



SPORTING
P E O P L E

**SWIM ENGLAND WEST MIDLANDS
CLUB CULTURE &
TALENT PATHWAY
INSIGHT PROJECT
28.04.23**

Report Contents

- Introduction & Brief
- Setting the Scene – The Desktop Research
- How we listened & who we listened to?
- Findings - Collated Voices by Group
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- Recommendations for future



The Brief

- Sporting People were commissioned by Swim England West Midlands to undertake a Club Culture Insight Project.
- The project was to explore the identification of the human factors (coach behaviours, parent voice, young people's voice, committee management) that impact experience of swimming in the West Midlands and define club cultures.
- The project also explored how clubs employed holistic development principles, and the extent to which the British Swimming Optimal Athlete Development Framework (OADF) was influence talent development activities.
- The aim of the project was to use insight to guide direction on future work nationally and regionally in the areas of club culture, welfare, safeguarding & performance planning.

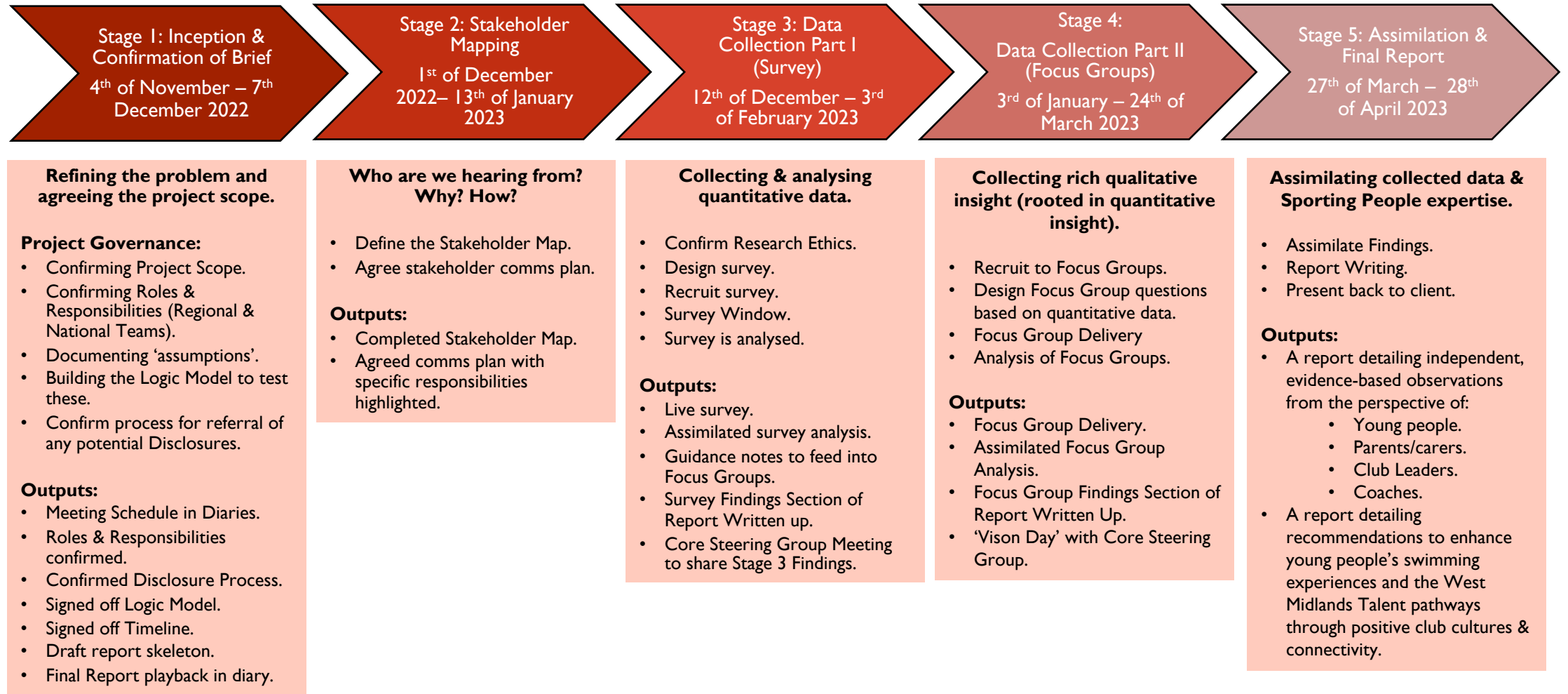
Our Report Will...

1. Summarise the cultural aspects in clubs and talent pathways that Swim England West Midlands are keen to understand from the perspective of young person, parent, coach and committee leader.
2. Summarise findings from Survey, Focus Groups and Club Visits.
3. Provide critical analysis of findings against the project brief.
4. Summarise key discussion themes from the research and conclude with actionable recommendations for development club culture and talent pathways in the West Midlands.

Upon finalising this report with Swim England West Midlands and Swim England, we have produced:

- A final report in PDF form.
- A final presentation on the 28.04.2023.

Project Overview



SETTING THE SCENE

The Desktop Research

INDIVIDUAL, WORKFORCE & ORGANISATIONAL EXCELLENCE



Themes from Desktop Research

- Several background documents were shared with the team to help set the scene for the project and inform the research questions. These documents raised a few questions for the team and whilst the answers to some of them are beyond the core scope of this brief they have been shared as they part of the wider added value from the team. The questions have been included in Appendix I to this report.
- A list of the documents that were reviewed as part of the desktop research included:
 - *West Midlands Club Lists 2022*
 - *Historical Summary Selections*
 - *WM Strategy Consultation 2022 Presentation*
 - *West Midlands Swimming Membership Analysis*
 - *Regional Development Programme 2022 – 2025 Presentation*
 - *British Swimming – Optimal Athlete Development Framework*



What are we not seeing in the Desktop Research?

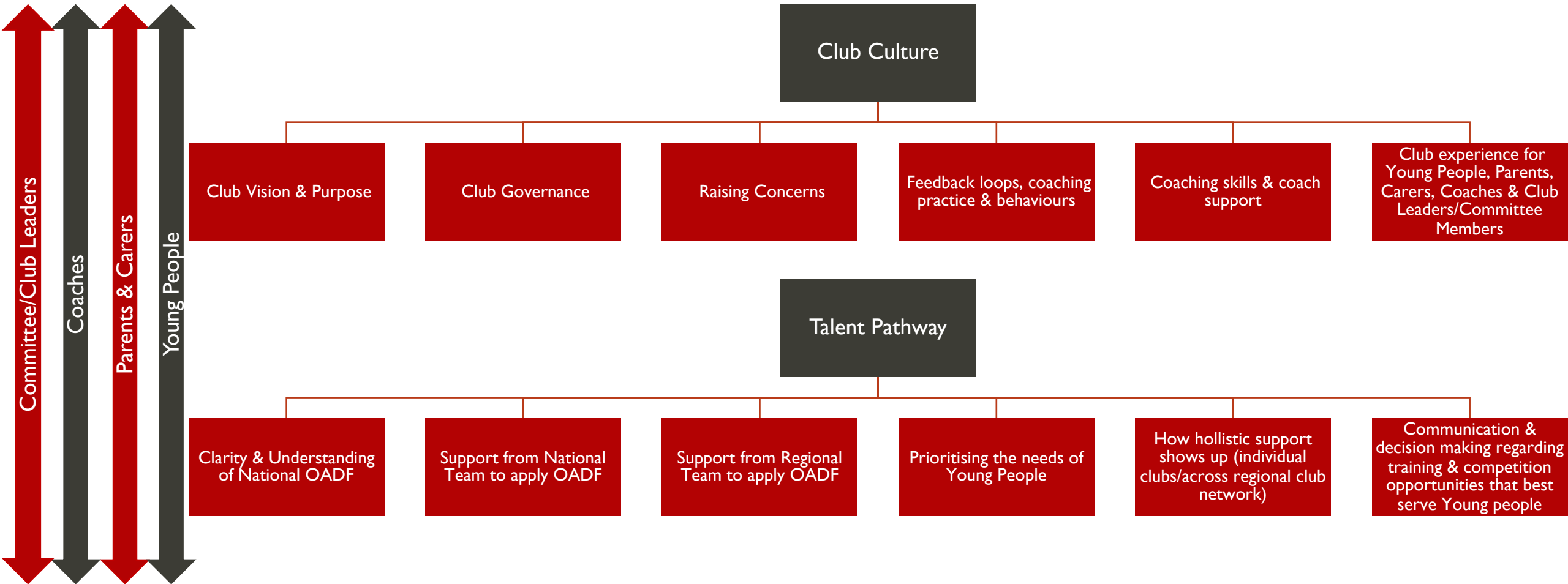
The following are things that were not made available as part of the desktop research:

- A regional plan that shows the connectivity from grass roots into the talent pathway.
- A pathway of clubs in the region – reference is made to 'performance clubs.' Where is this presented?
- Any materials that might be used to communicate the talent pathway in the West Midlands to clubs, swimmers and parents.
- Guidance or support materials of how clubs are expected to embrace and embed OADF.

HOW WE LISTENED AND WHO WE LISTENED TO

Mapping the Stakeholders

Consultation Logic Model



Scope of consultation

SURVEY

- 795 participants partially completed the survey.
- 418 responses were completed to the extent that data could be included in the sample.
- 62 clubs had at least 1 response.
- 71% of responses came from parents, 11% from young people, 9% from club officials, 7% from coaches and 2% from 'other'.
- (NB – individuals were counted according to the survey they completed, we are aware that some 'parents' also hold roles within clubs.)

FOCUS GROUPS

- 7 focus groups undertaken with 34 attendees covering:
 - Coaches (10)
 - Swimmers (8)
 - Parents/guardians of swimmers (8)
 - Committee members (8).
- In total 14 different clubs were represented.
- All 4 swimming counties were represented within this sample.

PERFORMANCE CLUB VISITS

- 4 Performance Club visits were conducted for in depth interviews with the following sample:
 - 12 male swimmers.
 - 6 female swimmers.
 - 19 parents.
 - 14 committee members and officials.
 - 10 coaches.

Cross-Section of Voices – Real People, Real Stories

“A really great swim club should be one where the person involved feels like they are welcome and can share their goals knowing someone is going to help them reach them. It is an environment where the swimmers feel they want to dedicate their time and energy to.”

“I want it to be somewhere we can all be safe and feel part of a team.”

Young People

“I feel as an athlete the team support us, but with things like exams little understanding, and support is given to things that may affect the swimmer outside the pool.”



“Needs to be clear, informative, flexible and understanding of the needs of parents to adequately support their swimmers”

“Only interested and supported when training and competing well. When struggled with anxiety/mental health there was very little help, ignored in training, no empathy or attempt to work with athlete to overcome issues or develop coping strategies. We were left to figure it out ourselves”

Parents

“It should feel like a family, where everyone is doing his own important part for each other, everyone and all the team. And it’s not like a boring routine, but like finding new ways for improvement and growing together as a team every day and every session.”



“A good club is run well, with continuous info being relayed back and forth at all times. All committee members available and approachable, with no showing of favoritism towards any one person.”

Coaches

“...the supportive environment around the athletes in regards to both school and swim is top quality. I have thoroughly enjoyed settling into this new role and adding value to the coaching team, the positive culture and providing the necessary things athletes need to support them through the pathway.”



“A great club is one that respects each swimmer, an acknowledgement that the swimmer who only ever competed against themselves and their own best is as equally valued as the swimmer who competes in nationals”

Committee & Club Leaders

“The club suffers from behavioural issues with certain children which has resulted in some serious bullying. The welfare team have failed to resolve these issues and now children are frightened to report issues because they know there is ineffective resolution of the issues by the adults concerned. This does not support good team spirit.”



SWIM ENGLAND WEST MIDLANDS- WHERE ARE WE NOW?

INDIVIDUAL, WORKFORCE & ORGANISATIONAL EXCELLENCE



FINDINGS I - Summary of Survey Themes

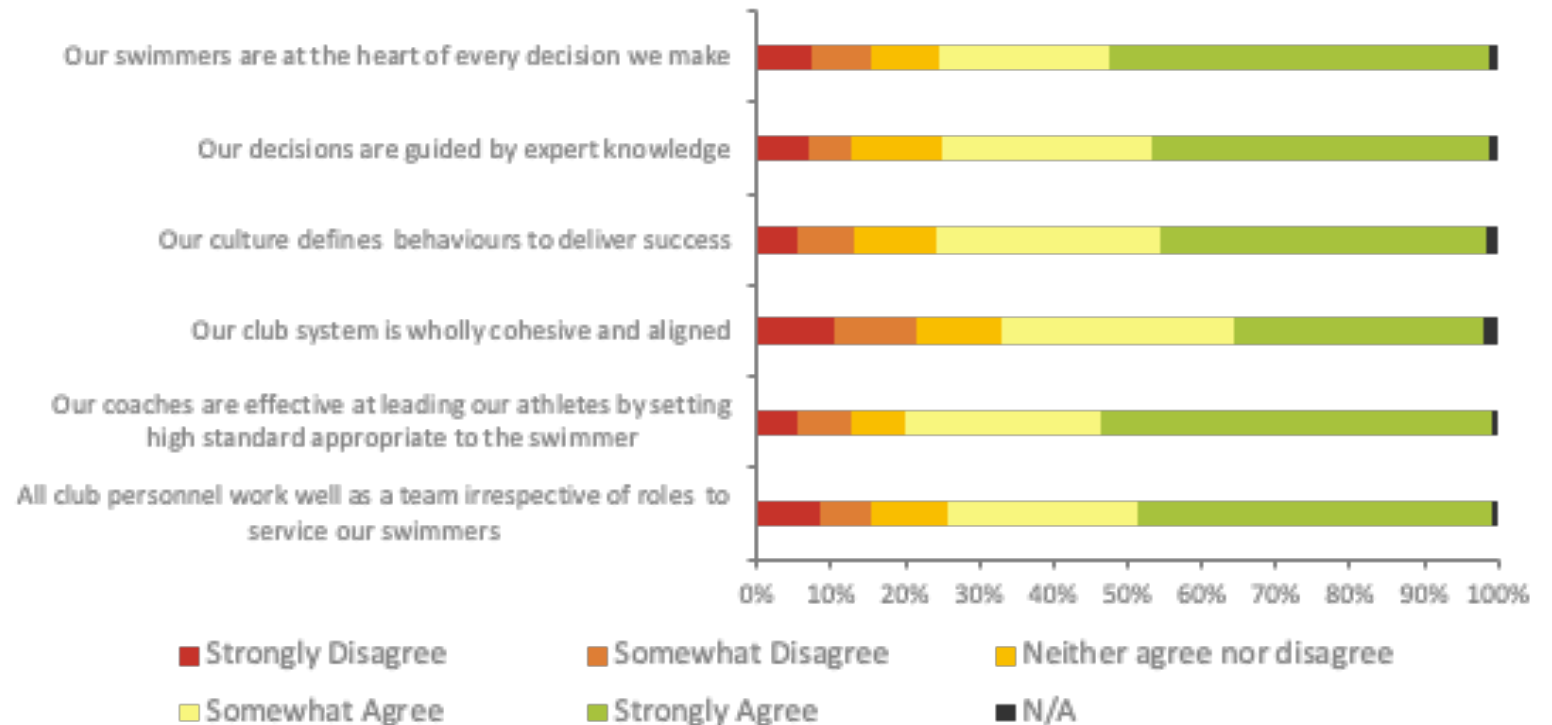
Survey fundings

Appendix 2 provides a more detailed overview of the raw survey data. The following provides a summary of some of the key themes arising from the survey analysis, namely relating to:

- OADF Alignment
- Skills and behaviours involved in having really great experiences in swimming clubs
- Support for young people
- Reporting issues
- The extent individuals are supported to develop their best selves
- The key ingredients for a good club environment.

