

FAVERSHAM POOLS

Phase 2: Perceptions & Experiences

31st March 2023

spear

centre for sport, physical education
& activity research



Canterbury
Christ Church
University

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About *spear*



CONTEXT

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

spear was commissioned by Faversham Pools to explore stakeholder, customer and potential customer perceptions of Faversham Pools and attitudes to swimming to further community engagement.

This report represents Phase 2 of the research and is informed by the Rapid Evidence Review and Feedback Framework developed in Phase 1.

The research comprises surveys and interviews with customers, potential customers and wider stakeholders. It has one overarching research question:

How can we maximise individual, group and community engagement with Faversham Pools?



OBJECTIVES



These objectives provide the structure for this brief report and are subsumed within three substantive sections:

Stakeholders, Customers and Potential Customers.

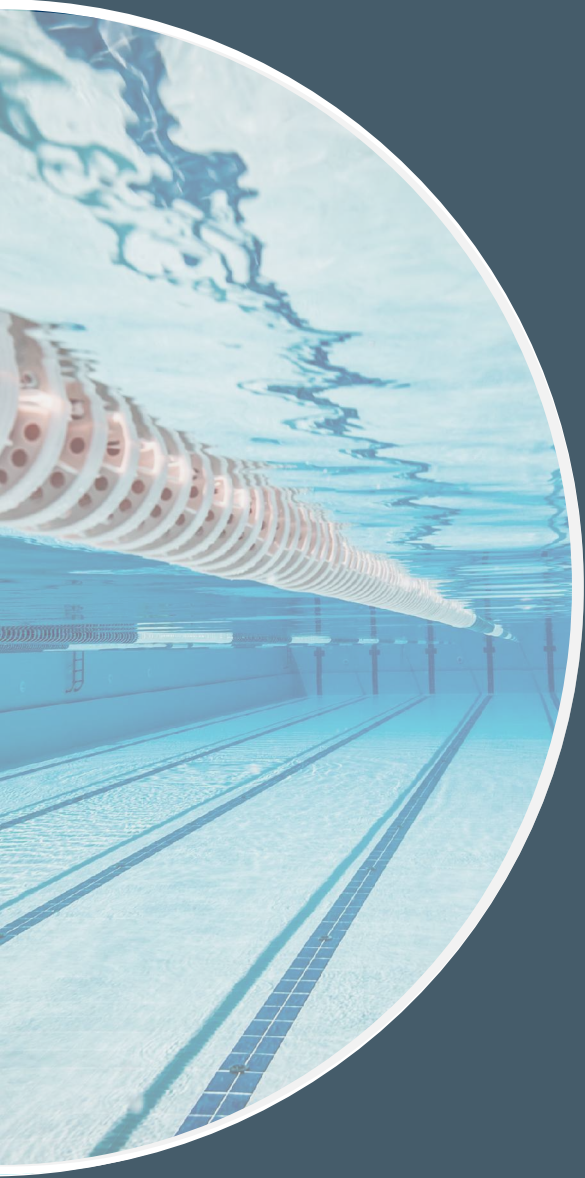
RESEARCH RATIONALE

Faversham Pools is facing a challenging funding landscape with potential cutbacks from Swale Borough Council. Cost pressures have also increased, leaving swimming pools vulnerable to closure or service reduction.

Sport England has recently announced the Government's Swimming Pool Support Fund. The fund will provide local authorities with a support package for public swimming pools. Faversham Pools has generated income through a successful crowdfunding campaign and secured grants for new lockers.

Ensuring services are appealing, relevant and accessible is key to engaging the community and to the sustainability of Faversham Pools. This research therefore explores the community's needs, perceptions and expectations in order to inform provision and maximise engagement with Faversham Pools.





HEADLINE FINDINGS

HEADLINE FINDINGS

FAVERSHAM POOLS IS...



A LIFELONG POOL

For many customers Faversham Pools has been a constant in their life, from their own childhood pool to the one they share with their children.



A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE

The outdoor pool is a unique asset and a motivator for current customers. Potential customers note they would use it in the summer over their usual pool.



A CONVENIENT POOL

Many Faversham Pools' customers attend due to its convenience; they live locally and the pool offers easy access to swimming.



A COMMUNITY POOL

Faversham Pools acts as a community hub; it is an important part of the local community which customers want to support.



AN OUTDATED POOL

Customers praise the locker refurbishment but feel showers and changing rooms need updating alongside better accessibility to these areas and the pool for disabled customers.



A QUIET POOL

Faversham Pools offers customers a desired quiet place to swim, with some purposefully looking to attend sessions that are less busy.



A FRIENDLY POOL

Staff at Faversham Pools are seen as supportive, friendly, helpful, caring, passionate about the pool and part of the local community.



A PRICEY ACTIVITY

Cost is noted as a barrier to swimming anywhere. Views are mixed regarding Faversham Pools' value for money, and the cost of parking is seen as a barrier.



MORE THAN A POOL

Faversham Pools is a place to swim and socialise. Here friends and family meet, use the popular café, and enjoy a picnic outside in the summer.



STAKEHOLDERS

STAKEHOLDER INSIGHT

A six-question survey explored staff and stakeholders' understanding of Faversham Pools' mission and values, as well as their perception of the organisation's purpose, value to the community, and their experience working with or for Faversham Pools.

Survey results help better understand stakeholder perceptions of Faversham Pools and how they can be leveraged to improve the organisation's performance and community engagement.

