



School Swimming Phase 1 Pilots in Scotland: Evaluation - North Lanarkshire Pilot

For sportscotland and Scottish Swimming
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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

sportscotland and Scottish Swimming supported four School Swimming Pilots during 2023. This included pilots in Dundee, East Lothian, North Lanarkshire, and Scottish Borders. The pilots were to have a focus on increasing swimming skill and confidence for children and young people from the most deprived areas in Scotland. That is, a focus on closing the equalities in sport gap. The School Swimming Phase 1 Pilots were part-funded by the Scottish Government, and the overall project was managed by **sportscotland**. Scottish Swimming supported implementation of the pilots at a local level.

EKOS Ltd and Integratis Consulting were commissioned by **sportscotland** and Scottish Swimming to undertake an independent evaluation of the pilots to better understand progress and to evidence impact on participants. It should be noted that the pilots started prior to the evaluation getting underway. This report provides a summary of the North Lanarkshire pilot and sits alongside separate documents including: a main report which provides an overview of evaluation findings at a programme level; a summary report for each of the other three pilots; and a standalone executive summary.

1.2 The pilots

Each pilot adopted a different approach to delivery in their local authority area (**Appendix A**). This recognises that a one-size-fits-all approach to delivery may not be appropriate.

In North Lanarkshire a **universal approach** was adopted. A cluster of primary schools located in deprived areas were invited to take part in the pilot in North Lanarkshire. A whole class or year group took part and were provided with a block of 'quality' swimming lesson provision during the school day. Five schools took part and the year groups ranged from Primary 5 to Primary 7.

The remainder of this report outlines the evaluation findings relating to the pilot in North Lanarkshire. The information provided in the following sections is based on: a review of background information and monitoring data provided by North Lanarkshire Council; and remote consultations undertaken with two individuals from North Lanarkshire Council. An email was also sent to the seven swim teachers involved, but no responses were received. It is our understanding from the lead contacts for the pilot that they had an end of pilot meeting with the swim teachers, and their feedback has been included within this report.

2 Project management and delivery

2.1 Introduction

This section sets the scene for the North Lanarkshire pilot. It provides an overview of the partners involved in the pilot and the underpinning rationale for the project.

2.2 Context

The pilot project in North Lanarkshire was based on the existing and well-established model of school swimming delivered in the region by North Lanarkshire Council.

The number of primary schools in North Lanarkshire involved in the Council's existing school Learn to Swim programme has, however, declined in recent years. North Lanarkshire Council report that they used to support around 60 primary schools in a typical academic year. The Council now typically support between 20 and 30 primary schools per academic year and around half the number of children and young people than it used to (now between 500 to 700 participants).

This is largely due to constrained financial resources, including the high transport costs for primary schools whose access to the nearest swimming pool is some distance away (that is, they are not within walking distance). The Council estimates that transport costs may be as high as £3,000 for the 12-week block of school swimming provision. Indeed, North Lanarkshire Council report that interest from primary schools in school swimming would be much higher if the cost of transport was less of a barrier to their involvement.

This issue has wider implications for the future delivery of school swimming in North Lanarkshire (and in reality, beyond this local authority).

The Council note that as the number of primary schools who cannot afford to participate in the existing school Learn to Swim programme or indeed do not prioritise school swimming as part of the school curriculum may put added pressure on North Lanarkshire Council to reduce the number of swim teachers/coaches it employs in the long-term. The Council is exploring the development of a long-term strategy to safeguard school swimming teachers with the introduction of early year lessons - the impact of this, is that it may limit the space the Council has to offer schools.

Primary schools located in geographic areas where children can easily walk a short distance to access a local swimming pool are more likely to book school swimming provision. Of course, it is also important to note that poor weather conditions in the winter months can make it challenging for even these schools to attend on a consistent basis.

In order to help overcome the challenge of high transport costs, some primary schools in North Lanarkshire use the same bus to travel to and from the pool and share the costs. This seems a sensible and pragmatic approach.

2.3 An established learn to swim and school swimming offer

As noted above, North Lanarkshire Council offers an extensive Learn to Swim programme for all swimming abilities across many of its venues. This includes: adult and baby; adult and toddler; adult and child; pre-school; swim skills (5 years+); adults (18 years+); and club ready. More detail on the swim skills (5 years+) and the existing school swimming framework used by North Lanarkshire Council is presented in **Appendix B**.

In terms of adult swimming provision, the Council report that its adults swimming lessons now attract a larger number of older adults - for example, those who already take or want to take their grand-children swimming but who personally either lack basic aquatic skills or confidence in the water to do so.

This points to a wider issue. While cost may be a barrier for some families to take their children (or grand-children) swimming, other barriers may also be at play. For example, learning to swim was not something that they did themselves when they were younger.

The delivery of the Council's existing school Learn to Swim programme can be summarised as follows:

- One session is delivered per week over a 12-week period.
- Assessment of swimming ability is undertaken in Week 1, 6, and 12.
- Based on the initial assessment undertaken in Week 1 children are placed into one of four groups based on swimming ability.
- Each session is 90 minutes in duration - this comprises 45 minutes in the pool (wet-side activity) and 45 minutes of Physical Education (PE) activities (dry-side activity). The dry-side activities span a range of sports.

Several things work particularly well with the existing approach to school swimming in North Lanarkshire, including:

- The 12-week block is considered the optimal duration to provide children with sufficient opportunity to progress in their swimming ability (rather than, for example, six or eight weeks) – and in particular when many children start from a low level of swimming ability and/or confidence. However, as considered later, any school swimming provision should be actively considered given cost and time implications.
- Given the number of children involved in each season, it also makes sense to split the children into a wet-site group and a dry-side group – this makes an efficient use of both time and spaces available at venues.
- 45-minutes in the pool is also considered an optimal duration for each session – it allows more time to be spent on task – and again, given that many children lack confidence and/or swim ability at the start.
- The inclusion of 45-minutes dry-side activity makes participation in the school Learn to Swim programme more attractive and ticks a number of boxes for primary schools. This is considered further below.

The health and wellbeing of children and young people is a policy priority at all levels. The Scottish Government wants every child and young person in Scotland to be able to learn about health and wellbeing to ensure they acquire skills to live healthy, happy lives. The Scottish Government is also committed to ensuring that schools deliver at least two hours of PE for all pupils in primary school.

Therefore, the 90-minutes session contributes to primary schools' requirement to deliver on this PE target for all pupils.

We touched on the barrier of high transport costs earlier. A 90-minutes session can appeal to primary schools that have to travel by bus to access a local swimming pool. While time away from the school day can also be a barrier to schools' involvement in the Learn to Swim programme, a 90-minutes session which comprises different activities is often viewed more positively than a shorter swimming session on its own (especially when transport costs are factored in).

Points to note on the existing scheme of work that all swim teachers in North Lanarkshire use is that:

- Children are assessed on swimming ability during Week 1 and placed into one of four groups ranging from non-swimmers (Level A) to children who can swim between 10 and 25 metres (Level D).

- For the remainder of the block of sessions the children are then split into two larger natural groupings – Levels A and B (no swimming ability and varying degrees of confidence in the water) and Levels C and Level D (can swim but to varying degrees of distance).

North Lanarkshire Council also:

- Has an existing monitoring framework in place to track and report on participants progress (that is, swim ability).
- Each participant receives a swimming progress report card at the end of the block to show their parents/guardians – it is also shown to/shared with school teachers.

2.4 Pilot project development and rationale

The pilot project in North Lanarkshire is, in the main, an extension of its existing school Learn to Swim programme. Water safety is a big driver for North Lanarkshire Council's school Learn to Swim programme (and therefore, the pilot). Being able to swim, in and of itself, is not considered sufficient for children and young people. The Council supports the [Water Safety Code campaign](#) which was developed by Water Safety Scotland. The Water Safety Code encourages people to stop, think, and consider the dangers that being in or near open water presents.

A young boy from St Thomas' Primary School in Wishaw drowned a few years ago in open water – and the school continues to involve pupils from Primary 5 to Primary 7 in the Council's school Learn to Swim programme. Some of the school's pupils also took part in the pilot. This accident would have been very traumatic for the boy's friends who were with him at the time. The Council note that the children are still petrified of the water. It would also have had a lasting impact on the school's teachers and the boy's fellow pupils.

Water safety education and knowledge is therefore an important underpinning rationale for the existing programme in North Lanarkshire (and the pilot).

It is not the only driver. Children are supported by qualified swim teachers to work through a structured programme to gain basic aquatic skills, coordination, stroke techniques and elementary skills as well as gaining confidence in the water.

Taken together, it is considered important to teach children both how to stay safe in and around the water, as well as learn how to swim. It is considered a vital lifesaving skill.

The Council report that many children in the region do not get the opportunity to learn how to swim out with the school day. The Council's existing school Learn to Swim programme (and indeed the pilot) may be the only opportunity some children will have to learn these skills and develop water safety knowledge and awareness.

The North Lanarkshire Council team emphasised the negative impact of COVID-19 on its school Learn to Swim provision during that time, as well as the fact that many children would have missed out on the chance to go swimming when schools and venues were closed. Many children missed out on learning this valuable life skill.

