



LONDON SWIMMING CLUB AND VOLUNTEER DEVELOPMENT

Think like a member

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Introduction

London Swimming recognises the importance of the clubs and volunteers within the region and has one focus, to become more member centric. This report has concentrated on engaging the current membership through, clubs, coaches, parents, swimmers, Counties and the region. Representatives from all aquatic disciplines (swimming, diving, water polo, synchronised swimming, masters and disability swimming) have been consulted and have responded, contributing to a comprehensive set of recommendations to increase the value of London Swimming to its membership.

The National Governing Body (Swim England) has published 'Towards a nation swimming' the strategic plan for swimming in England 2017-2021 with a mission to creating a happier, healthier and more successful nation through swimming. As a clear ambition, Swim England wants to create a society where everyone has the opportunity to learn how to swim; is supported to develop their skills; and enjoys the water throughout their lifetime¹. Clubs are the backbone to swimming, they are multi-functional from entry level, learn to swim to competition. London Swimming has an important part to play in Swim England's strategy and has a further role in helping to shape the future of swimming through its aim to creating a member centric organisation.

The landscape for London Swimming

Recently, Swim England has undergone a staffing restructure based on changes to the funding they receive from Sport England. The role for London Swimming is evolving to reflect these moderations. Since the inception of regionalisation in 2007 when London Swimming was formed, the region has created an Independent Board elected by its members. The Board is responsible for ensuring the best possible service is provided to the membership. Currently there are two paid members of staff, the Regional Executive Officer and the Administrator for London Swimming. Between them they cover the priority areas as outlined in the London Swimming Aquatic Strategy. London Swimming has set out the vision to include four interlinked priorities:

Activating our talent, Quality volunteers, Upholding our clubs and Advancing the London Region.

London Swimming is made up of four County ASAs; Middlesex County ASA with 40 affiliated clubs; Surrey County ASA with 29; Essex County ASA with 15; and Kent County ASA with 13. Three Counties

¹ Towards a nation swimming, Swim England, 2017.

(Surrey, Essex and Kent) are also members of two other swimming regions (South East and East). In total London Swimming has 102 affiliated clubs. In relation to the other eight Swimming regions, London is the third smallest region for affiliated clubs.

Comparison with other National Governing Bodies

Interviews with British Cycling and England Athletics allowed a comparison of their club and volunteer structure and to put into perspective the current position of London Swimming. It was found both governing bodies had recently applied equal pressure to the regional Boards to review their governance structure, similar to Swim England, this was linked to them receiving national funding. Aspects included examining the composition of the Board ranging from open recruitment to election through the membership. Both governing bodies had also reviewed the length of service for directors and introduced a rolling re-appointment system to ensure succession planning.

Studying the regional boards, British Cycling and England Athletics are aligned to similar geographical regions to swimming and both bodies reported a disconnect between their National Council and the regions. No Boards were operating in exactly the same way, mirroring that of swimming and like most sports Boards, representatives were stalwarts of the sport and had been involved over a long period of time. The new Duty of Care report and recommendations (UK Sport 2017) looking at the welfare of those involved in sport, has precipitated a review from both sports. Focussing on creating a positive environment to allow athletes to achieve their best prevails.

One area of significance was the involvement of young people within British Cycling, a national youth forum has been formed with representatives from each region. They each then have a direct link back into the regional board. Training was given by British Cycling and clear purposes established. Particular emphasis has been on gender equality and diversity, something London Swimming can give consideration to.

Benefits of affiliation were communicated strongly by England Athletics, a dedicated website page listed each benefit and provided comprehensive resources for clubs and volunteers to easily access. As a vital part of the sport, affiliation and registration was a visible part of the support services on offer and members had clear pathway in which to make their opinions heard. Two-way communication was at the heart of success in this area.

An interesting area from British Cycling was around the 'Club Clusters' and the appointment of paid full-time coaches operating sessions from 'Go Ride' development sessions to coach development opportunities. They directly linked into the national structure of foundation, talent and podium coaches. As clubs had a direct role to play, they were expected to run like a business in order to play a successful part in this pathway. Reflecting on the structure of London Swimming and the coach and swimmer pathway, a rebrand on the performance structure may assist with some of the barriers of clubs and coaches working in tandem.