16 Stakeholders



STAKEHOLDER INSIGHT

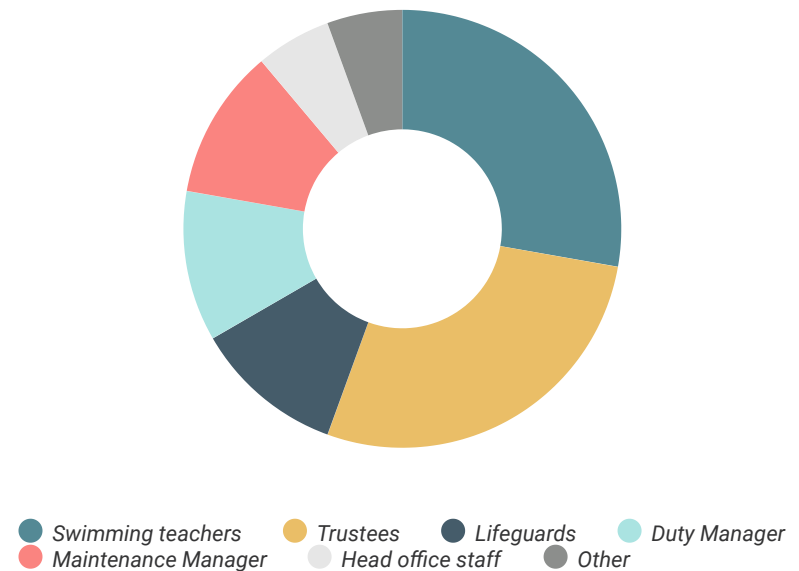
FAVERSHAM POOLS' PURPOSE

Stakeholders are asked about the primary purpose of Faversham Pools and any other role it serves. Stakeholders identify the main purposes of Faversham Pools as a swimming and leisure facility, a safe place to swim, and an accessible swimming environment. Stakeholders suggest Faversham Pools also serves as a community hub, a source for water safety education, a summer destination, and family day out.

Survey results reveal more than a third of respondents identify Faversham Pools primarily as a swimming and leisure facility, with a senior stakeholder responding that the main purpose is *"to provide the local community with the opportunity to swim"*. The importance of ease of access and financial accessibility is highlighted by a staff member who states a main purpose of Faversham Pools as being *"accessible in monetary as well as physical terms"*.

Regarding additional purposes, over a third of stakeholders identify Faversham Pools as a community hub, highlighting its role in bringing people together as *"it provides a focus for the community, a place to meet friends, a venue for parties and to promote social welfare"*.

Stakeholder Survey respondents



Three respondents consider Faversham Pools a summer destination and a family day out with a trustee saying it's *"a safe place for families and teenagers and young adults to hang out and swim in the outdoor pool during the summer months"*.

STAKEHOLDER INSIGHT

SUPPORTING THE PURPOSE

Stakeholders are asked how they support the purpose of Faversham Pools and any challenges they face. Stakeholders' responses include performing operational and strategic roles, using the pool facilities, and providing an inclusive swimming offer.

Stakeholders also report creating a friendly and welcoming environment for visitors and understanding the vision and objectives of Faversham Pools. Only four of sixteen stakeholders identify challenges in supporting the purpose of Faversham Pools. Of those four, the two main reported challenges concern the board and financial matters.

Over two thirds of stakeholders describe their operational or strategic role as how they support the purpose of Faversham Pools, e.g. *"teaching swimming"*, *"working as a lifeguard"*, *"being a trustee"* and *"through dedicated working"*. This suggests stakeholders view their roles within the organisation as key to supporting the purpose of Faversham Pools.

Being a user of Faversham Pools facilities is also highlighted by a senior stakeholder who says, *"my son is a member of the swimming club using the indoor pool once a week"*, indicating stakeholders who use the pool facilities feel they play a vital role in supporting the purpose of Faversham Pools.



of stakeholders didn't report any challenges with supporting the purpose of Faversham Pools

Challenges to supporting the purpose are cited by only four of the sixteen stakeholders and these challenges relate to the board and financial matters.

One stakeholder noted they wanted to *"feel actively engaged in the idea of providing change to the pools and to have staff suggestions taken on board"*. Another reported that it can be *"challenging to get the board and management team to see beyond the day-to-day operational difficulties and to the bigger development possibilities of the pools as a community asset"*, indicating a desire to see greater focus on long-term vision and goals in addition to immediate operational issues.

STAKEHOLDER INSIGHT

WORKING AT FAVERSHAM POOLS

Stakeholders' perceptions of Faversham Pools are explored by asking them what the best thing is about working with or for the organisation. Top aspects cited include the staff, the customers, and the working environment.

Over a third of stakeholders describe staff as the 'best thing' about working at Faversham Pools. Staff are perceived as friendly, enjoyable and passionate and this is seen to have a significant impact on job satisfaction.

A quarter of stakeholders cite customers as one of the best things about working with or for Faversham Pools and they appreciate the positive reaction they receive from customers.

“

Most staff are part of the community or local, so are passionate about the pools - they have grown up around it

- Staff

”

COMMUNITY VALUE

Stakeholders' perceptions of the community value of Faversham Pools centre around its role as a community hub, as a place for a family day out and a place where people can learn to swim. Stakeholders also see community value in the pool's support for people's health and wellbeing, in its inclusivity, and in having an outdoor pool where people and families can come together in a relaxed, accessible environment.

“ It illustrates what a community can do to benefit itself

- Senior stakeholder

”

Stakeholders overwhelmingly refer to Faversham Pools as a community hub with over a third stating that it is a focal point of the town. Faversham Pools is seen as a central location for socialising and meeting other members of the community: *“an essential part of the community's social fabric”*.

The inclusivity of provision at Faversham Pools features strongly among stakeholders' perceptions of community value. The pool is seen to cater for people of all ages and abilities, making it accessible to the broad spectrum of people in Faversham and the surrounding areas. This inclusivity is reported by stakeholders as key to the pool's value to the community: *“to provide a community based pool accessible for all”*.

STAKEHOLDER INSIGHT

SUMMARY

Responses to the Stakeholder Survey suggest stakeholders view Faversham Pools as having a multifaceted role in the community, serving not only as a recreational facility but also a community hub, educational resource, and inclusive environment for all.

While only a small number of respondents reported challenges supporting the purpose of Faversham Pools, these reported challenges are instructive in highlighting areas which could be addressed to enhance organisational efficacy, engagement and support.

Stakeholders' passion for and commitment to Faversham Pools is evident from responses to the Stakeholder Survey. The sense of pride and motivation stakeholders derive from serving their community and making a difference in the lives of others, is a key factor driving their commitment to their role and the value of providing a quality service.