Even when schools were 'open', local authority swimming pools across Scotland were shut. North Lanarkshire Council was one of the first local authorities to open all its pools and reintroduce swimming lesson provision through its COVID-19 recovery plan. Schools were offered spaces to attend but due to travel restrictions in place at the time this was not possible. The Council, however, had every aspect of the return for schools in place from an early stage.

As with the existing programme, the pilot was managed and overseen by North Lanarkshire Council. More specifically, the Senior Aquatics Development Officer and Aquatics Development and Participation Officer within the Council's Active and Creative Communities department:

- Undertook project management and administration.
- Engaged with primary schools.
- Provided access to local swimming pools.
- Provided Scottish Swimming Teacher Qualification (SSTQ) swimming teachers.

The pilot used the Scottish Swimming draft school swimming framework to guide project delivery, which largely maps on to the Council's existing framework. Indeed, North Lanarkshire Council's framework helped to inform Scottish Swimming's framework.

3 Implementation

3.1 Introduction

This section provides more detail on the implementation of the school swimming pilot in North Lanarkshire and on the primary schools and children and young people who took part. Additional contextual information about North Lanarkshire (for example, population, deprivation, urban and rural classification, and primary school distance from local swimming pools) is presented in

Appendix C.

3.2 When the pilot was delivered

North Lanarkshire Council pushed back its original start date for the pilot from November 2022 to March 2023. The delayed start was in the main reported to be due to timing issues and factors out with their control, including:

- The timing of confirmation via **sportscotland** of funding from the Scottish Government to part-fund and therefore be able to progress the pilots.
- Scottish Swimming recruited a new Aquatics Development Manager to lead on the development of the School Swimming Framework (and associated monitoring and evaluation), and it took time for the successful candidate to take up post and take this work forward.
- For the team managing the pilot to be provided with sufficient detail on the expectations and requirements from their involvement by **sportscotland** and Scottish Swimming (for example, purpose and outcomes of the Scottish Government funding, the draft school swimming framework, monitoring arrangements and templates).

The North Lanarkshire pilot commenced on 14th March 2023 and ran until 22nd June 2023 - a total of 12 sessions were delivered (as described in **Section 2**). Points to note include that:

- Delivery was negatively impacted by industrial action in schools over pay and workloads.
- North Lanarkshire Council was, however, able to extend timescales of the pilot to June 2023 to enable the block of swimming lesson provision to run the full 12 weeks as originally planned.

3.3 Primary schools involved in the pilot

Schools and venues

Five primary schools were due to take part in the pilot, however, one school withdrew before the pilot started due to high transports costs. Another school took its place.

Key points to note about participating primary schools, **Table 3.1** include that:

- Schools were not located that far away from the local swimming pool they used. This ranged from 0.4 miles for Carbrain Primary School (Tryst Sports Centre) to three miles for Plains Primary School (John Smith Pool).
- All schools were located within a 10-minute drive of their local swimming pool facility.

Table 3.1: Primary schools - distance to swimming pool facility or venue

Primary school	Number of children Involved	Primary year group	Venue	Distance from the school (miles)	Walking (minutes)	Driving (minutes)
Berryhill Primary School	33	Primary 5	Wishaw Sports Centre	1.0	20	4
Carbrain Primary School	23	Primary 5	Tryst Sports Centre	0.4	8	3
Plains Primary School	25	Primary 5 / Primary 6	John Smith Pool	3.0	51	8
St. Helen's Primary School	29	Primary 5	Tryst Sports Centre	2.1	40	6
St. Thomas' Primary School	24	Primary 7	Wishaw Sports Centre	0.6	12	2

Source: EKOS analysis of North Lanarkshire Council Active and Creative Communities data and Google Maps.

Deprivation

The pilots were to have a particular focus on increasing swimming skill and confidence for children and young people from the most deprived areas in Scotland.

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) is the Scottish Government's standard approach to identify areas of multiple deprivation in Scotland. It is a relative measure of deprivation across 6,976 small areas (called data zones).

The SIMD is formed from more than 30 indicators of deprivation which have been grouped together into seven domains - income, employment, health, education, housing, crime, access to services. The latest data was updated in June 2020.

All primary schools that took part in the pilot are within the 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland (Quintile 1) - a targeted approach within a wider universal offering.

Table 3.2 shows the proportion of pupils at the five school who live within the 20% most deprived data zones. The main point to note is that all primary schools with the exception of St. Helen's Primary School in Cumbernauld have a significant proportion of their school roll who live in SIMD Quintile 1.

While this provides an assessment of deprivation at a school and school pupil population level (all pupils - not just those pupils who took part in the pilot) - a fair assumption to make is that the North Lanarkshire school swimming pilot has been particularly successful in engaging children who live in deprived areas.

Table 3.2: Proportion of school roll who live in SIMD Quintile 1

Primary school	Proportion of pupils who live in SIMD Quintile 1
Berryhill Primary School (Wishaw)	93 %
Carbrain Primary School (Cumbernauld)	68%
Plains Primary School (Airdrie)	70%
St. Helen's Primary School (Cumbernauld)	16%
St. Thomas' Primary School (Wishaw)	72%

Source: The Scottish Government, Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation.

An alternative measure of deprivation is the percentage of pupils receiving free school meals. [Eligibility](#) for free school meals in Scotland used to be based on receipt of benefits (for example, Universal Credit, Income Support). This is perhaps not the best measure of deprivation. Now in Scotland, children at local council schools can now get free school meals during term-time in Primary 1 to Primary 5¹ (that is, their family's financial circumstances do not matter). The Scottish Government has made a further commitment to work with local authorities to extend universal provision to all pupils in Primary 6 and Primary 7 by 2024.

¹ Since August 2021, free school lunches during term-time was extended to all Primary 4 children, and to all Primary 5 children by January 2022.

Free school meals is therefore a less meaningful measure of deprivation than the SIMD. The latest data is for 2021, and so some of the changes outlined above do not yet feature in the data.

The North Lanarkshire pilot supported children in Primary 5 to Primary 7. The main points to note from **Table 3.3** about these primary year groups are that:

- The proportion of Primary 5 to Primary 7 pupils at participating schools registered for free school meals ranged from a low of 10% (St. Helen's Primary School) to a high of 63% (Berryhill Primary School).
- Berryhill Primary School also has the highest proportion of pupils (total school roll) who live in SIMD Quintile 1 (see **Table 3.2**).

Table 3.3: Proportion of school roll registered for free school meals (2021)

Primary school	Proportion of Primary 1 – Primary 4 pupils registered for free school meals	Proportion of Primary 5 – Primary 7 pupils registered for free school meals
Berryhill Primary School (Wishaw)	100%	63%
Carbrain Primary School (Cumbernauld)	100%	30%
Plains Primary School (Airdrie)	100%	30%
St. Helen's Primary School (Cumbernauld)	100%	10%
St. Thomas' Primary School (Wishaw)	100%	28%

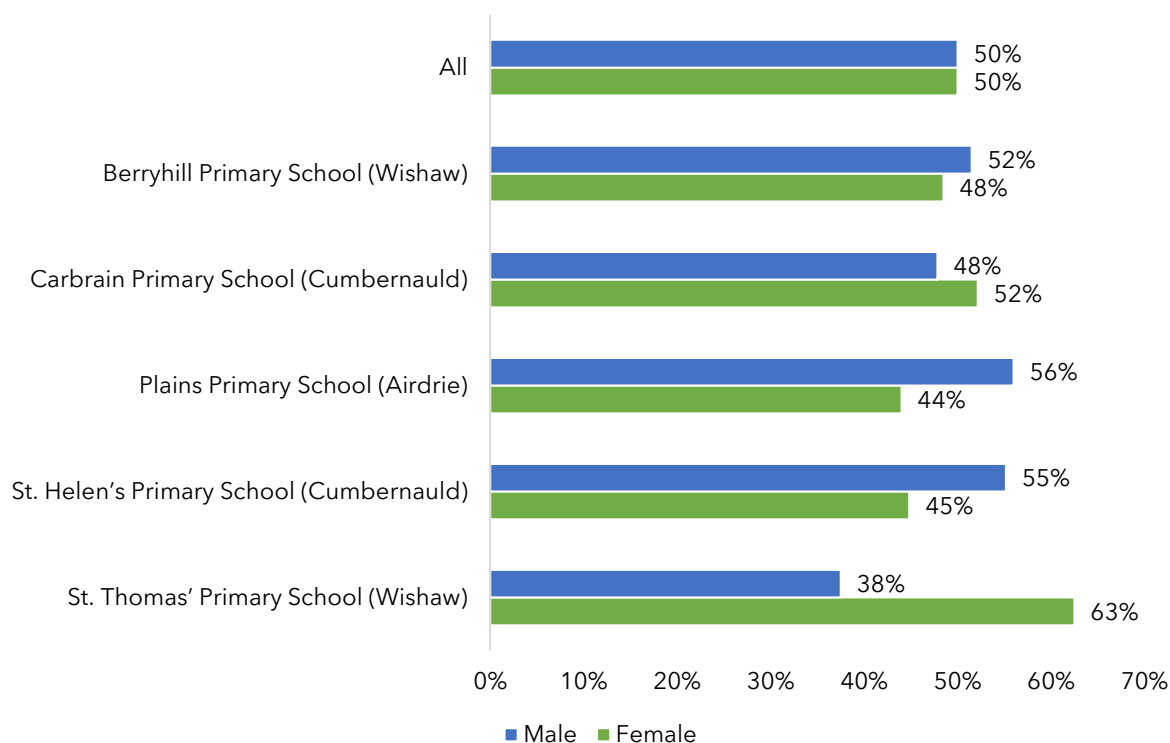
Source: The Scottish Government, National Statistics (2021) Summary Statistics for Schools in Scotland.