'Think like a member'

This review was conducted to produce a report with clear recommendations to help develop opportunities and further growth for club and volunteer development. Clubs and volunteers are the most valued assets of the region and are the mainstay of the membership. Clubs not only provide a central point to the community but also an opportunity for participation and performance. Through direct engagement with the members the research was able to create a deeper understanding of the challenges, gaps in provision and identify key components to help the region realign to meet local needs.

PEST analysis

It seemed relevant to conduct an analysis of the external macro-environment that affects London Swimming. **P.E.S.T.** is an acronym for the Political, Economic, Social, and Technological factors, that are beyond London Swimming's control but could have a big influence over the future. The following table is to put this into brief context and understand the overall picture surrounding London Swimming.

Political	The government's sport strategy 'A new strategy for an active nation' was a landmark and aspirational strategy for physical activity, outlining the intention to tackle physical inactivity and make it a national intention. This has served to underpin the importance of swimming, as it is the largest participation sport and commands the most latent demand. The strategy brings health, sport, recreation and leisure together under the 'physical activity' banner. Good governance is a vital element of achieving success.
Economic	Prevailing austerity measures continue to threaten the future of leisure centres. Swimming clubs are constantly experiencing raised pool hire costs, closure of swimming pools and reduced access to water time. Clubs have been a constant in the fluctuating leisure centre position, regular pool hire and quality workforce are an asset to the local area.
Social	Obesity is a national priority which can be tackled through a combination of balanced diet, reduced portion sizes and regular physical activity. Swimming is at the heart of every community and all children must receive swimming instruction through the national curriculum. The benefits of swimming span a wider reach than just simple measures. It has a unique position of being open to everyone.
Technological	Technology is fast developing within sport and is having a profound effect. Almost everything is available at a touch of a button leading to a less active nation. However, the surge of mass media and social media can be used to campaign or promote and clubs can use this to their advantage. With virtually everything going on line, clubs can administer and develop their membership and keep everyone up to date instantly.

SWOT analysis

The table below shows an overarching view on the internal strengths, weaknesses, external opportunities and threats for London Swimming based on the outcomes of the research. This will help identify and uncover opportunities that London Swimming can develop. By also understanding the weaknesses, it will manage and eliminate threats that could potentially be harmful. It can also involve external contributors to build a strategy that will make London Swimming more effective and successful with the membership.

Strengths	
Growth	Good governance
	Willing and able membership to be part of developing London Swimming
Knowledge and experience	Long standing individuals who listen to members and clubs to exert knowledge, advice and guidance when required
Core competency	Swimming is unique and can address physical, mental and social needs of society
Weaknesses	
Profile	Lack of visibility of the London Swimming Board
Roles and Responsibilities	No clarity in the roles and responsibilities of the London Swimming Board
Value	Volunteer recognition is generalist
Opportunities	
Workforce development	Coach development (including mentoring)
	Involve young people in London Swimming
Core function	Provide specific support through London Swimming Officers
Threats	
Changing climate	Austerity measures within local authorities, effect pool hire
Funding	Reduced funding opportunities
Workforce	Loss of volunteers due to size of role being too time consuming
Geography	Disengagement from Counties from overlapping regions

The scope of the report

This report will present the insight gathered through the views of the membership and culminate in a series of recommendations based on this important feedback. It is written for the attention of the London Swimming Board. Following review by the Chairman and the Regional Executive Officer, the recommendations will be presented to the membership, at the Annual Council Meeting on 16th September 2017.

Methodology

The accuracy and efficiency of data collection is crucial to obtaining good, reliable information. A combination of perceptions, opinions and attitudes have been gathered via the following methods:

- 4 Face to face interviews
- 19 Phone call interviews equating to 14 hours and 45 minutes
- 34 people engaged with the online survey, 13 completing it fully and 21 partial completions.
- Comparison to other sports: British Cycling and England Athletics
- Desktop research

Findings and the challenges facing London Swimming

Within the research undertaken, it can be seen that London Swimming face a number of key challenges to overcome in order to improve the growth of swimming and aquatics in the region but also to cement the relationship between the membership and the Board. Through a more individualised approach, London Swimming will be able to differentiate by offering what the membership wants to see and target areas that will make the most difference. By starting with this study, it will identify what to communicate and how to engage with the membership. The more time and effort applied to the right activities in the right quantities, the more quickly results will be achieved. Keeping expectations realistic, short term achievement will be undoubtedly helpful but raising the profile of London Swimming will take time and needs to be ongoing to achieve the goals.