ODAF Alignment

- Overall, there was good alignment with over 73% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statements exploring alignment to each of the OADF principles.
- The one exception was '*our club system is wholly cohesive and aligned.*'



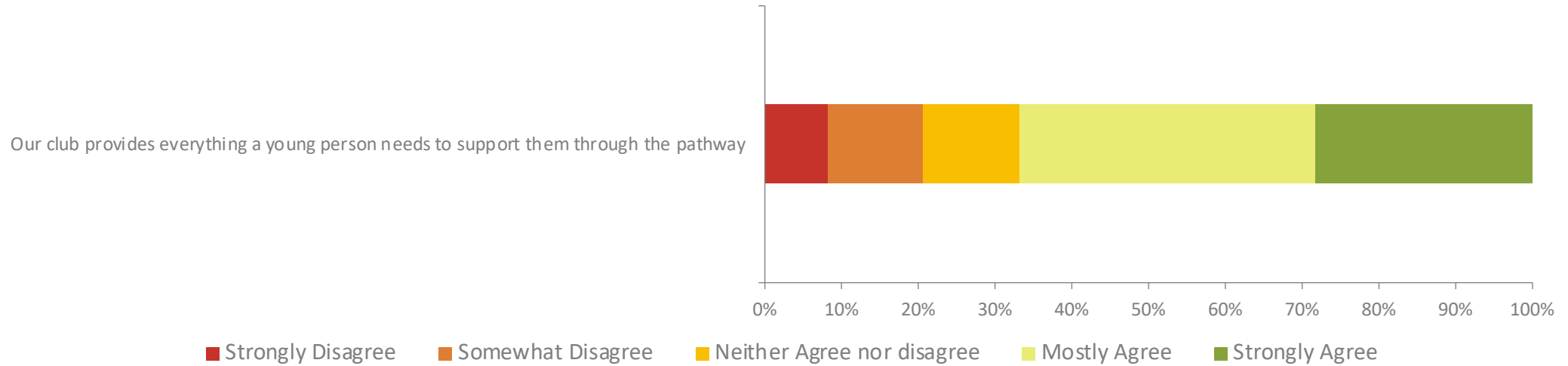
Skills and Behaviours Involved in Having Really Great Experiences in Swimming Clubs

- 1) **Parents and young people are less likely than coaches and club officials to select “knowledge of swimming techniques or child development”** as enabling of great experiences.
- 2) **Parents outside performance clubs** don’t identify welfare and wellbeing as others do - Parents are **LESS likely to cite “Knowledge of athlete wellbeing and welfare”** as important in the skills and behaviours of coaches than other groups (statistically significant)*
- 3) There were **two skills and behaviours that young people and coaches thought more important than club officials and parents** (statistically significant)
 - **Knowledge of Athlete well-being and welfare**
 - **Ability to create a healthy environment and culture**
- 4) These findings highlight the need to **consider the level of focus given to parental education.**

*There were no major differences in opinions between those connected to performance and non-performance classed clubs regarding skills and behaviours of club personnel (excluding clubs)

ANSWER CHOICES	SKILLS AND BEHAVIOURS OF COACHES		SKILLS AND BEHAVIOURS OF CLUB PERSONNEL (excluding coaches)	
Q9: Think about when you have seen young people having really great experiences in swimming clubs. What skills and behaviours are involved made that possible?				
TOP 3 ANSWERS IN GREEN				
Personal Integrity - Credible, Reliable, Open	67.94%	284	59.41%	243
Ability to create a healthy environment and culture	68.90%	288	71.64%	293
Effective Communication & Relationship Building with Athlete	86.84%	363	61.37%	251
Effective Communication & Relationship Building with Parents and Other Club Role Holders	63.64%	266	69.44%	284
Effective Management of Self and Behaviours	48.09%	201	47.92%	196
Empathy with and respect for the athlete	74.16%	310	61.37%	251
Knowledge of Child Development	56.46%	236	36.19%	148
Knowledge of Swimming Techniques	83.25%	348		
Matches coaching to athletes' preferred ways of learning	45.45%	190		
Effort to develop the whole young person as well as the athlete	59.57%	249	41.81%	171
Knowledge of Competition Preparation, Support and Evaluation	64.59%	270	27.38%	112
Knowledge of Higher Performance	47.61%	199		
Knowledge of Athlete Wellbeing and Welfare	60.29%	252	52.32%	214
Other (please specify)	7.66%	32	7.33%	30

SUPPORTING THE YOUNG PERSON: Our club provides everything a young person needs to support them through the pathway



EXAMPLE COMMENTS

NOTES

- ❖ No major differences between scores of parents, swimmers, coaches and club officials
- ❖ Performance classified clubs appeared to score below average – BUT it was not sufficient in differences to test significance

Strongly Disagree

There is no information about the pathways. There is no transparency about selection criteria for pathways. There is limited support from coaching team. Committee members get defensive when questions are raised.

Somewhat Disagree

Not all children are treated this same way. Some have better support because their parents are in better relationship with coaches.

Neither Agree or Disagree

Information can be hard to come by. It is assumed you understand the competition circuit when many do not.

Mostly Agree

I feel as a small club we could do more to explain about the pathways and development camps on offer.

Strongly Agree

I consider we have the best club in the area, where swimmers achieve great things constantly. By watching and listening to the swimmers, it is clear that they feel they are in a good place and they enjoy swimming and mostly have fun.

Think back to a time when you believed that something in a participant's experience could be improved or was an issue. What did you do? What would you do now?

ANSWER CHOICES	What Did You Do?	What Would You Do Now?
Had a quick chat with the coach or head coach	56.0%	70.0%
Kept a closer eye on it - be more aware to see if it continues to be a cause for concern	31.3%	32.3%
Had a quick chat with a club official	19.7%	33.5%
It's never happened/Not Likely	16.6%	1.7%
Formally emailed the coach or Head Coach	15.9%	25.7%
Formally emailed the appropriate club official or officials	15.2%	26.0%
Raised it in the regular meetings that take place	10.8%	13.2%
Talked to staff at the pool	9.3%	8.3%
Other (please specify)	8.1%	9.3%
Raised it with Swim England staff	5.4%	13.0%
I didn't know what to do	3.2%	3.2%
Sent an anonymous feedback message or email	0.7%	3.4%
Added it into the regular member feedback survey	0.73%	2.0%

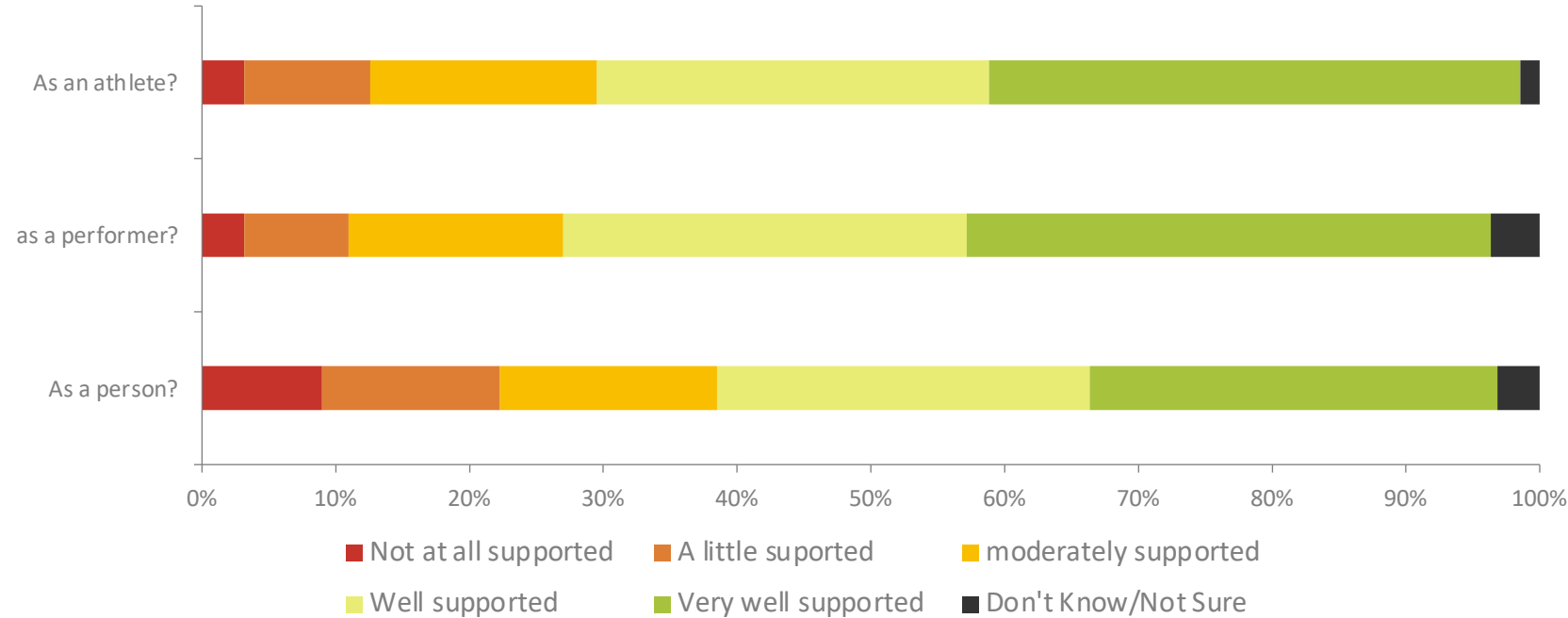
COMMENTS

- There appeared to be **low consistency across clubs** on what the process was and indicated **confusion over the difference between an issue, complaint, safeguarding or something else.**
- Overall – there is a level of confidence in there being a process and that there will be a result. However, there are a **small but strong set of responses suggesting some individuals experience very low confidence in the club's policy, approach or process to dealing with complaints, issues and concerns.**

To what extent do you think individuals are supported to develop their best selves:

COMMENTS

- **Overall, participants think clubs do a good job of supporting individuals as athletes and performers** though the **biggest critique** was around the variation within the club and **how higher performance means more support.**
- **There was a much lower level of confidence in the way individuals was supported as a person.** Where this was described as happening well, it was often linked with more positive feedback elsewhere in the survey too.



“As an athlete and performer- there is support in terms of facilities, training time, competition availability. As a person- there is very little to no support from the club for the person. The head coach often disrespects swimmers.”

“Coaches do not know swimmers beyond swimming pool.”

“I don’t feel, as a club, we put enough emphasis on “the whole package” e.g. nutrition, dry (“land”) training etc. to support “Athlete” levels of performance.”

“For children, being told when they do well is as equally important as being told where they can improve and where they are doing bad. Focus seems to be mainly on how to improve and performance in swimming, without taking into consideration what else is happening in children life which can affect their performance in training and competition.”

“I believe that my son is being given the best training and preparation not just to perform well but to learn from all experiences be they pleasant or also in situations where expectations weren't met. He is also being guided to make better choices and options.”

What Does Good Look Like – the ingredients



COMMENTS

- The graphic shows a summary of the **top 10 words or phrases across all 4 questions** of what makes a good experience for swimmers, parents, coaches and officials.
- The most significant theme across all questions by some margin was the **role of communication in creating a good experience**. This included communication between coaches and club officials, between club and parent about club activity and pathway activity. It also included communication and feedback between coach and swimmer.
- **For young people "fun" and "friendly" was reported with very high frequency**, especially in relation to other groups.
- **Feeling like one team or family was also very highly ranked.**

NOTES

- Word size reflects frequency used. The words good swimmer child club committee coach parent were removed as they were pre-fix or suffix in all cases.

Survey Themes

Strengths

- There is broad appreciation principles and statements of **OADF show up in some way across clubs in the WM region**. There is less confidence at how the principles show up **consistently** from top to bottom of clubs.
- There is good consistency in the skills and behaviours which the SEWM community value in coaches:
 - Communication & relationship building
 - Knowledge swimming technique
 - Empathy & Respect for Athlete

Watch Outs

- However, there are some concerns that only circa **5/10 people** felt the following skills were valuable:
 - **Knowledge of child development**
 - **Matching coaching to athletes learning preferences**
 - **Effective management of self & behaviours**
- It was equally concerning that only circa **4/10 people felt that for club role other than coaching**, the following skills were valuable:
 - **Effort to develop whole young person as well as athlete**
 - **Knowledge of child development**
- **Low consistency in appreciation of welfare and safeguarding process**, with small, but strong evidence of **low confidence from a group of respondents** from SEWM community.

- Evidence that young people's voice and opinion has points of significant difference than that of coaches and club leaders.

FINDINGS II - Summary of Focus Groups Themes

Committee Members – Strengths and Best Practice

- OADF Principles:
- There are positive examples of clubs where OADF appears to be proactively implemented.
- Acknowledgement however that it does need a lot of adaptation to implement at a club level.

- Participant voice:
 - Positive role of club captains supporting younger swimmers and providing a voice to coaches.
 - Examples of clubs who provide multiple (and regular) means to provide feedback on their swimming experience.
 - Specific approaches that were highlighted positively
 - regular coach – parent/swimmer meetings
 - use of an App (Spond)
 - Parent reps and Welfare Officer visibility at poolside
 - use of OADF feedback sheets as a framework for discussion.

- Club vision – Roles & Responsibilities:
- Examples provided of integrated approaches between committees and coaches.
- Some examples where it hasn't worked, but generally felt that clubs with head coaches on committees is a good thing – it helps with their understanding of how the club works, understanding finances, integration of philosophy etc. Also, regular structured forum of committee meetings to discuss collective progress against club vision.

Committee Members - Development Areas and Watch Outs

Talent Pathways:

- Learn to Swim (L2S) programmes:
 - The pathway into club environments is not working with swimmers being held back.
 - New teachers perceived to not understand or value competitive swimming.
- Awareness of the pathway is limited.
- Awareness of OADF is limited.
- Shortage of water, e.g. Birmingham, Shropshire:
 - Expanding activities therefore seen as '*impossible*'.
 - Clubs get less desirable pool time, e.g. cited where 70% of pool time is after 8pm. Welfare issues with children as young 10-11 swimming until 10pm on a school night.
- Perceived active intention of NGB to limit the number of clubs. Belief that new clubs will provide additionality if the pool space was available.
- Hard to find new coaches, particularly female coaches.
- Red flags raised relating to City of Birmingham (subject to existing reports), young people being '*abused*', suffering from burn out.

Committee Members – Development Areas and Watch Outs

Talent Pathways continued:

- Disability swimming – difficulties with getting classifications is a barrier to entry onto the talent pathway.
- Perception that lots of young people get lost to the system if they don't show potential early. Concern that young swimmers are being '*over developed.*'
- Certain clubs perceived to be overly focused on performance.
 - Do they have the patience to let people develop?
 - Does this over focus create wider welfare concerns? E.g. cited of an advisor from a performance club encouraging athletes to take supplements.

Committee Members – Development Areas and Watch Outs

Participant Voice:

- Lack of education for parents about acceptable coach behaviours.
- Perceived inability of NGB to deal with issues effectively. If people don't have confidence in the system, they are less likely to raise issues.
- Broader challenges with coaching philosophy – obsession with 'times'.
- Poor (lack of) communication to parents can lead to frustrations.

Club vision:

- Examples of clubs who have never discussed club vision with their Committee.
- Perception that there are 'coach led' clubs in the region.
- Risks highlighted where the coach isn't invited to input into the vision.
- Some clear examples of potential disconnect – University of Birmingham appoint the coach and the student committee who run the club must work with that individual.

Committee Members - Development Areas and Watch Outs

Reporting issues:

- Some concerns about how well Committees understand their role in this regard.
 - Learning approaches from the NGB seen as sub optimal for some.
 - Do Chairs understand enough to challenge a coach on their behaviours / actions? Opportunity to better support Committees to manage coaches.
- Concerns that many parents are unsure what to do:
 - Need to educate parents and swimmers as to the standards they should expect.
- Limited confidence in the system (outside of the club) once something is raised.
- Lack of support for voluntary Welfare Officers – see as a very difficult and often isolating job.
 - Who is supporting them? Examples cited where they have felt devalued by the NGB despite dealing with an issue correctly and effectively.
 - Problem exacerbated in University Club with limited support for Welfare role - where personnel change on a yearly basis.
 - Not all Welfare Officers adopt the same principles of confidentiality.
- 'Welfare' terminology not always helpful - most incidents tend to be wellbeing and mental health related.

Parents and Young People* – Strengths and Best Practice

- Creation of clear pathways within clubs:
 - Clear guidelines on what each swimmer needs to achieve to progress.
 - Frequent coach - swimmer/parent meetings to discuss plans.
- Positive examples of where participant voice is being asked for and listened to:
 - Coaches being open, approachable and proactively asking for athlete feedback.
 - Coaches asking swimmers for their personal development goals.
 - E.g. of senior captains having a mentoring role with junior swimmers and being a voice back to coaches.
 - Coaches treating swimmers as individuals.
 - Visible coaches, welfare officers and parent reps create an openness and ease for feedback.
- Positive club environments being created – high degree of correlation between swimmers, coaches and committee members.
 - Retention of members within the club environment (people come back).
 - Swimming is fun and inclusive and competitive (if that is what you want).

*Note: *Boys and Girls feedback is merged under one heading as there were no significant differences in feedback.*

Parents and Young People – Development Areas and Watch Outs

Talent Pathways:

- It doesn't feel like it feeds together and there is low awareness of what the actual pathway is.
 - You must ask lots of questions to pick up little bits of information.
 - Some kind of 'pathway education' would be helpful.
- Unsure of how the pathway is supporting late developers.
- Questioned what opportunities there are to support those on the fringes.
- Low awareness of 'performance' clubs – who they are, their role.
- Clubs (coaches) 'protective' of swimmers and hold on to them within their own programmes.
- Some questionable coaching behaviours – technically good coaches but talk down to swimmers, don't know their individual strengths in swimming and are poor motivators.

