



Swimming in a swimming pool

Rationale

Learning to swim is a key part of a young person's development. Being able to swim well can save your life. It is an excellent way to keep fit, which develops muscles that may not be developed by other forms of exercise.

Swimming can be a hazardous activity. Whether it takes place in structured lesson time or as a recreational activity, a risk-benefit assessment is vital. Establishments **must** follow their employer's policy.

When the use of a swimming pool will require establishment staff to work in partnership with the staff of the pool, then both the establishment staff and pool staff must be familiar with the pool's risk assessments and operating and emergency procedures. It is imperative that there is a clear understanding of how the responsibilities of supervision will be divided between the pool lifeguard(s) and the visiting group staff team - these arrangements should be made at the time of booking. In a similar manner, significant medical and special needs should be made known to the pool management and lifeguards.

Leaders should be prepared to assist the lifeguards in poolside supervision. This will help ensure that behaviour is appropriate. The pool lifeguard should deal with all emergencies occurring in the water.

Where swimming takes place as a recreational activity (such as an end of term 'reward' activity) a number of questions require a clear answer. These include:

- Will a less-structured activity encourage attitudes that reduce safe practice?
- When the group members know each other well, is this likely to compromise group management and result in unacceptable behaviour?
- Has the leader made best use of their knowledge of the group, anticipating where problems are likely to occur?

Recreational swimming pool activities as part of a visit

It sometimes happens that the opportunity for recreational swimming in a pool occurs during visits planned for other purposes, for example when a group is staying in a hotel overseas.

Ideally, swimming should only take place when an official pool lifeguard is on duty. Supervision should be proactive. The lifeguard and Visit Leader should work together as part of a team focussed on safeguarding all the young people in the pool. Visiting staff must ensure that they know the normal operating procedures of the pool as well as knowing the emergency procedures. They

should physically check the location of all emergency equipment prior to the start of the session.

If the pool has no lifeguard cover, then the establishment may be able to provide its own lifeguard, who must have been assessed as having the required competence and who must meet any employer requirements for qualifications. In this case, arrangements should be made to ensure sole use of the pool if possible, so that other guests do not increase the numbers in the water. Sufficient supervisory staff must be on poolside to ensure effective supervision of the whole pool.

Where the lifeguarding duty is given to an appropriately qualified young person, the Visit Leader will retain overall supervision responsibilities to guarantee appropriate levels of behaviour.

Lifeguarding must be the sole activity of the person given that responsibility – they should not combine recreational activities with lifeguarding.

