



# Free Swimming

## Will it work?

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# Setting the Scene

- Static participation rates in sport
- 50 years of the 'Wolfenden Gap'
- Obesity / metabolic syndrome
- Swimming offers a glimmer of hope
- Lessons from *Everyday Swim*
- A welcome contribution of £140m



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# Overview

1. What does the evidence tell us?
2. Can the over 60s actually swim?
3. What do staff think of free swimming?



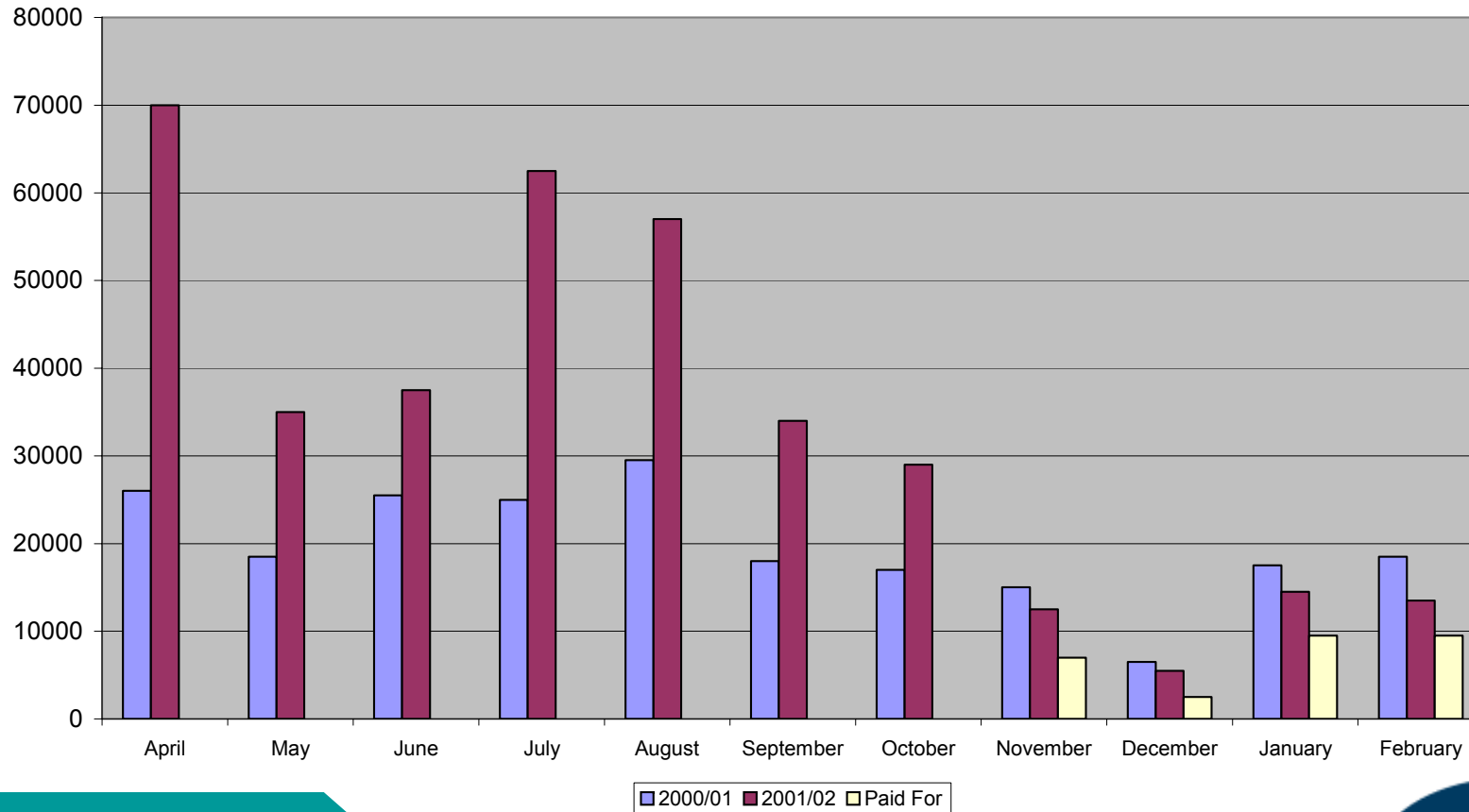
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# Free Swimming in Glasgow

Glasgow Free Swimming (5-18 yrs) Experiment



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# Port Glasgow Baths

- Free swimming for 6 months
- Attendances increased by 72%,
- (Under 17s 77%, Adults 62%)

However:

- Only 2% were new customers
- 35% increased frequency of swimming
- No significant uptake by priority groups



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# Lessons From Wales (1)

- Segmented markets
- Distinguishing between swims / swimmers
- Structured sessions or 'free for all'
- Cost was not actually a key barrier



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# Lessons From Wales (2)

"Simply providing free sessions is not, therefore, enough to secure participation by the majority of the eligible population."

[Source: Free Swimming: An Evaluation of the Welsh Assembly Government's Initiative (2008)]



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# Can The Over 60s Swim?

Adult who can't swim:

All adults (England)	21%
Adults aged 55-64 (England)	33%
Adults aged 65+ (England)	39%
Adults aged 60+ (Blaenau)	55%



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# Staff Views on Free Swimming

- Attracts the 'wrong sorts'
- Increased vandalism and petty crime
- Can damage the experience for others
- Lack of respect / inconsiderate behaviour
- Increased workload on cleaning
- Increased noise levels
- Product under valued because it's free



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# Summary Points

1. Sport development effect unproven
2. High swimming 'illiteracy' amongst 60+
3. Staff do not necessarily welcome it



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# Discuss.....

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