



**Scottish Water**  
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## Evaluation Report by Integratis Consulting Ltd

December 2025



Prepared for



**Scottish Swimming**

**INTEGRATIS**  
CONSULTING



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# 1. Executive Summary

The period 2015–2025 marks a decade of delivery for the Scottish Swimming Learn to Swim (LTS) Framework, supported by Scottish Water and delivered in partnership with a network of local authorities, leisure trusts and independent providers across Scotland. Over that time, the National Framework has become firmly embedded as the national standard for high-quality swimming instruction and a cornerstone in achieving Scottish Swimming’s vision that *Everyone Can Swim*.

Across the ten-year period, with participation now at over 94 per cent of pre-pandemic levels at over 83,000 per year and continuing to rise. What began in 2015 as a coordinated approach to improve quality and consistency in swimming lesson delivery has evolved into a nationwide movement – one that supports inclusion, develops confident teachers, strengthens club transitions and nurtures Scotland’s next generation of swimmers. *“The Framework isn’t a one-off project; it’s a continuous journey. We never stop learning, and that’s what keeps us improving.” Lesley Hendry, Leisure and Culture Dundee.*

The evidence from this evaluation demonstrates substantial and sustained impact:

- **Participation and reach:** Consistent growth from 53,000 children in 2017 to more than 83,000 in 2024, supported by 29 local authorities and over 160 pools nationwide.
- **Quality and consistency: Child centred approach that promote** The six components of a quality Learn to Swim environment – Culture, People Development, Partnerships, Programme Management, Facilities and Pathways – are now deeply embedded across participating providers.
- **Inclusion and equity:** The award-winning #SeeMyAbility campaign has transformed perceptions of disability inclusion, with three-quarters of children with additional needs now learning in mainstream classes.
- **Workforce development:** Recruitment and retention remain challenges, yet targeted campaigns and improved education resources are raising awareness of swimming as a viable and rewarding career.
- **Partnership and advocacy:** Collaboration between Scottish Swimming, Scottish Water and local partners has generated exceptional national visibility, with media reach exceeding 3 billion impressions and strong engagement around water safety, health and the social value of swimming.

Beyond participation metrics, the Framework has demonstrated measurable *social value* – improving community wellbeing, supporting water safety awareness and providing a sense of belonging for families.

The partnership's strength lies in its shared purpose and adaptability. Through pandemic disruption, facility closures and economic pressures, the collective commitment of Scottish Swimming, Scottish Water, providers and teachers has ensured that swimming has remained a life skill accessible to all.

As the Framework enters its next phase (2026–2036), the priority is to build on this solid foundation: scaling up school swimming, addressing workforce capacity, strengthening data and impact reporting, and continuing to embed inclusion and wellbeing at the heart of every programme.

In ten years, the National Framework has not only taught a generation to swim – it has created a confident, inclusive, and sustainable swimming nation for Scotland's future.

## 2. Introduction

### 2.1 Scottish Swimming

Scottish Swimming is the national governing body for Swimming, Diving, Masters Swimming, Open Water Swimming, Artistic Swimming, and Water Polo in Scotland. Scottish Swimming work inclusively with partners to achieve their vision:

*'Everyone Can Swim'*

Since 2015, the National Framework has aimed to provide high-quality, consistent, and inclusive swim instruction across Scotland. Backed by Scottish Water, it is a central strand of Scottish Swimming's vision.

Scottish Swimming is seeking to commission an independent, mixed-methods evaluation to assess the Framework's performance and outcomes. This will inform national strategy, shape local delivery improvements, and support the next phase of investment and development.

### Overview

Scottish Swimming invited proposals to evaluate the impact of the National Learn to Swim Framework, with specific focus on assessing progress since the [2018 review](#). The following report explores the quality, reach, and effectiveness of the programme in increasing participation, improving inclusion, strengthening partnerships, and contributing to financial sustainability.

### Project Objectives

- To assess the national and local impact of the Learn to Swim (LTS) Framework (2015–2025).
- To analyse data and gather stakeholder insight on delivery, satisfaction, and outcomes.
- To identify areas for future improvement and produce practical recommendations.
- To deliver high-quality outputs including a national report, local insights, visual summaries, and accessible data files.

## 3. Background Context

### 3.1 Strategic Context

The creation of the National Learn to Swim Framework was driven by the belief that every child should learn to swim and that quality learn to swim environments, created through improved qualifications, CPD and sharing good practice were essential to deliver the vision

The National Learn to Swim Framework had as its raison d'être the introduction of a life skill. This is embedded into the three central pillars of Scottish Swimming:

- Participation
- Clubs
- Performance

The Framework was developed with the aim of achieving quality standards of provision and recognising best practice nationally. The National Framework was developed by Scottish Swimming in consultation with partners and launched in April 2015.

### Best and Randak Associates Report 2018

Best & Randak Associates conducted an independent evaluation of the National Learn to Swim (LTS) Framework. The following summarises the key findings of the evaluation and highlights the key outcomes identified at that stage of implementation.

#### Quality of Programmes

- 70% of parents rated teaching as good or excellent; 73% of managers also rated delivery positively.
- Workforce well qualified: 52% of teachers held UKCC Level 2 or above; 89% had at least one year's experience.
- Concerns highlighted: large class sizes, class cancellations, inconsistent teacher quality, poor communication with parents, and lack of recognition (certificates/awards)

#### Participation Levels

- Estimated 60,000+ children were enrolled nationally.
- 95% of managers reported local increases in numbers.

- Baseline and tracking data were inconsistent, limiting the ability to measure overall reach.

### Partnership Working

- Partnerships between Scottish Swimming and local authorities/trusts were described as strong and effective, regarded by stakeholders as governing body best practice.
- Particularly valuable in rural/island areas where collaborative support was essential.

### Links to Clubs

- 88% of managers believed LTS prepared children well for clubs; 53% of parents expected their child to reach “club ready”.
- At the time, there was limited evidence of actual transitions to clubs.
- Some tension was noted between teachers and coaches, with clubs questioning the technical readiness of swimmers.

### Programme Content and CPD

- The syllabus, resources and progression model were strongly endorsed by teachers and managers.
- CPD was widely implemented but uneven in impact: 55% of teachers felt it had improved practice, while 41% saw no change.
- Perceived progression bottlenecks where levels were considered too broad.

### Delivery and Customer Experience

- Parents were satisfied with children’s enjoyment (82%) and progress (67%).
- Teachers with experience of previous models were less positive, with many seeing no improvement or decline in delivery efficiency.
- Key issues included communication, timetable flexibility, and perceptions of value for money.

### Inclusion and Equity

- Opportunities were increasing for children with disabilities and those in areas of deprivation, but progress was variable.
- Data limitations restricted fuller analysis of reach and impact in these groups.

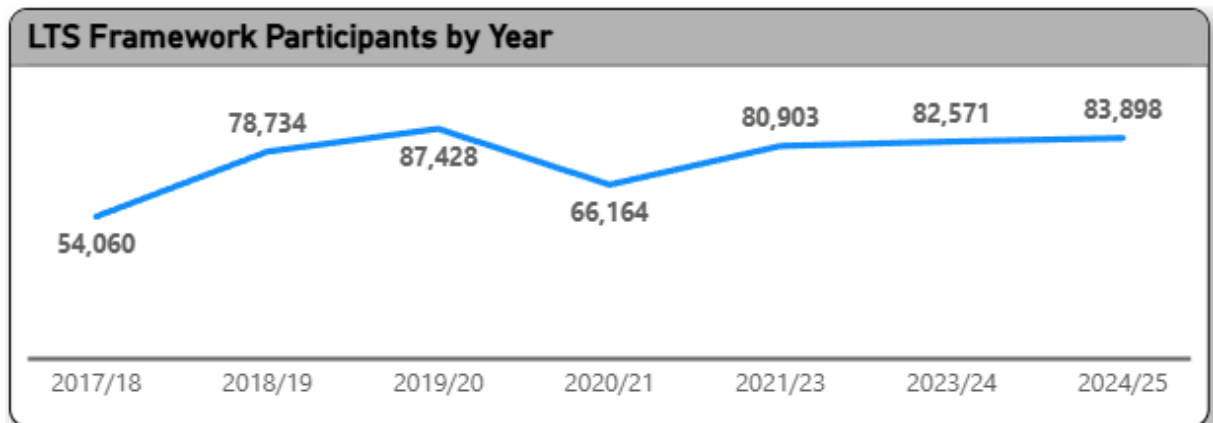
## Unintended Outcomes

- Positive: stronger national consistency, increased collaboration, and greater recognition of swimming as a life skill.
- Negative: frustrations around communication and progression; tensions between clubs and commercial providers.