CUSTOMERS

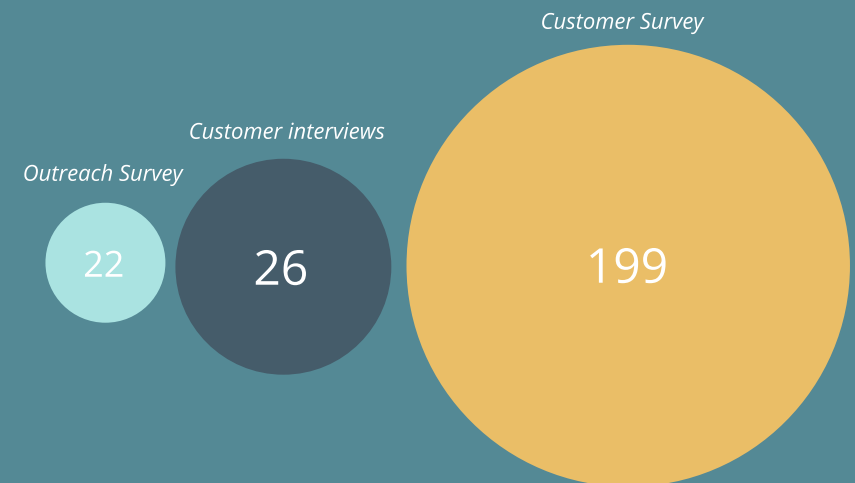
CUSTOMER INSIGHT

This section explores customers' perceptions, experiences, and engagement with Faversham Pools. It also provides insight into motivations, barriers and enablers to swimming and Faversham Pools. Data informing this section are derived from 199 responses to the Customer Survey, 26 customer interviews and 22 responses as part of the Outreach Survey.

The Customer Survey includes demographic information and contextual information such as age, gender and ethnicity as well as swimming ability and confidence. To understand how customers engage with Faversham Pools they were asked how often they visit, most common time to visit and reasons for visiting. Customers' experiences of Faversham Pools are explored by asking them to rate key areas of the provision and provide a Net Promoter Score (NPS).

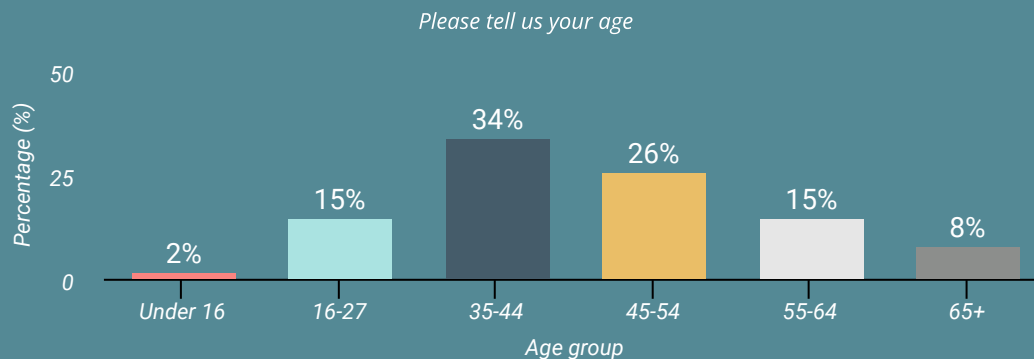
Questions from Sport England Active Lives Survey are used to enable comparison with national benchmarks. Questions from Active Lives used in the Customer Survey include the social and community development questions, and questions relating to capability, opportunity and motivation. Additional open-ended questions exploring customers' motivations, barriers and enablers to Faversham Pools, such as cost and why they swim, are also included.

Customer interviews explore their engagement and experiences with Faversham Pools. The Outreach Survey conducted within community settings asks those who are customers what they like about Faversham Pools, and what could be improved.



CUSTOMER INSIGHT

WHO ARE THE CUSTOMERS OF FAVERSHAM POOLS?



AGE

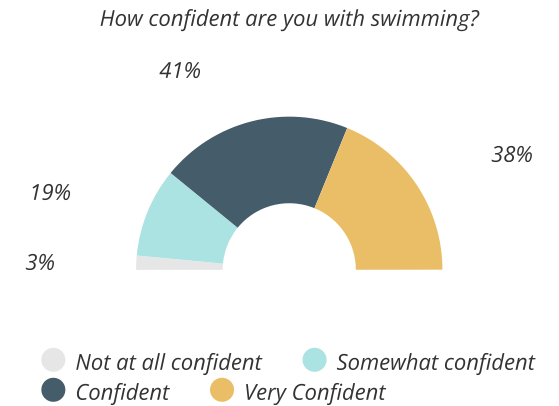
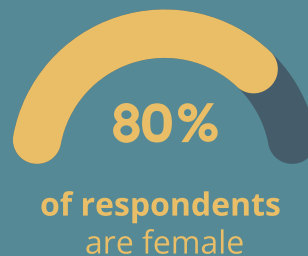
Customers responding to the survey range between those aged under 16 and those 65 and over. The majority are aged between 35-44, with fewest responses from those under 16 or over 65.

ETHNICITY

Most customers are of White British ethnicity (95%) with White other being reported by 3% and Mixed or other ethnic groups by 1%.

GENDER

Over three quarters of customers responding to the survey are female, less than a fifth are male.



SWIM ABILITY

Customers primarily report being an intermediate level swimmer (74%) and only 1% report their swimming ability as a beginner. One customer however revealed *“starting swimming again was a challenge after many years, as I wasn’t confident in my ability”*.

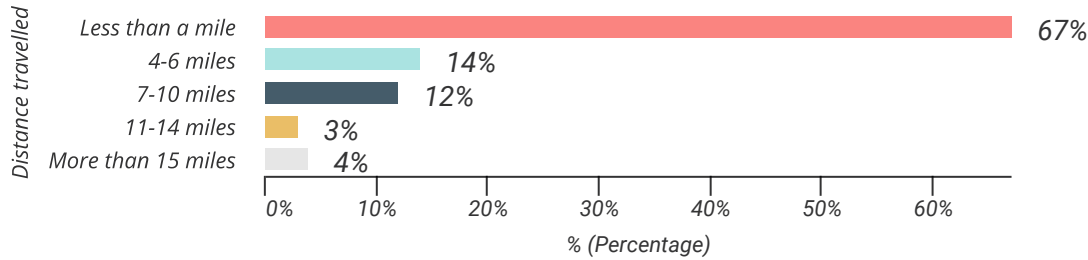
SWIM CONFIDENCE

Swimming confidence of customers is more evenly distributed with most reporting to be either confident or very confident.

CUSTOMER INSIGHT

HOW THEY ENGAGE WITH FAVERSHAM POOLS

How far do you travel to the pool?



CUSTOMER PROXIMITY

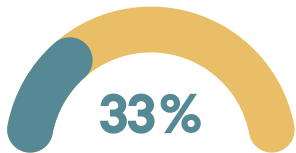
Over three quarters of customers report Faversham Pools as their nearest pool. Nearly two thirds travel less than a mile, with less than a tenth travelling more than 10 miles. Many customers discuss how it's local or close to home and work, although one customer says, "it's our first choice even though we have five pools nearer to home".