Parents and Young People – Development Areas and Watch Outs

Participant Voice:

- Example cited of inappropriate behaviour by a previous Head Coach – they didn't feel supported by that Committee and left that club.

Reporting issues:

- Questionable feedback loops on the outcome of complaints/concerns that have been raised.
- Senior Captains taking a role whereby concerns could be raised with them - trusted but no support or guidance on what they may encounter and how they should deal with it.

Coaches – Strengths and Best Practice

Talent Pathways:

- OADF is being adopted by some coaches - *'underpins everything I do as a coach.'*
- Consistent and clear communication to parents.

Feedback on practice:

- Value of coach mentors and developers emphasised.
- Encouragement for swimmer feedback loop. Linked to implementation of OADF.

Club vision:

- Strong view that the coach should be integral to creating the vision in unison with the Committee.

Coaches – Development Areas and Watch Outs

Talent Pathway:

- Perceived by some as being too directive from the NGB – more autonomy from coaches is needed.
- Lack of communications and transparency regarding the pathway and the inviting of swimmers onto it.
 - What is it?
 - Who is judging club's roles on the pathway and then communicating this?
 - Coaches referencing '*zero relationship*' with the performance club in their area.
- There is a lack of understanding regarding purpose of the pathway.
- There is a need to continually communicate and refresh peoples understanding of the pathway – new parents and swimmers coming on each year.
- There are issues with classification system with para swimming – unable to get swimmers classified.
- Noted a lack of club alignment to Swim England.
- No feedback to coaches from development camps – noted that this should be a prerequisite, but it doesn't happen. Need a joined-up approach between different coaches supporting an individual swimmer.
 - Some questions raised as to whether coaches have the capacity to do this effectively?

Coaches – Development Areas and Watch Outs

Talent Pathway (continued):

- OADF is viewed as 'cumbersome' and 'time consuming' to implement properly.
- Pathway skewed towards early developers. Selecting on times doesn't account for technique. Data cited from the US which showed that 80% of national swimmers were 'late developers'.
- Contradiction between selecting on speed and early developers vs the principles of understanding the person.
- Lots of clubs hang on to swimmers:
 - Coaches who pass swimmers on to other environments conducive to their needs are perceived to be in the minority.
 - In examples where there is a pathway to other clubs, swimmers have returned to their original club citing that they hadn't enjoyed the culture.
- Postcode lottery - in the wrong area of the region a 'talented' young swimmer could be travelling 1.5 hours each way to access swimming provision according to their ability.
- Pool hours are poor (quantity and timing). This limits what individual clubs can do.
- The focus doesn't appear to be on coaching kids to a good level of skill.
- Obsession with end of year date for selection which creates a relative age bias.
- Belief that many take a speed over skills focus which they feel is the wrong approach.

Coaches – Development Areas and Watch Outs

Club Vision:

- Examples cited of unsupportive committees clashing with coaches - think they know better, conflicted by parental interest.

Representation:

- These coaches noted that they are probably not a representative sample of swimming coaches in the West Midlands.

Focus Group Themes

Strengths

Watch Outs

- There is undoubtedly some excellent practice that takes place within clubs in the West Midlands with lots of positive examples cited through the focus groups. Participants themselves did however note that the sample of attendees probably isn't representative of the whole Swim England West Midlands community. This belief was reinforced by the volume of concerns raised about the effectiveness of individual clubs and the cohesiveness of the regional pathway.
- Concerns can broadly be grouped under 3 headings:
 - Poor or insufficient **EDUCATION** for stakeholders (parents, coaches, committee members, swimmers) about what to expect through their swimming experience.
 - A lack of **UNDERSTANDING** what good looks like or what people should expect through their swimming experience.
 - Underpinned by a lack of or poor **COMMUNICATION** at multiple levels of the swimming pathway – whether that be from:
 - governing body to clubs,
 - governing body to coaches,
 - coaches to coaches, or
 - clubs to parents and swimmers.
- Conversely where e.g.'s of good practice were cited it was evident that communication was strong, frequent and consistent, and this in turn supported stakeholders understanding in helping to foster an aligned, positive and supportive club environment.

FINDINGS III - Summary of Themes from Performance Club Visits

Performance Visit Club 1 – Strengths & Best Practice

- Coach care for, and connect with, children and young people
 - Swimming support.
 - Life beyond swimming.
- Proactive communication with parents from committee and coaches.
- Open and transparent discussion about young person group movements.
- Visible, approachable and proactive committee members.
- Strong sense of belonging for young people.
- Parental support to newer parents to navigate conventions of swimming kit and events.
- Social activities enable friendships and fun shared experiences.
- Passionate and committed committee.
- Multiple examples of supporting children with additional needs.
- Coaches have adapted OADF principles for younger groups.

"...just give 100% of what you can manage today!"

"...everyone here is like one big family"

Performance Visit Club 1 – Development Areas & Watch Outs

- Development / performance plans not systematically documented.
- Lack of performance services support and partnership e.g. HEIs.
- No land-based training.
- Committee lack performance pathways knowledge and expertise.
- Big challenge navigating merger and carrying culture into new facility.
- Club heavily reliant on very committed and dynamic committee member.

Performance Visit Club 2 – Strengths & Best Practice

- Coaches view their job as a vocation, supporting love of swimming, life skills and performance.
- OADF principles have been adapted for groups across ages and stages.
- Club working on a VMOST approach to planning and delivery, where values are embedded across activities.
- Clear selection criteria to support swimmer progression discussions.
- Club have an athlete tracker document / annual plans, but more support welcome to standardize, increase effectiveness of tracking impact.
- Squads for everyone, commitment to have patience in developing swimmers, clubs has good retention rate.
- Coaches showed could appreciation of female athlete health.
- Club has strong governance structure and is well resourced.
- Club have made use of UK Coaching CPD support for coaches.
- Parent reps are a useful point of contact to enable coaches to coach.
- Social media channels key resource for parent information.

Performance Visit Club 2 - Development Areas & Watch Outs

"...is performance club a helpful label, it feels like it creates friction between clubs"

- There is a need for an Optimal Coach Development Framework!
- Swim England starting to open up and share information, good to see camps being used for dual purpose of swimmer and coach development. USA swimmer more transparent and collaborative.
- Swim England need to be more visible and could provide more practical support:
 - Engage in discussions with clubs about adding value to swimmers, not just producing times.
 - Youth engagement strategies.
 - Protect coaches from rogue committee members.
- Youth voice is greatest opportunity for club to improve. Currently no captains or no youth forum.
- Case conferencing recognized as an opportunity to improve support. Regular reviews of swimmer transition which have gone brilliantly, ok and poorly, to learn from the why behind experiences.
- On paper local club happy to send swimmers. However, egos and personalities can make this difficult for young people.
- Very challenging for a young person to have a performance plan which align various opportunities across region.
- Welfare provision needs to be more visible. Parents and swimmers unclear. Club, county, region and nation website not user friendly for information!
- Hard for parents to know when and why to prioritize district, county, regional activity.

Performance Visit Club 3 – Strengths & Best Practice

"...swimming has help my child make friends, develop independence, learn time keeping...it set them up for life!"

- Lots of specific feedback to swimmers and their families. Peer used as positive role models in demonstrations to aid learning.
- School has embedded swimming in its DNA, and swim club has school values as guiding principles.
- Swimmers empowered to organize meetings with coaches to discuss training and competition plans.
- Welfare officer introduction to new swimmers when they join and attend all squad training every Thursday.
- Parents and swimmers have regular discussions with coaches to manage studies, swimming and life!
- Coaches always positive about how you have performed and provide advice for further improvement.
- Club communicate through excellent social media groups and on deck. Welfare officer on all groups.
- Headteacher is line manager of Head coach, weekly 1:1, and poolside at least once session per week.
- Headteacher role is advocate for the child / young person.
- Coaches provide clear competition and training plan for year.

"...individual sport in a team atmosphere"

Performance Visit Club 3 – Development Areas & Watch Outs

- Being a swim parent is hard, you always feel like you are playing catch up as your child progresses.
- To succeed family support is very important. Swimming is very challenging for families in terms of transport, financial and caring responsibilities.
- Parents find inconsistency of filming rules across county and regional events very frustrating.
- Do swimming pathways favour academically gifted young people?
- Swimmer movement between clubs is an ongoing challenge, no mechanism for smooth transition across region – it needs a regional plan!
- Post-covid need to reinvigorate social activities.
- Swimmers are sometimes not welcome at home club to compete once engaged with Performance Club.
- Swim England need to value skills in Learn to Swim. Arguably, the best teachers working with the youngest swimmers.
- Swim England club accreditation process lack detail about quality of swimming provision.

Performance Zooms Club 4 – Strengths & Best Practice

- Presentation and introduction of welfare officers at start of season.
- Experience coaches engaged in national talent programmes.
- Nutrition support to swimmers.
- Best with best training environment.

Performance Zooms Club 4 - Development Areas & Watch Outs

- “Club led by coaches 99.9%”
- Traditional swim club model is much more collaborative with committee and coaches. Accountability and financial responsibilities much clearer previous with traditional swim club committee structure experience.
- Swimmer experience is a bilateral relationship with swimmer/family and coach. Committee not involved in discussing.
- Committee have no involvement of performance support provided or monitoring of the impact of this provision.
- No parent or young person forums exist. Club recognized an opportunity here.
- Relationships with other clubs not always straight forward, and coach is key point of contact.
- Difficult to unpick club vs local authority (LA) lines of accountability – “big grey areas” in terms of activities and welfare accountability.
- Coach line management follow LA standard structure - no 360 feedback!
- Relationship and responsibilities of LA employed coaches to/with club employed coaches unclear.
- LA investment not dependent of appraisal of club committee skills or effectiveness.
- Lack of clarity if selection / de-selection should be supported by LA, Club, Swim Coaches Union?

Performance Club Visit Themes

Strengths

- Many great examples of positive relationship between, coach, young person and parents. Demonstration of collective effort to balance demands of school, home, training, rest & other hobbies.
- Some examples of strong sense of belonging to club, and support from peer swimmers, coaches and other adults.
- Some great examples of welfare, wellbeing and proactive safeguarding practice at the heart of club decision making.
- Many examples of knowledgeable coaches helping young people and their families to identify development action plans, qualification criteria and competition priorities. This includes coaches working through process to align OADF principles to all ages and stages of development

Watch Outs

- Lack of clarity regarding roles & responsibilities of setting, monitoring & managing club vision & strategy.
- Some concerns provision of coach care and support network, and impact on wider wellbeing when coaches have concerns of security and professionalism of their employment context.
- Some examples of limited/poor quality line management & performance impact measurement of coaches.
- Some examples of young people, parents and carers being unaware of welfare, wellbeing and safeguarding protocols.
- Some examples of total autonomy of coaches regarding athlete selection & development plans with limited or no consultation, check or challenge
- Clubs need more support to reestablish the social programme which positively impact on sense of belonging in post-covid world!

SWIM ENGLAND WEST MIDLANDS – WHERE NEXT?

INDIVIDUAL, WORKFORCE & ORGANISATIONAL EXCELLENCE



*"All WM clubs to have youth voice,
parent voice, parent care & coach care"*

*"People in region working together for
best interest of individual swimmer."*

*"Right environment, right time, right
support"*

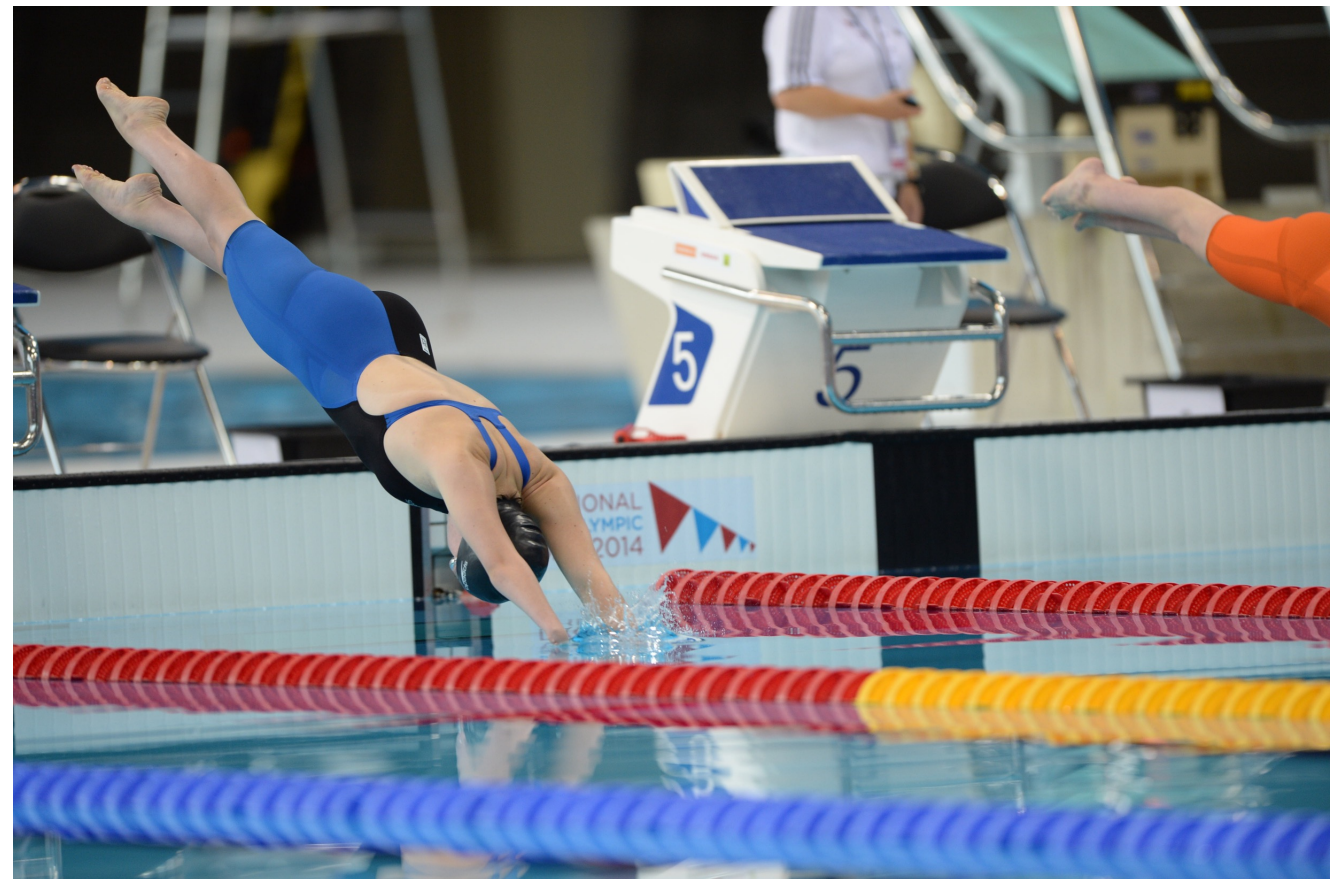
*"Performance clubs with balanced
scorecards"*



