

#48. SWIM SAFE OPEN WATER SWIMMING AND SAFETY FOR CHILDREN



Photo credit: <https://bit.ly/2sfhn4U>

Theme(s): Partnership

Type of initiative:
Open Water Facilities

Year: 2017

Location:
Birmingham
United Kingdom

Owner: Birmingham Wellbeing Service, Swim England and RNLI

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Source: <https://bit.ly/2sfhn4U>

DESCRIPTION

Children love swimming outdoors, but swimming in the sea, rivers and lakes is different to swimming in a pool where most swimming lessons take place. That's why Swim England, the national governing body for swimming in England, and the RNLI, the charity that saves lives at sea, launched Swim Safe. Swim Safe offers free outdoor swimming and water safety sessions for children aged between 7 and 14. Children learn how to keep safe when swimming outdoors and know what to do if they get into trouble. Children get to enjoy a fun, structured swimming session at an open water location – and learn all about how to stay safe:

- 60 minute sessions run by qualified swimming teachers, supported by a team of trained volunteers,
- Beach safety advice provided by qualified lifeguards on land,
- Up to 30 minutes in-water tuition with swimming teachers,
- All the right kit for swimming outdoors (including swim hats, wetsuits, and swimming aids).

SUCSESSES

Throughout the week 400 children from 20 schools around Birmingham attended the water safety sessions. They all left with the knowledge of how to be safe in and around open water, the key messages they were given was about safety in different environments. These children were then going back to their schools and sharing the messages with their friends and families. There has already been demand for the project to run again in the Summer term next year.

CHALLENGES

The challenges for this project have been getting staff from swimming pool environments qualified and familiar with the open water teaching and lifeguarding setting, this was overcome by setting up training courses and taking the teaching team to work with a team in North Wales who deliver open water swimming to school children, here the Birmingham team gained lots of tips and knowledge to be able to deliver the sessions in the city. We also trained teachers from the schools who were getting involved, to ensure that we had as many trained staff in the water with the children as we could.

Another challenge we faced was the lake isn't set up for open water swimming, so selecting the best area to swim and ensuring that the water tests were all clear had to be done by experts from an outside agency via Swim England. Having the partnerships with Swim England and the RNLI enabled the project to run.