3.4 Pupils involved in the pilot

A total of 134 children from across the five primary schools took part in the pilot. This included whole Primary 5, Primary 6, or Primary 7 class groups (depending on the school).

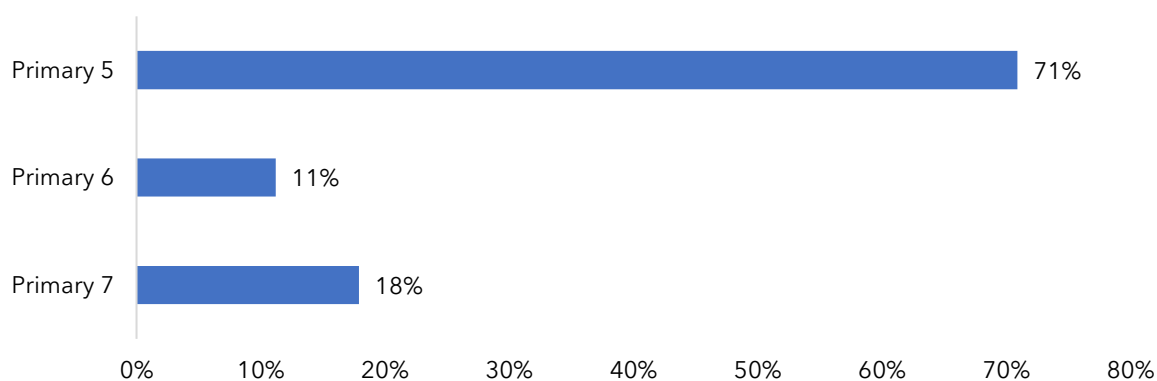
Overall, there was an equal split of male and female participants, **Figure 3.1**. The gender profile at a primary school level varied. The majority of children who took part were in Primary 5 (71%).

Figure 3.1: Children involved in the pilot - by gender



Source: EKOS analysis of North Lanarkshire Council Active and Creative Communities data N=134

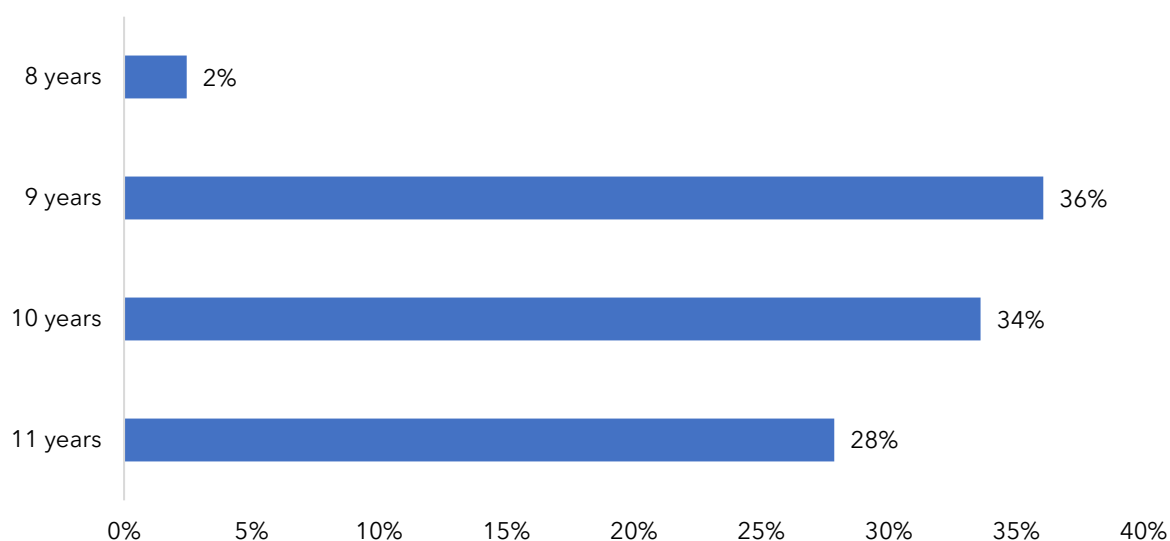
Figure 3.2: Children involved in the pilot - by primary year group



Source: EKOS analysis of North Lanarkshire Council Active and Creative Communities data N=134

The children involved in the pilot ranged from eight years to 11 years old - with the highest proportion of children aged nine (36%). The median age of children was 10 years.

Figure 3.3: Children involved in the pilot - by age



Source: EKOS analysis of North Lanarkshire Council Active and Creative Communities data N=122 (data was not provided for 12 pupils)

3.5 Lesson structure, content, and attendance

Duration

As described earlier, the pilot in North Lanarkshire ran for 12 weekly sessions. There was in-built flexibility within the pilot to extend delivery beyond the original timescales to take account of external factors (for example, industrial action within schools).

Each session was 90-minutes in duration - this comprised 45-minutes in the pool (wet-side activity) and 45-minutes of PE activities (dry-side activity) which contributes towards primary schools' requirement to deliver at least two hours of PE for all pupils.

Swim teachers

North Lanarkshire Council provided access to SSTQ qualified swimming teachers for the pilot. Seven swim teachers were involved in delivery across the four venues - and some delivered sessions across more than one venue. The typical ratio is one swim teacher to 15 participants, albeit this increases as and when required. For example, for children with additional support needs.

Assessment

The swim teachers used the Scottish Swimming draft school swimming framework to undertake the initial assessment of swimming ability in Week 1, and then repeated this at the end of the block (that is, week 12).

Based on the initial assessment the children were split into four categories:

- Stage 1 - maps on to the Council's Level A assessment (non-swimmers).
- Stage 2 - maps onto the Council's Level B assessment (confident, no swimming ability).
- Stage 3 - maps onto the Council's Level C assessment (can swim 5 metres to 10 metres).
- Stage 4 - maps onto the Council's Level D assessment (can swim 10 metres to 25 metres).

The only issue raised by the Council team was around terminology within the draft school swimming framework. For example, the definition of some swimming outcomes are considered open to interpretation by swim teachers. We return to this point in **Section 4**.

3.6 Costs

The focus of the evaluation was not to compare the cost of each of the pilots (not least as each pilot adopted a different approach). Rather, the focus was to better understand the extent to which the pilots were successful in supporting children and young people to improve their water safety and swimming skills.

For the North Lanarkshire pilot, costs would in reality be incurred for the following broad cost headings:

- Project management team/administration support.
- Swim teacher costs.
- Pool hire.
- Lifeguard costs.
- Reward and recognition (certificates, etc).
- Equipment.
- Transport.

In the current financial climate, tough decisions require to be made by local authorities and other public sector organisations about how they target and prioritise scarce financial resources. Any school swimming provision is better than no provision at all.

4 Experience and impact

4.1 Introduction

This section provides our analysis of the monitoring data for the North Lanarkshire pilot provided by North Lanarkshire Council. This includes the baseline and end of pilot data on technical ability for the primary school pupils who took part, and wider qualitative feedback.

Scottish Swimming provided each pilot with details of the information and data to be captured (and when), and a template for recording this.

The template included space to record an assessment of the swimming outcomes in each stage of the framework, in the first week and at the last week of the pilot. Most schools used the first week template to record all data, and thus, we are unable to make comparisons on the individual swimming outcomes (or skills) from the beginning to the end of the pilot.

4.2 Draft Scottish Swimming school swimming framework

Scottish Swimming and partners have developed a draft school swimming framework to support delivery of effective school swimming provision. This is part of a wider project to support local authorities and their partners with the planning, development, and delivery of school swimming.

The framework itself has defined aims, objectives, and outcomes, and the different stages are briefly described below:

- Stage 1 - Aim: Develop confidence in the water and introduce basic aquatic skills.
- Stage 2 - Aim: Increase competency of basic aquatic skills.
- Stage 3 - Aim: Utilise basic aquatic skills to produce safer pupils.
- End point - "Aquatics for life".