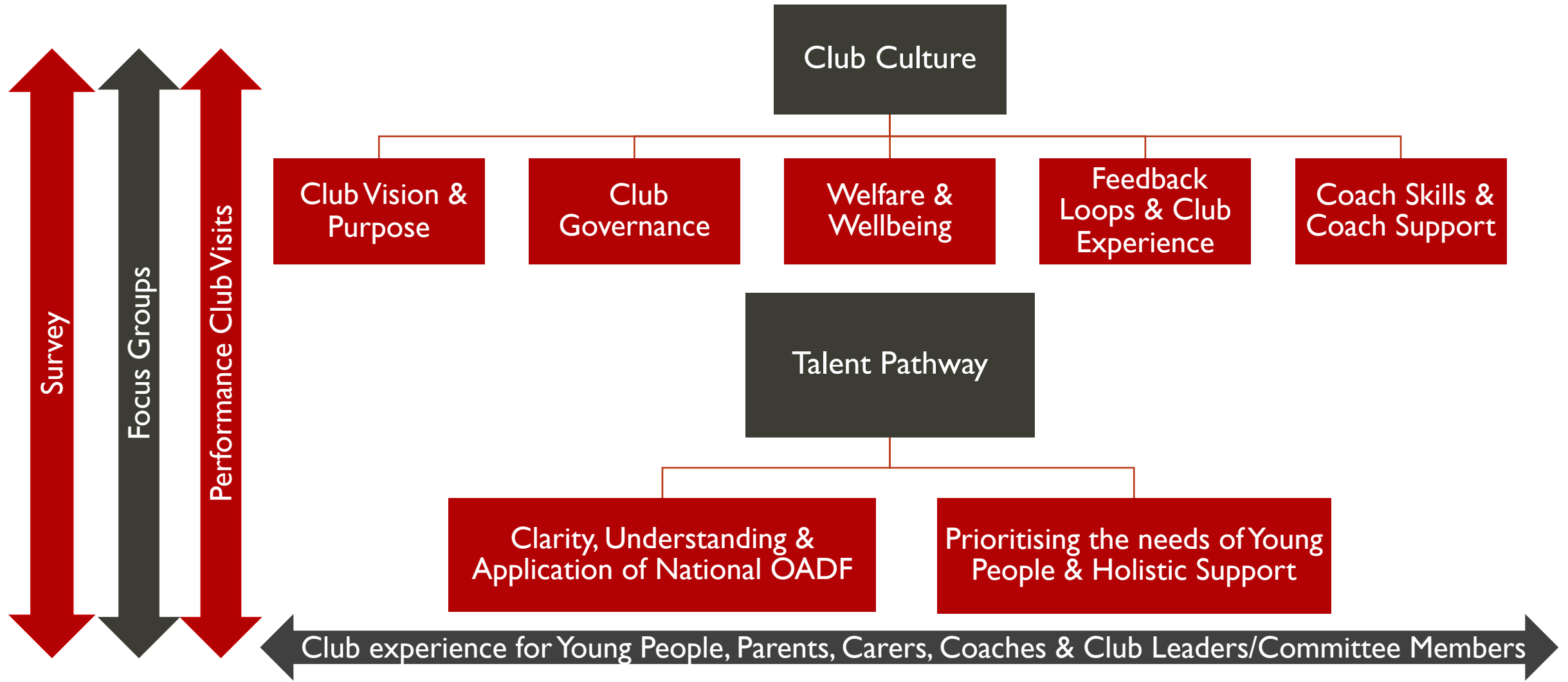
Swim England West Midlands – Core Steering Group 15 March 2023

A way forward for swimming in the West Midlands

- Across the different data sets it is evident that there are some clear and consistent themes for both the region and governing body nationally to consider.
- This section draws those themes together to outline a proposed vision for the future and structures next steps and recommendations under seven thematic areas (see over page).
- Each thematic area is addressed in three parts:
 - Summary of the key findings
 - Some questions to consider as SEWM Board
 - Recommendations



Recommendations Model



Club Vision & Purpose – Summary of learning

- For some clubs a ‘vision’ is an alien concept.
- Coaches and Committees need to be clear on who they are and what they provide, alongside what their predominant offer is. Without this clarity how can parents ensure they find the right club for their child?
- There is a sense that a child does not need to know the vision and purpose of a club, but a parent does to make an informed choice and receive a useful induction.
- At present, across many clubs, there is a misalignment of ‘why’ (purpose) between committee and coach.
- There are examples of well aligned, coherent, healthy coach led clubs. A key area that sets these apart from their counterparts is a strong alignment between committee and coaches.
- Whether or not clubs have a vision or purpose, the survey showed clear alignment to OADF to an extent that cannot be accidental and suggest clubs must be ‘having a go’ at using the framework.
- Use the OADF principles to help club identify what to improve and how could be a good way to support the development of meaningful Purposes & Visions.
- The OADF principles are ‘gold dust’ and are clearly relevant to clubs and could form the basis of a ‘culture triangle’.
- The OADF is a British Swimming tool and there may be a Swim England ‘vacuum’.

Club Vision & Purpose - Questions to consider

- Who should be involved in defining a club's vision & purpose?
- What skills and experiences do the vision setting group require?
- What support should the group be able to access to discharge their responsibility?
- What is needed to support this process that is currently missing in the WM region?



Club Vision and Purpose – Recommendations

1. To consider what support clubs need in terms of putting in place a clear vision and purpose.
 - Training
 - Templates
 - Support in recruiting boarder volunteer base
2. Better utilise the OADF principles to help clubs identify what to improve and how.
 - Person
 - Athlete
 - Performer
3. For Swim England to consider how the OADF principles can be evolved to be inclusive of all swimmers, alongside the support and guidance it can provide to help ALL clubs apply these principles.
 - Age and stage development guidance for coaches & club leaders



Club Governance – Summary of learning

- Roles and Responsibilities:
 - There is a question mark over whether committees ‘know what good looks like’ when it comes to coaching and this impacts upon the effective line management of coaches.
 - There is also a question mark over how we effectively support welfare officers (see ‘Raising Concerns’).
- In order to have strong healthy clubs, committees need to:
 - Oversee effective use of club resources.
 - Give effective line management support/drive effective recruitment practices for their professional workforce (including volunteers).
 - Engage in effective welfare of their professional workforce (including volunteers) as well as their Young people.
 - Ensure that committee meetings discuss provision, as well as the organising of competitions.
- There is massive variation in leadership competence amongst clubs.
 - In some cases, this is mitigated by being partnered with another organisation who is stronger.
 - There are a lack of good processes in place to enable people to be held accountable (e.g., processes to support raising concerns).
- The ‘Golden Triangle’ is clubs: **Knowing what is good + Having Processes + Having people to deliver.**

Club Governance - Questions to consider



- What role should club committees play in monitoring a club's progress against its agreed vision?
- What sources of information and perspectives should club committee members seek to review a club's effectiveness?
- Which voices, if any, are missing in clubs' governance in the West Midlands? Why?
- What is needed to support this process that is currently missing in the West Midlands region?

Club Governance - Recommendations



1. Explore introducing the approach of balanced scorecard to club governance
 - Financial
 - Customer Relationship
 - Internal Processes
 - Learning and Growth.
2. Missing voices in clubs traditionally young person and parents. Swim England / West Midlands to invest in support to enable:
 - Parent/carer forums and support groups.
 - Activities to enable Young People to shape the club offer.
 - Clubs should have roles of Children' Rep & Parent Rep on club committees!

Welfare and Wellbeing – Summary of learning

- There is a strong theme about who is looking after the people looking after the people?
 - Welfare officers are volunteers, and the scope and potential burden of the role is massive.
 - They feel unsupported and under a microscope
 - There is a lack of clarity of how this role can be joyful, and an interactive function of a vibrant club
- This is the area of research where there is the least clarity on ‘what good looks like’.
 - Inconsistent understanding of ‘good’ and this lack of clarity could be leading to people that aren’t well aligned being recruited to the role.
 - There are some exemplary approaches that could be learned from.
 - To what degree is there a culture of openness, support and sharing.
- Support needs to be technical (the skills and knowledge required) and emotional and should include:
 - Welfare Officers.
 - Chairs (and other committee members).
 - Coaches.
 - Senior Swimmers.
 - Parents / guardians.

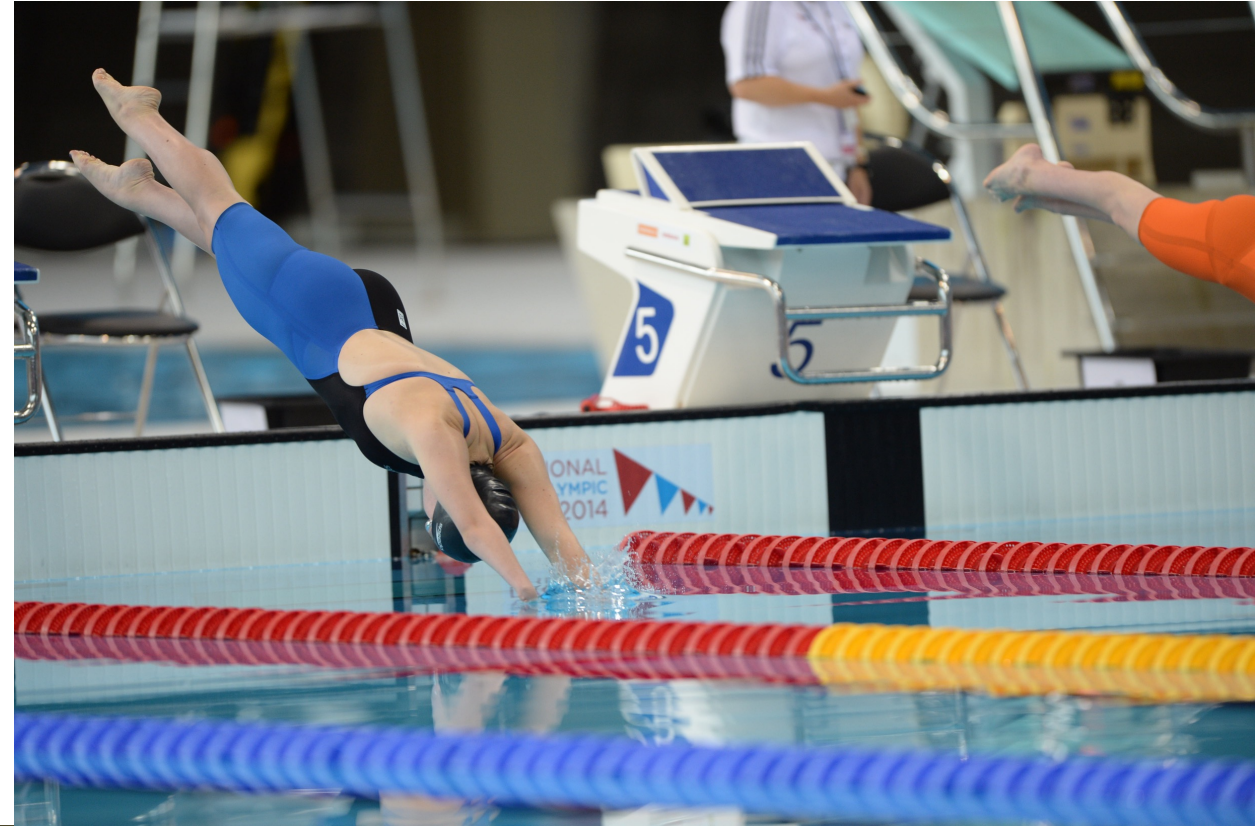
Welfare and Wellbeing - Questions to consider

- What does great communication and support in clubs look like for:
 - Young People
 - Parents & Carers
 - Coaches
 - Committee Members?
- Who is accountable for bringing this to life?
- What is needed to support this process that is currently missing in the West Midlands region?



Welfare and Wellbeing - Recommendations

1. Spend time to better understand and learn about what good looks like in other sports with regards to welfare and wellbeing.
2. Reposition the NGBs role in safeguarding and harm prevention towards positive and proactive wellbeing support to enable those involved in the club to thrive.
 - *E.g. often individuals only involved in club when something goes wrong, as opposed to being a regular present to advocate the rights of children and adults in all club activities.*
3. Swim England West Midlands to recognise their role by:
 - Providing more direct messaging to parents / carers and committees about the rights of the child.
 - Providing more guidance to clubs about proactive communication and how connection with members enables safer, healthy and high performing environments. There is a big, daily, harm prevention element, and this should be more than crisis management.
4. Better understand those who undertake welfare officer roles and why to facilitate effective recruitment and support of these individuals.



Feedback Loops and Club Experience – Summary of learning

- Whilst there were some excellent examples, overall, it is inconsistent how Young People, Coaches and Parents were heard in decision making processes of clubs.
- The clubs allocate resource, both financial and people, based on annual habits, as opposed to insight and consultation.
- Good examples of clubs adopted OADF, held regular meetings with parents/swimmers and coaches, had structured plans in place. They generally had more formal and informal opportunities to contribute. There was understanding an institutional application of OADF.
- Coach philosophy and behaviour is paramount.
 - Inconsistent evidence about openness of coaches to discuss impact.
 - Inconsistent evidence of coaches receiving 360 feedback, proactive line management, and then having opportunity to use this to evolve their work
- The need of openness between coach & athlete is clear. The openness between coaches and parents/other role holders was secondary.
 - It was evident that many of the problems were down to non-existent or ineffective communication.

Feedback Loops and Club Experience - Recommendations

1. Support clubs to deliver high quality line management, performance management and 360 feedback processes for coaching staff.
 - Template contracts
 - Template Performance Reviews & Development Plans
 - Training for committee members
2. Support clubs taking case conferencing approach to swimmer transitions between squads within clubs and between clubs
 - E.g. what can we learn from swimmer transitions in last quarter that went well, were ok, went poorly?
3. Support clubs in improving the mechanisms for listening to Parent and Swimmer Voice including:
 - Support committee leaders to ensure processes are in place and that the intent is visible in appropriate plans.
 - Recruit young people & parents into SEWM regional structure to offer “missing voices”

Coach Skills and Coach Support – Summary of learning

- It is evident that there is a spectrum of coaches in the region, from those who treat the swimmer as an individual to those who don't take the time to understand the individual. Swimmers report that this impacts on the swimming experience.
- Mentoring/peer supervision is viewed as important, although in practice it is sporadic at best.
- Supervision of coaches is lacking from a regional/national perspective.
- A community of coaches in the region is not as strong as it could be.
- Inconsistency in level of support that coaches in different types of clubs are accessing.
- Inconsistent line manager support for coaches. Coaches feel much safer when employed by an established organisation, e.g. LA, school, leisure operator.
- There is a significant gap in wellbeing and welfare support for coaches with provision inconsistent or limited at best.
- Those coaches who engaged in the focus groups were vocal and had a lot of concerns that they wanted to voice. Many wanted to speak and share more. It is evident that there is a need for spaces for coaches to communicate back to the governing body.

Coach Skills and Coach Support – Questions to consider



- What developmental support should every coach in the West Midlands be able to access?
 - How is engagement & development tracked?
 - Are there coaches who should receive targeted support? If so, why?
- How are coaches supported to identify developmental priorities?
- Who is accountable for coach wellbeing and welfare in the talent pathway?
- What should collaborative professional practice for coaches in West Midlands look like?
- What is needed to support this process that is currently missing in the West Midlands region?

Coach Skills & Coach Support - Recommendations



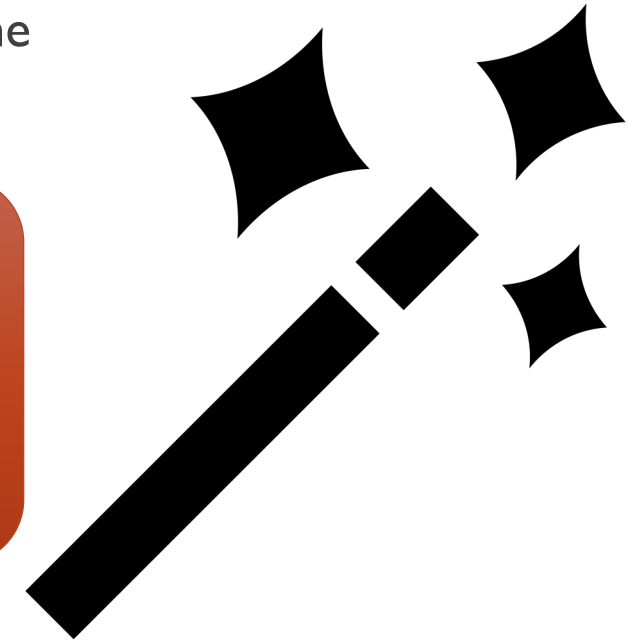
1. Improve access of context relevant coach development core offer ensuring there is 'brilliant basics' support to all coaches in the West Midlands.
 - This should include without exception welfare and wellbeing support for coaches.
2. Coach welfare & wellbeing support
 - Coaches feel isolated & require help to establish coaching cells and support networks with a blend of expertise.
 - Explore approaches to foster more peer supervision and mentoring relationships between coaches.
3. For Swim England nationally, and in the region, to identify and commit to targeted support for unrepresented groups in the coaching workforce.
 - Women Coaches
 - Ethnically Diverse Coaches
4. Explore how to improve Line Manager support for coaches within the volunteer club network.

Club Culture – Magic Wand

The recommendations on the previous pages address the specific themes under Club Culture. Alongside that, when considering the overarching '*must do*' to accelerate positive club cultures in the West Midlands the core steering group championed the following:

Provide focused support to clubs to:

- Enable alignment of daily activities and club purpose.
- Enable committee and coach collaboration.
- Enable youth voice.
- Enable visible, positive and passionate wellbeing and welfare support.