Most customers drive (57%) or walk (39%) to Faversham Pools.



76% of customers report Faversham Pools as their closest pool

VISITING TIMES



say **mornings** are the most common time for them to visit the pool

Data suggest the morning is the most popular time for customers to visit the pool. There is no clear alternative peak time, as the preferences of customers responding to the survey are fairly evenly distributed throughout the day. Early mornings, lunchtimes, afternoons, and evenings receive between 14-21% of customer responses each.

No peak time to swim may be beneficial for customer engagement. Customers say they like to avoid busy times in the pools; "I struggle with crowds so try and go when the pool is less busy". One customer notes they "like the ability to book online and see how many spaces are available. If it looks too busy for us we would choose a less busy time slot".

Lessons
Family fun swimming
Outdoor pool
Lane swimming
Club activity

REASONS TO VISIT

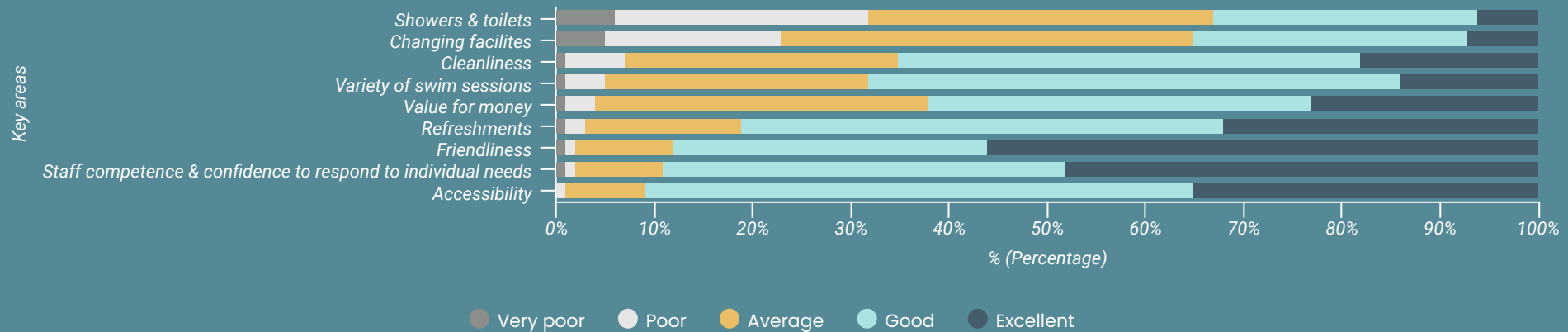
Top three reasons for visiting Faversham Pools are to use the outdoor pool, fitness/lane swimming and family fun swimming. Many customers speak of the draw of the outdoor pool with a customer commenting "if I didn't live here I'd travel to use the outdoor pool".

CUSTOMER INSIGHT

EXPERIENCE OF FAVERSHAM POOLS

The survey asks customers to rate key areas of the facilities and provision, with responses ranging from 'Very Poor' to 'Excellent'.

How would you rate us against these key areas?



RATED HIGHLY

Data indicate customers are highly satisfied with the accessibility of Faversham Pools, with 9 out of 10 customers rating it as 'Good' or 'Excellent' although a small number of customers mention having walk-in steps would be much easier for the less mobile.

Customers also rate staff competence and confidence to respond to individual needs highly, with 9 out of 10 customers rating it as 'Good' or 'Excellent'. Customers note how friendly and supportive the staff are.

“ I've swum here for many years and believe the staff and trustees make a massive contribution to it being a successful enterprise. I've been a beneficiary of their hard work and I am very grateful

- Customer ”

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Survey data also highlight areas of improvement for Faversham Pools. Changing facilities are rated 'Very Poor' or 'Poor' by over a third of customers, while showers and toilets are rated 'Very Poor' or 'Poor' by a third of customers.

Comments from customers in the survey and during interviews mention needing to upgrade the changing rooms, lockers, toilets, and showers. One customer suggests “perhaps modernise the changing facilities, although it doesn't impact on the enjoyment of my swim”. Single-sex facilities are highlighted by customers as a provision that would make them feel more comfortable.

Customers refer to the lack of a constant temperature for the showers and the need for more family lockers and family changing rooms. The plan for new lockers is acknowledged by customers but they hope these will be an improvement with one customer wanting them to be “more spacious and modern” and another noting “larger lockers would be very useful”.

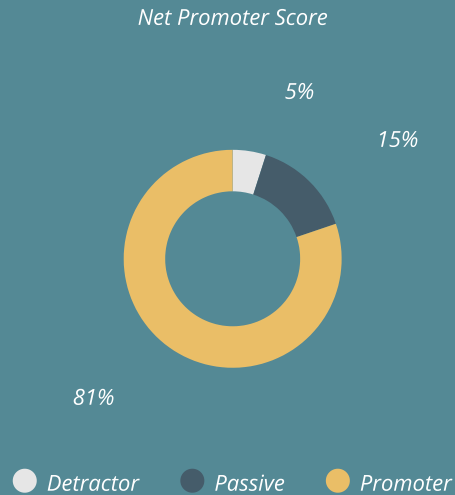
CUSTOMER INSIGHT

EXPERIENCE OF FAVERSHAM POOLS

NET PROMOTER SCORE

The Net Promoter Score (NPS) is a widely used metric that measures customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Faversham Pools received an NPS score of 76. This score falls into the 'excellent' category, which ranges from 70 to 100, indicating a high percentage of customers are likely to recommend Faversham Pools to others.



RECOMMENDATIONS TO A FRIEND

Customers expressing what they might say to a friend who is thinking of trying the pool mention it being one of the best pools in Kent. Others say, *"definitely come along and give it a try you won't regret it"* and *"do it, lidos are a dying resource, we are so lucky having one in Faversham, with most its original decorations (so vintage really). It's beautiful and well worth a visit"*.

This suggests Faversham Pools has a loyal customer base, which is a positive indicator of the facility's success in providing excellent services to its customers.

WHAT DO CUSTOMERS WANT?

Survey and interview respondents suggest sessions or provision they would like at Faversham Pools.

Primarily they would be keen for more adult-only swim sessions, particularly in the evenings, with one customer mentioning it as a 'game changer' due to otherwise travelling to an alternative pool.