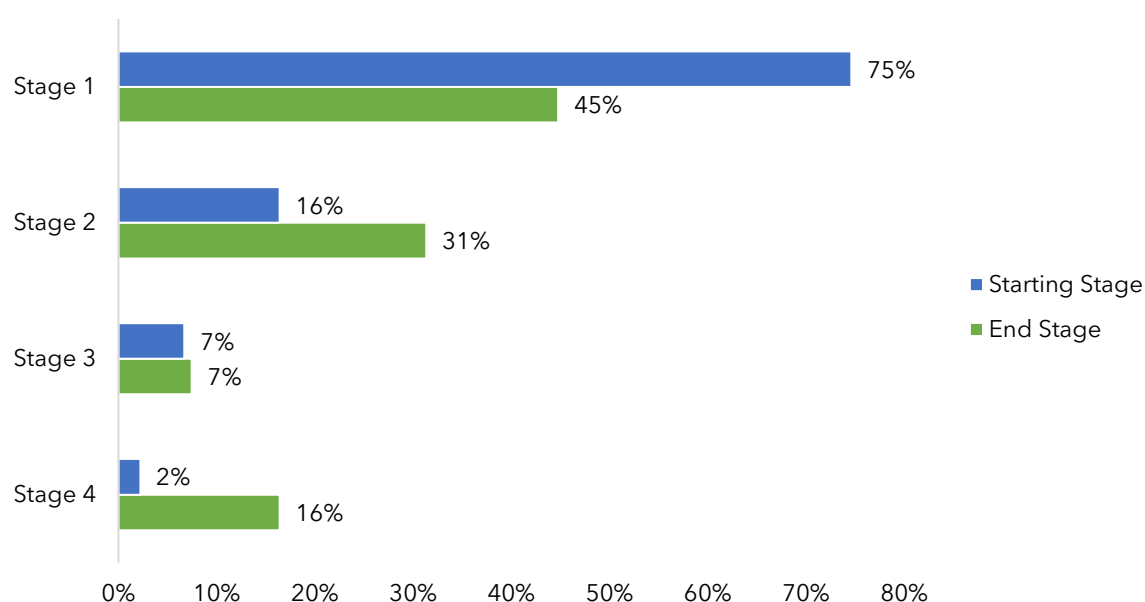
Each stage, and the swimming outcomes within each stage, become more technical as the children advance.

4.3 Overall performance

The main points to note about the North Lanarkshire pilot at the start of the project are that:

- The vast majority of children (91%) were non-swimmers or were confident but had no swimming ability prior to taking part in the pilot (that is, assessed as Stage 1 or Stage 2).
- Few children (9%) were assessed at the baseline stage as 'swimmers' (that is, assessed as Stage 3 or Stage 4). The North Lanarkshire data captures for children at Stage 4 - "Aquatics for life", although this technically is not a stage in its own right.

Figure 4.1: Assessment of children's swimming ability (baseline and end of project)



Source: EKOS analysis of North Lanarkshire Council pilot monitoring data
N=134

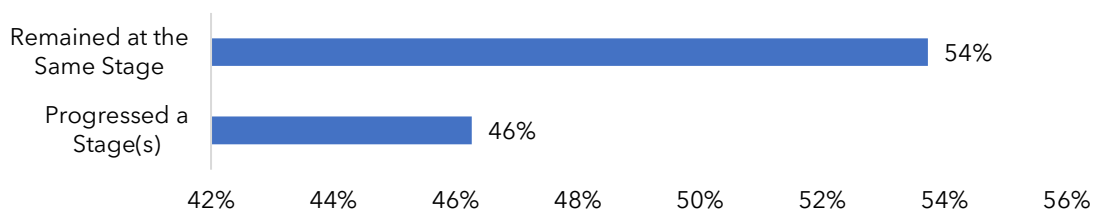
At the end of the pilot, progress among participants is evident. Most notably:

- There was a reduction in the proportion of children assessed as at Stage 1 - down from 75% to 45%.
- There was an increase in the proportion of children assessed as at Stage 2 - up from 16% to 31%.
- There was also an increase in the proportion of children assessed as at Stage 4 - up from 2% to 16%.

While progress in swimming ability and confidence is evident, the vast majority of children did not reach Stage 4 (84%).

Figure 4.2 provides a closer look at progress by the end of the pilot, and this also shows a mixed picture - 54% of children progressed beyond their initial assessment stage by the end of the pilot, but the remainder did not (46%).

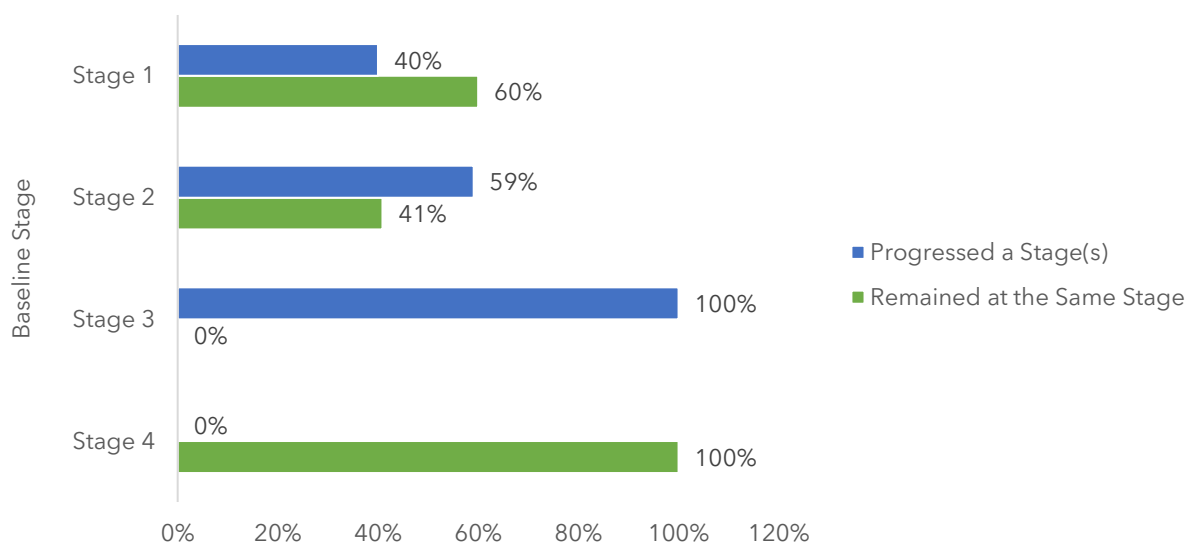
Figure 4.2: Progress or otherwise made in children’s swimming ability by the end of the pilot



Source: EKOS analysis of North Lanarkshire Council pilot monitoring data
N=134

Figure 4.3 shows the baseline stage of children who took part in the pilot and the proportion who either remained at the same stage by the end of the pilot or progressed in their swimming ability.

Figure 4.3: Progress or otherwise made in children’s swimming ability by the end of the pilot from baseline stage



Source: EKOS analysis of North Lanarkshire Council pilot monitoring data
N=134

Points to note include that:

- All children initially assessed as Stage 3 progressed in their swimming ability to Stage 4.
- There are more mixed results when data for children who were initially assessed as Stage 1 or Stage 2 are examined. For example, 60% and 41% respectively of these children remained at the same stage by the end of the project.

4.4 Stage 1 - develop confidence in the water and introduce basic aquatic skills

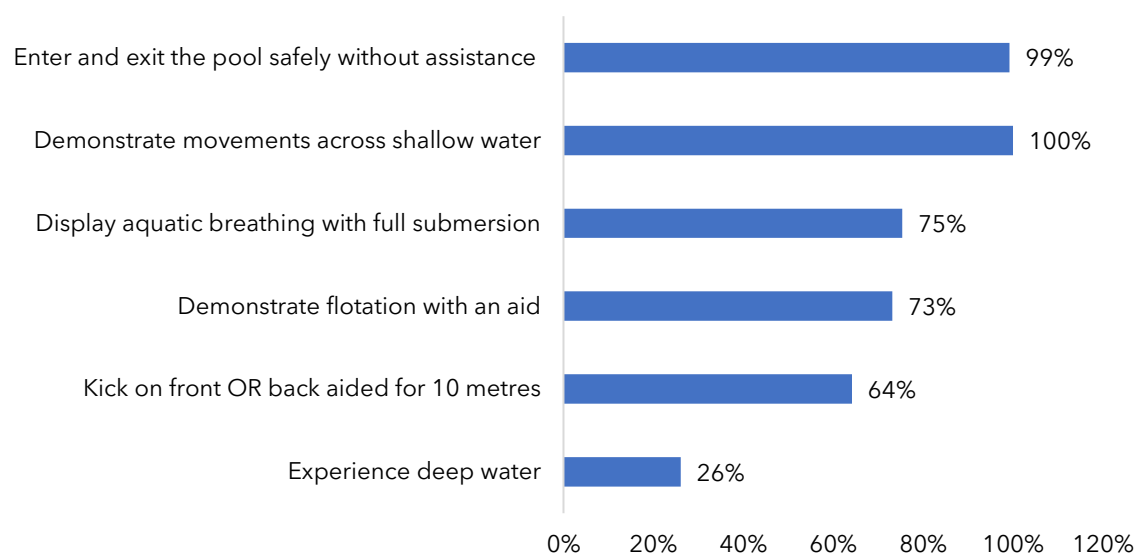
Stage 1 of the Scottish Swimming draft school swimming framework has six swimming outcomes (or skills). These range from children being able to “enter and exit the pool safely without assistance” to children “experiencing deep water”.