London Swimming

With reference to the mission statement and London Swimming Strategy, during face to face interviews and phone calls members either were unaware of the detail of the strategy or felt it was vague and not applicable to them. Results from the on-line survey showed 28% respondents being totally unaware of the priority areas. Through the face to face interviews, there was a certain understanding of why a strategy is needed, but it was suggested that if the strategy became more realistic and relevant to the clubs' purpose, it would then be accepted and adopted more easily. There was a willingness from clubs to contribute to putting a strategy together, particularly to help highlight the areas that need the most work. It was recognised there are some forward thinking ideas and the

clubs could help to bring these to fruition. Whilst the strategy does consider some needs of the members, the issue may lie within the communication of its value and significance.

Recommendation: Re-communicate the main elements of the London Swimming Strategy and publish the development plans, indicating the relevance to the clubs and members.

Frequently mentioned during the face to face interviews and phone calls, was the confusion between who London Swimming and Swim England were. When questioned about the role of each organisation, members found both were difficult to describe. Continuous cross referencing between the two demonstrated this. The clubs who had received help from either the Regional Executive Officer (employed by London Swimming) or the Club Development Officer (employed by Swim England) highly praised this support but none were clear who they represented. On-line responses also referred to the Club Development Officer and Synchronised Swimming National Development Officer support being invaluable

‘...Before we met them we did not have a contact at London Swimming and we were struggling to run our club...’.

This indicates at an individual level, clubs benefit from one-to-one support, helping identify solutions to their challenges.

Recommendation: Communicate the structure of employed Officers to members with clear roles and responsibilities. Look at ways support can be personalised to members.

The Chairs’ forum has been cited as the ideal opportunity to get to the heart of matters at the local level. Most feedback to date indicates the current meetings are not always attended to full capacity and there is a reluctance to travel into London to hear things they may already know. Specific feedback from newly appointed Chair’s, was the forum could be of great value to enable them to check day to day queries but also to learn more about the role.

Recommendation: Reinstate the Chairs’ forum, set dates and venues for the year in advance. Identify a theme and include guest speakers, new information from the wider landscape and keep it club led.

On a whole, London Swimming is viewed as the regional competition organisers, selectors for talent camps and support for SwimMark. Responses on-line were mixed, with some positive experiences of working with London Swimming

‘...To my club London Swimming are the entity that organise our regional swimming championship meets as well as some camps. They are essentially our local representation of British Swimming’ ‘... London Swimming is fantastic in running galas in my opinion...’

and those who had no relationship

‘...Sadly, it means nothing’ and ‘...Apart from running Regionals and selecting children for talent camps – I do not feel like London Swimming have a huge impact on my club...’.

When asked about what members value most from the services received from London Swimming, 13 on-line responses supported the findings from the interviews, with the top three services identified as competition information, SwimMark and funding advice. At present, clubs do not use London Swimming for any marketing support, potentially valuable for areas such as membership recruitment.

What members value most from London Swimming		
Competition information		69.23%
SwimMark		30.77%
Funding advice		30.77%
Provision of training opportunities		23.08%
Official information		23.08%
Volunteer guidance		23.08%
Health and safety guidance		23.08%
Club details		23.08%
Don't receive any service		23.08%
Efficient membership service (including affiliation queries)		15.38%
Up to date information point		15.38%
Swim England news and updates		15.38%
Links to regional staff		15.38%
Discipline details		7.69%
Other (please specify): Regular email. Competitive Swimming events page on the website		7.69%
Marketing		0.00%

Recommendation: To focus on the key functions of London Swimming and clearly communicate the service clubs can expect to receive.

London Swimming Regional Board

The Board purpose isn't widely known amongst the membership. Those who do have an understanding is due to previously being a member or having a direct link to a current member. For members who were aware of the Board, usually the County or aquatic discipline representative, the Board agendas seem restrictive with items being applicable to swimming or matters for the Board's attention only. The agenda items are not publicised beforehand and this sometimes gives the impression decisions are taken without wider consultation or from a membership perspective. The prevailing view was most members were unsure of the roles and responsibilities and for what purpose the Board existed. Clubs did not feel there was any specific reason to contact the Board but weren't sure how they would communicate with them if there was. This wasn't proposed as a criticism of the Board but a statement of facts and an assumption that all clubs would automatically know.