Loyalty cards are also mentioned for regular customers who are *"unable to visit often enough to take advantage of any membership packages"*.

Another priority seems to be wanting a better offer for children in terms of sessions, pool activities and facilities. Such suggestions include *"pirate boat"*, *"slides"*, *"water spray"*, *"tip buckets"* and *"pool parties"*.

More to do with kids
Water spray
Pool Parties
Inflateables Slides Things for children
Rubber rings
Pirate boat
Tip bucket
Adventurous swimming for kids
Fun sessions for younger children

CUSTOMER INSIGHT

BARRIERS & ENABLERS

DISABILITY OR LONG-TERM HEALTH CONDITION (LTHC)

Responses to the Customer Survey provide insight into the capability, opportunity and motivation of customers with a disability or LTHC to be physically active.

Survey data show 90% of customers without a disability or LTHC believe they have the ability to be physically active. This figure drops by 35% for those with a disability or LTHC. Additionally, 81% of customers without a disability or LTHC find sport and physical activity enjoyable and satisfying, however this figure is 25% less for customers with a disability or LTHC.



Only 56% with a disability or LTHC **find sport and physical activity enjoyable and satisfying**

Quantitative data reflect qualitative comments with one customer expressing the winch seat is scary and wanting an *"easier form of access for the less mobile"*.

One customer reveals their son *"has complex needs but enjoys the pool, though at present we aren't able to safely and comfortably shower and change"*.



Cost of swimming affects 64% of those with a **disability or LTHC**



of all respondents say **cost of swimming** affects how often they visit the pool

COST OF SWIMMING

The cost of using Faversham Pools is identified as a barrier to participation in swimming. Responses show nearly half of customers feel the cost of swimming affects how often they visit the pools, suggesting affordability is a key factor in frequency of pool usage.

Customers did say Faversham Pools is *"reasonably priced"*, but cost is still perceived as a barrier to swimming.

The cost of swimming has a more substantial impact on those with a disability or LTHC, with nearly two thirds reporting the cost of swimming a barrier to participation.

CUSTOMER INSIGHT

BARRIERS & ENABLERS

BUSY TIMES

Customers mention wanting a calm and quiet environment. Many refer to busy pool times as being a barrier to swimming, in particular customers note *"anxiety about going during peak times"* and *"struggling with crowds"*.

PARKING

Parking is mentioned by customers as being *"close"* and *"easy to park with not much walking"*, making access to the pool straightforward.

Requirement to pay for parking is identified as a barrier by 14 customers, with one suggesting *"a refund in parking ticket if using the pool"* and another noting *"parking nearby too expensive"*.

ENABLERS

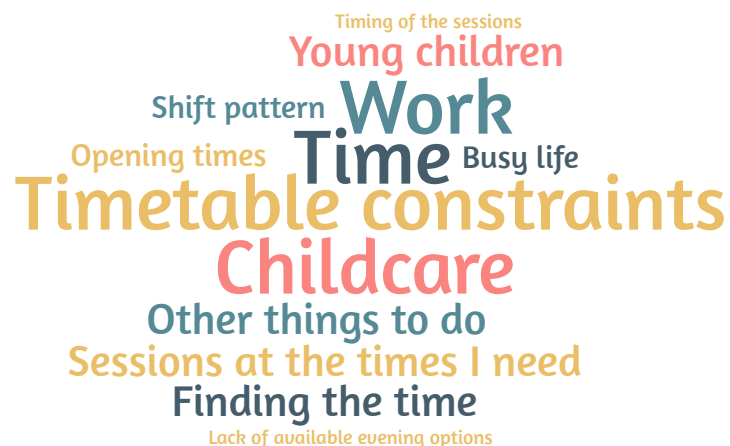
Faversham Pools is seen to minimise barriers for customers, such as avoiding queues, in comparison to other pools in the area.

Customers cite the accessibility of information, clear booking system and welcoming environment as enablers to engagement, e.g. *"it is easy to book and obtain timetables"* and the *"nicer feel than [my] local pool"*.

OPPORTUNITY TO SWIM

Limited opportunity to swim is identified as a barrier by respondents, with customers citing work, family commitments and childcare as restricting opportunities to swim.

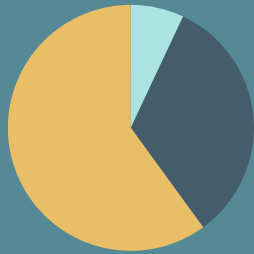
Several customers cite the swimming timetable as affecting their engagement. One customer mentioned *"I finally 'got' swimming when I used to swim at the same time as my young son had lessons"* while another called for *"one lane for swimming whilst lessons are on"*.



CUSTOMER INSIGHT

PERCEPTIONS OF FAVERSHAM POOLS

I feel most people in my local area can be trusted



● Disagree ● Neither agree nor disagree ● Agree

HERITAGE

Data show Faversham Pools has been cherished by locals for generations and plays an essential role in the lives of many families, as one customer notes *"it's been a big part of my family for years"*.

The pool is a place where parents have brought their children to learn how to swim, and those children have grown up to bring their children to the same pool. This generational connection to the pool showcases how important it is to the community. It is also a constant in the lives of many locals, as one customer says *"I loved Faversham Pools from a young age"*.

Many customers have created lasting memories at Faversham Pools, with one remembering *"we have photos of us as children in the baby pool outside and now of my nephew in the same spot"*. This highlights the sentimental value the pool holds for families and the community.

COMMUNITY

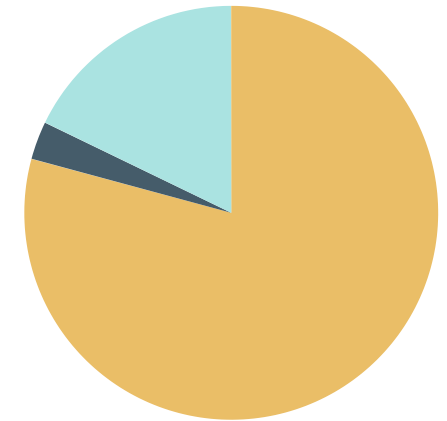
As a registered charity, Faversham Pools plays a vital role serving the community. The Customer Survey explores customers' perceptions of their community and social trust.