As outlined earlier, 75% of children were assessed as Stage 1 at the baseline stage. By the end of the pilot, this had decreased to 45%.

Points to note from **Figure 4.4**, include that:

- All children were able to “demonstrate movements across shallow water” by the end of the pilot, and almost all could “enter and exit the pool safely without assistance”.
- The vast majority of children (75%+) could do three of the six Stage 1 swimming outcomes by the end of the pilot.
- A majority of children could also “kick on front or back aided for 10 metres” (64%), but a sizable proportion could not (36%).
- “Experience deep water” was the most challenging skill for children to master - around one-fifth of children achieved this swimming outcome by the end of the pilot.

Figure 4.4: Stage 1 swimming outcomes (at the end of the pilot)



Source: EKOS analysis of North Lanarkshire Council pilot monitoring data
N=134

It is our understanding that the Stage 1 “experience deep water” swimming outcome is perhaps open to interpretation.

While Scottish Swimming consider this to mean that the children are simply taken to the deep end of the pool and asked to look down into the pool to see how deep the water is (and difference in depths), some pilots and swim teachers (including North Lanarkshire and Dundee) interpreted and assessed this as the children physically being in the deep end of the pool – hence the low completion rate for this skill at the end of the pilot (that is, 26% completed).

“Enter deep water” (that is, physically being in deep water) is a swimming outcome within Stage 2 of the framework (see **Section 4.5**). The feedback from pilots is that pool design can affect children’s perception of different depths when not in the pool, and that it is easier to understand this when the children are physically in the swimming pool.

4.5 Stage 2 - increase competency of basic aquatic skills

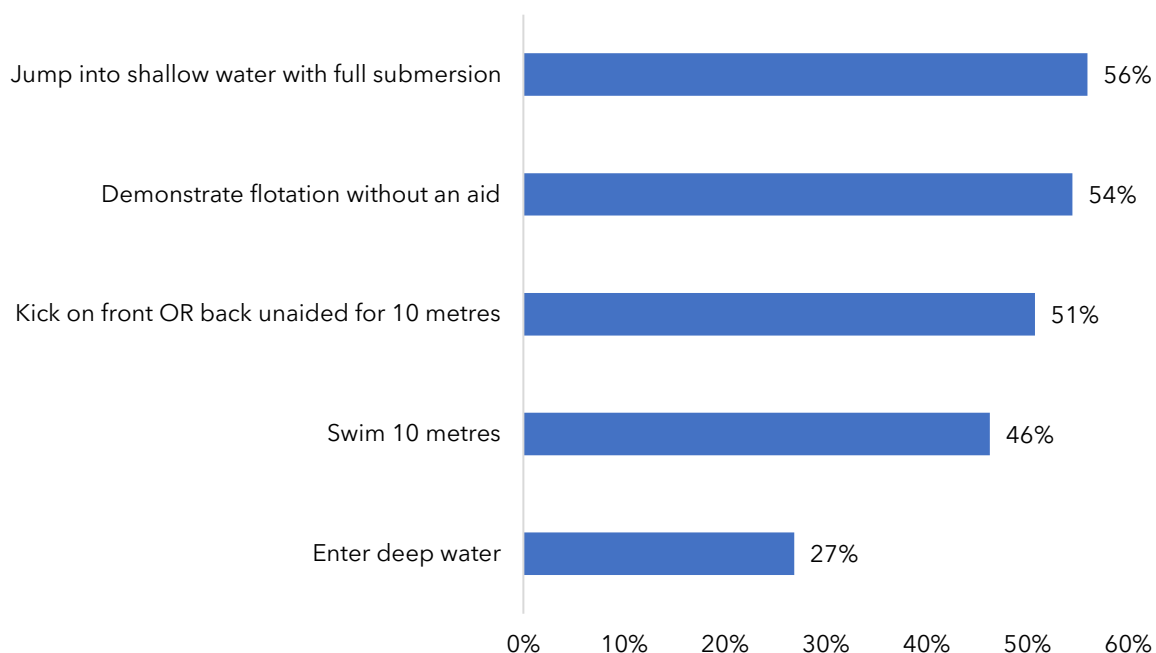
Stage 2 of the Scottish Swimming draft school swimming framework contains five swimming outcomes, which ranges from “jump into shallow water with full submersion” to “enter deep water”.

By the end of the pilot 31% of children were assessed at Stage 2, an increase from 16% at the baseline stage.

Points to note from **Figure 4.5** include that:

- For each swimming outcome in Stage two, only around half or fewer children mastered each of the skills (this ranged from 27% to 56%).
- The swimming outcomes of “jump into shallow water with full submersion” and “demonstrate flotation without an aid” were achieved by the highest proportion of children (56% and 54% respectively) by the end of the pilot.
- Only 27% of children could “enter deep water”.

Figure 4.5: Stage 2 swimming outcomes (at the end of the pilot)



Source: EKOS analysis of North Lanarkshire Council pilot monitoring data
N=134

4.6 Stage 3 - Utilise basic aquatic skills to produce safer pupils

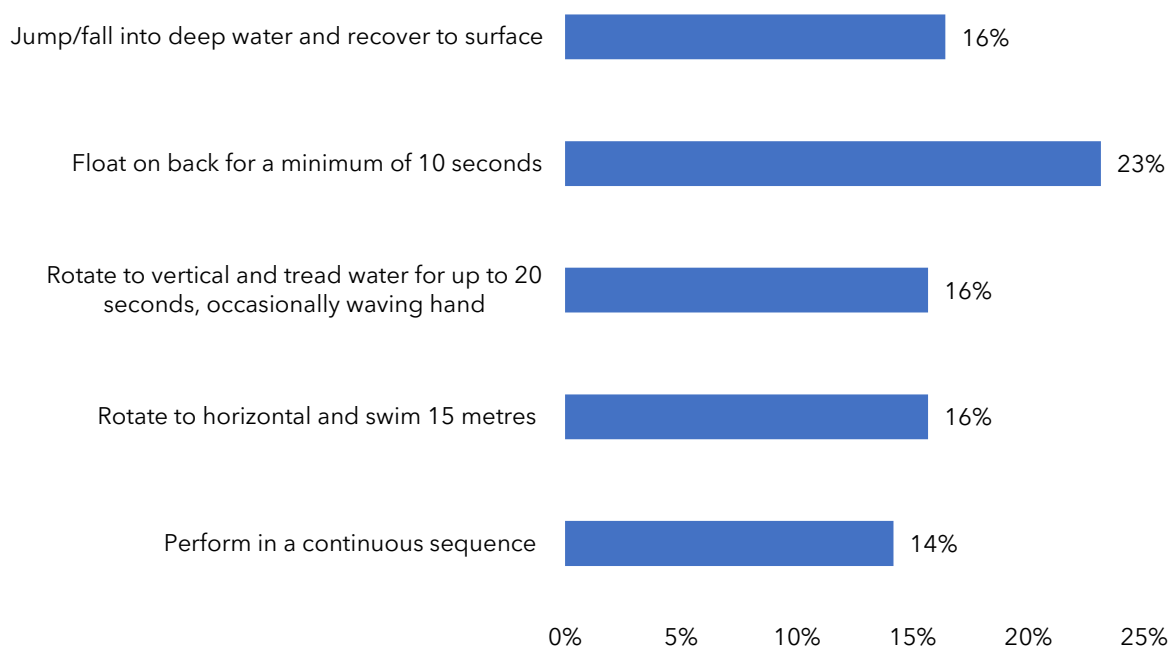
Stage 3 consists of five swimming outcomes, ranging from “pupils should be able to perform in one continuous sequence” to “rotate to horizontal and swim 15 metres”.

All children who were initially assessed as Stage 3 at the beginning of the pilot completed this stage and progressed to Stage 4.

Key points to note from **Figure 4.6** include that:

- Less than one-quarter of children were able to complete each of the swimming outcomes within Stage 3.
- “Perform in a continuous sequence” saw the lowest completion rate, at 14%.
- This suggests that the vast majority of children could not do any of the swimming outcomes in this stage.

Figure 4.6: Stage 3 swimming outcomes (at the end of the pilot)



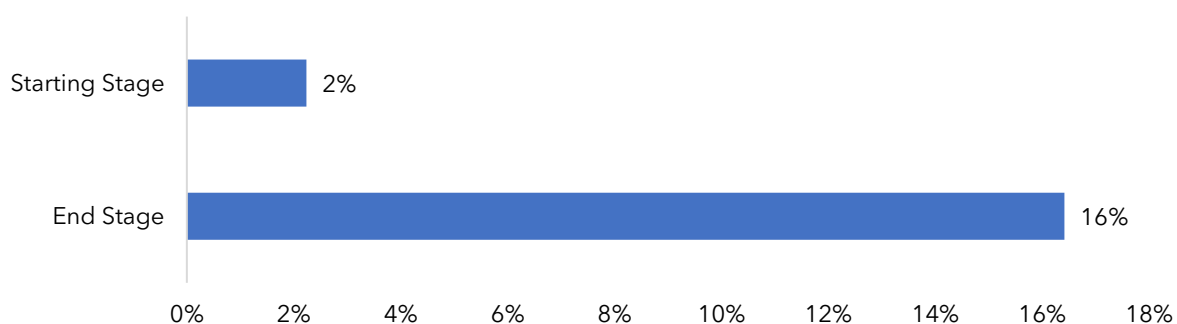
Source: EKOS analysis of North Lanarkshire Council pilot monitoring data
N=134

4.7 Stage 4 – aquatics for life

As noted earlier, on completion of Stage 3, the end point is “Aquatics for life”.