Recommendations: To re-establish the roles and responsibility of the Board and communicate it to the membership. To introduce themes or areas of priority with clear briefs and measurable outcomes.

Looking wider than London Swimming and into the political landscape, it has been noticed there is no longer a relationship with anyone of importance. By that, it is referring to influential figures or bodies who play a part in Government or leading organisations that could enhance the opportunities for funding or promoting London Swimming, using the value its members can contribute to wider society. Lobbying would bring about a significant shift in raising the profile but also highlight how swimming and aquatics can support the nation to lead an active and healthy lifestyle. Whilst this is also a national remit for Swim England, London Swimming is unique in its position here due to the geographical location of being situated within the country's capital city.

Swimming and aquatics has the potential to strengthen community cohesion and provide young people new skills for life and work. London Swimming could look at being bolder in harnessing the potential of impact swimming and aquatics can have on physical and mental wellbeing, assisting social good and contributing to improving people's lives, all part of the Government's ambition of creating a more active and healthier nation. This, in turn could increase the possibility of investment, especially for coaching and facility development.

Recommendation: To identify an expert negotiator to operate in the political sphere.

Facilities:

Generally, the clubs reported having a good relationship with their local pool managers, which they manage themselves. Continual issues with accessing the most appropriate pool time exist, mainly around time of sessions and the increasing costs. Escalating hire costs are a continual source of concern for clubs, usually counteracted with having to increase membership fees and balanced with attracting enough new members to keep the club operating as a viable business.

Clubs expressed an interest in learning more about the landscape operators deal with on a daily basis and also welcomed the chance to learn how to communicate and negotiate with them more. It was mentioned that this would be beneficial as part of a two-way process and clubs would appreciate the opportunity to present to operators about the wide range of club functions. Overall there was a continuous struggle reported in getting the right amount of water time, at the right time for the right price.

Recommendation: To raise awareness and upskill the clubs on how to communicate with Operators. Follow with hosting a series of workshops with Operators, to share insight around their roles and the challenges they face.

Two areas which were frequently raised and are not new in terms of being issues for clubs around the country, new facilities and learn to swim programmes. Clubs felt strongly about having input into the design of new pools being built, frequently clubs are first to learn of news builds even ahead of Swim England and are close to the Local Authority to contribute practical views. They felt they carried a lot of knowledge and experience in terms of the structure but also the requirements from a competitive sphere. This featured mostly where well-established programmes existed and through the perceived absence of Swim England's involvement. It wasn't raised as something for London Swimming to take on board but the questions were mooted as to whether London Swimming could highlight specific cases to Swim England on behalf of clubs. Clubs expressed on almost every interview undertaken as part of this research, their loss of income once Learn to Swim is taken over by operators. Similarly, frequently issues around the quality of teaching and level of competence was debilitating for clubs when swimmers joined them. Again, there wasn't an expectation for London Swimming to resolve this but a core subject that could be raised with Swim England on their behalf.

Recommendation: London Swimming to gather real time information from clubs to feed into Swim England, on behalf of the membership. London Swimming to communicate feedback and results back to clubs.

Water time needs to be protected and clubs are often confused between the priorities of Swim England and London Swimming in terms of supporting pool hire requests. Nationally there is a drive to increase the frequency of participation amongst the general public and create new products to attract more users, this is viewed as encroaching on already valuable water time from clubs' perspectives. Clubs feel the landscape is moving but no one has explained the significance to them.

Recommendation: Offer an update on the aquatic development landscape stating the relevance to clubs.

London Aquatic Centre was mentioned on a number of occasions in relation to the perceived unfairness of hire and usage. Most clubs expressed dissatisfaction with the way it was made available and would welcome London Swimming intervention in trying to influence the Operator to introduce a fair and suitable programme.

Throughout all of the research it was apparent each club (or scheme) works in isolation. Duplication of services offered by clubs operating in neighbouring pools or even in the same pools indicated a reluctance to take an overview of how water time is used. Clubs have developed a silo working ethos which is centred around individual club needs. It wasn't clear whether consideration for the swimmer was a priority. Appreciating it's a difficult situation and clubs feel they are providing what's right for their members, taking time to review this may lift the pressures of water time usage.