## 4. Analysis of Participation

### 4.1 Trend mapping and Benchmarking

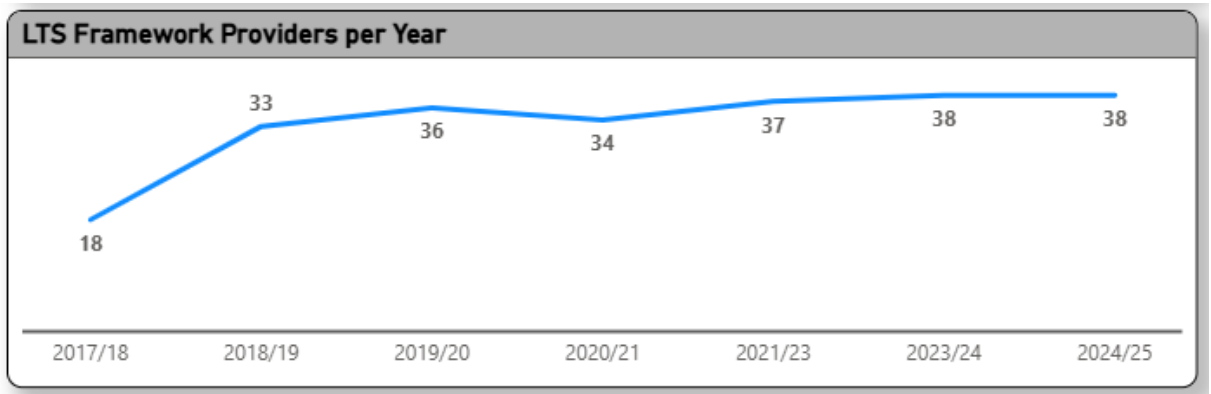
Based on data provided by Scottish Swimming we have analysed the number of participants in the LTS programme from the start of the relationship with Scottish Water in 2017 through to 2024/25. The summary of this analysis is shown in [Figure 4-1](#) below. As can be seen the programme enjoyed significant growth in the period up to the Covid19 Pandemic with total participants rising from 54,000 to 84,000 representing a 56% growth in participants over the total period. It should be noted that the scheme reached a high in excess of 87,000 participants in 2019/20 prior to the impact of the Covid Pandemic.



**Figure 4-1**

The impact of the pandemic can clearly be seen with participation numbers dropping to 66,000 (24%). Whilst recovery has been strong with participants increasing back to 84,000, it should also be noted that this has been done where there have been significant limitations on the availability of water space.

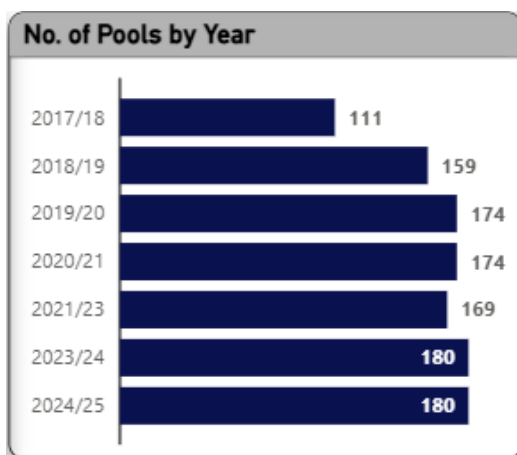
In line with the growth in participation, there has also been a steady growth in the number of LTS Providers and the number of pools available to the programme. [Figure 4-2](#) shows the year on year changes in the number of Providers. As can be seen the number of Providers has shown growth increasing from 18 to 38 representing an increase of 111%, with the mix of Local Authority/Leisure Trusts, Higher Education Establishments and independent Clubs and Swim Schools shown in [Table 4.2](#)



**Figure 4-2**

Provider Type	2017/18	2024/25
Local Authority / Leisure Trust	17	26
School		2
Single Site Operator	1	6
Swim Club		1
University		3
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>38</b>

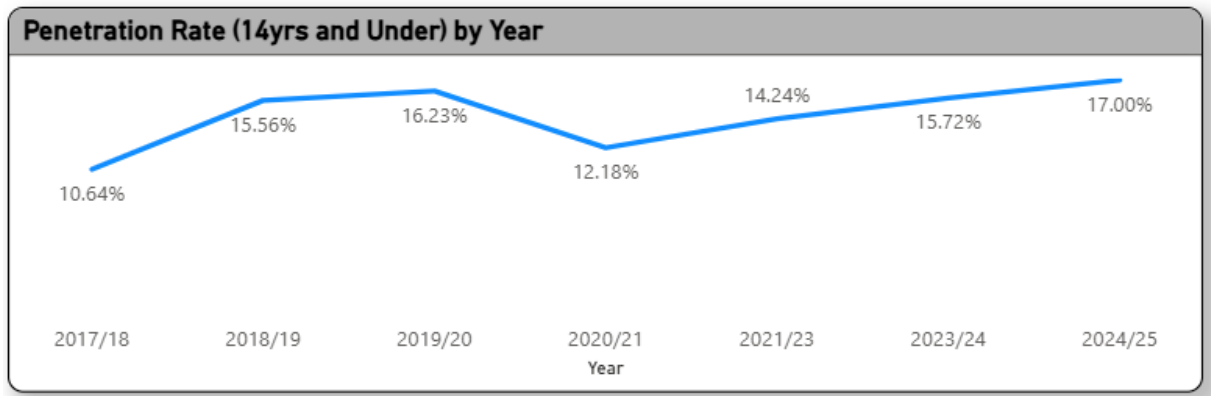
**Figure 4-3** shows the year on year changes in the number of pools available to the Programme with the number of pools available growing from 111 to 180 representing an increase of 62%. This has been down to the increased number of providers participating in the programme.



**Figure 4-3**

## 4.2 Penetration Rates of Local Populations

In this section we look at the penetration rates of LTS across Scotland. This analysis combines providers from each LA area to allow us to look at the number of LTS participants as a percentage of the total population of 14 years and under. **Figure 4-4** shows the % of population penetration for 14 years and under over the last 8 years. As can be seen with the exception of the period during Covid there has been a steady increase in penetration rates from 10.6% to 17.0%.



**Figure 4-4**

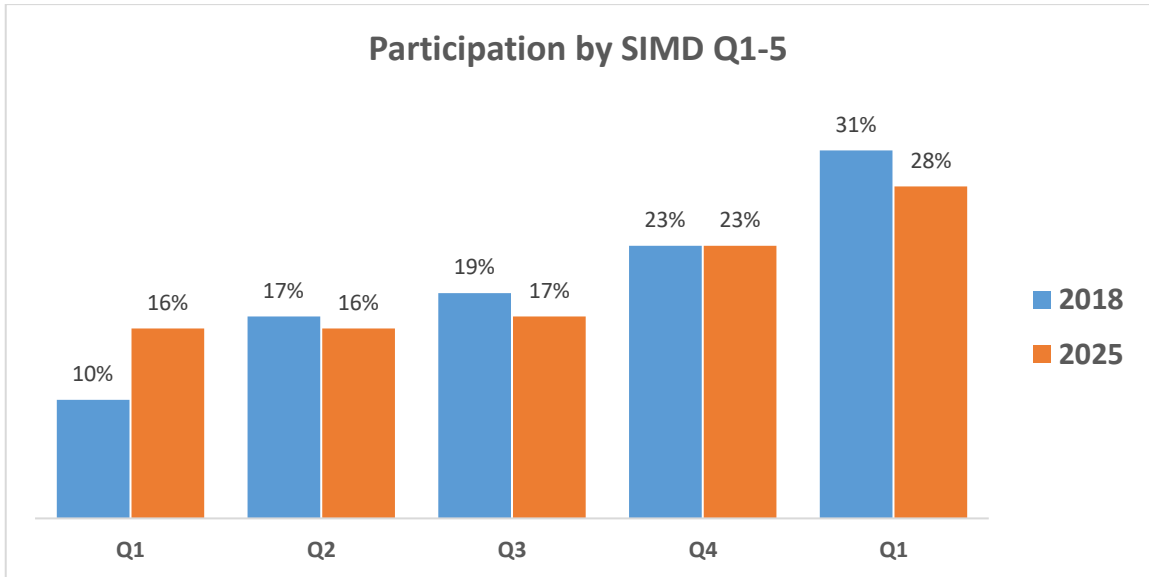
## 4.3 Participant Profiles

### Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) identifies areas in Scotland where people experience the greatest levels of disadvantage across multiple factors such as income, employment, health, education, access to services, crime, and housing. It divides Scotland into five Quintiles from Quintile 1 (most deprived) to Quintile 5 (least deprived) allowing for analysis of participation and outcomes by area-based deprivation. SIMD provides an evidence-based way to assess equity and inclusion across communities.

Further information can be found at: [www.gov.scot/simd](http://www.gov.scot/simd)

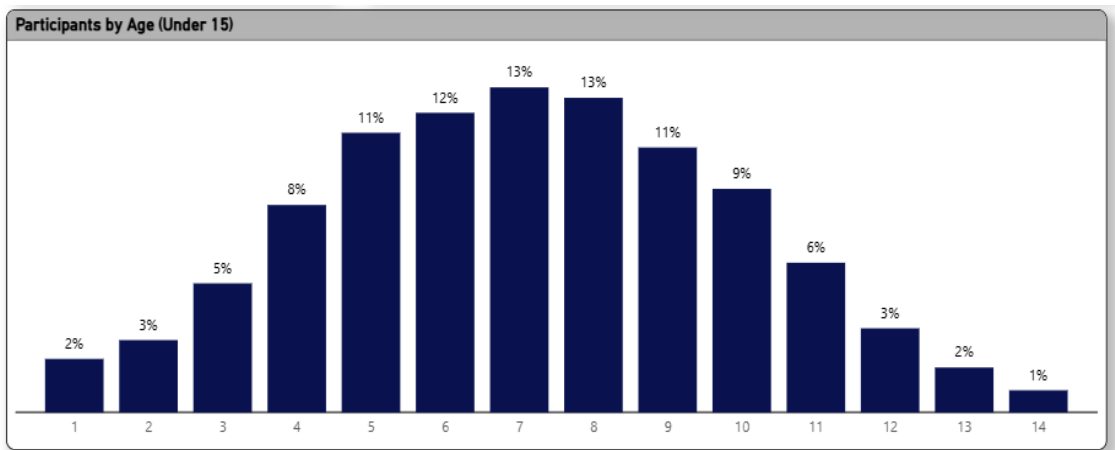
Based on a sample of 30% of the total LTS participants the following analysis looks at the breakdown of participants in terms of SIMD and Age. **Figure 4-5** Shows that the percentage of LTS participants from SIMD Q1 has risen to 16% from a percentage of 10% in 2018.