Few children (2%) were assessed at Stage 4 (Aquatics for life) at the initial assessment. This increased to 16% by the end of the pilot. Most children did not improve their swimming ability and confidence to this level.

Figure 4.7: Stage 4 completion - start and end of pilot



Source: EKOS analysis of North Lanarkshire Council pilot monitoring data
N=22

4.8 Wider observations

The Council provided some wider demographic data on participants. There were no notable differences in progress in swimming ability and confidence when gender or primary year group/age were examined.

At an individual school level, some points to note include that:

- None of the children from Berryhill Primary School progressed beyond Stage 2 by the end of the pilot.
- No children from Plains Primary School or Berryhill Primary School reached Stage 4 by the end of the pilot.
- St. Helen's Primary School and St. Thomas' Primary School had most children in Stage 3 or Stage 4 by the end of the pilot.

4.9 Additional monitoring data

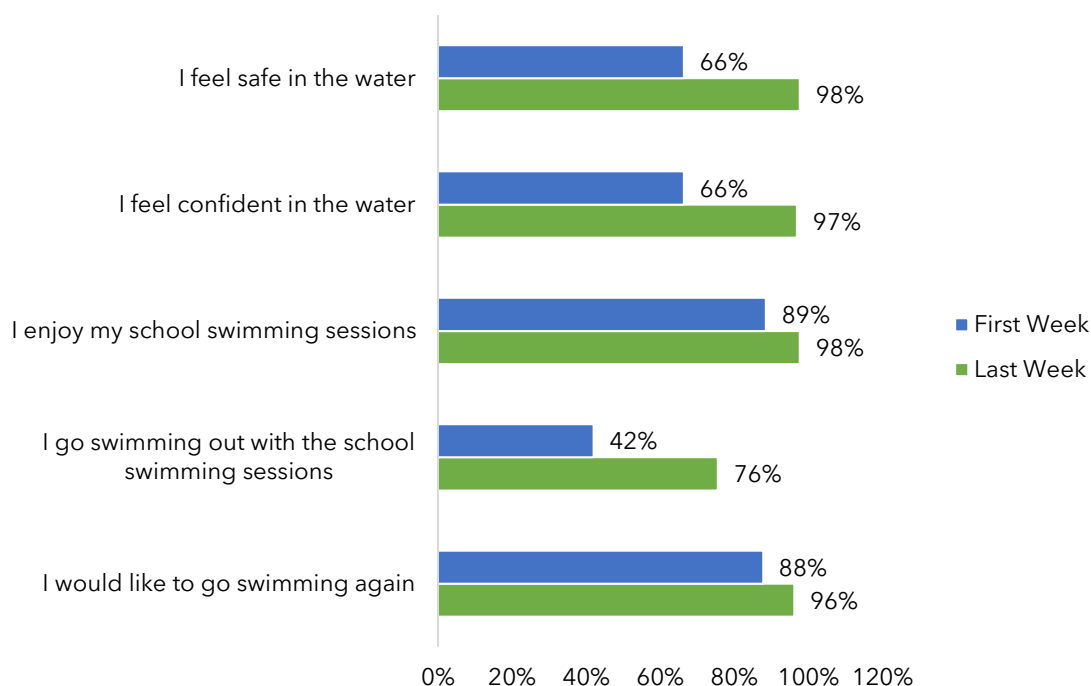
This section provides our analysis of additional monitoring data requested by Scottish Swimming and captured by North Lanarkshire Council. Monitoring data was to be collected on the first week, at the mid-point of the pilot (optional), and the last week.

It should be noted that there are some data gaps, for example:

- Two of the five primary schools did not complete monitoring data during the mid-point of the school swimming provision. Due to this, mid-point data has not been used. Mid-point data collection was, however, optional.
- A few children were absent from sessions when data was to be collected (for example, completed for the first week but not the last week). Only completed datasets were included in the analysis.

Children were asked about their feelings towards their school swimming provision and swimming in general. For each statement, children and young people were asked to select either "Yes", "No" or "Unsure". **Figure 4.8** displays the proportion of those children who reported "Yes".

Figure 4.8: Children’s views on the school swimming provision and swimming generally (“Yes” responses only)



Source: EKOS analysis of North Lanarkshire Council Active & Creative Communities data N=131

Note: Most other responses were “Unsure”, with the exception of “I go swimming out with the school swimming sessions” which attracted more “No” responses.

Key points to note, include that:

- There was an increase in the proportion of children reporting “Yes” to each statement from the baseline to end of pilot stage - this is a positive finding in and of itself.
- The biggest change was for the statement “I go swimming out with the school swimming sessions” - this increased from 42% to 76% by the end of the pilot.
- A positive finding is that almost all children reported at the end of the pilot that they:
 - Feel safe in the water (98%).
 - Enjoy their school swimming sessions (98%).
 - Feel confident in the water (97%).
 - Would like to go swimming again (96%).
- While the percentage of children that reported they “go swimming out with the school swimming sessions” increased from 42% (baseline) to 74% (end of pilot) - this suggests that a sizable proportion only experience swimming when at school. The findings do suggest that there may be barriers at play that prevent or make it difficult for some children go swimming out with the school.

5 Strengths, challenges, and lessons learned

5.1 Introduction

This section touches on the main strengths of the North Lanarkshire universal approach to school swimming, as well as challenges encountered, and lessons learned.

5.2 Strengths

The reported strengths of the North Lanarkshire approach are as follows:

- North Lanarkshire Council's and the Scottish Swimming school swimming frameworks place equal importance on water safety and improving swimming ability.
- The North Lanarkshire pilot adopted a universal approach which included a targeted element. That is, primary schools located in the most deprived areas of the region took part (and whole class groups). Based on a review of existing datasets on deprivation this pilot has been particularly successful in engaging children who live in deprived areas.
- There was in-built flexibility to extend delivery to overcome challenges related to industrial action within schools and pool closures.
- The technical assessment and groupings of children worked well in practice.
- While any school swimming provision should be encouraged, North Lanarkshire Council's experience is that a 12-week block which includes 45-minutes poolside and 45-minutes dry-side PE activity has several strengths. It provides a good amount of time when time spent on task is considered, and for children to progress in their swimming ability and confidence. It has the added benefit of being a more attractive offer to primary schools.

- The lessons/sessions are (in some cases) delivered to two schools at a time to maximise swim teacher and participant ratios, and to make best use of time and spaces available.
- The inclusion of 45-minutes dry-side activity ticks a number of boxes for primary schools. The longer session which combines wet-side and dry-side activity contributes towards primary schools' requirement to deliver at least two hours of PE for all pupils.
- Each child receives some formal recognition of participation and achievement (that is, a school swimming report card).

5.3 Challenges

The main challenges were reported as:

- Transport costs - this is a significant barrier for many schools and is evidenced by a declining number of primary schools involved in the North Lanarkshire Council existing school Learn to Swim offer. Some schools, for example, those located in relatively close proximity to each other often look to use the same bus to share costs.
- Time away from the school day can also be challenging for schools, not least as many schools are catching up for lost time post COVID-19. School swimming provision may be considered less of a priority within this context.
- Delays in confirming the provision of Scottish Government funding for the pilots had a chain of knock-on impacts, including on implementing the pilots at a local level, communication, partnership working, monitoring, and evaluation. There will always be external factors which are out with the control of projects.
- The delayed start to the overall School Swimming Phase 1 Pilot project and piecemeal or drip-feeding of information on the pilot and on monitoring and evaluation meant that there was lack of clarity at the outset. As well as challenges in data collection which resulted in data gaps. This made securing buy-in and engagement from primary schools more difficult, and in particular with regards to approaches made to schools for demographic information on participants.

- The pilot included a requirement for additional monitoring information and data that North Lanarkshire Council (and its swim teachers) would not typically collect as part its existing school Learn to Swim provision. This posed additional administrative burden for swim teachers. Swim teachers (paid) time does not currently factor in time for monitoring, rather they are paid to set up and deliver the swimming session.

