

Manchester and North West Disability Swimming Club

Policy for Managing Challenging Behaviour during Swim Sessions

The following definitions of challenging behaviour are taken from the website of the Challenging Behaviour Foundation:¹

‘Culturally abnormal behaviour(s) of such an intensity, frequency or duration that the physical safety of the person or others is likely to be placed in serious jeopardy, or behaviour which is likely to seriously limit use of, or result in the person being denied access to, ordinary community facilities.’

Source: Emerson, E (1995), cited in Emerson, E (2011, 3rd edition): *Challenging Behaviour: Analysis and intervention in people with learning disabilities*. Cambridge University Press

‘Behaviour can be described as challenging when it is of such an intensity, frequency, or duration as to threaten the quality of life and/or the physical safety of the individual or others and it is likely to lead to responses that are restrictive, aversive or result in exclusion.’

Source: Royal College of Psychiatrists, British Psychological Society, Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, (2007), *Challenging behaviour – a unified approach*. (Updated 2016)

Behaviour that challenges can be very distressing for a child or adult with learning disabilities and their family and carers. It is important to understand the reasons behind challenging behaviour and see it as a form of communication to know how to respond. It shows that something is not right for the child or adult and they need some help and support.

It is recognised that any swimmer might exhibit challenging behaviour but swimmers with significant learning disabilities may be more likely to present such behaviour. In addition, we share the pool currently with Bambers Inclusive swim school, and some swimmers who might display challenging behaviour. As an inclusive swimming club, our aim is for all swimmers to enjoy swimming and avoid behaving in a challenging way. Accordingly, we aim to offer an environment which helps swimmers to behave appropriately.

Our primary aim is to maintain safety for all swimmers and all staff.

We will aim to offer an environment conducive to appropriate behaviour by:

1. Keeping the noise level down at poolside e.g. coaches not shouting instructions or encouraging groups to make noise, and fostering a calm environment. If the session is planned to be noisy, e.g. alongside Water Safety lessons with Bambers Inclusive, then swimmers should be informed beforehand wherever reasonably possible, so that they can expect this change in the environment.

¹ www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk

2. Maintaining close vigilance for any swimmer who is becoming distressed – rapid intervention at this stage may de-escalate the situation. Parents/carers may be asked to assist with this.
3. Where a swimmer has an individual plan for their swimming, coaches must be informed of this, and must ensure that the swimmer's needs are met e.g. certain types of communication, routines that must be followed, actions to avoid such as splashing
4. Communicating with the swimmer and their parents/carers to establish if there are any changes to be aware of e.g. sudden or unexpected recent events that may have unsettled the swimmer, or changes in medication

We will respond to challenging behaviour by:

1. Remaining calm
2. Informing the Head Coach and/or Welfare Officer about the incident as soon as possible
3. Treating the swimmer with respect and in a non-judgemental manner
4. If the swimmer has an individual plan for challenging behaviour, following the plan
5. If there is no plan in place, we will ask parents/carers to intervene and take responsibility for the swimmer, getting them to a place of safety where they can be calm
6. Once the swimmer is behaving appropriately, check with the Head Coach and/or Welfare Officer to decide if the swimmer can return to the session safely
7. Staff should not attempt to restrain a swimmer or force a swimmer to get out of the water
8. If there is a risk to the other swimmers or staff, the pool or poolside/changing rooms should be evacuated calmly and quickly
9. If there is a risk of the swimmer being injured or drowning in the water, the lifeguard must decide how to intervene
10. If parents/carers cannot control the swimmer and there is a serious risk of harm, call the emergency services / Police on 999