**Figure 4-5**


Whilst the improvement in levels of participation from SIMD Quintile 1 is welcome, there is still room for further improvement in terms of targeting participations from those who live in areas of deprivation in order to ensure the goal of ‘everyone can swim’ can be achieved.

In terms of age breakdown **Figure 4-6** gives a full breakdown. As can be seen the majority of participants (69%) come from the 5-10 year old age bracket with over 10’s being 12% and Under 5’s 18%.



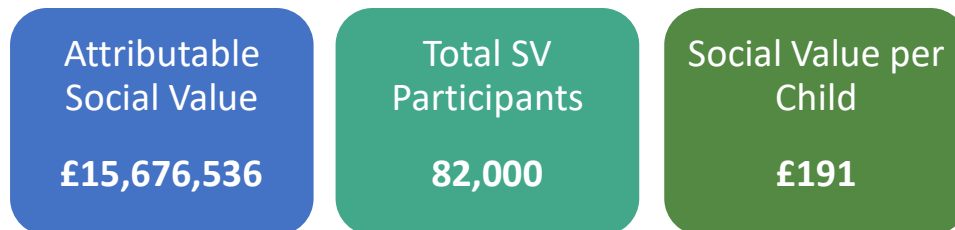
**Figure 4-6**

## 5. Predicted Social Value

Through analysis of the participation numbers we have been able to calculate a predicted Social Value of Scottish Swimming Learn to Swim Framework. For this analysis we have used the  Social Value Calculator V4 (SVC4).

SVC4 is aligned with the updated national model of the social value of sport and physical activity in England published by Sport England in 2024 which differentiates between primary values to the individual through improved wellbeing and secondary values to society in terms of healthcare and wider cost savings. The updated national model has prioritised wellbeing and health values as they are outcomes with the highest quality evidence and capture some of the most significant benefits sport and physical activity generates for individuals and society.

**Figure 5-1** shows the predicted Social Value of the programmes running across Scotland based on 2024/25 performance. Whilst indicative, it does show a significant value being generated in term of improving the individual wellbeing of those children taking part in swimming lessons.



**Figure 5-1**

As can be seen the total predicted Social Value equates to £191 per child taking part in Learn to Swim programmes.

## 6. Marketing and Campaign Effectiveness

### Marketing and Campaign Effectiveness

The Learn to Swim partnership with Scottish Water has delivered a series of high-profile national campaigns that have been central to strengthening the National Learn to Swim Framework's visibility, credibility, and growth. Campaigns have centred around inclusion, water safety, workforce recruitment, and advocacy, all of which have underpinned its success.

### Save Our Pools

The #SaveOurPools campaign has been critical to the National Framework's sustainability, providing a strong national voice during a period of financial pressure for leisure operators. By linking the importance of swimming pools to community wellbeing, water safety, and child development, the campaign achieved extensive social media reach, generating parliamentary debate and local action to protect facilities. Focus group participants described this advocacy as 'absolutely key' to keeping swimming on local agendas, and providers reported it strengthened their ability to argue for investment amid waiting lists and demand growth.

### Learn to Swim Month

Learn to Swim Month has become the key annual event for raising the National Framework's profile. It celebrates local delivery and unites campaigns on water safety, inclusion, and recruitment under one national banner. This campaign has high engagement led by National Learn to Swim Ambassadors Duncan Scott OBE and Toni Shaw, whose journeys embody lifelong participation and progression. More than three quarters of providers rated the framework's quality and national coordination as good or excellent, reflecting the value they place on initiatives like Learn to Swim Month and national campaigns.

### See My Ability

Inclusion sits very much at the heart of the National Framework. The award-winning #SeeMyAbility has transformed perceptions of disability inclusion in aquatics.

By 2025, 81% of children with a disability were participating in mainstream lessons. Powerful examples of teachers with disabilities who came through the LTS framework as participants, further demonstrate its impact on the workforce and inclusion culture. Focus groups highlighted this campaign as 'genuinely changing attitudes' and embedding inclusion as everyday practice.

## Drowning Prevention Week

Water safety remains the foundation of the Learn to Swim Framework. Delivered annually within the lesson programme in partnership with Scottish Water, RLSS, and RNLI, the campaign highlights the delivery of dedicated water safety lessons and parent resources. In the parent survey, over 70% cited water safety as their main reason for enrolling their child, confirming the campaign's effectiveness in aligning with parental motivations and reinforcing the Framework's core water safety message at the heart of the programme.

## Never Too Late

The Never Too Late campaign expanded Learn to Swim's reach to adults, linking swimming to life skills, health improvement and local exercise referral schemes. Focus groups highlighted the role of adult lessons in promoting health and mental wellbeing while maximising pool use during quieter periods, a benefit both for operators' efficiency and for inclusive access to life skills. Its effectiveness as a campaign is best demonstrated by the 8% increase in adults in the Learn to Swim Programme recorded in 2025.

## Become a Swim Teacher

The #BecomeaSwimTeacher campaign continues to tackle workforce shortages, celebrating teaching as a valued, flexible profession. While quantitative outcomes are still emerging, provider survey comments were strongly positive, citing improved visibility of the role and appreciation for Scottish Swimming's support through the SSTQ and mentoring. Focus groups noted this campaign's positive cultural impact on workforce perception and career pathways.

## Conclusion

National campaigns have proven effective in reinforcing the National Framework's identity, credibility, and social value. Early visibility-building campaigns established trust; thematic campaigns delivered behavioral change; and advocacy and workforce campaigns now sustain the National Framework's long-term impact. The partnership with Scottish Water continues to add credibility, enabling a unified national voice and consistent branding that has amplified water safety and community engagement.

## 7. Stakeholder Engagement

### 7.1 Survey Results

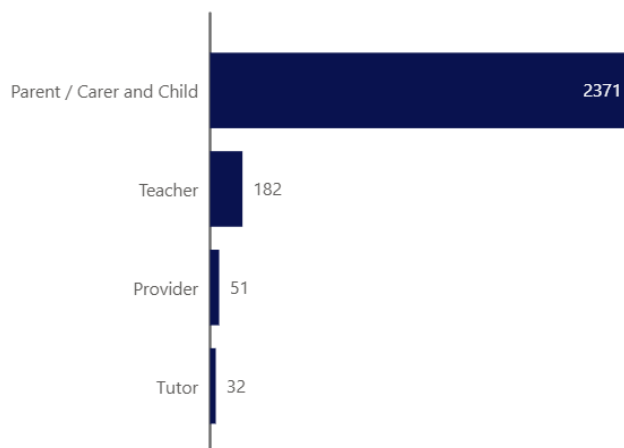
In order to get a thorough understanding of the impact of the framework we undertook an extensive survey that was issued to all current LTS Framework Providers across Local Authorities, Leisure Trusts, Universities, Swim Schools and Clubs. The survey was broken down to 3 distinct areas Providers, Teachers/Tutors and Parents/Children.

The survey received an excellent response, during the 3 weeks which the survey was open, with 2,636 completing it, broken down as 31 different Providers (including 51 respondents representing Managers and Co-ordinators), 182 Teachers/32 Tutors and 2,371 Parents/Children. The following section analyses the results across these 3 headings.

Responses were received from all key stakeholder groups:

- Providers and programme managers – including Local Authorities, Leisure Trusts, Universities, Swim Schools, and Clubs.
- Teachers and tutors – including Scottish Swimming Teacher Qualification (SSTQ) educators.
- Parents and children – representing the largest proportion of responses.

This broad profile ensures that the findings capture a representative view of the Framework from multiple perspectives. A summary of the profile is shown in [Figure 7-1](#) below.



**Figure 7-1**

From the 2,636 survey responses, the largest proportion of respondents were parents and carers, predominantly women aged between 25 and 54 years. Almost half (49%) were aged 35 - 44, with a further 19% aged 45–54 and 15% aged 25–34, reflecting the age profile of adults most likely to have children participating in swimming lessons. Women made up 84% of respondents, with men accounting for 15% and a very small proportion identifying as non-binary or preferring not to state their gender.

The survey population was largely White Scottish/English/Welsh/Northern Irish/British (82%), with 7% from other White backgrounds, 5.5% identifying as Asian/Asian Scottish/Asian British, 1.5% as mixed ethnicity and just over 1% as Black/African/Caribbean/Black British. A small proportion identified as Arab or other ethnic backgrounds, while 2% preferred not to provide this information.

Seven per cent of respondents reported that their child had a disability or long-term condition that limited their activities, with 30% describing the impact as significant. The most commonly reported disabilities were learning (43%) and physical (29%), with smaller proportions reporting sensory or other conditions including Autism and ADHD. The vast majority of these children (90%) were taught in mainstream swimming lessons alongside their peers.

Geographically, the survey achieved wide coverage across Scotland. This included representation from large trusts and councils such as Glasgow Life, Fife Sport and Leisure Trust and South Lanarkshire Leisure, as well as smaller rural providers including Shetland Recreational Trust, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and Atlantis Leisure(Oban).

### 7.1.1 Universal Findings

This section summarises universal findings from the survey across all stakeholders, with a focus on areas where Scottish Swimming can exert national influence. It provides an overview of response profile, overall satisfaction, shared strengths, and the key challenges that can be addressed through national leadership.