Recommendations: Support the clubs to conduct an in-house analysis of their water time usage and offer advice on how to use to capacity, including partnership working with aquatic disciplines where applicable.

Training:

Swim England Level 1 and Level 2 qualifications for teaching and coaching are viewed as being costly and time consuming. Financial assistance was cited as the most needed element to support young people. Courses seemed in short supply, especially when most people were volunteers and had limited

time to travel as well as time to attend them. The difficulty in accessing the courses, the length and complexities, are all barriers for more people training. One on-line respondent encapsulates is ‘... the courses are expensive to attend, the volunteers often have to pay for them themselves as the Club does not have enough money to help – we have so few coaches...’.

The majority of clubs value the development of their young people, especially swimmers who move from competing into teaching and coaching. It was often commented that being part of an aquatic clubs as a young person contributes to future development such as social skills, time management and leadership for later life. Links to schemes such as the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award was also viewed as an esteemed part of the pathway for young people development. Again, mixed messages around the provision of the Young Aquatic helper workshop (13-16 year olds) and Young Aquatic leader certificate (14-19 year olds) training course were held. No one was clear if these courses were continuing or who was responsible for organising them. All placed high importance on the training but clarity around hosting and running needs further exploration.

Recommendations: London Swimming to host and deliver more courses for Young Volunteers. A funding guide for clubs would be useful and provide assistance for applying for grants provided.

Membership:

Clubs communicate with their members through the website, twitter and other social media mechanisms. Most indicate they are very active via these mechanisms, but there were a few reporting the requirement for assistance. Some clubs wanted help to set up new websites, advice on the most efficient ways of setting up newsletter distribution and easy to use finance systems. Generally, any best practice advice would be gratefully received.

Recommendation: London Swimming to share media and communication tips, examples of good practice and simple templates with clubs.

It was reported that all clubs interviewed or who took part in the survey were at capacity in terms of paid members, apart from one small club and some of the aquatic disciplines. One area that would be beneficial is to help clubs keep the swimmers in the sport after they drop out of training. Circulation of best practice amongst clubs would be a good starting point.

Governance was an interesting area, as most clubs who follow SwimMark feel everything is in place. It was also viewed that Swim England should lead the way on policy and governance, rather than London Swimming. However, one major area for concern was the amount of time, work and expertise required by the volunteers to fulfil the governance requirements. It was commented that volunteers were being expected to execute professional standards in an amateur club where volunteers are time limited. Too much pressure and responsibility was cited in the lack of take up of Committee positions. Whilst they appreciated the need to operate in a secure way, the length of documents and forms to be completed was excessive, onerous and therefore off putting to being a volunteer.

Recommendation: London Swimming to review the administration forms for volunteers. Introduce a London Swimming 'stand' or information point at key events in the region to answer questions directly from clubs.

Volunteers:

Time, cost, family commitments, lack of information on what roles are available were all cited as the main challenges within recruiting and retaining volunteers. One response from the on-line survey reported the

'...Main challenge is being able to volunteer for a short time without long hours becoming too much for any one individual...'

There was an over whelming response that stated volunteers are responsible for sorting out too many problems and issues within a club. Whilst some clubs have a bigger structure and therefore the capacity to put in place paid positions, most clubs appoint 'willing' parents. A significant consensus from clubs and volunteers themselves was the lack of understanding of their role and responsibility. Most volunteers hold professional skills which could be easily transferred, however not without guidance on making them aquatic specific. This would involve a considerable shift from addressing local needs and sorting out day to day priorities. Running a club needs to adhere to certain legislation and law. It wasn't clear if London Swimming or Swim England provided this information to the clubs, but clubs are overwhelmed by the responsibility the volunteers are expected to take.

Recommendation: London Swimming to offer simplified governance guidelines and templates for
(i) clubs
(ii) committees.

Rewards and Awards:

Whilst members are aware of the regional awards and those of Swim England, most felt they were impersonal and couldn't see the gain for being nominated or awarded them. All interviewed reported the greatest value was to award some recognition at the local level i.e. within the club setting. Commendation in front of peers was more meaningful. The long service awards offered by London Swimming were mentioned frequently, this is something that resonates with the membership and perhaps gets overlooked.

