

# CASE STUDY

## SWIMMING GROUP FOR CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS

### Overview

This free programme was aimed at 8—12 year old children with additional needs. There is evidence that the use of physical activity supports positive mental health. Swimming as an activity also provides excellent sensory input for children with sensory processing differences. Offering positive engagement in a community based leisure activity as many of the children have had unsuccessful experiences with leisure activities in their community in the past.

### Aims

Providing the therapeutic benefits of water play and swimming to support:

- Behavioural differences – need for supportive emphatic approach and positive reinforcement.
- Social interaction differences – small group side by side activity. 1:1 support.
- Social communication differences – Swim instructors in the pool. One step instructions where possible. Extra processing time to follow directions. Lamh / core board used.
- Sensory Processing differences-
  - ⇒ Sensory seeking – proprioceptive and vestibular input through swimming, deep pressure input through resistance in water, visual input through bright pool environment
  - ⇒ Sensory sensitivity – using pool at quieter time, less crowds, reduced background music, reduced lighting, mushroom water feature turned off.
- Motor coordination differences:
  - ⇒ Increase independence in self-care tasks of dressing, washing etc. – balance, coordination, motor planning etc.
  - ⇒ Improve coordination in swimming – body awareness, balance, coordination.

### Implementation

An interest and a need for a swim programme was identified by the team and families. Members of New Ross Children's Disability Network Team suggested potential candidates meeting the criteria after completion of Individual Family Support Plans. The OT contacted potential families inviting them to the swimming group. Numbers were limited to keep the group small due to given needs. Group of 4 is the maximum size due to support required. The programme was held in the Apex, New Ross as it is a top class facility and is familiar to the children and their families. It was held over a 6 week period from 20th February, a 40 minute class weekly. The swimming coaches in the Apex lead the programme with Clodagh Corduff, OT on site supporting parents. 6 children invited, 4 attended



### Outcomes

Future swimming groups would be hugely beneficial to children with additional needs who attend New Ross Children's Disability Network Team. It is hoped the success of this programme and the expertise of the swimming coaches in this modern facility would ensure a commitment to future swimming groups being offered to these children.

Parents committed to continuing to bring their children to the pool regularly.

All aims were achieved.

### Feedback

"He didn't want to leave. He would smile when I tell him he is going" - feedback from participants parent.

"Thank you, my son loved going" - another parent's feedback

"Each child improved great over the classes, whether it was in overall swimming ability or general confidence in the water" - Feedback from swimming coach

"One change I noticed in particular, was one non verbal child was able to kick his legs by the end of class - another swimming coach's feedback