#### Overall Satisfaction and Advocacy

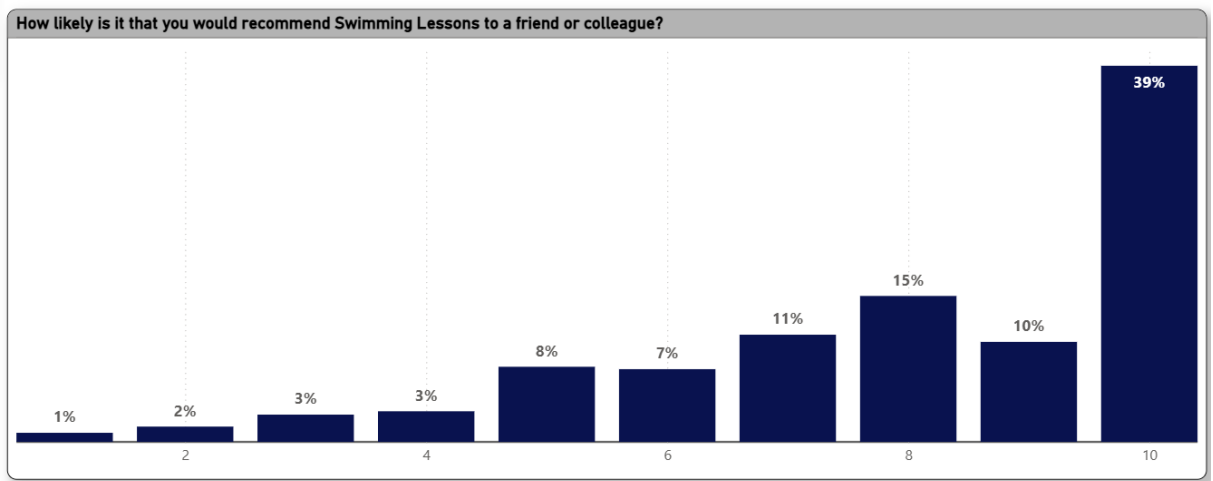
Across all groups, the LTS Framework is viewed positively. The programme achieved a **Net Promoter Score (NPS)** of +24, a strong indicator of advocacy and reputation within the sector. This positive score shows that families are generally willing to recommend the programme to others, although there is room to strengthen satisfaction further by improving communication, availability, and transition opportunities.

NPS is a recognised measure of participant satisfaction and loyalty, based on the question: *“How likely are you to recommend the Learn to Swim programme to others?”* Respondents rate their likelihood on a scale from 0 (not at all likely) to 10 (extremely likely).

Responses are categorised as:

- **Promoters** (scores of 9–10): highly satisfied and likely to recommend the programme.
- **Passives** (scores of 7–8): generally satisfied but less likely to actively recommend.
- **Detractors** (scores of 0–6): less satisfied or dissatisfied.

The NPS is calculated by subtracting the percentage of Detractors from the percentage of Promoters, resulting in a score between –100 and +100. A positive score generally indicates more promoters than detractors, reflecting higher overall satisfaction and advocacy.



**Figure 7-2: Net Promoter Score**

Generally NPS is more commonly used in the health and fitness or overall leisure centre environment and covers overall experience. Whilst more mature users of the measure will generally be expecting a positive score of 50-60, any positive score is deemed to be a positive result. Few coaching programmes look at NPS as an indicator but this could be developed into a useful statistic.

The results show 508, 24% of respondents being detractors (scoring 0-6), 529, 26% being passives (scoring 7/8) and 995, 49% being promoters (scoring 9/10). As can be seen there are a significant number of ‘passives’ which are excluded from the calculation. Therefore, it would be hoped that with a bit of focussed attention and more regularly measuring NPS many of these could be converted into ‘promoters’ more in line with the overall satisfaction levels highlighted in [figure 7-2](#) showing 79% of respondents enjoying their swimming lessons.

## Universal Strengths

Despite differences in perspective, stakeholders consistently identified three national strengths of the Framework:

- Children’s enjoyment – 79% of parents rated enjoyment 4–5, supported by more than 70% of teachers, and strongly endorsed by providers.
- Skill progression – 66% of parents and more than 70% of teachers reported clear evidence of progress.
- Programme quality and consistency – between 74% and 82% of providers rated programming effectiveness, teacher effectiveness, and quality of learning as good or very good.

These strengths demonstrate that the Framework has successfully embedded a culture of quality, enjoyment, and progression across Scotland.

## Universal Challenges (National Perspective)

While many challenges raised in the survey are operational and vary by provider, three areas emerged as priorities that Scottish Swimming can directly influence at a national level:

- Parent communication
- Only 43% of parents rated provider communications highly.
- Teachers and providers also cited communication with families as a weakness.

National role: Scottish Swimming can address this by developing communication toolkits, parent information packs, and clearer messaging around progression and pathways.

### **Progression into clubs and lifelong swimming**

- While 66% of parents expect their child to complete the LTS pathway, only 27% strongly intend to move into a club.
- Providers confirmed that club transitions remain inconsistent.

National role: Scottish Swimming can strengthen pathways through national campaigns, “Try Club” initiatives, and closer integration with clubs as well as explore alternative programmes beyond club ready for children not wishing to progress to a club but wish to continue swimming for fun and fitness. In addition, there is currently an absence of consistent national data on children progressing from the Learn to Swim pathway into clubs, therefore it’s currently challenging to measure trends, long-term impact or identify regional variations.

By developing a national system for tracking transitions from Learn to Swim delivered by partner providers into their wider swim participation programmes and community clubs would provide valuable data, insight and evidence to inform future investment and pathway development.

### **Teacher development and support**

- Teachers and tutors highlighted gaps in CPD, particularly around interpersonal skills, ASN support, and digital delivery of qualifications.
- Parents echoed this, with lower confidence in teachers' broader child support (56%) compared with swimming skills (69%).

National role: Scottish Swimming is responsible for SSTQ design and CPD frameworks and can refine these to improve readiness and sustain consistency.

### **Summary of Universal Findings**

The survey findings demonstrate that the Framework enjoys broad endorsement and is achieving its national objectives in terms of quality, enjoyment, and skill progression. At the same time, challenges around parent communication, club progression, and workforce development are widely shared across groups. These findings highlight the areas where national leadership, guidance, and resources will have the most significant impact in the next phase of the Framework.

## **7.1.2 Providers**

Through the providers questions we were seeking to understand the impact and effectiveness of the Framework. Questions focussed on the quality of the Framework, the quality of the training and support provided and the impact of being a partner of Scottish Swimming.

The survey results demonstrate that providers value the Framework highly for its role in raising standards and ensuring consistency across Scotland. A large majority rated programme effectiveness, teacher effectiveness, and quality of learning positively, with between 74% and 82% awarding scores of 4–5.

**Figure 7-4** below illustrates how providers rated different elements of the National Framework. The majority of ratings fell within the “Good” and “Excellent” categories, with particularly strong results for impact on operational and strategic targets, quality LTS environment and child experience.. Lower ratings were more evident for communications and the resources available to providers, highlighting areas where further support could strengthen impact.

How would you rate the following elements of the Learn to Swim Framework (Top 5)

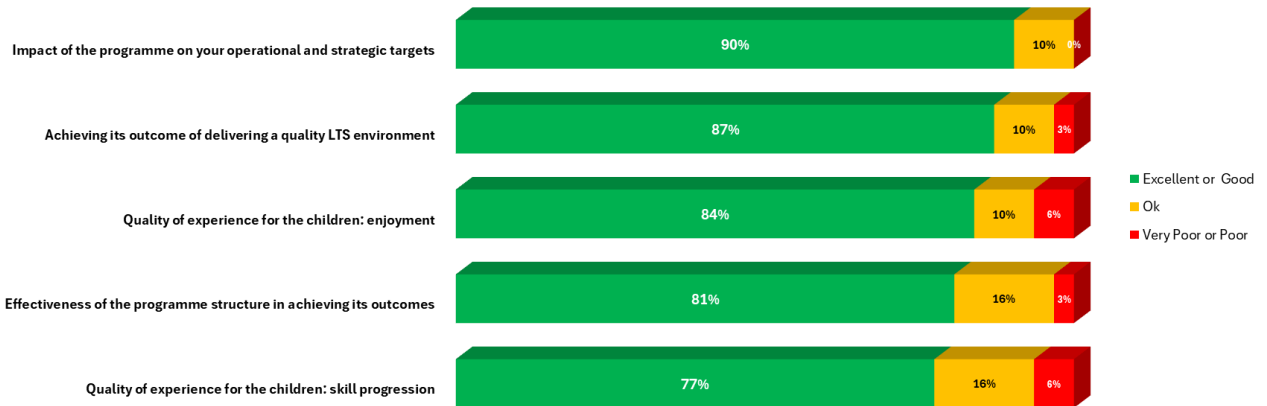


Figure 7-4

These findings suggest that the Framework has delivered against its core objective of establishing high-quality learn to swim environments.

Scottish Swimming’s support structures were also recognised. The annual provider conferences received an average satisfaction score of 4/5, indicating that they are an effective mechanism for sharing best practice and building a sense of national identity.

Resources and ongoing support scored slightly lower (3.9/5) but were still considered valuable in helping providers maintain consistent standards.

