



**Swim and Gym Program for adults
with learning disabilities.**

Project Overview

Special Olympics Sussex Delivered a 10-week physical activity program at Hillbrow Health and Wellbeing, Eastbourne (Meads Area), aimed at adults with a learning disability. The project focused on improving swimming ability, water confidence, and overall health and wellbeing.

Sessions ran weekly and consisted of a 45-minute coach-led swim session, followed by a gym session.

Need for the Project

Special Olympics Sussex identified a clear gap in accessible swimming provision for adults with learning disability across Eastbourne and Sussex. This project was developed to address the inequality and provide a safe, supportive environment for participants to engage in physical activity.

Delivery

Location:	Wave Active, Hillbrow Health and Wellbeing,
Area:	Eastbourne, Meads
Duration:	10-week (13 th Jan – 17 Mar 2026)
Session:	10 total
Participants:	20 attendees
Activities:	Coach-led swimming session Instructor-led gym sessions

The sessions were to build confidence in the water and gym.

Outcomes

The swim sessions were open sessions, where new people able to join in at any time during the 10-week course. This meant it was difficult to have pre and post forms completed by participants. It was left for Special Olympics Sussex to feedback on the outcomes of the sessions.

Positive Outcomes:

- There were significant improvements in swimming ability and confidence seen in those who attended regular sessions during the 10-weeks
- This was evident through participants progressing from having no confidence in the water (e.g. staying in the shallow end) to swimming full lengths
- The sessions created a supportive and inclusive environment for adults with a learning disability.
- Increased enjoyment and willingness to participate in physical activity.

Behavioural and Personal Impact

- Participants gained confidence in trying new activities
- Some individuals exceeded their own expectations in terms of progress. For example, going from swimming 5 metres to completing a full length.

What worked well

- The safe, structured environment helped reduce anxiety amongst participants.
- The sense of community and peer support

Learnings

- The gym session following a swim was less effective, as many participants were fatigued after swimming.
- The swim sessions, as participants progressed became more demanding than initially planned in the project proposal. This shifted the sessions, away slightly, from the gym after.

Sustainability

The sessions are to continue post funding, with a refined swim-only format going forwards. Sessions will continue a weekly basis, based on the demand and success of those attending.

Key Takeaways

- There is a clear demand for inclusive swimming with 20 participants engaged in the project.
- Sessions focusing on one element of physical activity can help improve engagement.
- The key to success was the participant-led adaptation.
- Key focused sessions targeting a specific demographic, which may not have a huge attendance, can still deliver meaningful impact.