5.4 Lessons Learned

The main lessons learned from the universal approach are identified as follows:

- A greater lead-in time to plan delivery at a local level and timely and comprehensive information and communication from Scottish Swimming and **sportscotland** is key. This is vital to ensure that everyone involved is clear at the outset on: the purpose, objectives, and outcomes of the pilot (that is, what change are funders looking to bring about); what is expected from delivery partners; data sharing requirements (and consent); what is to be measured (how and when); and on reporting requirements.
- The high cost of transport is the main barrier to involvement of primary schools. Financial assistance is required to help encourage more schools to be involved, and so that children do not miss out on an opportunity to learn a vital lifesaving skill.
- Time away from school can be another barrier to involvement. The North Lanarkshire approach can be attractive to some schools because it offers a 90-minute combined session (as described above). The inclusion of dry-side activity works best if it has a purpose.
- It is essential to undertake the initial assessment of children's baseline swimming competency in Week 1 to ensure children are streamed into the correct group based on their ability.
- Given the number of children involved in each season, it makes sense to split children into a wet-site group and a dry-side group. This makes an efficient use of both time and spaces available within venues.

- The time poolside is important. Most children did not complete the three stages of the framework by the end of the pilot. This suggests that longer sessions (duration and/or blocks) may be needed and for more children to go swimming out with the school sessions to reinforce learning. In particular, as most children started the pilot as non-swimmers. There are cost, scheduling, and time implications associated with all of this. As this pilot shows, some progress in swimming ability and confidence was evident for children who took part.
- Some swimming outcomes within the draft school swimming framework may be open to interpretation by swimming teachers.
- Monitoring activity takes time and should be proportionate - administrative time (and cost) implications need to be fully considered at the outset.

6 Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

This section presents some suggested recommendations for consideration by **sportscotland**, Scottish Swimming, and partners.

6.2 Recommendations

Our recommendations to **sportscotland**, Scottish Swimming, and partners are to:

- Disseminate the findings of this evaluation to stakeholders, including to local authorities. While outcomes are mixed, the findings in relation to improvements in swimming ability and water confidence and safety (and wider health and wellbeing outcomes) are encouraging. Sharing the findings may also encourage local authorities that do not provide school swimming to make a case for future provision.
- Share the findings with the Scottish Government as part of the evidence base to make a case for the longer-term sustainable funding for school swimming. This would also help to overcome the barriers to participation faced by schools.
- Take the necessary steps to finalise the school swimming framework for wider use at a local level. Swimming outcomes should be reviewed to ensure they are clearly and sufficiently defined and to support a consistent approach to monitoring.
- Clarify whether school swimming provision should have a particular focus on deprivation. Most, but not all, pilots addressed deprivation in some way (albeit to varying degrees). This may look different in, for example, urban compared to rural areas.
- Develop resource packs to support school swimming provision at a local level. These could then be used by local delivery partner(s) to engage with and secure buy in from key stakeholders, including schools.
- Prepare detailed guidance to inform the monitoring of school swimming provision and provide training. This will help ensure a shared understanding as well as standardisation and consistency in data collection and reporting. Monitoring should be proportionate, and an external evaluation should also be factored into future plans.
- Continue to raise awareness of the physical and wider benefits of being able to swim and going swimming out with the school day to reinforce learning, and to address the barriers that may prevent some children from participation. The pilots confirm that school swimming provision on its own is not likely to make most children confident, safe, and competent swimmers.

Appendix A: The other three pilots

Targeted approach

East Lothian - all Primary 5 children in East Lothian were assessed for swimming ability in the second week of the school term. Nineteen schools took part in the pilot and 216 children who were assessed as non-swimmers took part in the pilot and were provided with a block of 'quality' school swimming provision during the school day. Additional features include that:

- Primary 5 children assessed as not requiring swimming lessons receive vouchers for eight free swimming sessions at local pools.
- Children assessed as needing school swimming lessons receive follow-on support on completion of their block: those who can now swim are provided with vouchers for eight free swimming sessions at local pools; and those who are unable to swim are offered the opportunity to continue their swimming lessons within the community Learn-to-Swim programme offered by Enjoy Leisure (eight vouchers).

Holistic approach

Dundee - the approach adopted in Dundee was a combination of the universal and targeted approaches and sought to develop a holistic model of delivery, including Active Schools. The collaborative approach involved a range of stakeholders to support delivery, including Active Schools. One cluster primary school took part in the pilot with all Primary 4 children provided with a block of 'quality' school swimming provision during the school day at a secondary school with its own pool (Baldrigon Academy). Delivery was supported by some senior pupils of Baldrigon Academy who undertook training to achieve the Scottish Swimming Teacher Qualification (SSTQ). This was with a view to providing opportunities for skills development and developing a pipeline for the future workforce.

Rural approach

Scottish Borders - as the number of children in each primary class or year group may be small in rural primary schools, a whole school approach was (in the main) adopted in the Scottish Borders pilot. Three schools took part - two schools involved all pupils (Primary 1 - Primary 7), and a larger school involved its Primary 4 class. The delivery model was originally designed to support effective school swimming within a rural setting and the challenges this presents. A more intense delivery model was anticipated - that is, increased time on task per visit and a reduced number of visits to maximise the time spent at the venue and offset the cost of travel (for example, time and money).

Appendix B: North Lanarkshire existing school swimming framework

The swim skills (5 years+) lessons have four levels and defined aims and objectives as follows:

Swim Skills 1

Aim: To further develop water confidence and develop core aquatic skills without aids.

Objectives:

- Develop confidence and ability to perform a wide range of core aquatic skills without buoyancy aids.
- Develop the basic technique of the four strokes.
- Introduce the basic technique of sculling.
- Develop balance and buoyancy through a variety of activities.

Swim Skills 2

Aim: To increase the competency of the core aquatic skills and develop basic stroke technique.

Objectives:

- Introduce and progress new core aquatic skills.
- Develop stroke technique to include all four strokes.
- Introduction to diving (pool permitting).
- Develop awareness and feel for the water through a variety of core aquatic skills.

Swim Skills 3

Aim: Introduce more advanced stroke technique and achieve Triple S standard.

Objectives:

- Further develop competency in all four strokes.
- Development of Diving.
- Further develop Butterfly and Breaststroke aiming to achieve legal technique.

Swim Skills 4

Aim: To improve the quality of stroke technique, introduce multi-aquatic skills/disciplines and basic lifesaving skills.

Objectives:

- To demonstrate competent technique in all four strokes.
- Introduce lifesaving skills and basic aquatic discipline skills.
- To provide basic skills to enable progression into all aquatic disciplines including life-saving.

Table B.1: North Lanarkshire Scheme of Work

Assessment levels Level A - Non swimmers Level B - Confident, no swimming ability Level C - Can swim 5 metres to 10 metres Level D - Can swim 10 metres to 25 metres	
WK1 Assessment - Safety Talk, fire & pool alarm procedures. General poolside rules. Safe Entries & Exits. Assess each pupil on F/C or B/S capability. Set groupings. Confidence exercises as a group & game to finish. Discussion at the end on water safety and the first element 'STOP & THINK'.	
WK2 - Beginner Group A/B Recap on entries - Fundamentals of breath control, confidence games. Floating prone & supine. Reducing noodles & floats if progressing. P&G intro into F/C Kick. Game. Exit at stairs. Rem - Point 1 Water Safety Code.	WK 2 - Intermediate Group C/D Rem - safe entry. Confidence game working on aquatic breathing. Floatation - Rotation. Assess full F/C. P&G F/C WPW streamlining body position. Intro into treading water. Game. Exit at stairs. Rem - Point 1 Water Safety Code
WK3 - Beginner Group A/B Conf Exercises, submerging & sinkers. Floating Supine reducing noodles & floats when progressing skills. Intro B/C Kick, P&G Streamlining distance and kick. Re-cap F/C Kick build distance. Climb out at side. Game.	WK3 - Intermediate Group C/D Jump in entry. Floatation/Rotation/Mushroom P&G Supine streamlining distance with rotation onto prone. B/C Kick ext arm to finish, distance. B/S Legs attempt arms. Game. Climb out exist.
WK4 - Beginner Group A/B Conf games, P&G into F/C Kick building distance. Attempting F/C. Floating Supine. Intro B/S Legs. What is the contact numbers for emergency services? Race game.	WK4 - Intermediate Group C/D Straddle jumps/Treading Water/4Floatation shapes. F/C Single arm, bi-lateral breathing, and timing F/C WPW build distance. What is the contact numbers for emergency services? Race game.
WK5 - Beginner Group A/B Assess group and mark LTS level. Keep groups together work on some rescue techniques. B/C P&G building distance on kick attempt arms. Game.	WK5 - Intermediate Group C/D Assess group and mark LTS level. Keep groups together work on some rescue techniques. Re-Cap F/C. B/S WPW timing & Breathing. Game.
WK6 - Beginner Group A/B Conf exercises. Flotation - Rotation - Mushroom intro sculling. B/C Kick & Sculling. B/S legs attempt arms. Game.	WK6 - Intermediate Group C/D Treading water - Flotation on back 'HELP'. Pencil jumps B/C Single arm WPW P&G Kick into transition. Timing of B/C Arms. Forward/Backward rolls. Intro B/F kick. Game.

