

By email to the identified Free Swimming Programme contacts of:

Metropolitan District Councils (England)
Non-metropolitan District Councils (England)
Unitary Authorities (England)
London Borough Councils
Common Council of the City of London
Council of the Isles of Scilly

20 March 2009

Dear Colleague

FREE SWIMMING PROGRAMME - UPDATE

1. Further to our communication of 2 March, we are now able to provide further information on reserve funds, a new discussion forum and revised guidance on use of membership cards, as well as an update on media and reminders on branding and monitoring & evaluation.

Reserve Funds

2. On the issue of reserve funds, our Ministers are now keen that we give to those local authorities who withdrew their initial expression of interest in Pot 2, i.e. funding to provide free swimming for those aged 16 or under, the opportunity to opt in to Pot 2 before the Programme launches on 1 April. Those who wish to opt in will receive funds based on their original bid plus the 20 per cent uplift already awarded to Pot 2 participants. However, there is a cap on the total funds available of £1m and, if we are in a position where there are insufficient funds to meet demand on this basis, the fund would need to be allocated on a reduced pro rata basis.
3. The remaining reserve funds will be allocated over the duration of the Programme to support participating councils. Details of this will follow in due course.
4. Local authorities wanting to opt back in to Pot 2 should contact DCMS at enquiries@culture.gsi.gov.uk no later than 26 March 2009. In the event that there are insufficient funds to meet demand on the basis outlined above, DCMS will aim to respond to those local authorities that have asked to opt back in by 30 March 2009.

Discussion forum

5. A discussion forum has been created using the Communities of Practice service to assist participating local authorities in launching the Free Swimming Programme. We appreciate that many local authorities will still have specific questions not answered by the FAQ or the marketing and promotion toolkit about the delivery of the programme. This will be your opportunity to get advice from Government or to share information and experiences to help answer those questions as quickly as possible in time for the launch on 1 April and beyond.
6. Please use the discussion board to seek advice, post information and details of events and look out for useful updates. Details of how to use the service are attached at **Annex A**.

Membership cards

7. In response to feedback from local authorities, Ministers have agreed to revise this element of the scheme. Local authorities will be allowed to apply a nominal charge (no more than £2) for membership cards. However, the amount should only seek to recover costs and should not discriminate between residents and non-residents: at any rate (in each case) insofar as it relates to our target age groups. We want to ensure that the process of applying for a membership card is as simple as possible and that those using the scheme are clear that charging for membership cards is not a means of restricting the scheme to residents.

Marketing and promotion toolkit

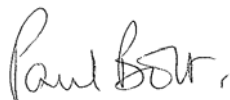
8. As you will know, the toolkit, providing marketing assets and advice on the branding and promotion of the Free Swimming Programme for local audiences, is available for use by participating local authorities. The national launch of the scheme and brand will take place at the end of March and significant media/PR activity is planned around this. In addition, the brand is linked to the high profile nationwide social marketing campaign Change4Life aimed at halting the rising tide of obesity and promoting healthy living.
9. Using the supplied brand and marketing materials will help local residents recognise that their local authority is one of almost 300 across England participating in a national scheme at a local level. It is available at:
http://swimfree.theteam.co.uk/Swim_free_toolkit_v1_March_09.pdf .
10. All materials in the toolkit are single file download apart from advert files, which are zipped. Please note that the artwork files take time to download and, as a guide, please allow for 15 minutes per file. Further guidance will appear as appropriate. Queries specifically on the branding toolkit should be sent to
freeswimming@culture.gsi.gov.uk .

Media

11. For your information, DCMS anticipates putting out a press release to regional media in England on Tuesday, highlighting the fact that free swimming is only a week away. The release will acknowledge the crucial role of local councils in delivering the scheme. This would be intended to appear in newspapers from Wednesday onwards.

Monitoring and Evaluation

12. For those local authorities yet to do so, we would be grateful if you could complete the attached pro forma, identifying your nominated data collection lead, and return it to DCMS at enquiries@culture.gsi.gov.uk with the subject header "Free Swimming Data Pro Forma" by 25 March 2009.



PAUL BOLT
Director, Sport and Leisure
Department for Culture, Media and Sport

20 March 2009

How to register to use the Free Swimming Programme discussion forum

To participate in the forum, you need to register with the Communities of Practice website as follows:-

1. Go to the communities of practice website at the following address:
<http://www.communities.idea.gov.uk>
2. Click on the "**Register**" button on the front page and follow the simple steps to set up your profile. You will be asked to supply a password which you will then use to log in to the site along with your email address.
3. To access the Free Swimming discussion board, go to the '**communities**' section at the top of the page, then type in 'free swimming programme' in the search box and a link will appear.
4. As this is a private community, the welcome page to the free swimming community will give you the option 'apply to join'. Just click on 'Go' to request membership and you will receive an email confirming that you have joined.
5. Once you are a member, a link to the Free Swimming Community will appear on your home page whenever you login to the Communities of Practice website.
6. The free swimming community's page will allow you to view latest posts on different topics, or to start new topics. You can also post/view upcoming events and library items.