Clarity & Understanding of National OADF – Summary of learning

- The health and effectiveness of the talent pathway is underpinned by a clear purpose and understanding of when and why athletes need something different to help support their development.
- The pathway is hard to access and there is limited understanding of it (across different stakeholder groups).
- There are huge gaps in delivering developmentally appropriate information for everyone in the pathway below future potential British Swimmers.
- There is a clear need for Optimal Coach Development Framework which supports coaches in their age and stage.
- OADF principles are a good and a useful barometer as to how clubs could be set up.
- There is an apparent contradiction with the way that OADF advocates for understanding the individual and yet the talent pathway is set up rigidly by way of times and birthday. This goes counter to the late developer which is a common cause for concern with the pathway as currently structured.
- When independently asked without prompt '*what does good look like*' OADF principles came out. When simply prompted, 73% agree/strongly agree that their club aligns.

Clarity and understanding of OADF - Questions to consider

- How should OADF be accessed and understood by:
 - Young People
 - Parent & Carers
 - Coaches
 - Committee Members?
- Where can the swimming community in the West Midlands go to seek advice on developmentally appropriate support?
- What is needed to support this process that is currently missing in the West Midlands region?



Clarity and Understanding of OADF - Recommendations

1. Put in place clear advice and guidance to all stakeholders on developmentally appropriate development and support below Great British Swimmer and Future Performance Potential levels (*building on the work that Swim England have in progress*).
2. Develop an Optimal Coach Development Framework to help address the significant demand to align coaching practice and behaviours to the rights of the child in their swimming journey. (*NB: a Teachers and Coaches register is another pipeline project which is needed by the community.*)
3. Implement communication and awareness raising strategies for often forgotten audiences of parents, clubs and committee members. This clear and consistent messaging needs to be regular and via channels which suit the audience. *Parents, Young People & Club Leaders need to be empowered to have discussions about the best opportunities and support for the individual.*



Prioritising the Needs of Young People & Holistic Support – Summary of learning

- There are some positive examples of holistic practice with Young Person individual support and needs being considered and carefully balanced.
- 67% of people mostly, or strongly agree, that their club promotes all round support through the pathway. BUT the survey results show a significant difference in people's confidence in clubs to support the swimmer as an athlete (68%) as opposed to the person as a whole (58%). Coaches and clubs are frequently described as being unaware, or uninterested in swimmers' development or welfare outside the pool.
- There is a consistent theme across multiple clubs in the survey comments showing a lack of clarity and/or communication about the talent pathway
- There is inconsistent practice around criteria and processes to transition between squads and groups. Some of this is great, some is poor. A big part of this is attributed to effective communication and transparency of process and decision making.
- The process and experience of transitioning through the pathway Young Person varies from environment to environment seemingly dependent on who the coach is. There is no systematic approach.
- Case conferencing of transition is a missing skill from the region.

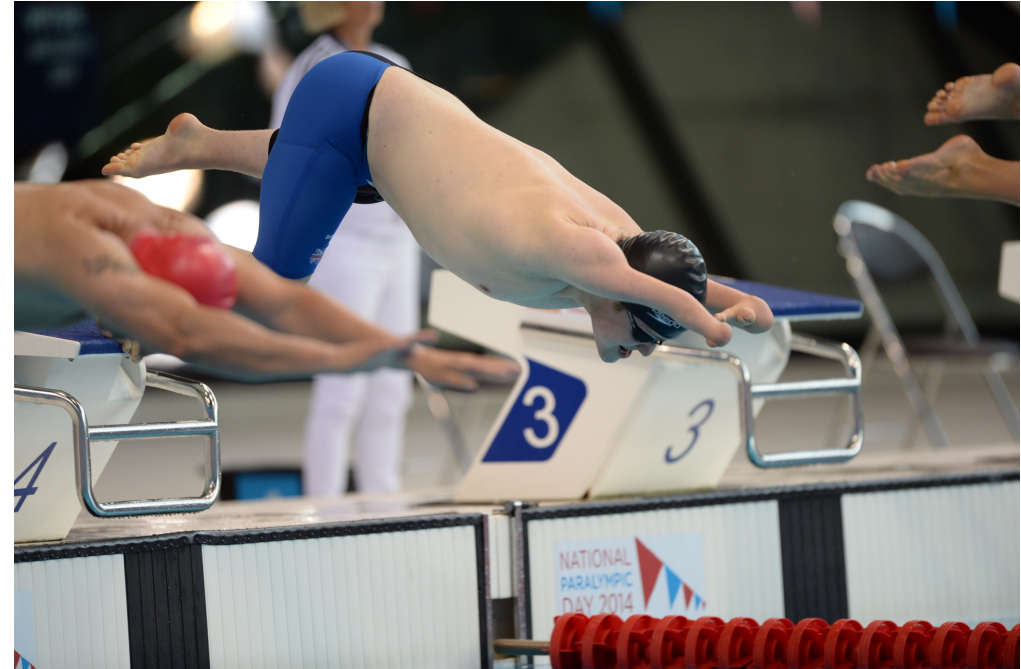
Prioritising the Needs of Young People & Holistic Support - Questions to consider

- What should gold standard support for young people look like in West Midland clubs?
- Who are the advocates for young people in navigating their swimming journey?
- Who has responsibility to support young people and their families in decision making about training, competition and performance lifestyle decisions?
- How is the quality of holistic support to young people monitored in the West Midlands?
- What is needed to support this process that is currently missing in the West Midlands region?



Prioritising the Needs of Young People & Holistic Support - Recommendations

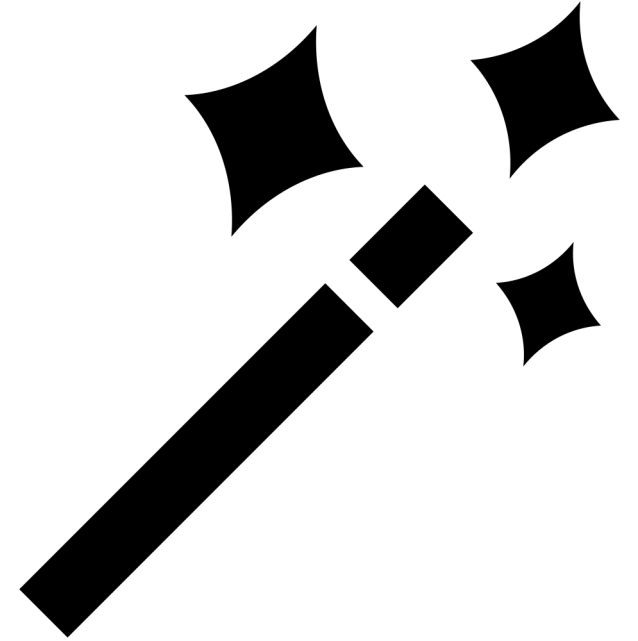
1. SEWM to support awareness of rights of child across all clubs including:
 1. Training opportunities.
 2. Consistent and regular communications.
2. Support parents in the journey of being a parent of a young person engaged in competitive swimming.
 - Within focus groups & performance club sessions with parents a rich sharing of information across parents of different age and stage swimmers manifested, there was a big appetite for more of this!
3. Support clubs to rebuild social programmes in a post-COVID world. With limited club funds and increasing pool costs, this has dropped down the list of priorities!
4. As previously mentioned, a Children & Young People advocate & a Parents advocate on a club committee could play a positive role in holding the club to account for the impact of decisions.



Club Culture - Talent Pathway

The recommendations on the previous pages address the specific themes under Talent Pathway. Alongside that, when considering the overarching '*must do*' to accelerate positive club cultures in the West Midlands the core steering group championed the following:

Ensure adults involved in swimming are working together for the best interest of each individual young person so they can access the right environment, at the right time, for right period of time!



Lots of opportunities, where you could start...

- **Quick wins for SEWM:**
 - Invest time & build the community of passionate welfare & wellbeing volunteers
 - Introduce “YP advocate” on region & club committees
 - Introduce youth engagement & youth voice training for clubs
 - Provide templates & training for club development plans & balanced scorecards
 - Provide templates & training for running effective peer support activities (e.g for parents and carers)
 - Facilitate opportunities for coaches across region to case conference swimmers and how they might collaborate to help these young people
 - Support clubs to re-ignite social programme post-covid



Lots of opportunities, where you could start...

- **Quick wins for SE & SEWM:**
 - Parent education UN rights of child (alignment to / with Children's Coaching Collaborative movement – May 2023)
 - Socialise age and stage development guidance for coaches & club leaders
 - Socialise Optimal Coach Development Framework
 - Increase coach supervision, mentoring & welfare support
 - Provide HR/OD Support for clubs to build healthy & high performing workplace (including the use of effective performance reviews, reporting concerns, building DIAPs & using 360s for staff & committee)





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APPENDIX 1

The Desktop Research – Setting the Scenes Questions

Themes from Desktop Research

- A number of background documents were shared with the team to help set the scene for the project and inform the research questions. These documents raised a number of questions for the team and whilst the answers to some of them are beyond the core scope of this brief they have been shared as they part of the wider added value from the team. The questions have been included in the appendix to this report.
- A list of the documents that were reviewed as part of the desktop research included:
 - West Midlands Club Lists 2022
 - Historical Summary Selections
 - WM Strategy Consultation 2022 Presentation
 - West Midlands Swimming Membership Analysis
 - Regional Development Programme 2022 – 2025 Presentation
 - British Swimming – Optimal Athlete Development Framework

Swimming Data and Membership trends - sparking our curiosity

- There are some challenges projecting with the impact of Covid but are membership levels trending on the decline?
 - If so, what impact does club environment have on this?
- 71% of clubs have less than 200 members whilst the 20 largest clubs have 53% of the total regional membership.
 - Are there any trends or impacts of club size on the research questions?
- The biggest membership declines are in Warwickshire.
 - Are there particular reasons for this?
- How inclusive is the swimming in the West Midlands?
 - 1.8% of members are disabled, yet 9% of children are disabled nationally (and the prevalence of disability increases with age).
 - The proportion of members is skewed towards least deprived areas.
 - Ethnicity data is incomplete (54% blank) but tends to reinforce that there are inequalities in participation by ethnicity.

Talent Pathway

- To what degree are clubs (different stakeholder groups) a) aware of the pathway, b) understand how to get onto the pathway, and c) are clear about the role of their club contributing to the pathway?
- The Regional Development Programme (RDP) refers to OADF. However, most of the detail presented focusses on the technical and sport science support. The document is not explicit where and how the more holistic elements of understanding the person fit in.
- Communication with parents and home coaches are an explicit requirement at a regional level – to what degree does this happen (effectively and consistently)?
- The RDP document references the importance of exploring and understanding the OADF attributes of the person. How effective is the communication back into the club environment? True integration relies on the club environment adopting and understanding OADF - to what degree are the principles embedded within clubs?

What are we not seeing in the Desktop Research?

The following are things that were not made available as part of the desktop research:

- A regional plan that shows the connectivity from grass roots into the talent pathway.
- A pathway of clubs in the region – reference is made to 'performance clubs.' Where is this presented?
- Any materials that might be used to communicate the talent pathway in the West Midlands to clubs, swimmers and parents.
- Guidance or support materials of how clubs are expected to embrace and embed OADF.

APPENDIX 2

Survey Data

Survey Findings

A note on survey findings:

- 1) There are some matching IP addresses which may be repeat submissions but on different devices. This could be multiple parents or coaches completing while physically in the club but it could also be deliberate multiple submission.
- 2) There are occasional examples of scores being inconsistent with written answers – for example scoring 1-worst but with high praise answer. These have been corrected where possible.

Q8: Think about when you have seen young people having really great experiences in swimming clubs. What were the **skills and behaviours of the coaches** involved that made that possible?

THIS IS ALL RESPONDANTS

TOP 3 ANSWERS IN GREEN

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Personal Integrity - Credible, Reliable, Open	67.94%	284
Ability to create a healthy environment and culture	68.90%	288
Effective Communication & Relationship Building with Athlete	86.84%	363
Effective Communication & Relationship Building with Parents and Other Club Role Holders	63.64%	266
Effective Management of Self and Behaviours	48.09%	201
Empathy with and respect for the athlete	74.16%	310
Knowledge of Child Development	56.46%	236
Knowledge of Swimming Techniques	83.25%	348
Matches coaching to athletes' preferred ways of learning	45.45%	190
Effort to develop the whole young person as well as the athlete	59.57%	249
Knowledge of Competition Preparation, Support and Evaluation	64.59%	270
Knowledge of Higher Performance	47.61%	199
Knowledge of Athlete Wellbeing and Welfare	60.29%	252
Other (please specify)	7.66%	32
TOTAL		3488

Q9: Think about when you have seen young people having really great experiences in swimming clubs. What **skills and behaviours of the club personnel (excluding coaches)** involved made that possible?

THIS IS ALL RESPONDANTS TOP 3 ANSWERS IN GREEN

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Personal Integrity - Credible, Reliable, Open	59.41%	243
Ability to create a healthy environment and culture	71.64%	293
Effective Communication & Relationship Building with Athlete	61.37%	251
Effective Communication & Relationship Building with Parents and Other Club Role Holders	69.44%	284
Effective Management of Self and Behaviours	47.92%	196
Empathy with and respect for the athlete	61.37%	251
Knowledge of Child Development	36.19%	148
Effort to develop the whole young person as well as the athlete	41.81%	171
Knowledge of Higher Performance	27.38%	112
Knowledge of Athlete Wellbeing and Welfare	52.32%	214
Other (please specify)	7.33%	30
TOTAL		2193

Q8: Think about when you have seen young people having really great experiences in swimming clubs. What were the **skills and behaviours of the coaches** involved that made that possible?

- ❖ Parents and young people are less likely to see knowledge of swimming techniques or child development as important
- ❖ Parents are LESS likely to cite “Knowledge of athlete wellbeing and welfare” as important in the skills and behaviours of coaches (statistically significant)
- ❖ One difference between performance club and non -responses – performance club responses more likely to cite Knowledge of Athlete Wellbeing and Welfare as important

Other comments include

Warm approachable person
Understanding of, empathy for and ability to tailor training when swimmer has obstacles such as illness or medical conditions
Understanding of the swimmer and their parents needs. A good coach development programme.
Understanding of disabilities / Knowledge of how to communicate and train disabled swimmers. Let all swimmers know they are valued members of the team
Sense of humour
Respect for the individual
Putting enjoyment of sport first
Overall being an amazing person.
Our head coach is amazing and understanding
Offering motivation and not having favourite swimmers that get all the attention
Not sure, coaches do not know swimmers personally.
Making coaching and events enjoyable
Listening and being human
Knowledge of Welfare issues and when athletes may feel under too much pressure or behaving incorrectly
Knowing the needs of the swimmer
Inclusivity and awareness of the negative impacts of bias
Inclusive approach across genders and backgrounds
Honesty
Having been there and done it! True, credible experience from the horses mouth.
Haven't seen it
Good motivational skills
Fun x 2
Encourage positive behaviours between team mates
Create an idea of a Journey for each individual so they can enjoy their pathway in the sport
Approachable and supportive character
Able to create a positive and fun environment

Q9: Think about when you have seen young people having really great experiences in swimming clubs. What **skills and behaviours of the club personnel (excluding coaches)** involved made that possible?