Data show customers have a largely positive perception of their community, with 60% reporting feeling most people in their local area can be trusted. Customers praise Faversham Pools for being an integral part of the community, highlighting *"it's a great local resource that I want to support to keep open"* and simply thanking them for staying open and *"taking care of [their] community"*.

Responses to the survey suggest customers have a sense of community cohesion and trust in their local area and this positively impacts their engagement with Faversham Pools.

“ I learnt to swim here when I was 3, it's a very important place to me
- Customer ”

Do you know if Faversham Pools is a charity?



● Yes ● No ● Don't know

CHARITY

A customer remarked *"you're all doing brilliantly on very, very limited resources"*, however a fifth of customers are unaware that Faversham Pools is a registered charity.



POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS

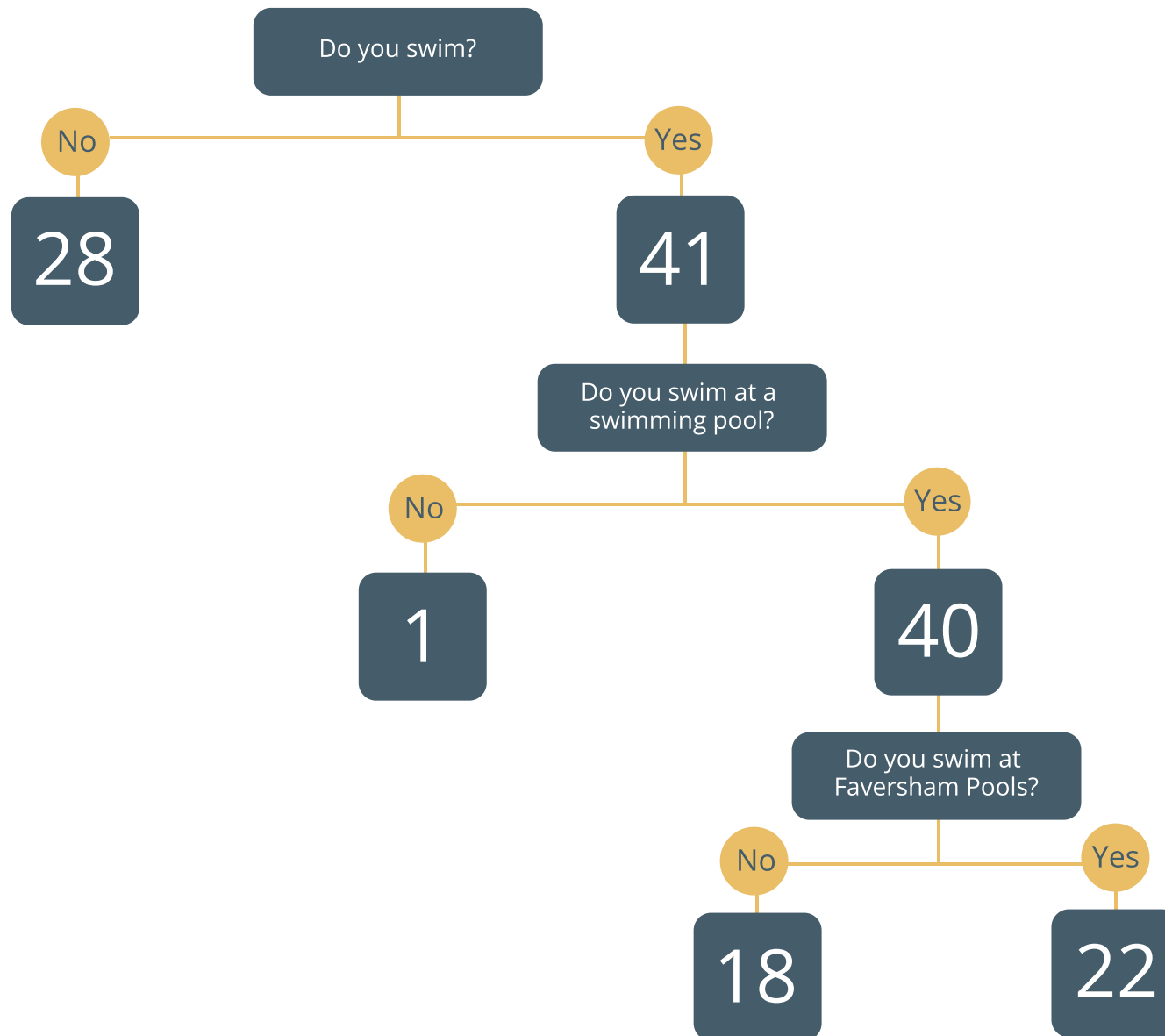
POTENTIAL CUSTOMER INSIGHT

The Outreach Survey explores potential customers' perceptions and attitudes towards swimming, and swimming at Faversham Pools. The survey is facilitated as a conversation with prompts around barriers and enablers. The survey also captures the perceptions and attitudes of Faversham Pools' customers (n = 22); this data is included in the previous section.

The survey was carried out in locations where people from target communities frequent and at organisations that provide services to these communities. Settings included Sittingbourne; and Faversham High Street, Forum Shopping Centre, Market Place, Age UK and Faversham Umbrella.