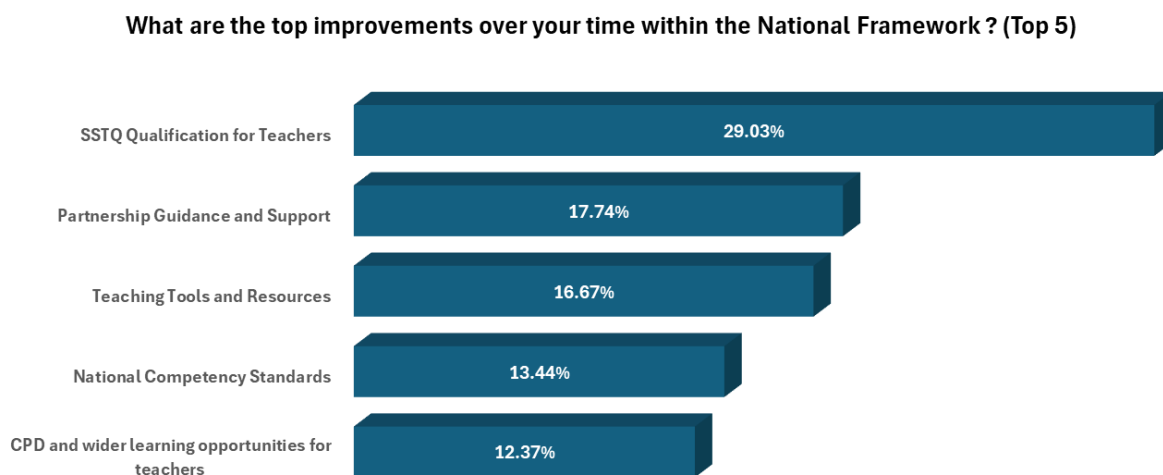
The Scottish Swimming Teacher Qualification (SSTQ) was a particularly strong feature of the provider feedback. 77% of providers agreed that the SSTQ aligns with their organisational goals and reflects the standards expected of teachers nationally. Providers noted that the qualification has been instrumental in delivering consistency, particularly by ensuring that all teachers are trained to the same benchmark. However, feedback also highlighted areas for refinement, including the need for more practical teaching experience within the course and more streamlined processes for integrating newly qualified teachers into programmes.

While overall satisfaction was high, providers identified several challenges that limit the Framework’s impact at a local level. Only 43% rated communications with parents highly (4–5), with common concerns around the clarity of progress updates and responsiveness to queries. 63% were satisfied with lesson availability, reflecting ongoing pressures on pool time and teacher capacity. 56% were satisfied with teacher continuity, underlining a challenge in

ensuring consistency of instructors across lesson blocks. While these are operational issues, providers suggested that national guidance, model toolkits, and best practice examples from Scottish Swimming could help to address them.

Finally **Figure 7-5** below presents the areas that providers felt had improved most during their time within the National Framework, showing the proportion of respondents selecting each area among their top three choices. The Scottish Swimming Teacher Qualification (SSTQ) for Teachers was identified as the area of greatest improvement by 29% of providers, followed by Partnership Guidance and Support (18%) and Teaching Tools and Resources (17%). National Competency Standards (13%) and CPD and wider learning opportunities for teachers (12%) were also highlighted as key areas of progress.

These results suggest that providers particularly value the advances made in teacher qualification and professional guidance, which together underpin the overall quality and consistency of delivery. While other areas such as CPD and competency standards remain important, the emphasis on qualifications and partnership support reflects the sector’s priority on strengthening workforce capability and maintaining high teaching standards.

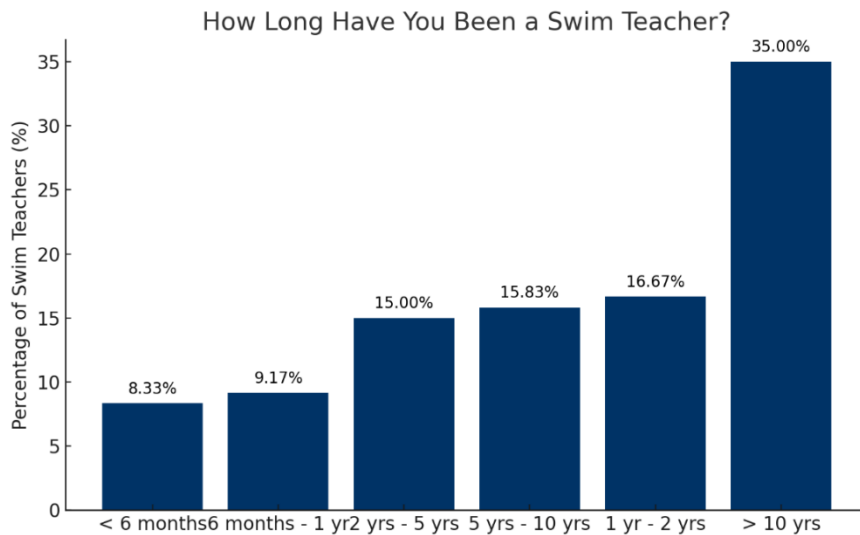


**Figure 7-5**

### 7.1.3 Teacher/Tutors

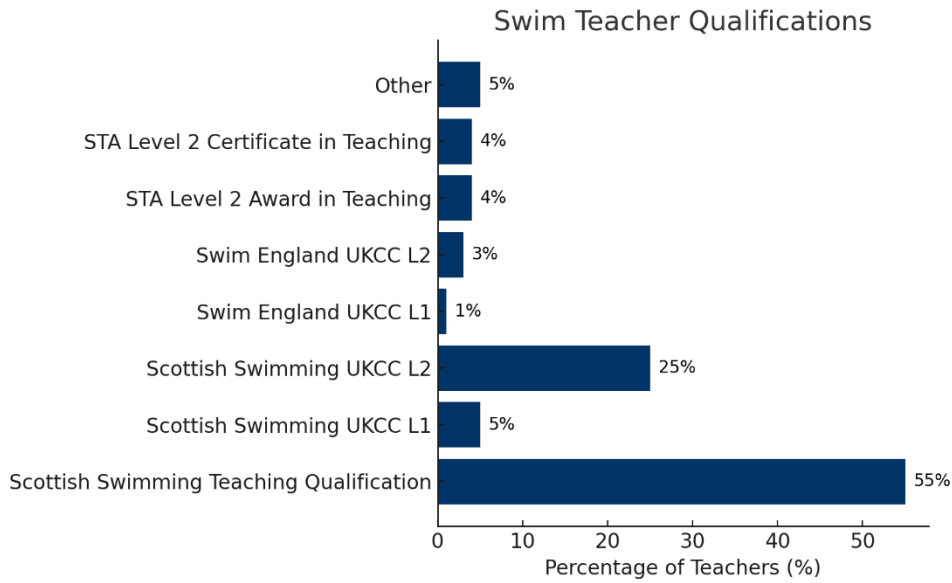
This section of the survey seeks to understand the impact having a National Framework has had on teaching delivery.

The survey results show a wide spread of teaching experience among providers as highlighted in **Figure 7-6** below. The largest group (35%) reported over 10 years of experience, highlighting the depth of expertise across the workforce. Just under a third of teachers had between 2 and 10 years' experience, with approximately 17% teaching for 1-2 years and less than 20% had been teaching for under a year. This mix of highly experienced teachers alongside newer entrants suggests that the Framework supports both retention of long-serving staff and the integration of fresh talent into the workforce.



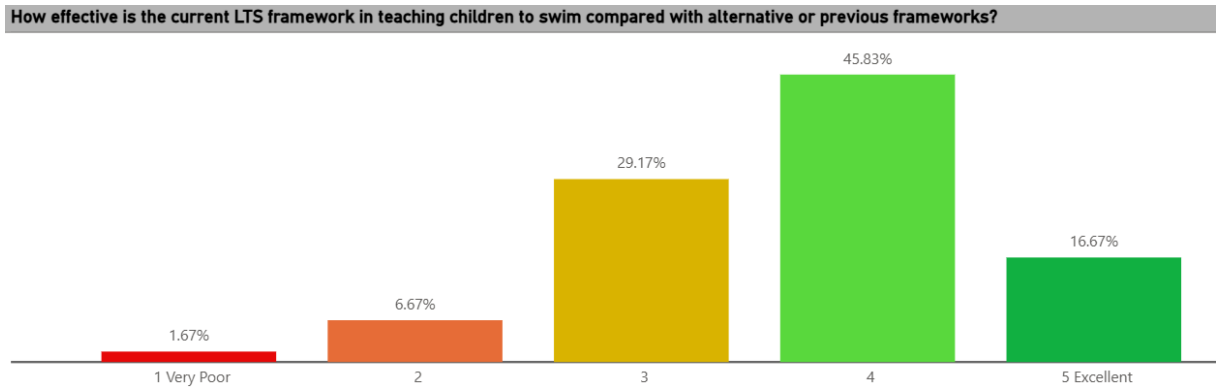
**Figure 7-6**

More than half of teachers who completed the survey (55%) hold the Scottish Swimming Teaching Qualification, highlighted in **figure 7-7** reflecting its position as the primary pathway into the profession in Scotland. Around a quarter (25%) hold the Scottish Swimming UKCC Level 2 qualification, with smaller numbers holding UKCC Level 1 (5%) or equivalent Swim England and STA qualifications. Only a small proportion (5%) reported “Other” qualifications. This distribution highlights the strong alignment of the workforce with Scottish Swimming’s national qualification framework, while also showing a degree of diversity from teachers trained through alternative routes.