- ❖ There were two skills and behaviours that young people and coaches thought more important than club officials and parents (statistically significant)
- ❖ Knowledge of Athlete Wellbeing and Welfare
- ❖ Ability to create a healthy environment and culture
- ❖ No major differences between performance and non-performance classed clubs

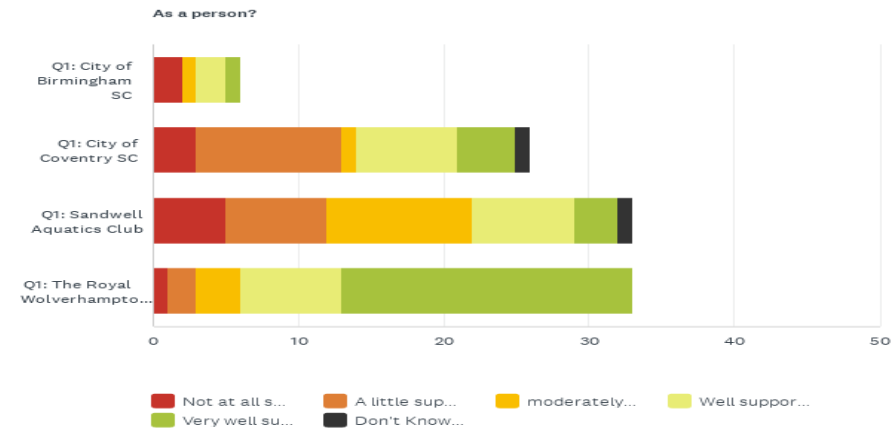
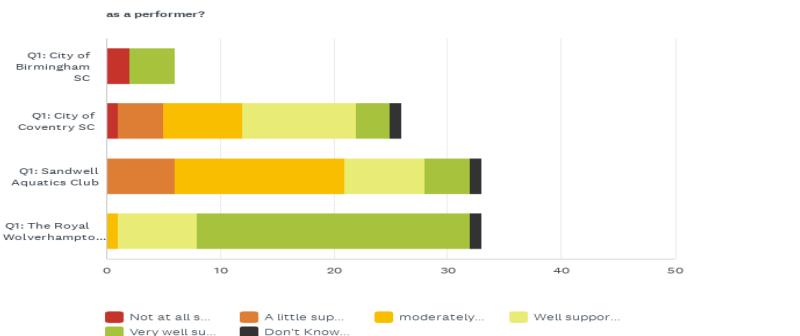
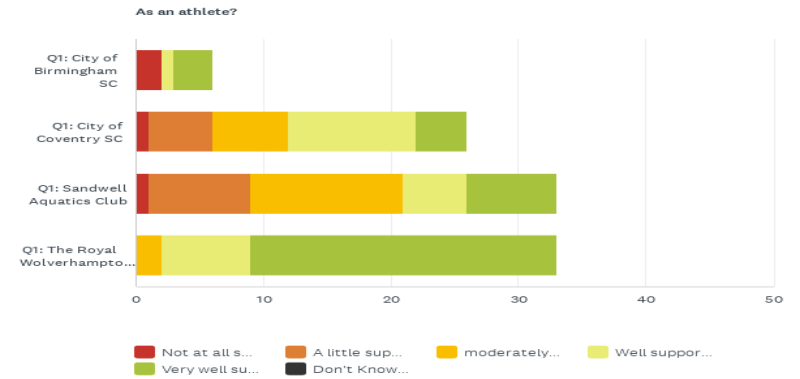
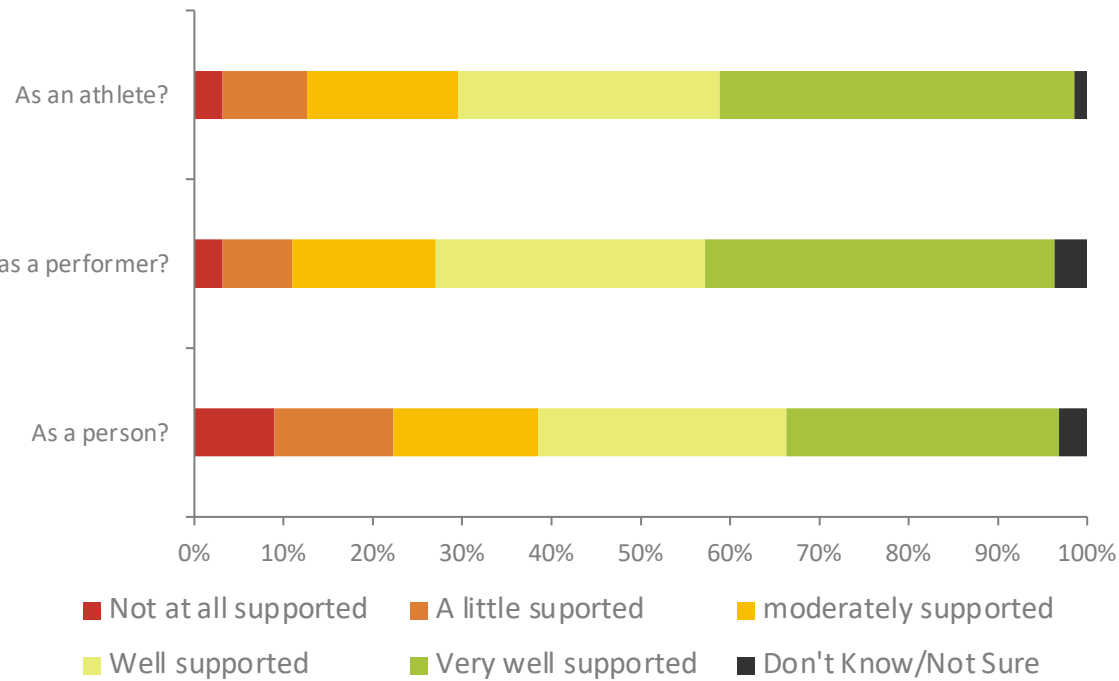
Other comments include

Understanding of disabilities
They look after the swimmers to the best of their ability
Specific skills for role
Pro-active in being supportive
Personal touch coaching
only been part of a club recently so cannot comment
not sure I've seen it
Not seen it
Masters Club don't have young people - again too generic question
Knowing the needs SEN of the child
Know who to go to for advice. Having confidence Swim England will support and guide you.
kindness
It's too hard to separate out coaching staff
Inclusivity and awareness of the negative impacts of bias
Having time!
Good listening and problem solving
Engagement on all levels
Effective encouragement for all stages and letting all winners know they are valued members of the team.
Create an idea of a Journey for each individual so they can enjoy their pathway in the sport
Being approachable
Being active
Approachability
An understanding of dealing with volunteers
Ability to create an environment for the long term; not just the here and now

Q11: Now please think about the young person's experience in your club. To what extent do you think individuals are supported to develop their best selves:

Answered: 414 Skipped: 4

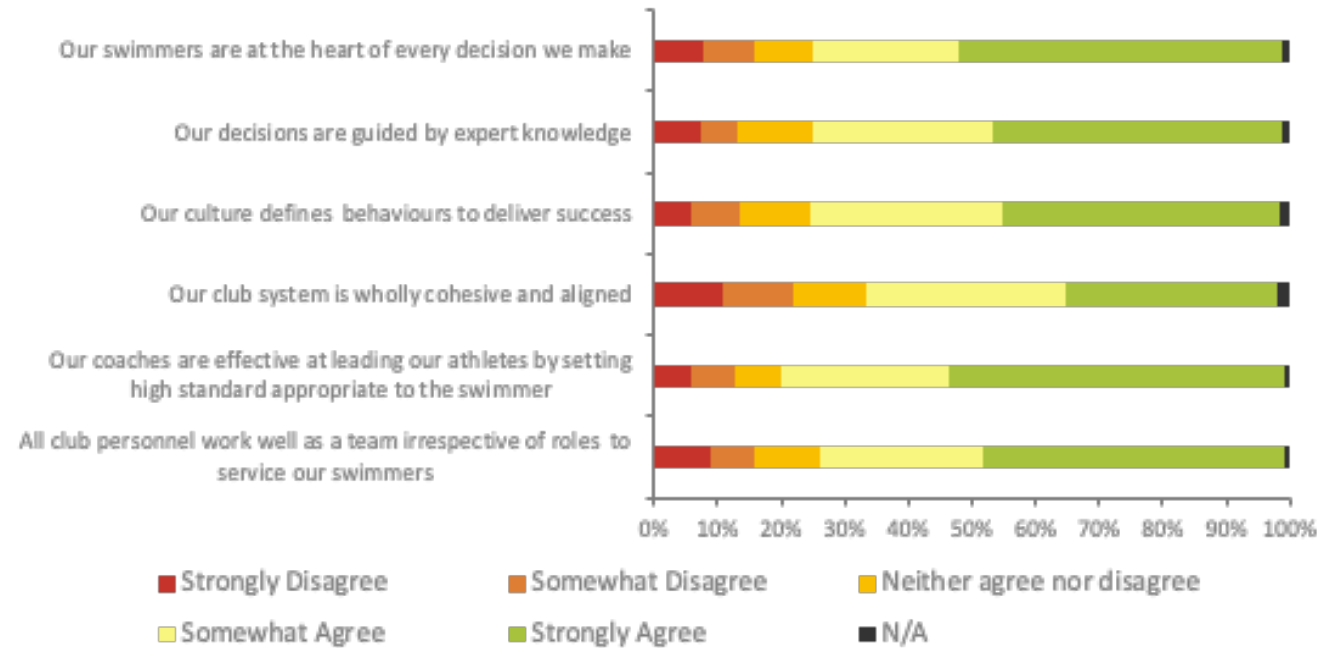
ALL



Alignment to OADF Principles

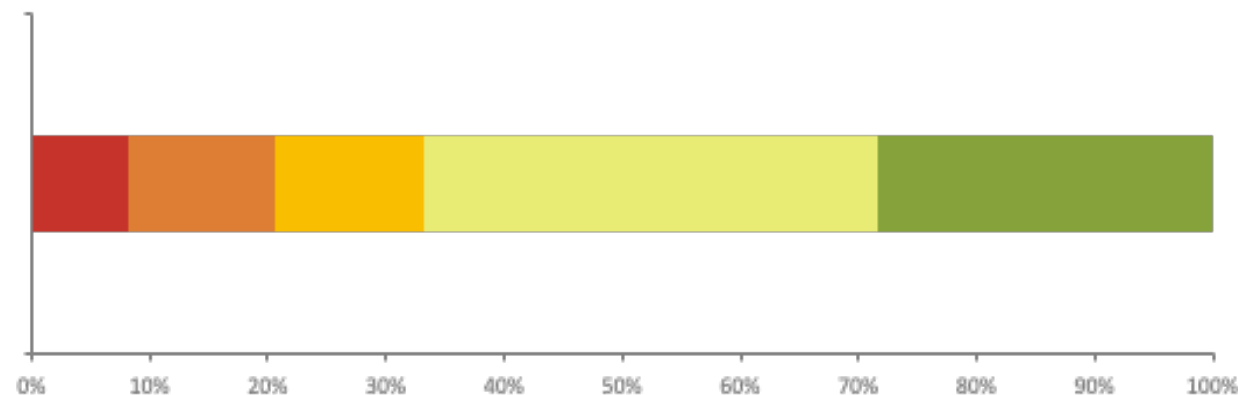
- Overall there was good alignment with over 73% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statements exploring alignment to each of the OADF Principles with the exception of one statement
- There was a significant difference with less than 65% of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement "Our club system is wholly cohesive and aligned"

Answered: 413 Skipped: 407



Answered: 399 Skipped: 19

SUPPORTING THE YOUNG PERSON: Our club provides everything a young person needs to support them through the pathway



STRONGLY DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	MOSTLY AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
8.23%	12.35%	12.59%	38.50%	28.33%	413	3.66
34	51	52	159	117		

There is no information about the pathways. There is no transparency about selection criteria for pathways. There is limited support from coaching team. Committee members get defensive when questions are raised.

If your child is not the faster they don't care about them.

Our coaches provide everything they can within the restrictions you have enforced through a corrupt, unfair process but the club is a proxy because you closed our club.

The club lacks empathy. Coaches demonstrate ineffective communication skills and are quite happy to highlight they have favourite swimmers.

The existing Coach appears to make it up as he goes and applies no discipline within the training sessions. There is no sign of planning and swim cycles for various events.

There is certainly a culture in our club that has historically encouraged a niche of the 'top' swimmers, that all swimmers and parents are aware of.

Information can be hard to come by. It is assumed you understand the competition circuit when many do not.

When I was competing no one really said anything about what happened next and what options there were to progress. Its only reason that I found out about the specific completion pathways, and that they require you to be swimming IMs.

There's no pressure to swim. If you leave the choice to swim to the athletes, not the parents or the coaches, you have swimmers that love their sport, because they can be themselves. Swimming isn't about giving everything until nothing is left. At 17 my son now wants to swim at University, I couldn't ask for more than a desire to swim

Competition day is highly anxiety provoking. Our club coach has ways of distracting and creating a relaxing atmosphere on the day.

Club could do better with individual goal setting, competition planning and advice about events to enter, but they are now improving this.

I consider we have the best club in the area, where swimmers achieve great things constantly. By watching and listening to the swimmers, it is clear that they feel they are in a good place and they enjoy swimming and mostly have fun.

Club doesn't seem to lack in anything.

My son has had a wonderful caring and knowledgeable coach as well as others who have been incredibly supportive and driven. They have looked after and pushed him along in equal measure.

Overall, what makes a great club experience?

It feels like you belong somewhere that is pushing you to do your best
(Swimmer)

You want to be there! There's no doubt about turning up to train or compete for them
(Swimmer)

Don't know, haven't experienced it yet in 7 years of swimming.
(Swimmer)

You are part of a team, everyone striving to move forward as a collective. Having fun and supporting each other.
(Coach)

I think a good club should feel like family. They should feel encouraged, supported, listened to and motivated
(Parent)

In your opinion, what are the most important ingredients that create a really great club experience for a coach - Top words

Row Labels	Count of no
Support	14
Communication	9
Supportive parents	8
Supportive committee	7
Trust	5
Fun	4
Parental support	3
Respect	3
Passion	3
Engaged swimmers	3
Empathy	3
Supportive parents	3
not sure	3
Structure	2
Training	2
Committee support	2
Friendly	2
Respect	2
Drive	2
approachable	2
Hard working swimmers	2
Enthusiastic	2
Knowledge	2
Positivity	2
Training	2
Dedication	2
Motivating	2
Structure	2
Appreciation	2
Support from the Head Coach	2
Organisation	2
Communication	2
CPD opportunities	2
Teamwork	2
Encouragement	2
Experience	2
Pool time	2
Knowledgeable	2
Inclusion	2



Note: Data not cleaned fully for image – so some generic words or word in others phrases are still there eg "good". See main report for cleaned top occurring words overall

Think back to a time when you believed that something in a participant's experience could be improved or was an issue. What did you do? What would you do now?

ANSWER CHOICES	What Did You Do?	What Would You Do Now?
Had a quick chat with the coach or head coach	56.0%	70.0%
Kept a closer eye on it - be more aware to see if it continues to be a cause for concern	31.3%	32.3%
Had a quick chat with a club official	19.7%	33.5%
It's never happened/Not Likely	16.6%	1.7%
Formally emailed the coach or Head Coach	15.9%	25.7%
Formally emailed the appropriate club official or officials	15.2%	26.0%
Raised it in the regular meetings that take place	10.8%	13.2%
Talked to staff at the pool	9.3%	8.3%
Other (please specify)	8.1%	9.3%
Raised it with Swim England staff	5.4%	13.0%
I didn't know what to do	3.2%	3.2%
Sent an anonymous feedback message or email	0.7%	3.4%
Added it into the regular member feedback survey	0.73%	2.0%

Think back to a time when you believed that something in a participant's experience could be improved or was an issue. What did you do? What would you do now? Other Responses Summarised

In the past		Now	
Chat to Welfare Officers	3	Discuss with Welfare Officer	4
Ignored It	1	Find a better club / leave	3
Again I think it is difficult to know who to go but again communications have improved massively recently		No point / nothing they do not listen / Nothing will change at this club / Previous experience suggests they would ignore the issues, therefore I have low confidence that anything would be done or changed as the club takes the view they are always right!	3
Could not have quick chat with coach as coach was the issue. Could not have quick chat with head coach as they are never available		Any issues that we have are relayed to the Welfare Officer for comments and also to see if a formal pathway is required	
Don't bother as nothing happens No point in reporting chair doesn't listen./ they think they are perfect	3	As we are currently run by our assistant coach, I don't believe that this incident would now occur as we have a more open and approachable relationship with this coach. The committee is also more open and transparent and I feel that my son and I could easily raise any issues that we may have.	
Also got my son to talk to the coach himself		Ask how we could improve the experience and discuss with the rest of the club.	
Head coach made all of the above option impossible as should his authority be questioned he would bully the swimmer in question.		Await further improvement at the club I have removed my swimmers	
I am the type of person that I will go straight to the source to sort the issue out, however, with previous club this was not always met favourable with the head coach		Get my parents to speak to the committee	
I even involved teachers and school staff because it was a boarding school		I am no longer involved with the Club as the Coach doesn't want anyone involved that might do a better job than he can....	
I raised an issue with the West Midlands welfare person as an issue was not not effectively resolved - they did not bother to respond...		I would always seek to resolve and issue verbally before emailing. In the case of a serious issue such as a safeguarding breach, I would raise it with Swim England staff so that there was external notification of the issue.	
I think a Welfare Officer should keep things confidential and not discuss them outside of the parties concerned, unfortunately this is not the first time this has happened		I would email and wouldn't expect anything to happen then go directly to a national newspaper	
Issues and concerns raised but not fully addressed and still continues. Difficult as one member of the management team is the issue.		Ignored it	
Little confidence Swim England would support and are keen to find someone to blame for the situation.		initial stages, but if things don't change, I would look to escalate appropriately	
Note: the chat with the coach had to be escalated to the other methods.		It would depend on the issue and what type of issue it was but not had this experience and usually the coach would b first person I spoke to	
Nothing, fact of life that you need lots of kids to get fees to pay for running of club		Little confidence Swim England staff will provide support, rather they are keen to apportion blame on some willing volunteer.	
Raised it at committee meetings, asked if surveys could be asked of parents/ swimmers/ those leaving the club.		Maybe ask my son to ask the coach ?	
		Our child is SEN. Their needs are rarely met	
Supported swimmer (son) directly.		Put it on the swimmers feedback area on the individual training memory stick so only head coach had access to it.	
Swim England did nothing in regards to a big safeguarding problem, the club followed swim England and child is still swimming		Raise with SE only if necessary	
The issue was picked up and dealt with before I had to take any action		The club team from coach to helpers are always approachable and always hear you out and help.	
This did not occur at Oswestry Otters but at Ellesmere College.		We came from the Isle of Man where support, and particularly welfare of swimmers was non existent. Complaints about the coach and committee aren't listened to in swim north west - I hope if there are future complaints swim England act.	
This was at a previous club, before we merged with the other two clubs.		Will probably leave. Concerns are not taken seriously. Coach is not held to account for his actions.	
Waste of time, chair doesn't listen!		Would comfortably do any of the above depending on the situation	
We are a new club, so very little experience. As a very small Masters club, we work through consensus and agreement.		wouldn't bother as literally nothing is done and not even a reply	
We deal with issues raised with proportionality, usually dealing with issues in a low key manner unless of course there is need to escalated the incident which we will.		If any issues are raised they are dealt with a.s.a.p.	
We had issues at another club and moved to my daughters current club			
Whilst I did have a quick chat with the head coach, regarding a medical matter, I found him to be very unapproachable, formidable and he had the 'he knew best' attitude. My son asked me not to speak to him again, and he dealt with this coach by avoiding as much as possible. My son asked for mee not to say anything else as he didn't want any retribution from this coach.			