POTENTIAL CUSTOMER INSIGHT



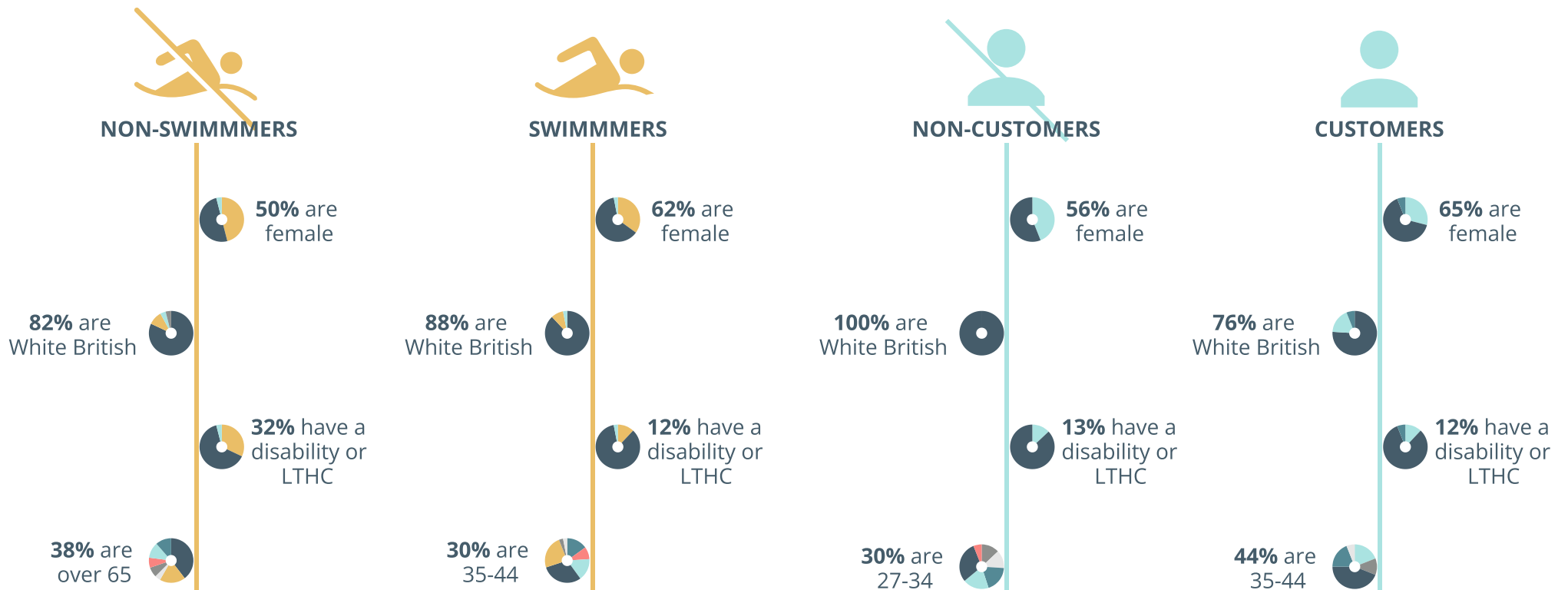
Data derives from 47 potential customers. Twenty eight do not swim and of those who do, 18 do not swim at Faversham Pools.

Respondents swimming at other pools frequently mentioned Swallows and Kingsmead, Medway Park, Larkfield Leisure Centre, Maidstone Leisure Centre, Dover District Leisure Centre, Hartsdown Leisure Centre and The Stour Centre are also mentioned.

The most popular reasons for visiting these pools are how close they are to travel to "proximity to home", having plenty on offer for children "lots for kids to do" and having fitness facilities such as "a gym".

POTENTIAL CUSTOMER INSIGHT

OUTREACH RESPONDENTS



LTHC - Long Term Health Condition

POTENTIAL CUSTOMER INSIGHT

BARRIERS TO SWIMMING

OPPORTUNITY

Time

Having the time to go swimming is reported as a barrier for many potential customers. They say they don't have enough time due to work commitments or other aspects of their life. One respondent mentions they *"used to swim a lot, but don't have time to swim now"*. Another participant notes *"I just don't have time to go swimming with everything else I do"*.

Life events

Another barrier seen to affect swimming engagement is life events. One individual describes how they used to swim with their husband but when he passed away they *"fell out of doing a lot of things"* they like. Another noted that when the COVID-19 pandemic started, they just stopped swimming. Both expressed a desire to return to swimming but have been unable to do so.

CAPABILITY

Age

Age is reported as a barrier to swimming for some who feel they are *"too old"* or *"have difficulty with activities requiring great exertion"*.

Injuries

One respondent mentions having a knee injury and transitioning to playing rugby instead of swimming.

“

I can't do it on my own because people will make fun of me.

- Potential customer

”

Fear of judgement

Several respondents speak about avoiding swimming because of fear of being judged. They specifically raise concerns about being *"laughed at"* or *"ridiculed by others"*. One participant spoke about feeling uncomfortable in public swimming pools.

MOTIVATION

Lack of interest

The main barrier to swimming mentioned by respondents in relation to motivation is a lack of interest. Some say they are simply *"not interested"* in swimming and find it to be *"boring"*.

POTENTIAL CUSTOMER INSIGHT

ENABLERS FOR SWIMMING ENGAGEMENT

GETTING TO THE POOL

Socialisation

The importance of socialisation is discussed by six respondents. One individual mentions they *"need company to go swimming"* and wouldn't go on their own because their *"husband has breathing problems and cannot swim"*. Another speaks about how they might go swimming if it was with friends, indicating the social aspect of swimming can be a motivating factor.

"Meeting people" and *"having someone to push you to do things"* is deemed beneficial by another individual who doesn't currently swim.

“

used to swim more with friends. They don't really go anymore. If friends went then I might go...

- Potential customer

”

Convenience

Some individuals refer to the need for swimming to fit into their daily routine; *"it's got to fit into my day"*, therefore convenience of pool opening times seems to play a role in their decision to swim. Respondents also expressed a willingness to go to a *"local"* pool, indicating that proximity is an key factor when considering going for a swim.

“ It's got to be local and close

- Potential customer

”

Support

Two respondents note they would require the support of a carer or support worker to visit a swimming pool. One individual mentions they have not been swimming for many years due to health reasons, and they would need someone to accompany them to feel comfortable and safe.

Another individual says, *"my support worker might take me"*, indicating that having someone to provide assistance and encouragement could make a difference in their capability, opportunity and motivation to swim.

POTENTIAL CUSTOMER INSIGHT

ENABLERS FOR SWIMMING ENGAGEMENT

AT THE POOL

Facilities

Three respondents express a desire for a spa-like environment that would motivate them to swim, including access to a steam room and sauna.

Aqua aerobics is also mentioned as a way to encourage potential customers to go swimming.

Respondents suggest having 1-to-1 lessons with someone who is *“trained and knowledgeable”* would encourage and enable them to overcome their fears. The temperature of the water is also cited as a factor influencing willingness to swim.

“ Nice warm pool and
spa facility with a
steam room

- Potential Customer

”



Accessibility

For some respondents, accessibility is seen as key to enabling them to swim. One respondent suggests if it was *“more affordable for older people”* it could encourage them to go swimming.

Another aspect of accessibility is the availability of facilities or programmes that cater to specific groups of individuals. For example, someone says *“if there were more groups for people who are like me and have the same disability, particularly SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities)”* they might be encouraged to go swimming.