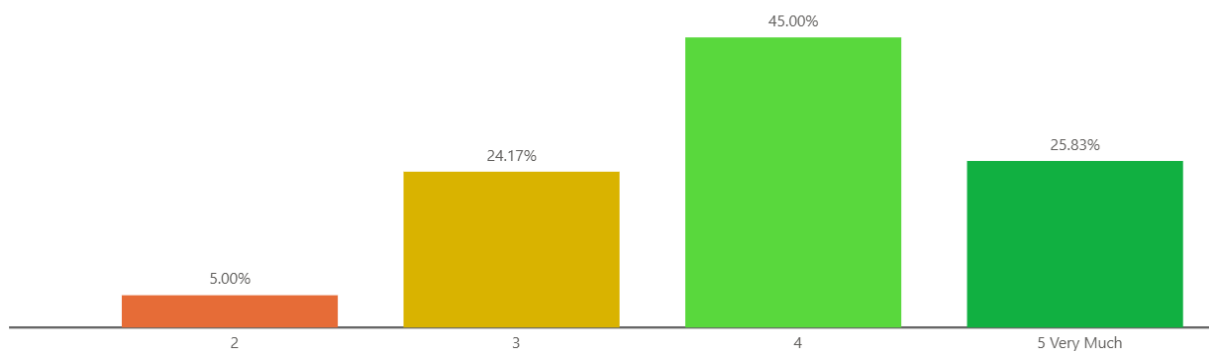
**Figure 7-7**

Teachers provided strong endorsement of the Framework as a tool for delivering quality lessons and improving outcomes for children. Compared with alternative independent programmes and previous Frameworks, the existing Framework was rated 3.7/5, and 3.9/5 for effectiveness in creating a quality learning environment as highlighted in [Figures 7-8 and 7-9](#) below.



**Figure 7-8**

**How effectively has the LTS framework achieved its outcome of delivering a quality learning environment?**



**Figure 7-9**

More than 70% of teachers also rated children’s enjoyment and progress as 4–5, confirming that the Framework is delivering tangible benefits in the pool.

Teachers also noted that the Scottish Swimming Teacher Qualification (SSTQ) has strengthened their professional confidence and skillset. However, opportunities for continued professional development (CPD) beyond the initial qualification were described as inconsistent. Coordination between roles (teachers, coordinators, managers) was another area where teachers felt the Framework could provide greater support.

Parents’ perspectives reinforced this message. While 69% expressed high confidence in teachers’ technical ability to support their child as a swimmer, only 56% felt the same about teachers’ broader support for their child as a person. This highlights a gap in interpersonal and inclusion-related skills. Teachers themselves identified a need for more CPD in supporting children with additional support needs (ASN), building confidence, and managing parental expectations.

Tutors and SSTQ educators echoed these findings. Practical and face-to-face elements of the SSTQ were highly rated (more than 75% scored 4–5), but online and Brightspace components were less effective (45–55% scored 4–5). Tutors reported that candidates consistently request more poolside practice (60%), improved course structure and flow (40%), and simpler digital systems (35%). These findings suggest that while the SSTQ has established a robust national benchmark, refinements are needed in course design and delivery. Some educators involved in the Framework also highlighted the need for stronger national networks and post-SSTQ CPD pathways to ensure sustained consistency in teaching quality.

## 7.1.4 Parents/Children

Through these questions we were keen to understand the motivation for parents to enrol their children in swimming lessons and how being part of a LTS programme has impacted children's lives. We also developed a section to understand the 'voice of the child' embracing the use of emoji's to gauge participants thoughts.

Parents provided overwhelming evidence of the value they place on swimming and the impact of the LTS Framework. As highlighted in **Figure 7-10** Water Safety was by far the strongest motivator for enrolling children, with 62 % selecting it as their first choice. Improving Swimming Skills also featured prominently, as well as developing confidence.



Other factors such as Enjoyment, Health and Fitness and preparing for holidays were less likely to be ranked first but appeared more frequently as second or third priorities. These findings suggest that while safety and skill development are the primary drivers for enrolment, families also value the broader wellbeing and enjoyment benefits of the programme.

**Figure 7-10**

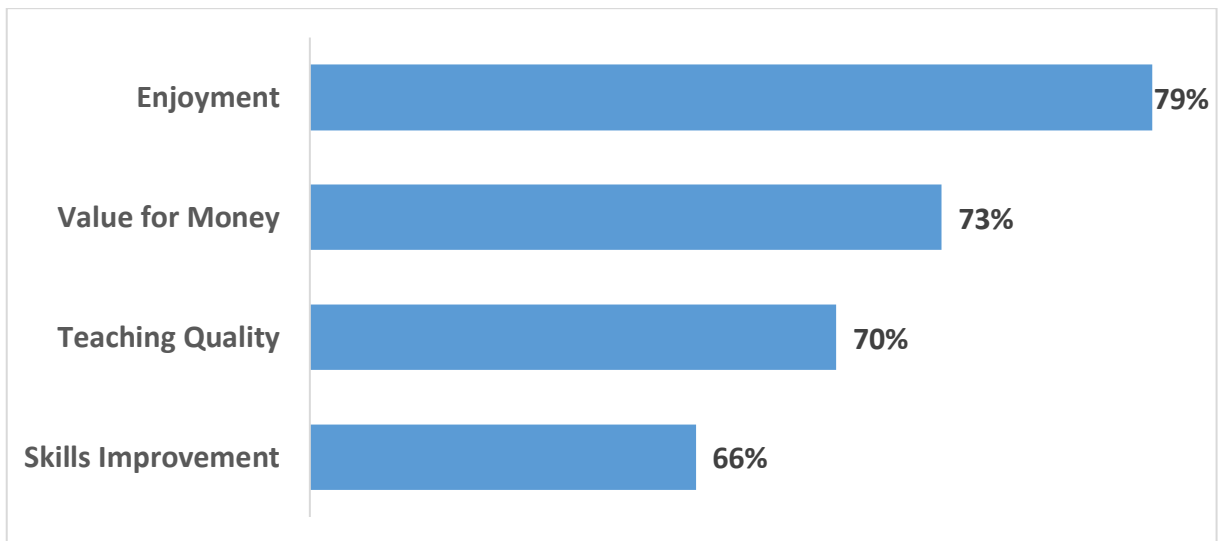
Furthermore, **Figure 7-11** shows parents identified Improved Water Confidence as by far the most significant impact of the Learn to Swim programme, with 69% selecting it as their top choice. Improved Skill Development was the next most important outcome, followed by increased self-confidence, showing the wider positive effects beyond core swimming ability.

These results highlight that while water confidence and skill progression are the central gains for families, the programme also contributes meaningfully to children's physical, social, and emotional development.



**figure 7-11**

Parents reported strong satisfaction with the quality of their children’s lessons, and when asked to rate various aspects of their child’s swimming lessons **figure 7-12** below shows the aspects that scored highest with good or excellent being selected.



**Figure 7-12**

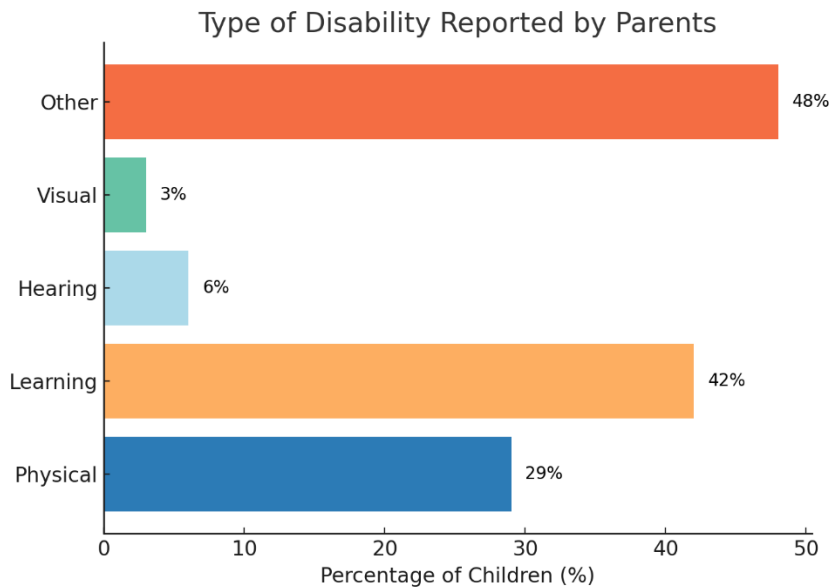
However, there were weaker results in areas relating to customer experience. Only 63% rated availability of lessons positively, reflecting capacity challenges, and just 43% rated communication with parents at 4–5. Feedback indicated that parents want clearer updates on their children’s progress, greater transparency on waiting lists, and more proactive communication about cancellations or changes.

Parents also highlighted the outcomes they observed in their children. The most significant reported impacts were improved water confidence, stronger swimming ability, and increased self-confidence. These benefits underline the social value of the Framework beyond technical skills.

Progression remains a challenge. While 66% of parents expect their children to complete the LTS pathway, only 27% strongly intend for their child to transition into a swimming club. This demonstrates that while the Framework is successful in teaching swimming as a life skill, there is a national issue with sustaining participation beyond lessons.

The survey also provided insight into inclusion. 9% of parents reported that their child has a disability or health related condition, broken down in **figure 7-13** below. Parents reported a range of disabilities among children participating in swimming lessons. The most commonly identified were other disabilities (48%) and Learning disabilities (42%), followed by Physical disabilities (29%). Smaller proportions reported Hearing (6%) or Visual impairments (3%). These results highlight that while a wide spectrum of needs is present, the majority relate to

learning or broader, non-specified including neurodevelopmental disorders. This reinforces the importance of inclusive provision and adaptable teaching approaches within the Learn to Swim Framework.