Overall, what makes a great club experience? (1of6)

friendly swimmers and coaches -having fun - competition

A challenging environment that is welcoming and caring. Putting the person first, not the swimmer

A club that has a head coach who loves the sport, you see their passion, enjoyment when they watch their swimmers. A club that has a "team" that encourage, support and pick each other up in bad times but also celebrate the highs alongside them. Consistency with training.

A club that is inclusive (welcomes all), is well managed and run, listens to its stakeholders, is ambitious and is staffed by great coaches who encourage swimmers whilst stretching them to perform better and better.

A club that makes them feel safe, that encourages them to own their sport to do the best they can. A club that is friendly and provides a social environment that make its enjoyable. Coaches that treat the swimmers with respect and that give the best coaching that they can for each of the swimmers.

A club that respects each swimmer, an acknowledgement that the swimmer who only ever competed against themselves and their own on is as equally valued as the swimmer who competes in nationals

A club where there is a positive, supportive environment where there is a good relationship between the coach and the swimmer. For the swimmer to be able to feel that they can tell the coach anything (for example, if they are injured). Also, for the coaches to tell swimmers good things about their swims but some constructive criticism. It would also be good for the coaches to be supportive of the swimmers during their swimming journeys and to believe in the swimmers. It would also be good to have a coaching system that is

not one size fits all so the coaches can work with people who are better at certain things and who have different techniques of strokes compared to everybody else.

A club you are proud to belong to
A community club that is supportive of the swimmers, whatever their level. Lots of volunteers getting involved supporting the club

A community of people from a different background- all together and enjoying the sport. Accepted and valued

A community that you can rely on to help with the continued development of skills

A community, where everyone feels part of the club

A Community, working together to develop happy, swimmers who feel safe and supported.

A family

A family

A family which listens, communicates and provides support to all involved.

A family, supportive, understanding, willing to compromise, cares for each individual swimmer and their needs.

A family. A home.

A family. Swimmers (and their carers!) spend a LOT of time together so a great club is like a big family; safe, caring and fun.

A feeling of happiness from members.

A feeling of pride.

A friendly community

A friendly environment which encourages swimmers to want to try and their best. An environment which supports both their physical and mental health.

A friendly place with professional standards

A friendly warm welcoming atmosphere and happy fulfilled swimmers in the water.

A friendly, positive environment, which promotes good behaviour, a caring

feeling and most of all a place where they are safe and looked after in the best possible way.

A fun environment to train at a sport they love with friends they've made

A fun family

A fun supporting family like environment that help you aspire to improve

A fun, friendly environment to train, improve and compete.

A fun, safe place to be where they can enjoy the sport they love and progress at it.

A good club encourages positive behaviours of kindness, respect and pursuit of success through the teachings and examples set by good coaching staff.

True friendships are forged in and out of training where we strive for the benefit of the whole squad, not only for the individual. Friends in the pool are closer than those even at school. When competitions come around, we are

encouraged to bring our best and reflect upon how we did in a positive way. It's not just about swimming, my club helps me develop in every way!

A good club has to be well-managed and must have a good coaching structure.

There should also be a friendly atmosphere in the swimming environment.

A Great Club has a positive can-do approach for all it swimmers regardless of ability and aims to educate both swimmers and parents a provide an enjoyable journey in which life skills are developed. There are no limits to possibilities.

A great club promotes excellent sportsmanship, teamwork and develops communities. Also, should provide a good sense of well-being, pride, recognition and achievement.

A great club should feel like a family where everyone looks out for one another but also be a place where you're pushed to do your best and

helped/coached to be the best you can be. A smile on your face must be a must! A great swimming club can develop swimmers into well rounded adults with great fitness levels

A great swimming club feels like somewhere anyone involved, whether athlete, coach, volunteer, committee member etc can feel valued in what they are doing. Enjoy their time at the club and drive a community spirit to achieve together.

A great swimming club gives opportunity to young people to develop their swimming but also have fun in friendly and supportive environment that does not focus just on times and winning.

A great swimming club has a sense of community... the parents help each other out in spite of any competition between the kids. The kids enjoy the social side of swimming. There is a sense of everyone trying to follow the same path. The training and competing can be hard on the kids and their families, and these other factors are what make the kids want to continue and the parents want to support them in continuing.

A great swimming club is friendly, engaging and informative.

A great swimming club is one where the coaches are really nice, and you can get on with them. You feel able to speak to them if something is wrong or if you have an issue. They also say positive things about your swims but they can give you constructive criticism as well, so you know where to improve. The coaches should make you feel good as a swimmer but as a person too. A great club is also one with a positive atmosphere surrounding it where all of the swimmers are happy and get on with each other. In my opinion, I think that the club I am at fits this perfectly and I am really enjoying training

A great swimming club is one which communicates well with its members,

no-one is 'left out' and when issues do arise the welfare team have the ability to resolve the issues.

A great swimming club is supportive of its swimmers offering an opportunity to improve the individual. To be driven in the goal of producing great swimmers but in a nurturing way. The club should be friendly and inclusive

A great swimming club needs to be a community that provides the child with a sense of belonging. It is more than simply turning up to training and competitions. A great swimming club promotes a love of swimming and provides the ability to develop that

A great swimming club should give confidence in the ability of the team to coach and the swimmer to swim

A great team

A happy environment where every swimmer should feel equal regardless of ability. Clear direction and motivation from the coaches.

A happy environment where everyone gets on and supports each other.

A happy friendly place to be where everyone feels valued & welcomed if this is in place then achievements & success will come.

A happy place that develops our children to the best of their ability in a safe, pleasant atmosphere.

A happy, safe environment where they are helped and encourage to improve and grow.

A member of a friendly, supportive team.

A motivating and supportive programme that garners a passion for swimming.

A network of professionals encouraging individuals to reach their potential while making new friends

A place to love swimming and flourish

A place my children look forward to going to each day

A place that makes swimming fun and promotes development

Overall, what makes a great club experience? (2of6)

A place they enjoy going to and want to be at, at 5:30am
 A place to explore alongside others like minded individuals.
 A place to see your child happy, whether they are winning medals or improving technique. Somewhere that acknowledges that each child is different
 A place where people feel safe and valued. Somewhere that communicates and listens to all levels. Varied, fun and progressive sessions.
 A place where they feel safe. can interact with peers and staff. Facilities feel clean and cared for
 A place where you can be yourself, can achieve your goals and be part of a team.
 A place where you can't wait to go to your next session. Friendly, welcoming and supportive
 A really fun place to work hard and belong to doing something you love
 A really great club feels like a safe and fun place for children to learn and grow. There is a culture of hard work and commitment, but with fun and a sense of team spirit
 A really great swim club should be one where the person involved feels like they are welcome and can share their goals knowing someone is going to help them reach them. It is an environment where the swimmers feel they want to dedicate their time and energy to.
 A really great swimming club feels like a community in which you feel safe and accepted in doing what you want and somewhere where you can be given the best help to achieve your goals
 A really great swimming club feels like everyone competing and comparing themselves to the others in the group that is around the level as me.
 A rewarding experience and career and opportunity to train up to the highest level (Olympics)
 A safe and friendly space to do what you love and to achieve your very best with people who care about you

A safe and inclusive environment to learn, develop and be challenged to perform to their best ability.
 A safe place to work hard, learn from mistakes and be encouraged to reach for individual aspirations.
 A safe space to learn, develop and thrive with supportive and encouraging coaches. Ability to make friends and learn about your own limits and beyond.
 a safe space, where you feel you are a developing at a comfortable pace for you. to feel confident to communicate with your coach about worries or concerns and feel supported by everyone
 A safe, fun, relevant environment and coaches who are competent and enable the person to progress and understand their progression and next step for progression. Progression is celebrated.
 A safe, inclusion environment where swimmers can achieve their individual goals, make friends and have fun
 A second family, a safe place where you feel welcome and that you can contribute to.
 A sense of belonging
 A sense of belonging and being part of a team where everyone is valued
 A sense of belonging. A pride in being a member. Perhaps some competition or galas with other clubs to promote identity.
 A supportive and encouraging environment for all involved, ultimately where fun can be had
 A supportive club where there are opportunities to complete (in swimming AND water polo)
 A supportive environment that recognises success, effort, achievement whether that's through competition success or simply improvements in training. You should also feel like it's ok to miss sessions in order to enjoy other activities/have family time rather than aiming for 100% attendance.
 A supportive family style environment where people are there for each other

and we celebrate each other's achievements but are there to pick each other up when things aren't going so well. Meeting people where they are at.
 A supportive group with an excellent workout which teaches you new skills and keeps you active
 A supportive inclusive environment which promotes enjoyment and progress and love of the sport.
 A supportive, happy, inclusive place where the swimmers are positively trained and encourage and able to thrive and progress.
 A swimmer should feel a valid member of their chosen club. A swimmer should believe they can achieve anything through training hard and being supported by coaches and fellow club members. A swimmer should feel safe in their environment.
 A team of people who can support you through the sport and encourage you to do your best and have fun
 A trusted/committed/safe place for children to grow up whilst learning fundamental life skills and enjoying sport to its full potential
 A type of family, in every way!
 A valued part of the local community
 A welcoming club which provides good communication creating a partnership to get what they want to achieve
 A welcoming place, somewhere that knows the individual child, somewhere that can nurture and encourage the swimmer. Somewhere that will challenge the swimmer and provide opportunities, somewhere that can tailor training to the individual
 Accessible facility with competent coaches who are swimmer and parent centred.
 Affordable, quality tuition
 All children being included and treated equally.
 All inclusive, getting good coaching being able to talk to the coaches when things get too much i.e. exam time and balancing work load

All of the above
 All of the above mentioned.
 All of the above
 Always happy to go, don't want to miss a lesson. Keen to get involved in all events.
 Working hard to improve
 An easy experience, everyone is helpful and committed and is along the same journey as the swimmer
 An encouraging environment to progress.
 An environment that challenges and inspires commitment and success
 An environment where swimmers can improve whilst enjoying the experience
 An extended family
 A fun, friendly environment that is able to push swimmers to the best of their ability without it becoming a chore.
 An open environment where concerns are aired, swimmers have good relationship with coach, committee are approachable.
 Anyone can be the best them, improving, progressing and enjoying the swim.
 As a coach I have really enjoyed seeing and being part of the efforts made to strengthen and grow the club. I have witnessed swimmers' success and take pride in my role helping them to achieve this.
 Awesome and fun.
 Being include no matter the level you are swimming at, such as full club gala.
 As well as having a support network that we there to help develop every swimmer
 Being part of a community with purpose, which achieves, has great role models and a string team identity through a feeling of belonging.
 Being part of a swim family, including everyone, encouraging everyone.
 Making new friends with a same interest as well as progressing with swimming.
 Belonging! Everyone engaged, supportive and helpful / friendly
 Both a challenging and enjoyable experience

Brings happiness and a sense of achievement.
 Burton is a very special inclusive club with great coaches that care about the children. We may not be a big club but because of the atmosphere I feel we punch above our weight
 Can't wait to get to the pool.
 Clear, informative, flexible and understanding of the needs of parents to adequately support their swimmers
CLUB THAT IS GOOD VALUE FOR MONEY ENJOYABLE ATMOSPHERE WITH APPROACHABLE COMMITTEE MEMBERS
 Coaches get involved at all levels and provide bespoke coaching to swimmers.
 Opportunities for progression for all ages and abilities.
 Coaches need to be supportive and believe in the swimmer. Set realistic goals that can be achieved. Good coach that sets different sets. Not the same boring things like kick and the child's weakest stroke e.g. backstroke. Not stigmatising a stroke that they don't like e.g., fly.
 Coaches' teachers that are technically competent and look after needs of swimmers with good support network.
 Decent pools with good pool times and organisational skills.
 Comfortable environment
 Communal, supportive and fun
 Community to enjoy a similar activity.
 Connected across all areas of the Club.
 Positive atmosphere and striving to do everything well.
 Creates a positive, supportive environment for all members and communicates what it is doing
 Don't know, haven't experienced it yet in 7 years of swimming.
 Dynamic, happy, mutually supportive and celebrates success
 Empowerment - so that the unbelievable becomes achievable. Awards - praise and recognition throughout the swimmer's journey. Tone: - Human, inspired, positive, assuring, authoritative

Overall, what makes a great club experience? (3of6)

but humble Language - Authentic, intelligent, encouraging, clear and progressive Purpose - To lead, educate, inspire and empower.
Encouraging and motivating but not overly serious and supportive of young swimmers whatever their goals. enjoyable
Enjoyment is key factor, so you need to be liking it. Good vibes/atmosphere goes a long way to achieving this. Include everyone and get people involved in different aspects of the sport
Enough support and encouragement to meet the next challenge, yet fun.
Enthusiasm and an enjoyable atmosphere
Enthusiastic to be there
Environment where you enjoy the process
Equal opportunities, sense of community, targeted, enthusiastic coaching
Every club needs every help from parents for its success, volunteers are very hard to come by these days. Most don't understand that it's the volunteers that run the club. Approachable volunteers who are not doing just for their swimmer but for all
Everyone feels a valued member of the group. It is the centre of their world. Everyone is getting better and smiling while they are doing it.
Everyone works together to help to produce a quality club with strong honest leadership.
Exciting, fun and interesting
Family
Family
Family
Family
Family - belonging
Feel involved and part of a team who are improving my child's swimming in a fun way
Feel part of a community, valued and friendships made.
Feeling like a family unit. More than just a swimming club. Somewhere we people feel safe and valued

Feeling like you are part of a big family. Being surrounded by amazing coaches, volunteers, swimmers & parents/guardians that support each other and are incredibly passionate for the sport not just the club. Seeing the support all swimmers of different ages & abilities give to each other.
Feeling like you are part of a community, feeling like you are improving and being noticed and having a good relationship with everyone involved with good communication with everyone
Feeling of being part of a team feeling of belonging, valued member of a team
Feeling part of a club being valued and coached to progress and achieve.
Feeling that it is a good organisation to be involved with and promotes the sports of aquatics in an enjoyable and supportive way without undue pressure
Feeling welcome, making friends, supporting each other
Feels like a sense of community and safe space
Feels like a supportive family environment where each member is challenged and pushed to reach their full potential and to deal with the ups and downs along the way.
Feels like they are a part of a large family. Internal but friendly competition. Everyone striving to be better for themselves or their children
First Home
for me needs to be friendly, coaches listen to concerns from both child and parent, not bullying or favouritism from coaches or parents
For me the friendly atmosphere between coaches' swimmers committee and parents makes a club bond and feel like a club
For the swimmer, the training should be challenging but attainable and enjoyable. There should be opportunity to support teammates

