ST. MICHAEL'S HOUSE
Services For People With Disabilities

Ireland
of swimmers

Comhairle Cathrach
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City Council

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Swimming & Disability

2nd **Swimming is the second most popular sport for people with disabilities.**

7.2% **Of those over 16 and with a disability swim at least once a week**

85,000 **Number of people with a disability that swim at least once a week**

Sources: Swim Ireland Swimming Pool Gap Analysis Report 2025
Irish Sports Monitor 2025

www.swimireland.ie

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Are we truly accessible?

85% **of pools reported being accessible to people with disabilities.**

48% **reported having pool hoists to assist patrons with limited mobility to enter the water.**

21% **have braille signage to assist visually impaired users navigate a facility.**

Sources: Swim Ireland Swimming Pool Gap Analysis Report 2025
Irish Sports Monitor 2025

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The start of Swim Access

- Physical barriers to participation
- Lack of information on accessibility
- Compliance vs user led
- Major benefits: physical, therapeutic and social gains
- Huge untapped potential for inclusion and growth
- Genuine commitment for accessibility

Swim Access – Phase 1

- Grew organically through discussions and creative thinking
- Move from assumed accessibility to disability-led evidence
- Swim Ireland application via Dormant Accounts for pilot programme to audit small sample of swimming pools
- Partnership approach throughout:

Swim Access Project

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Access Earth

active disability ireland

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Ireland Active | Leisure, Health and Fitness Association

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Swim Access Project – How it works

Move from assumed accessibility to disability-led evidence.

1. **CO-DESIGN** — People with disabilities shape the audit
2. **AUDIT** — Trained auditors assess real experience
3. **IMPROVE** — Evidence informs practical actions
4. **TRACK** — Progress can be measured over time

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Swim Access – Phase 1

- 3 swimming pools audited with Swim Access App
- 4 auditors with a disability trained
- Creation of structured, evidence-based accessibility report
- Nominated for 'Best Initiative to Promote Disability in Sport & Physical Activity' at Irish Sports Award
- Clear appetite for Phase 2 and Scalability

Swim Access – Phase 2

- **Steering Group goal: move from pilot/proof of concept to national impact**
- **Submission to Rethink Ireland under Disability Participation and Awareness Fund 4.0.**
- **Swim Ireland awarded €147,000 for Phase 2**
- **Two main targets in 2027:**
  1. 10-15 Auditors trained nationally in Swim Access App
  2. Audit of 100 swimming pools using Swim Access App including an accessibility report

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Swim Access Implementation

Quarter 4 2026

- Recruit project manager
- Identify Local Sports Partnerships (LSP's)
- Strengthen digital infrastructure

Quarter 1 2027

- Build network of auditors with a range of disabilities
- Deliver train the trainer for LSP's
- Commence pool audits

Quarter 2 2027

- Deliver a minimum of 50% of pool audits
- Support network of auditors
- Develop training and resources for facility staff

Quarter 3 2027

- Deliver 100% of pool audits
- Seek stakeholder feedback
- Produce reports
- Develop sustainable model

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Swim Access – The benefits

- Cost effective, subsidised desktop and field audit on the swimming pool - €250 per pool
- Structured, evidence-based report based on lived experience
- Confidential report highlighting areas of accessibility and for improvement
- More inclusive, welcoming and accessible facility
- Competitive edge, new members
- Potential impact on future grant applications or industry wide standards

Swim Access – Our ask

- What challenges or opportunities do you see?
- Local authority and LSP support
- Help facilitate audit sign-up
- Complete an Expression of Interest form
- Input into Phase 3 – what will this look like?

Accessibility is not a checklist completed once.

It is an ongoing commitment shaped by lived experience.