**Figure 7-13**

90% of children with a disability attending lessons participate in mainstream classes which is broadly consistent with the See My Ability Campaign trends. Parents welcomed this mainstream inclusion but also requested more tailored support, particularly for children with autism, ADHD, and physical disabilities.

#### Children’s Feedback

To ensure that the voices of children were directly represented in the evaluation, the survey included a dedicated section that used emojis to allow children to express their feelings about swimming lessons. This approach provided an accessible and age-appropriate way for children to share their experiences.

The majority of children reported high levels of enjoyment in their swimming lessons as outlined in [figure 7-14](#) below. 79% of children gave a positive response with only 13% giving a neutral response, while very small proportions reported lower levels of enjoyment (less than 7% combined). Overall, more than four out of five children expressed clear enthusiasm for their swimming lessons, underlining the programme’s success in creating a positive and engaging learning environment.

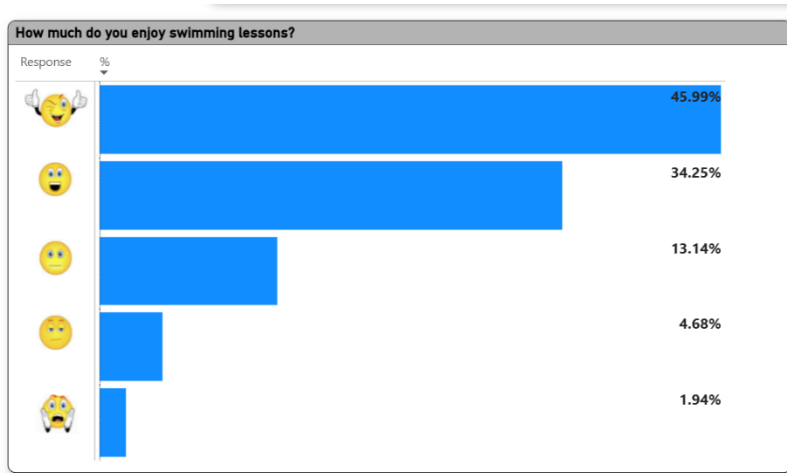


Figure 7-14

Most children reported high levels of water confidence as outlined below in [figure 7-15](#), with 82% expressing that they felt confident. Only 14% gave a neutral response, and fewer than 5% expressed low confidence. This suggests that the Learn to Swim programme is effective in building children’s comfort and assurance in the water, a core outcome of participation.

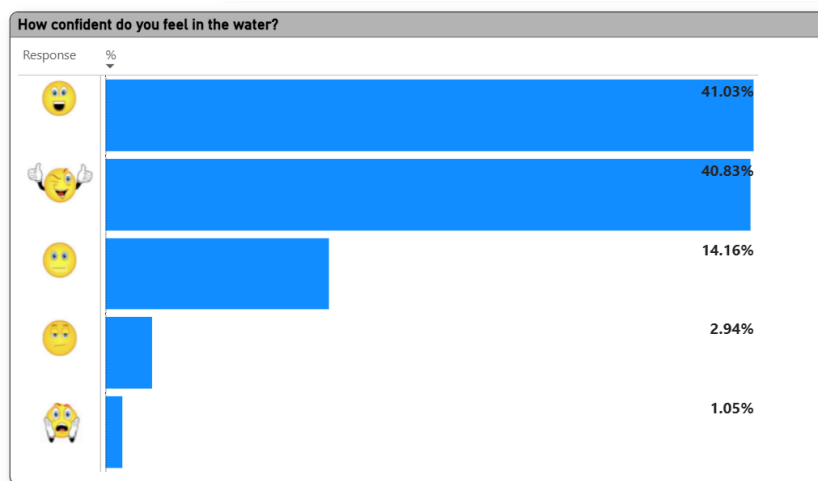


Figure 7-15

Children overwhelmingly recognised the importance of learning to swim as shown in [Figure 7-16](#). 87% of children saw learning to swim as either being very or extremely important. Only a small minority (under 5%) gave neutral or negative responses. This demonstrates strong alignment between the programme’s objectives and children’s own motivations, with swimming widely regarded as an essential life skill.

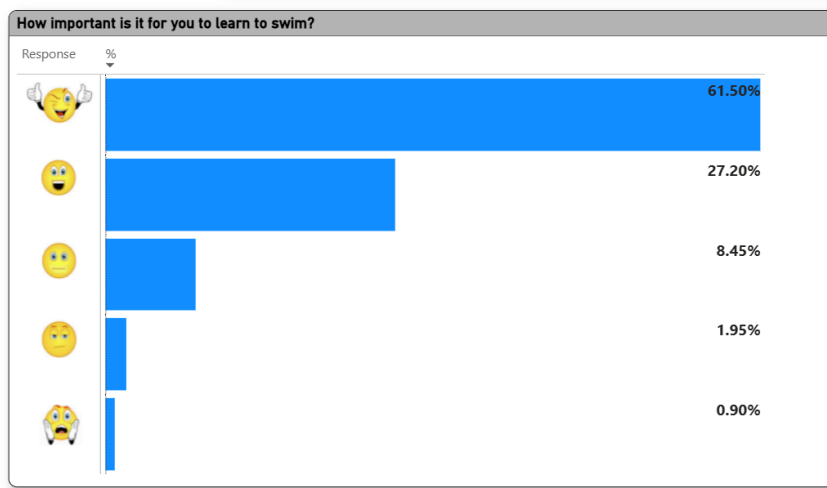


Figure 7-16

This child-centered feedback reinforces the findings from parents and teachers that the Framework is delivering enjoyable, engaging, and confidence-building experiences. It also highlights the importance of fun and social interaction as key motivators for young swimmers, in addition to technical skill progression.

## 7.2 Focus Group Findings

As part of the evaluation, eight focus groups were held with providers across Scotland, including managers and teachers from local authorities, leisure trusts, universities, and independent leisure operators. These discussions provided rich insights into the effectiveness of the Learn to Swim Framework, complementing the survey findings. The themes below are presented in line with the evaluation brief.

### Partnership and Wider Outcomes

The Framework was consistently described as a source of credibility and a “badge of quality” for providers. It has strengthened local partnerships with schools, clubs, health services, and water safety agencies, and has provided a stronger national voice when lobbying for investment or defending pool provision. Networking opportunities and national campaigns (e.g. Learn to Swim Month, Drowning Prevention Week, Save Our Pools, #SeeMyAbility) were highly valued, with providers highlighting their role in raising profile, saving staff time, and extending local reach. *“It wasn’t about being told what to do, it was about being supported.”*

**Lesley Hendry, Leisure and Culture Dundee.**

## Participation and Access

While participation has rebounded strongly post-COVID, demand continues to outstrip supply. Long waiting lists were reported in several areas, with limited pool space and workforce shortages acting as constraints. Providers noted particular challenges at entry levels, with older children re-entering programmes post-pandemic and creating pressure in mixed-age beginner classes.

School swimming remains a vital entry point, especially in SIMD1/2 communities, but provision is inconsistent nationally. Some local authorities offer only a small block of sessions, which is often the first and only pool experience for many children. Cost was also highlighted as a barrier, with swimming increasingly perceived as a “middle-class product” unless subsidised.

## Quality of Lessons

Providers praised the Framework for delivering greater consistency and clearer progression. However, issues remain with the breadth of Swim Skills 1, which covers too wide a range of abilities. Many providers have created local sub-levels (1a/1b, 2a/2b) to manage this, and several called for a national review to reduce pressure while avoiding over-complication. Parents sometimes struggle to interpret progress, particularly when they focus only on assessment criteria, leading to tensions with teachers. While teaching quality has improved overall, the Bronze/Silver/Gold awards were frequently described as confusing or undervalued.

## Impact

Across groups, the most significant impacts reported were improvements in children’s water confidence, skills, and safety awareness. The Framework was seen as raising standards, professionalising delivery, and embedding monitoring and accountability within providers. Wider benefits included better workforce culture, stronger business cases for investment, and parents’ increased confidence in provision.

However, retention remains a challenge. Many children leave after Swim Skills 2/3, once parents feel they are “safe enough” swimmers, or at P7/S1 when competing demands from other activities increase. Participants also highlighted that the breadth and time commitment of Swim Skills Level 1 is a barrier: the length of time it takes to progress can demotivate children and parents, reinforcing the case for splitting Level 1 into smaller stages to sustain engagement. Providers emphasised the importance of reinforcing the value of continuing lessons and broadening post-framework opportunities.

## Inclusion

There is strong commitment to inclusion, with most children with additional support needs taught in mainstream lessons. However, rising demand for ASN provision, especially for children with autism, ADHD, and hidden disabilities is creating pressure. Teachers often lack confidence despite existing CPDs, which were described as too generic. Providers requested more practical, scenario-based training, ideally delivered by specialists, along with companion resources specifically for ASN provision. Some operators have developed local inclusive pathways, but there was appetite for national guidance and recognition.

## Workforce Support

Workforce challenges were one of the most consistent themes. COVID-19 exacerbated teacher shortages, with some areas losing up to 40% of staff. Recruitment remains challenging, with fewer young people coming forward for training. However, there were also many positive examples of how local innovation and the Learn to Swim Framework are helping to rebuild and sustain the workforce. Mentoring, clear pathways, and early engagement are creating new routes into teaching, often inspired by those who learned to swim within the programme themselves. *“It’s so rewarding to see those you once taught now teaching others. That’s the power of the Learn to Swim Framework, it builds skills, confidence, and connections that last a lifetime.” Michelle Ashworth, liveArgyll.*

This real-life example from Dunoon reflects how the Framework is not only addressing workforce shortages but also fostering community pride and long-term sustainability through locally grown talent.