Friendly, encouraging for all and being provided with an environment to develop regardless of skill
Friendly and supportive
Friendly and welcoming environment, where every swimmer is important.
Friendly and welcoming to all
Friendly club environment with an open dialogue with coaches and team. Good structure for progression with the club and opportunities for the YP to experience more within swimming.
Friendly competitive and inclusive
Friendly fun and inclusive
Friendly inclusive willing to move forward and update coaching skills ensure that the children are progressing at their speed in an enjoyable manner
Friendly, enthusiastic, happy club with appropriate support
Friendly, good for the children, financially worthwhile.
Friendly, supportive swimmers that want to help others to achieve, knowledgeable coaches and staff.
friendship and support
Fun
Fun
Fun and a family environment
Fun and enjoyable, where the environment and facilities are excellent.
Young people feel safe and look forward to going to the swimming lesson and learning.
Fun and fulfilling
Fun and rewarding
Fun but challenging, encouraging and rewarding. Focussing on the needs of the swimmer rather than the needs of the club.
Fun but hard work, reduction a sense of achievement
Fun, enjoyable, challenging, supportive, encouraging, hard work, disciplined, inclusive, empowered - positive physical & mental wellbeing.
Fun, caring individual coaching & creating a team environment
Fun, challenging and with opportunities to achieve goals

Fun, clear communication, guidelines, understanding.
fun, comfortable with the people around you, happy, competitive but not unkindly
Fun, friendly and supportive
Fun, supportive, challenging, encouraging and overall a nice place to come.
Fun!
Good club is run well, with continuous info being relayed back and forth at all times. All committee members available and approachable, with no showing of favouritism towards any one person.
good coach, teammate, culture, location & pool time
Good community united feel, with coaches who are skilled and recognise the different learning styles of the children so tailor their approach to each individual. Varied training sessions. Good facilities at decent times. Feels good to be a part of it.
GOOD FIRNDS WITH GOOD ATMOSPHERE AND CHEAPLY PRICED TRAINING
Good whilst you are swimming fast. As soon as a little blip hits clubs or they deem you too old to further your development, then they don't care. Loyalty counts for nothing. Too much training, too much pressure and very pushy serious coaches.
Great community, great coaching, chances to race and achieve, see growth
Great engagement and ambition, celebrating success in a competitive and supportive and empathic environment
Great family feeling, support from all members, well run finances and good communications
Great fun, swimming with my friends and working hard
Great structured sessions, clear goals, friendliness, good timetable, support from coaches, good facilities, good communication, targeted meets, team atmosphere at galas
Great training facility, less crowed team and very experienced coach
Happy environment

Happy place, somewhere to grow and prosper and learn life lessons through sport
Happy, secure fun with positive and encouraging technical training by coaches who see potential in all.
Have a good coach, where the children/ young adults get on with each other. A good competitive team that work together. Swimmers can feel comfortable talking about there challenges, aspirations and goals with the coach.
haven't experienced it so would not know
Having a good time at the club.
Having a great Head Coach drive a club forward and feel supported by the parents
Having attended several clubs in Shropshire (Ellesmere College, Shrewsbury and Oswestry) I can honestly say that Oswestry are an exemplar of a club that gets it right.
Great coach, active and engaged committee and happy swimmers.
Having fun. Smiling. Enjoyment. Feeling safe.
Healthy competition and eagerness to improve. Enjoyable and fun sessions.
Friendship and support. Age appropriate sessions
Home
Home, welcoming, friendly, you knows it's going to be tough but you're all in it together.
I call it my swim family, my daughter has made lovely friends and loves going
I have left the club No structure No welfare- my child left because the coach humiliated him and welfare/ chairman and coach swept it under the carpet.
The coach doesn't attend open meets and has no idea how to develop swimmers needs and goals. There is no planning to target meets. Training sessions are chaos.
Inclusive
Inclusive

Overall, what makes a great club experience? (4of6)

Inclusive and opportunities advertised early.
 Inclusive, friendly, flexible when real life intrudes, not too demanding of time
 Inclusive, fun and rewarding to be involved with it.
 Inclusive, fun, professional, talk of winning, encouragement, welcoming
 Inclusive, supportive environment with a variety of training, events and social occasions
 Inclusive, welcoming, fun, helpful, team ethos
 Inclusive, well organised, encouraging and engaging
 Inclusive. fact based decisions and communications that are transparent and open where everybody counts. A club taking responsibility for its decisions. A club taking responsibility for its duty of care for swimmers and not prioritising its club success and trophy count above all else
 Inclusivity, fun and lots of support and encouragement
 Inspired, motivated, understood
 Interaction between coaches, swimmers, parents, committee, openness, honesty
 It feels friendly and personable. It seeks to give create a personal experience for the swimmer taking into account their strengths and needs. It has coaches who enter into two way dialogue with parents and swimmers and understand the other pressures in a swimmers life such as school. It is a psychologically safe space where parents can ask questions and children can receive feedback in constructive helpful ways. It seeks to support the children's social relationships.
 It feels good for yourself in that you are improving, staying healthy and making friends.
 It feels like a big family with some swimmers progressing to teach and coach and for volunteers to feel valued
 It feels like a family. Like we all have one goal, to make the club the best it can be for all the children. To give them

positive experiences within swimming so they can be proud of their achievements.
 To give the children opportunities to create lasting friendships and learn to be part of something bigger than just themselves.
 It feels like a second family.
 It feels like a well oiled vehicle. Smooth running and any bumps are well ridden.
 It feels like Bridgnorth - Bridgnorth is great. I sit next to lots of parents at other clubs who say their club are much stricter and shout at kids. Bridgnorth is not like that, much more relaxed and they still seem to get great result. My kid loves going to Bridgnorth and that will keep him swimming after his teenage years development.
 It feels like fun environment, with strong friendships fir the swimmer. Am environment that challenges the swimmers , but with a high level of support
 It feels like something you want to do, even when you feel down about other things.
 It feels like they are part of a family.
 It feels like you belong somewhere that is pushing you to do your best
 It feels like you have the support and resources that enable you to succeed in whatever goal that is. That could be performance, fitness, socialising etc.
 Clubs usually can't cater to all, so a great club is one that outlines what it aims to do for its members, and does all it can to achieve that.
 It has great team spirit, with good communication between swimmer coaches and parent, great motivation and coaching staff
 It is a happy welcoming club for everyone involved. As well as swimming there is a focus on team building and social to help gel together. This is achieved in the club my child swims at !
 It is a place where the swimmer can go, enjoy themselves whilst working hard
 It makes you feel good about what you do

It should be a fun place to be. There should be challenges and competitions to enter both for the swimmer individually and Team galas. To promote friendship and teamwork when swimming.
 It should feel inclusive at all levels, have structure to evolve and develop swimmers of all abilities, have a clear plan and purpose.
 It should feel like a family, where everyone is doing his own important part for each other, everyone and all the team. And it's not like a boring routine, but like finding new ways for improvement and growing together as a team every day and every session.
 it should feel like a second home with lots of support, inspirations, motivation.
 Friendly and welcoming. care for children and their achievements. Coach must be closely involved with his team. Support them all the way from training sessions to competitions.
 it should feel like there is no barriers to achievement, for both the coaches and the swimmers. we are all working to improve together with a clear plan and outcome.
 It should make the person feel involved, inspired and enthusiastic, feeling like an equal member of the club to their peers.
 It's fun and satisfying. This should remember a life long love of swimming, it's like being a member of a family where everyone enjoys swimming and wants to create a supportive environment where swimming is a fun and rewarding experience
 It's feels enjoyable to be making you want to push yourself to the best you can be
 It's feels like a second family and support network, where the people involved look after and out for each other sharing everyone's achievements and helping each other to achieve
 It's fun, rewarding, challenging, with great friendships.

Just making it inviting and warming, that the child wants to learn. Always encouraging them so they can move on. I think groups should be smaller especially when they are just starting out learning to swim.
 Learn new skills and develop current skills
 Like a family
 Like a family
 Like a family
 Like a family, creating friendships that extend beyond swimming
 Like a family; supportive, caring and encouraging.
 Like a family.
 Like a fun escape from other stresses like school/work, and somewhere they feel comfortable being themselves
 Like a second family
 Like a second family: supportive, competitive and inspirational
 Like a supported and trustworthy community bringing fun, success and skills
 Like a valued member of a community.
 Like an extension of the player's team
 Like being part of a family of like minded people
 Like family
 Like it isn't a chore, and you are progressing
 Like they belong, are valued and respected irrespective of pbs and medals, and know what's going on and why.
 Like you are a part of something special
 Like you're part of the team at any level
 Makes all the time and hard work worth while
 Makes you feel like you want to be there not to much pressure
 My children have developed a passion for swimming. They have been inspired to improve technique and times so that they can go on to be successful at competition.
 My son has only ever been with this club and can not fault the coaches at all. He is very happy here and enjoys the

camaraderie with his team mates even when competing against them there is no animosity towards one another
 My sons best friends are his swimming mates. Enjoys the rewards
 Never really had this as it is always so stressful with how people want things doing and it is there way or not a tall.
 Not at that stage yet (only been with club a few months)
 Not really like the club we are at not sure
 One big family
 One in which young people develop their swimming skills to the best of their abilities, have opportunities to compete and receive the best possible support from their coaches
 One that allows all to flourish and develop a love for the sport to continue into later life. Feeling part of a community and something bigger than just a swimming club
 One that sees and values the swimmer as an individual, and not just concerned with the faster ones that will win medals
 Open and honest
 Opportunities to progress and improve, encouraging environment, opportunities to compete
 Organised, professional, athlete focused, able to keep hrs work and fun in balance.
 Orion.
 Part of a big family where everyone is available to help and make you feel part of the club
 Part of a great team where the coaches, swimmers and parents support each other to have fun, enjoy the sport and make good progress
 Part of a team.
 Particularly with teenagers the mark of a great club is when they are always enthused to go to every session. To win them away from their TVs, phones and PlayStations the club has to offer an almost perfect blend of social interaction with challenging and competitive swimming

Overall, what makes a great club experience? (5of6)

Passionate coaches who really enjoy what they do. Coaches who dedicate time and attention to all their athletes regardless of their level. Friendly and respectful Parents that are willing to collaborate. Parents who respect coaches and vice versa. Apply and promote kindness and respect among all involved (coaches, parent and kids) About a year ago my daughter was on a team that really put her down to the point she decided to swim no more. In fact, she stopped swimming for more than 3 months. We change to a different club NBSC and now she is back in the water beating all her records. HAPPY CLUBS MAKE GREAT ATHLETES Passionate, focussed on developing each individual, excellent communication, opportunities, inclusion Personal touch of the head coach on the training Positive energy that encourages and rewards hard work while keeping it fun Positive experience Positive experience overall Professional, considerate, inclusive and good planning Proud and happy to be part of such a great club. Proud to be part of the club, and swimming family. happy to provide my children with the opportunity to progress their swimming skills to the best of their ability. Rugby is a small club where it feels like a family, encouragement and support from everyone including team mates, coaches and parents Safe and fun and to come away feeling good. Safe, friendly and achieving its potential with the resources available See above Sense of belonging and a family unit associate with swimming to support and encourage and watch improvement and growth in the discipline. Happy 😊 Sense of belonging and enjoyment

Sense of community and ownership Should be fair to all and a nice place to go(should be) no favourites Simple to run, happy Masters Swimmers and a good social scene Somewhere I enjoy going to Somewhere people want to be because it has a positive atmosphere Somewhere safe where you feel part of a team/club. Somewhere you feel that you are being acknowledged, that you can see hard work being rewarded and that you can progress. A place that is fun as well as challenging. Somewhere that you want to go to and want to volunteer to help out with because it's enjoyable. Somewhere they feel they belong and enjoy being part of a team. Encouragement from coaches, parents and fellow swimmers and generally being recognised as part of the team Somewhere they want to be, where they have club mates but also friends, and where they are pushed in a supportive way to achieve their best (whatever level that might be at). Somewhere to improve skills and have opportunities to compete Somewhere we can all be safe and feel part of a team. Providing great facilities, training, galas, meets and activities inclusive to all. Somewhere where someone wants to be, go to and not be pressured Somewhere where they find like-minded people, strive to do their best and feel like they belong. Whilst having fun! Somewhere where they look forward to going to train and happy to be part of the team Somewhere where they want to go to train, feel like they are getting positive input from coaches and team mates, and a club atmosphere Standing together on the poolside as a club to cheer individual and relay teams and doing your own swims in that scenario. Supported, encouraged, want to achieve

Supportive atmosphere for all involved. Setting challenges for the swimmers to achieve to maintain interest and commitment. Supportive inspiring and a community Supportive not only in how the swimmers are doing in terms of competition and training, but willing to understand as well what else is going on in the swimmers life that could affect their performance in training and competition from time to time Supportive, inclusive, friendly, encouraging to all who train. Not just those who compete. Not all winners compete due to costs involved. Supportive, with great communications Swim to grow Swimmers, coaches, volunteers and helpers all working together to ensure everyone is happy, motivated and enjoying their time at the club and wants to attend to continually develop and improve. Swimming can involve the whole family, not just the participant. It is important that there is a clear communication path between the swimmer, coach and parents. It's important that the club has a clear culture and that it also acknowledges what is best for each individual swimmer to get the best results. The club needs coaches who have an understanding of all individual needs and can tailor their training to get the best results. There must also be fun elements that are attached to their training. Team ethos, commitment to ongoing development and respectful behaviours That the coaches believe in the child. Give positive feedback to help them progress. Let the swimmer pick their own events in races with guidance not be told what to do. Friendly atmosphere. That the effort put in is recognised and celebrated That they are learning and having fun in equal measures That they are made welcome & involved

That you are part of a really great team The young person feels secure confident and happy They all have lots of fun but sometimes struggle when they don't know what else they need to do to move forward They always want to train and feel positive about themselves and their abilities. They have lots of fun They are given plenty of variety in training with great coaches. That everyone feels included. That they have well organised sessions at a reasonable time and that they her enough pool time. They enjoy the experience and feel the benefit of regular attendance through improvement and social interaction. They feel important and valued and can be the best they can be .to try and understand that individual They feel inclusive and receive a fair and safe place to train. They are given opportunities to achieve their goals and are supported by a team around them. They feel like part of a family. All there to support each other to help the children to achieve and experience these Learning opportunities They look forward to the next lesson and are happy at the end of each session To be happy to go and train. To be involved in a safe working environment, where staffing relationship with athlete is paramount. Information at all levels are passed to swimmer parent, reducing politics around the environment. Coach and committee approachable and issues dealt with ASAP and not left to fester. To be part of a community and get involvement and support To be part of a family, to be included and accepted no matter how good a swimming somebody is. To have happy swimmers enjoying their sport with excellent support from the coaching team. Training should be feel like a normal part of the day, not a chore or something in

the way, that's when you know it's a good club. Training with no pressure to attend set number of sessions, have a light-hearted as well as serious approach Very inclusive, welcoming, safe and with an ethos of excellence. Vibrant, part of a family/community, fun Want to go all the time look forward to it We had an amazing club with Brian as a coach. He was supportive and driven and the children loved him. He was the drive behind a great club. If you had bothered to investigate all sides and ask current swimmers, you would of had a whole different story!!!! He was and is amazing. The lies and swim England have destroyed our club and opportunities in our area for children!!! Very very let down by swim England Welcoming, supportive, sharing , forward thinking and inclusive Welcoming and feel part of a team Welcoming and safe Welcoming at all levels. Communication Volunteering Welcoming environment where you are respected and supported to participate. welcoming fun and supportive environment that is not just focussed on the upper end swimmers and a fair scale of fees Welcoming, a place they want to be at, somewhere that's pushes them to achieve more than they think they could do, celebrates the wins Welcoming, friendly, positive and fun and equal to all. Well organised, good standards, safe and a happy environment where they are able to train, compete and have fun Whatever their role in the Club is they feel it plays a part in the Club's success. When a child has aspirations from a young age to be the best they can be in the sport of swimming and they invest time, commitment & energy into it you want them to be given fair opportunities and access quality coaching in a

Overall, what makes a great club experience? (6of6)

supportive environment. Where a child demonstrates specific talent, for example distance swimming, you would hope that training would complement this: one size does not fit all and it is grossly unfair that some get preferential treatment over others.

When swimming club respect a person and do the club award system equity and same for everyone

When the child, parent and coach work together and there are opportunities to celebrate achievements together as a whole club.

Where a young person is positively motivated to attend, they are praised for twirl achievements and supported to make progress. Their coaches and parents have a good relationship. And they are encouraged to participate in

different ways, competitions, training and social events, in a fair and enjoyable way.

Where everyone is valued and given the same opportunities. A cohesive team, built through communication, a common goal and most importantly fun!

Willingness to participate and wanting to be involved

Wrekin is like one big family

You are appreciated and acknowledge at every level, ability and position.

You are part of a team, everyone striving to move forward as a collective. Having fun and supporting each other.

You can see the child developing. Access to high quality training. Parents are not kept at arm's length and interact with the coaches

You feel like you're part of a team and included

You are feeling like a part of the team and you are treated equally to others.

And it doesn't matter what financial status you have or background.

You need to enjoy being at the club
You want to be there! There's no doubt about turning up to train or compete for them