Feedback from committees, Counties, clubs, chairs and parents thought London Swimming could pay more attention to the role volunteers, officials and coaches and the services they contribute towards the region. Overall a personal thank you makes the most difference.

Recommendation: London Swimming to consider putting in place a more personal way of thanking the volunteers e.g. through a personal letter.

Coaching:

All coaches interviewed reported they were performing to the best of their ability. All had some connections with other clubs but chose not to formalise these links. Being aware of the Beacon programme and some of the difficulties incurred, the coaches were interested and open to discussing a new Beacon style programme but with the stipulation of being led by an external independent coach from outside the region. Someone who would command the respect through proven track record, was highly qualified and had the ability to bring clubs, coaches and swimmers together successfully.

It was also declared that coaches would be interested in mentoring, both giving and receiving. This could form an important part of building a more closely-knit workforce within the region.

The coach's forum was mentioned throughout the research and it was felt it served a purpose but need to be more focussed to work for everyone. A good starting point could be around the mentoring.

Recommendation: To re-start the coaches' forum with an independent chair, a revised agenda and a year in advance in terms of dates and venues.

Aquatic Disciplines:

All of the disciplines reported feeling over burdened by the amount of administration they were asked to carry out. Tasks mentioned ranged between contributing to the annual report, budget plans, competition reports, editorials etc. The requests and templates are time consuming and unachievable as a volunteer. Each discipline had been asked to put together some targets for the forthcoming year, however it was unclear what the baseline was and consequently they were unsure how measurement would take place. This was just an example of one of the many tasks being asked to do. Through the phone call interview's, the consensus was this was the major barrier to recruiting new volunteers to the committees and also was a main factor in causing current post holders to resign.

Recommendation: London Swimming to review the administration tasks for the Discipline Committees and to consider appointing a 'regional development officer' role to support them.

Some discipline committees felt disconnected from the London Swimming Board and hadn't received an induction so some simple processes such as what expenses can be claimed and how to claim them hadn't been explained. New volunteer and aquatic discipline leads asked for more training around the function of the role, timelines for reports and most stated they hadn't been given any guidance by the Board. Whilst there were some volunteer roles filled, time was required to train the volunteer to be aquatic specific to fulfil the duties, this was cited as another time-consuming factor.

Largely the disciplines feel they are not recognised by the Board for their efforts and consequently feel their discipline is not well known amongst the membership. More support in promoting the discipline would be widely welcomed.

Recommendations: Refresh and maintain induction training for new Board and Committee members.

Development funding was mentioned by each of the discipline committees, especially as it could support the training of more officials, teachers and coaches. A distinct lack of officials exists within the aquatic disciplines, the same people seem to run all of the competitions. The restrictions placed on running training courses by the Institute of Swimming means the aquatic disciplines are underrepresented as they are not populated enough to warrant the demand of running courses in the region. London Swimming could help by creating a central point of collecting interested people to attend the courses.

Recommendation: London Swimming to address the needs of teacher, coach and official training for the aquatic disciplines.

There was an aspiration to involve more young people in the running of the sport and also to provide them with real opportunities to become involved in the governance of London Swimming. One suggestion was to set up shadow sessions with the Board members to understand the roles and nature of the business. Perhaps with the view to becoming part of the Board in the future.

Recommendation: London Swimming to involve young people in the Board and other Committees.

As with the swimming clubs, there was an expressed view that water time was scarce and required good relations and negotiations with the operator to obtain the maximum amount. Whilst the disciplines would welcome support here, the suggestion made on several occasions was to also link to the swimming club and broker feeder systems, pathways and pool time. This would help develop the discipline and offer an exit route for retiring swimmers.

Recommendation: Investigate how the Disciplines can work more closely with swimming clubs.

Operators seem to run on their own initiative 'taster' sessions for the aquatic disciplines, diving, synchronised swimming and water polo, to maximise the benefit of this London Swimming could intervene, support and to assist in ensuring information is relevant and links to clubs are promoted.

Recommendation: Integrate aquatic disciplines into the recommended workshops between operators and clubs.

Some disciplines reported a lack of clear distinction between the relationship of Swim England, London Swimming and the County. In order to help sustain, retain and grow the sport a better relationship is needed to attract more participants in, but also to develop the volunteer base.