Opinions on the Scottish Swimming Teacher Qualification (SSTQ) were mixed: in some areas it was viewed as an improvement on the old Level 1/2 model, while in others it was described as costly, inconsistent, and producing under-confident graduates requiring significant mentoring. Many participants suggested a staged qualification pathway, splitting Level 1 into two parts to make entry more accessible and strengthen the recruitment pipeline. CPD opportunities were widely welcomed but described as repetitive, with demand for more advanced, inclusive, and digital content. Mentoring and peer support exist locally but lack national structure. A separate review of the SSTQ is currently underway, and findings from this evaluation will be shared to ensure alignment and that workforce recommendations are considered within that process.

## Overall Assessment

The focus groups confirmed that the Framework is viewed as a success in raising quality, consistency, and professionalism. Providers value the national identity, partnership with

Scottish Swimming, and the opportunities it creates for collaboration and lobbying. However, several areas were identified where the Framework could evolve further:

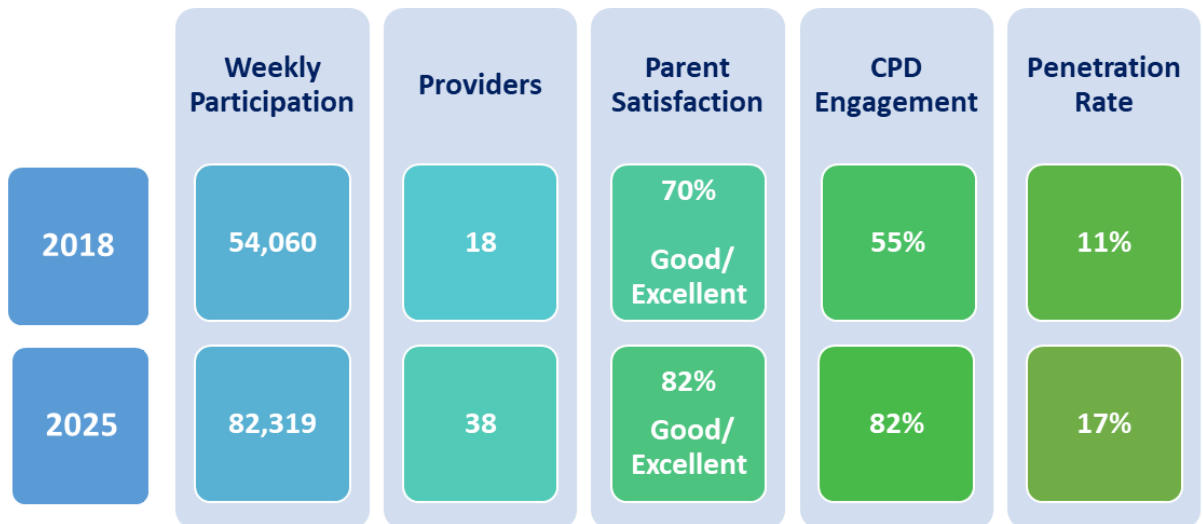
- Reviewing Swim Skills levels, particularly Level 1, to address ability range and time factor pressures.
- Renaming/redefining the “Club Ready” stage to reflect both competitive and recreational pathways.
- Enhancing CPD to focus more on practical skills, inclusion (autism/ADHD), and mentoring.
- Strengthening school swimming and access for children in SIMD1/2.
- Developing more consistent national data to evidence progression and retention.

## 8. Conclusions & Recommendations

### 8.1 Overview

The National Learn to Swim Framework (2015–2025) has delivered a transformative impact on swimming participation, quality, and inclusion across Scotland. Over its ten-year lifespan, it has evolved into a partnership initiative between Scottish Swimming and Scottish Water being nationally recognised model of best practice, contributing directly to public health, child safety, and community wellbeing.

This evaluation confirms that the Framework has achieved, and in several areas exceeded, the findings of the 2018 Best & Randak Review which is summarised in [Figure 8-1](#) below.



**Figure 8-1**

Progress has also been achieved against the broader outcomes to demonstrate stakeholder satisfaction, evidence social value, and provide robust, actionable recommendations to shape the next phase of the Framework (2026–2036).

## 8.2 Conclusions

### Participation and Reach

Participation has grown from approximately 54,000 in 2017 to over 83,000 children and adults weekly in 2025, representing a 55% increase despite pandemic-related disruption. The number of providers has expanded from 18 to 38, encompassing 180 pools nationwide, delivering full geographic coverage. The Framework now reaches an estimated 15.4% of the 14 years and under population within the participating Local Authorities, with an overall social value contribution of £191 per participant, equating to more than £15 million annually across Scotland.

### Quality and Consistency

The Framework has established a recognised national benchmark for quality and safety. More than 80% of providers and teachers rate programme effectiveness, teaching quality, and child experience as good or excellent. The Scottish Swimming Teacher Qualification (SSTQ) has professionalised the workforce, and CPD engagement has increased substantially. However, the evaluation highlights variation in regional support, mentoring, and communication that should be addressed to maintain national coherence.

## Inclusion and Equity

The Framework has achieved meaningful progress on inclusion, supported by campaigns such as #SeeMyAbility, with 66% of children with disabilities now learning within mainstream lessons. *“It’s lovely when you see other providers visiting us to learn from what we do. That’s what the Framework’s all about – sharing success.”* **Dianne Breen Sport Aberdeen.** Nonetheless, practical CPD and teaching resources for autism, ADHD, and complex physical needs remain limited. Participation among SIMD1–2 communities is below the national average, highlighting a continuing need for targeted, subsidised provision.

## Partnerships and Collaboration

Partnership working remains a defining strength of the Framework. The Scottish Water partnership has elevated public profile, enabled high-impact campaigns, and supported political advocacy through #SaveOurPools. Providers value the Framework as a 'badge of quality' which strengthens their case for local investment. Going forward, renewed regional engagement structures will be vital to sustaining this confidence and ensuring consistent support.

## Workforce and Capacity

Teacher recruitment and retention are critical challenges. The SSTQ has set a strong standard *“Students gain a Level 7 qualification and a guaranteed job with us at the end. It’s been huge for recruitment and retention.”* **Karen Baxter Enjoy East Ren** but can act as a barrier to entry due to cost and accessibility. CPD content is well received but at times repetitive, with demand for more advanced, practical and inclusion-focused material. Many providers are operating without a formal mentoring framework. A re-established national mentoring and quality assurance model, supported by a digital resource hub, would significantly strengthen workforce confidence and consistency.

## Progression and Pathways

While two-thirds of parents expect their child to complete the Learn to Swim pathway, only 27% intend to transition to a swimming club. The Framework has been successful in embedding swimming as a life skill but less so in sustaining long-term participation. Opportunities now exist to develop a broader 'Beyond Learn to Swim' pathway encompassing community, recreational, and leadership routes alongside competitive options.

## Stakeholder Satisfaction and Social Value

The Framework's Net Promoter Score of +24 demonstrates strong advocacy from parents, teachers, and providers. Participants reported improvements in children's confidence, wellbeing, and safety, reaffirming swimming's value as both a sport and a public health intervention. The estimated social value in excess of £15m highlights swimming's contribution to Scotland's wider wellbeing and prevention agendas.

## 8.3 Recommendations

### Participation and Access

Continue targeted expansion within SIMD1–2 communities through local partnerships and subsidy schemes. Strengthen links between school and community swimming to maximise capacity, coordination and progression.

### Framework Structure and Quality

Review Swim Skills Level 1 to create smaller, more achievable stages that sustain motivation. Standardise sub-level certification nationally to ensure consistency and reduce local administrative burden.

### Inclusion and Equity

Further develop the National Disability & Inclusion CPD Framework alongside Scottish Disability Sport. Promote the national repository of adaptable lesson plans and tools for teaching neurodiverse and disabled children.

### Communication and Parent Engagement

Introduce national Parent Communication Toolkits providing clear messaging on progress, expectations, and the value of continued participation. Refresh campaign messaging to emphasise enjoyment, wellbeing and lifelong engagement.

### Workforce Development

Explore a revised entry route to the SSTQ to widen access and address teacher shortages. Establish a national mentoring and quality assurance framework with regional mentors and digital support. Broaden CPD content to include interpersonal skills, inclusion, and retention strategies.

## Progression and Retention

Develop diversified 'Beyond Learn to Swim' pathways linking to clubs, recreational swimming, volunteering and leadership opportunities. Create a national system for tracking progression and retention to evidence long-term impact.

## Partnerships and Governance

Rebuild regional structures for engagement and communication to ensure equitable support. Continue joint advocacy with Scottish Water and partners on the social value of swimming. Embed social value measurement within annual reporting cycles.

## Data and Evaluation

Improve and extend the annual LTS Provider Data Return to monitor participation, equity and outcomes. Develop a national Social Value Dashboard to support local advocacy and investment cases.

## 8.4 Looking Ahead (2026–2036)

The Learn to Swim Framework has firmly established the infrastructure, partnerships, and quality standards necessary to realise Scottish Swimming's vision that 'Everyone Can Swim'. The next decade offers the opportunity to consolidate these achievements by:

- Embedding social value and health outcomes as key success metrics;
- Diversifying pathways to support lifelong participation;
- Ensuring the teaching workforce is valued, skilled, and adequately supported; and
- Guaranteeing that every child regardless of background, geography, or ability has the opportunity to become a safe, confident, and competent swimmer.