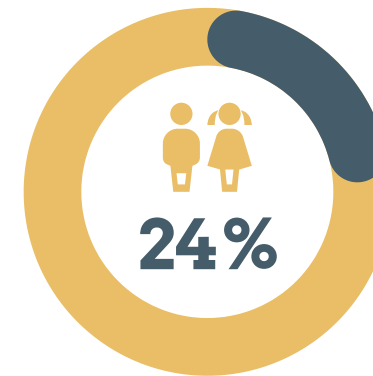
POTENTIAL CUSTOMER INSIGHT

WHAT WOULD ENCOURAGE USE OF FAVERSHAM POOLS?

FACILITIES

Data suggest potential customers could be encouraged to use Faversham Pools if the facilities are warm, and the pool offered fun activities for children and young people such as inflatables, with one person saying they would be encouraged to go if there were *“more things for children”*.

Some respondents also suggest the changing rooms need to be large enough to accommodate everyone. It seems that creating an attractive offer for families could encourage more customers to use the pools.



of potential customers report they would go if there was more for children to do

SWIMMING OFFER

Responses suggest an enhanced swimming offer could encourage more individuals to use the pools. Two individuals mention wanting it to be *“affordable”* or *“cheaper”*, with others wanting *“better times”* or for it to be *“open for a 6am swim”*.

Data also reflect how women-only sessions might encourage them to use Faversham Pools, with one respondent saying, *“Swallows do the women-only sessions, I would travel for that”*.

Responses broadly indicate that improvements in the swimming offer would encourage potential customers to use Faversham Pools, for example, *“it's nice in the summer, they have got the slide, but inside in the winter there is nothing to do in there”* and another customer requesting *“better inside pool offer, please”*.

AGE UK CASE STUDY

ABOUT THE FUNDED PROGRAMME

Age UK Faversham & Sittingbourne worked in partnership with Faversham Pools in 2022 to offer fully funded swimming sessions made possible through Sport England funding.

The sessions provided 16 places to individuals over the age of 50 and the 12-week programme was facilitated by qualified instructors. Participants were also given an opportunity to socialise over a drink in the café.

PROGRAMME AIM

The programme aimed to build confidence among participants, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. It targeted people who may never have had access to a swimming pool, people with poor swimming experiences, and people who had never learned to swim.



of participants report they want to do the sessions again

POSTIVE RESPONSE

The feedback received from Age UK staff and attendees is overwhelmingly positive. One individual's progress from being a "non-swimmer to a swimmer" during the 12 weeks is noted by the Age UK manager, and some participants had the opportunity to swim again after a gap of two years.

The programme offered a quiet time in the pool, with participants having a lane to themselves, which individuals say made them feel more comfortable and less vulnerable. The social aspect of the programme was also highly valued by attendees, with some describing the "tea and chat" at the end as one of the best things.

“ I feel much better going
with someone I know
- Potential Customer ”

NEXT STEPS

After the programme ended, four out of sixteen participants wanted to continue swimming but report it as unaffordable. According to the Age UK manager, individuals found the cost of parking, swimming, and support workers' time unfeasible. The scheme's funding made it more achievable and helped to remove the financial barrier.



RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

CUSTOMER AND POTENTIAL CUSTOMER PROPOSALS

1 PERCEPTION

A fifth of customers were not aware Faversham Pools is a charity. Customers suggested highlighting the pool's charitable status, emphasising its strong local heritage and role in the community to encourage more people to use the pool.

2 PROVISION

The timetable does not provide all customers with an opportunity to swim around work and family commitments. Customers suggested timetable amendments, a creche, and a lane for adult swimming during swimming lessons to offer additional opportunities to swim. Customers and potential customers also suggested sessions they would like at Faversham Pools, including women and adult only swim sessions, SEN sessions, quiet swim sessions and sessions specifically for children with fun activities and equipment.

3 KEY ASSEST

The outdoor pool is a strong motivator for many and customers proposed further ways this asset could be utilised and maximised. Customers would like to see a greater variety of sessions offered and for the pool to be open more often.

4 COST

The associated price of a swim is an important consideration for customers and potential customers. Carer discounts, parking reimbursement and monthly/annual tickets at a reasonable price were proposals to help with this cost.

RECOMMENDATIONS

OVERARCHING RECOMMENDATIONS

1 TAILOR INITIATIVES

Engagement initiatives must be visible, accessible and relevant for people to engage. However, opportunities that are 'open to all' are not always effective in engaging all people. Consult with your target groups. Find out how they can, and want, to engage. Potential customers may be more open to an opportunity that allows them to start small, for example, through a taster session, social activity or event, and grow their engagement as the benefits are realised. Tailoring your approach to people's readiness to engage will increase the reach and impact of your communications and the accessibility of your offer.

2 TAP INTO WHAT MATTERS MOST

Increasing perceived capability and providing opportunities are necessary, but not sufficient drivers of swimming engagement. People must be motivated to engage; they must value the opportunity to embrace and make space for it. Use your knowledge of target groups and communities and frame your offer in ways that relate to their perceptions and potential misconceptions. Communicating your offer in ways that tap into the things that matter most to potential customers will enhance their motivation to engage.

3 PROMOTE THE POOLS AS 'BIGGER THAN AND BEYOND SWIMMING'

Stakeholders and customers alike speak passionately about Faversham Pools' strong local heritage. Many families have a generational connection to the pool, have created lasting memories at the pool, and see the pool as a constant in their lives. It is also recognised to play a vital role in the community, not just as a recreational facility, but as a social hub, educational resource, and inclusive environment for all. Promoting Faversham Pools as 'bigger than and beyond swimming' by highlighting the pool's charitable status, its role in the community and in the lives of local people will broaden the relevance and appeal of your offer.

ABOUT *spear*

The Centre for Sport, Physical Education & Activity Research (*spear*) is located within the Faculty of Science, Engineering & Social Sciences at Canterbury Christ Church University. *spear* undertakes a range of evidence-led analyses, from critical commentaries and reflections on current policy and practice, to commissioned research, evaluation and consultancy.

The Centre's research is funded by a range of national and international funders such as the International Olympic Committee, World Health Organisation, Terre des Hommes, Department of Health, Department for Education, Youth Sport Trust, Chance to Shine, Premiership Rugby, Sport Birmingham, parkrun UK and Sport England. Recent work has focused on sport, physical activity, health and wellbeing in schools and communities.

Research conducted by *spear* helps guide and inform public policy by contributing to the wider evidence base used by policy makers, providing a rationale for government and commercial investment, and steering programme improvements that enhance the experience of practitioners and participants.

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