Counties

All four Counties were interviewed (Middlesex, Essex, Surrey and Kent). The Counties reported they didn't feel there was a strong link between the County and London Swimming Board. Communication

is delayed or non-existent and often selective making Counties feel they are not fully in the picture. Decision making by the Board doesn't indicate whether the Counties needs have been taken into consideration.

The main area of feedback has been around the make-up of London Region and how some Counties are part of another region as well. This means the Counties are required to have a double set of resources as each region operates in a slightly different way with conflicting procedures. The Counties admitted to defaulting to the other regions due to a bigger affiliation and closer working relationships. It was also thought this is the cause of clubs being quite insular.

There seems to be quite a disconnect between the Counties and the London Swimming Board. Some Counties didn't know who the London Board members were and admitted having not met them before. Decisions made within London Swimming reportedly didn't involve the Counties due to them not having representation on the London Swimming Board, this causes a lack of understanding around the business and creates a feeling of irrelevance to the Counties. A strong view presided over the Counties in that London Swimming was also detached from the other regions, it was suggested some relationship building took place, so each could understand the other in a more meaningful way.

Recommendations: A facilitated workshop is organised with the regions where clubs overlap with London Swimming, this will help identify areas of duplication. London Swimming consider putting in place a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to clarify the roles each will undertake.

Conclusion

London Swimming greatly values the parts clubs, volunteers (including officials), committee members and Counties play in achieving success in the region. The feedback and willingness to provide ideas for future development was over whelming. Whilst there are a number of small tasks which can make a big difference to the members, there are also some overriding strategic elements which need careful consideration. These are:

- Appoint a dedicated professional to assist the discipline committees, club matters and streamline the point of contact.
- Identify an expert negotiator to operate in the political sphere.
- Conduct a review on the role of the London Swimming Officers and the key functions to help clearly communicate the service clubs can expect to receive.
- Set an agreed number of reportable projects / work areas for the Board to monitor and report back to the membership on annually.
- Re-launch the coaches' forum to introduce a united voice and mentoring system.
- Be proactive in approaching the regions with shared club membership with London Swimming, to set up a way of working cohesively.

Critical success factors for London Swimming in becoming more member centric, is to respond positively to the voice of the membership and communicate how their needs have been addressed.

To include:

- Quality: high quality communication of knowledge and services to build a long-lasting relationship with the membership.
- Visibility: membership satisfaction through clear understanding of the role of London Swimming.
- Productivity: clear brand and tangible results reported on a regular basis.
- Business capability: providing value for money and to be industry leading.

Actions recommended

1. Increase the visibility and profile of London Swimming

- a. Re-communicate the main elements of the London Swimming Strategy and publish the development plans, indicating the relevance to the clubs and members.
- b. Improve communication to the members, starting with the roles and responsibilities of the Board. Introduce a 'meet and greet' with Board members at certain events.
- c. Consider assigning Board members with a number of clubs to directly engage with over the year, to create a two-way dialogue.
- d. To identify an expert negotiator to operate in the political sphere.
- e. To introduce an agreed number of reportable projects or work areas for Board to monitor and report back to the membership annually.

2. Increase membership involvement in the development of London Swimming

- a. London Swimming to gather real time information from clubs to feed into Swim England, on behalf of the membership. London Swimming to communicate feedback and results back to clubs.
- b. Reinstate the Chairs' forum, set dates and venues for the year in advance. Identify a theme and include guest speakers, new information from the wider landscape and keep it club led.
- c. To conduct a review on the role of the London Swimming Officers and the key functions to help clearly communicate the service clubs can expect to receive.

3. Practical engagement with clubs and their members

- a. Raise awareness and upskill the clubs on how to communicate with Operators. Follow with hosting a series of workshops with Operators, to share insight around their roles and the challenges they face.
- b. Offer an update on the aquatic development landscape stating the relevance to clubs.
- c. Support the clubs to conduct an in-house analysis of their water time usage and offer advice on how to use to capacity, including partnership working with aquatic disciplines where applicable.
- d. London Swimming to host and deliver more courses for Young Aquatic Helpers and Leaders. A funding guide for clubs would be useful and assistance for applying for grants provided.
- e. Investigate how the Disciplines can work more closely with swimming clubs.
- f. Integrate Aquatic Disciplines into the recommended workshops between operators and clubs.