<p>WK 7 - Beginner Group Re-cap weeks 2 & 3 bui Beginner Group A/B lding distance/breath control. Focus on weakest stroke continue to practise. Class Game.</p>	<p>WK 7 - Intermediate Group C/D Re-cap weeks 3 & 4 building distance and timing of strokes. Focus on weakest stroke continue to practise. Class Game.</p>
<p>WK 8 - Beginner Group A/B Re-cap weeks 4 & 5. Point 2 on Water Safety Code (Discuss with class) 999. Remember point 1? Sinkers. Intro into Water polo.</p> <p>WK 9 -Beginner Group A/B Class discussion on Water Safety Code Points 1-4. F/C & B/S WPW. Mushroom floats, flotation on supine. Hoops, subs and bobs. Spot the dangers posters class discussion. Race game.</p> <p>WK 10 Beginner Group A/B Assess group (LTS Level) re-cap all skills and strokes learned within all sessions. Individual requirements on weaker stroke. Game of water polo full class.</p> <p>WK11 - WATER SAFETY WEEK As per session plan - PDF's sent to teacher. End of Block Assessment.</p> <p>WK 12 - FUN WEEK As per session plan - Relay games and fun. Certs and evaluation sent to teacher. WELL, DONE ALL. Golden Ticket given to each pupil.</p>	<p>WK 8 - Intermediate Group C/D Re-cap weeks 5 & 6. Point 2 on Water Safety Code (Discuss with class) 999. Remember point 1? Surface dives (hoops). Attempt B/F full. Intro into water polo.</p> <p>WK 9 - Intermediate Group C/D Class discussion on Water Safety Code Points 1-4. Own/Choice Warm up, Multi - strokes. IM Swim, Handstands. Spot the dangers posters class discussion. Race Game.</p> <p>WK 10 - Intermediate Group C/D Assess group (LTS Level) re-cap all skills and strokes learned within all sessions. Individual requirements on weaker stroke. Game of water polo full class.</p> <p>WK11 - Water SAFETY WEEK As per session plan - PDF's sent to teacher. End of Block Assessment.</p> <p>WK 12 - FUN WEEK As per session plan - Relay games and fun. Certs and Evaluations sent to teacher. WELL, DONE ALL. Golden Ticket given to each pupil.</p>

Source: North Lanarkshire Council

Appendix C: About North Lanarkshire

Population

North Lanarkshire is Scotland's fourth-largest local authority area - it borders several local authorities, including East Dunbartonshire, Falkirk, Glasgow, Stirling, South Lanarkshire, and West Lothian.

North Lanarkshire has a population of 341,400 of which circa 57,500 are under 15 years old (17% of the region's total population). North Lanarkshire's population by age group is largely in line with the national average.

Table C.1: Population by age group (2021)

Age group	North Lanarkshire		Scotland	
	Population	% of total population	Population	% of total population
0-14	57,561	17%	853,730	16%
15-24	39,896	12%	615,608	11%
25-34	42,694	13%	754,051	14%
35-44	44,280	13%	692,525	13%
45-54	48,456	14%	728,089	13%
55-64	47,897	14%	762,036	14%
65+	60,616	18%	1,073,861	20%
Total	341,400	100%	5,479,900	100%

Source: NOMIS.

Looking at population projections (among other things, for example local housing developments, developments within the school estate), are important to better understand how an area is expected to change in the medium to longer-term - as well as to understand implications for the demand for services, including sport and leisure.

Population projections for North Lanarkshire show that:

- The total population of the region is forecast to remain relatively stable between 2023 and 2033.
- There is, however, forecast to be a decline in the proportion of under 16s (-9%) over the same period.
- There will be a sizeable increase in its older population (65+), up 22% by 2033.

Table C.2: North Lanarkshire - population forecast (2022-2033)

Age group	2023	2033	Population change (2023-2033)	Population change (2023-2033) (%)
0-14	56,089	50,898	-5,191	-9%
15-24	39,325	38,937	-388	-1%
25-34	42,395	39,202	-3,193	-8%
35-44	45,299	45,811	512	1%
45-54	45,610	45,604	-6	0%
55-64	49,303	43,410	-5,893	-12%
65+	62,992	76,654	13,662	22%
Total	341,013	340,516	-497	0%

Source: The Scottish Government, Population Projections (2018-based).

Urban and rural classification

The [Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification](#) can be used to classify geographies as urban, rural, and remote. The classification for North Lanarkshire and Scotland is outlined in **Table C.3**. North Lanarkshire is largely made up of urban areas and accessible small towns but the region does have a small accessible rural hinterland in the north and eastern part of North Lanarkshire.

Table C.3: Percentage of population in each 6-fold Urban Rural category (2020)

Categorisation	North Lanarkshire	Scotland
Large Urban	38.8%	37.8%
Other Urban	48.4%	33.9%
Accessible Small Towns	4.2%	8.6%
Remote Small Towns	0%	2.6%
Accessible Rural	8.6%	11.6%
Remote Rural	0%	5.5%

Source: The Scottish Government, Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification.

Deprivation

Key points from the SIMD (2020) to note for [North Lanarkshire](#) are that:

- North Lanarkshire has 447 datazones which cover the Council area.
- 144 (35%) datazones in North Lanarkshire are within the 20% most deprived communities in Scotland. This share has increased since the 2016 SIMD.
- Across Scotland, North Lanarkshire sits behind Glasgow, Inverclyde, North Ayrshire, West Dunbartonshire, and Dundee in terms of the local share of datazones in this 20% most deprived.

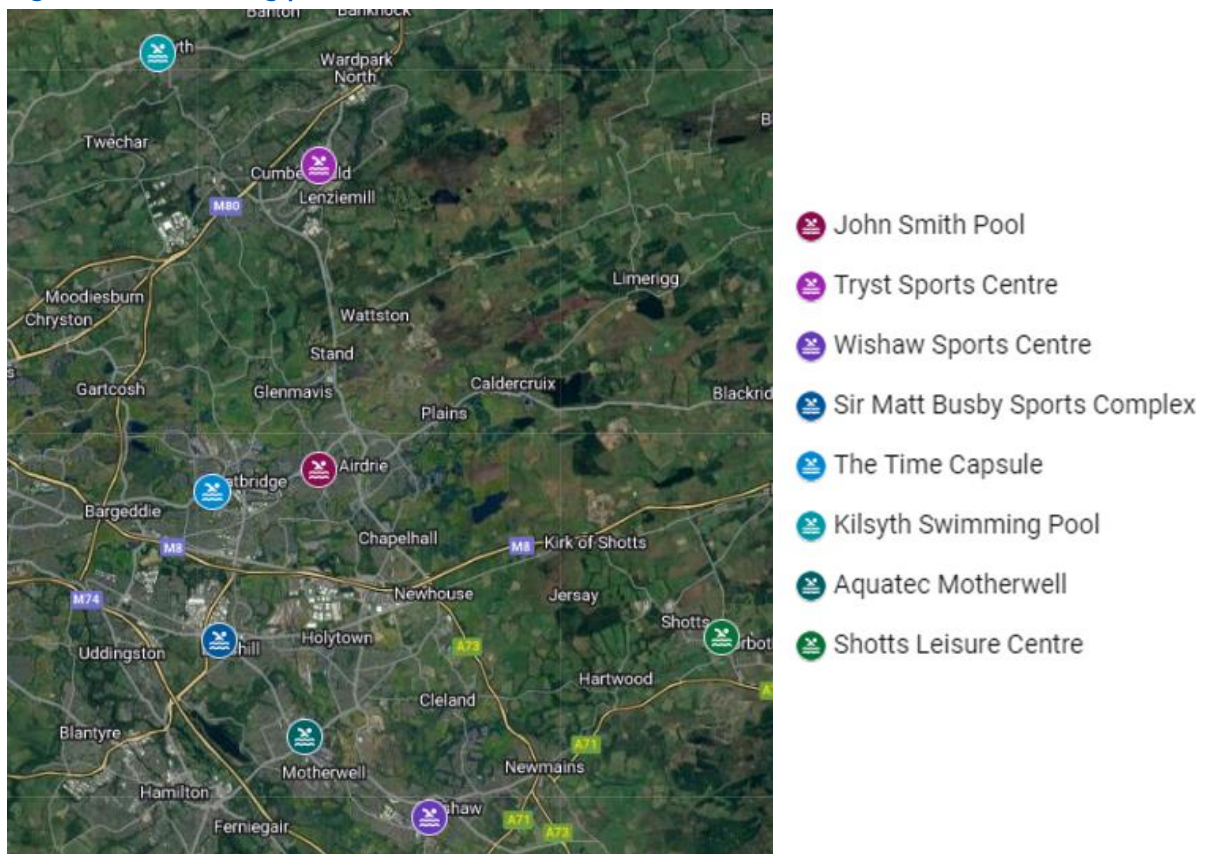
- Across North Lanarkshire, 50,897 (15%) people are income deprived, the Scottish average is 12%.
- There are 24,796 working-age people in North Lanarkshire experiencing employment deprivation. This is 11% of the working-age population. In Scotland this is 9%.

Swimming pools and venues

North Lanarkshire Council operates eight swimming pools - these are fairly well distributed across the region, **Figure C.1**. Wider points to note include that:

- The Time Capsule in Coatbridge is Scotland's only waterpark.
- The pool facilities within Aquatec Motherwell are currently closed

Figure C.1: Swimming pool facilities in North Lanarkshire



Source: Google Maps.