4. Appraisal of the administration and governance procedures

- a. London Swimming to offer simplified governance guidelines and templates for
 - (i) clubs
 - (ii) committees.
- b. Consider appointing a 'regional development officer' role to support the Officers and Committees.
- c. London Swimming to review the administration tasks for the Discipline Committees to avoid overloading with responsibility. Allow as much notice as possible to fit in with work / home commitments.
- d. Introduce a London Swimming 'stand' or information point at key events in the region.
- e. Refresh and maintain the induction training pack for new Board and Committee members. Highlight the progress pathway for volunteers, making it visible and transparent, for example, explain how volunteers can progress to a committee role or to be a London Swimming Board member.
- f. London Swimming to share media and communication tips, examples of good practice and simple templates with clubs.

5. Addressing the training and development needs of the volunteers

- a. London Swimming to consider putting in place a more personal way of thanking the volunteers e.g. through a personal letter or rewarding with extrinsic incentives such as tickets to an event.
- b. Re-start the coaches' forum with an independent chair, with a revised agenda and a year in advance in terms of dates and venues. Mentoring would be a strong starting point.
- c. London Swimming to address the needs of teacher, coach and official training for the aquatic disciplines.
- d. London Swimming to involve young people in the Board and other Committees.

6. Working with other regions

- a. A facilitated workshop is organised with the regions where clubs overlap with London Swimming, this will help identify areas of duplication. London Swimming consider putting in place a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to clarify the roles each will undertake.
- b. Streamline communication to prevent overload. Minimise unnecessary contact, make it meaningful and simple to avoid confusion.
- c. Allow time to de-brief and follow up on what can be done better, show when ideas are implemented.

	Strategic priorities	Quick Wins
1.Increase the visibility and profile of London Swimming	1.c. Consider assigning Board members with a number of clubs to directly engage with over the year, to create a two-way dialogue.	
	1.d. To identify an expert negotiator to operate in the political sphere.	
	1.e. To introduce an agreed number of reportable projects or work areas for Board to monitor and report back to the membership annually.	
2.Increase membership involvement in the development of London Swimming	2.c To conduct a review on the role of the London Swimming Officers and the key functions to help clearly communicate the service clubs can expect to receive.	2.b. Reinstate the Chairs’ forum, set dates and venues for the year in advance. Identify a theme and include guest speakers, new information from the wider landscape and keep it club led.
3.Practical engagement with clubs and their members		3.a. Raise awareness and upskill the clubs on how to communicate with Operators. Follow with hosting a series of workshops with Operators, to share insight around their roles and the challenges they face.
		3.b. Offer an update on the aquatic development landscape stating the relevance to clubs.
4.Appraisal of the administration and governance procedures	4.a. London Swimming to offer simplified governance guidelines and templates for (i) clubs (ii) committees.	4.d. Introduce a London Swimming ‘stand’ or information point at key events in the region.
	4.b. Consider appointing a ‘regional development officer’ role to support the Officers and Committees.	
	4.c. London Swimming to review the administration tasks for the Discipline Committees to avoid overloading	

	with responsibility. Allow as much notice as possible to fit in with work / home commitments.	
5.Addressing the training and development needs of the volunteers	5.b. Re-start the coaches' forum with an independent chair, with a revised agenda and a year in advance in terms of dates and venues. Mentoring would be a strong starting point.	5.a. London Swimming to consider putting in place a more personal way of thanking the volunteers e.g. through a personal letter or rewarding with extrinsic incentives such as tickets to an event.
6.Working with other regions	6.a. A facilitated workshop is organised with the regions where clubs overlap with London Swimming, this will help identify areas of duplication.	6.b. Streamline communication to prevent overload. Minimise unnecessary contact, make it meaningful and simple to avoid confusion.

Thank you to the following who were interviewed for this report:

Bromley Swimming Club	Essex County ASA
Dive London	Kent County ASA
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Greenwich Royals Swimming Club	Surrey County ASA
Hackney Aquatics	London Swimming Board Members
Kingston Royals Swimming Club	Masters representative
Parent & Swimmer Bromley Swimming Club	Open water representative
Sutton and Cheam Swimming Club	Swimming committee representative
Saxon Crown Swimming and Disability Club	Synchronised Swimming Committee
Sea-Byrd Swimming Club	Water polo Committee
Swim England	British Cycling
	England Athletics