

# Pool capacity and programmes



## Capacity allowing for programmes

How do you plan the capacity of a pool for the first time? There are 2 potential measurements based on 1 bather to either 6 or 3 square metres.

Let's try and apply this to an example:

A 4 lane pool of 25 metres x 8 metres with a surface area of 212.5 square metres- if we assume that each swimmer in an unprogrammed session swims for an average of half an hour, this means 35 swimmers per half hour based on 6 square metres or 71 based on 3 square metres.

It now depends on how long you intend to keep the pool open. Let's say it is from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m., i.e. 14 hours. Your capacity would therefore be a maximum of 1,988 or 980 swimmers in the day based on the 2 measurements of 3 and 6 square metres. If you took the mean of adult pool admission prices of £3.11 in the last reported year, then the maximum income would be £6,183 or £3,048 per day based on a pool of this size. This example could be applied to any pool size.

In reality you are rarely going to achieve this capacity. The main reason for this is, first, insufficient swimmers, and secondly, pool programming. Pools normally programme to meet the needs of customers and this means that they work at much less than their capacity. If we take one example, swimming lessons, both adult and junior, generate more revenue but decrease the number of swimmers in a pool. You may be talking about as little as 2 groups of 10 people in half an hour. Aquafit classes in a pool of this size could mean just 20 people in the shallow end with insufficient alternatives being available for the deep end to be used at the same time. If we took water polo as another example, a maximum of 14 players can take up the whole pool for a game in a half hour.

## Capacity allowing for programmes

You will need to carefully weigh up future opportunities. One useful exercise that can be undertaken at the start is to work out the pool's capacity based on unprogrammed swimming and maximum number of opening hours and then, separately, to work out the capacity based on the programme that was run at the pool under the previous owner.

You can then determine what the likely income is per session based on the type of activity. Armed with this information you can then start to consider the most appropriate use of the pool at different times of the day. If you have signed a service level agreement (SLA), you



will probably have undertaken to deliver 'x' number of hours per day on a series of activities. You should therefore exercise caution to make sure you understand the requirements in the original SLA and the impact it will have on your pool programme and the income you can generate.

If, for example, you are hiring to a club, then the mean amount charged across England and Wales in the last year for a typical hire is £58.31 per hour. If this is compared to unsupervised swimming, the return is smaller. In the typical example in '*How to determine pool capacity*', you could potentially generate an income of £220.81 (based on one swimmer per 3 sq.m.) or £108.85 (based on one swimmer per 6 sq.m.) if each swimmer swam for 30 to 45 minutes. It would therefore appear to be more attractive to encourage more unsupervised swimming but the reality is that clubs are regular customers, guaranteed to turn up in all sorts of weather and bring their relatives, who also become customers, and are likely to be in existence for many years. You will therefore need to weigh carefully the economic arguments for each case.

### **Consideration of the initial programme**

Your initial programme should include a mix of provision. Given that there is considerable demand for all types of swimming between 7.30 and 9 a.m. in the morning and from 4 p.m. onwards in the evening, part of the challenge is to fill the pool during the daytime.

In addition to school swimming and adult fitness swimming, there are plenty of opportunities to introduce programmes to encourage people to swim during the day. Typically these include:

- Health and well being days
- Integrated swimming and coffee mornings for adults
- Aqua jogging
- Aquarobics
- Post natal parent and baby sessions
- Health referral sessions
- Promotional offerings- swim one, get one free
- Tailor made sessions, e.g. WI or Rotary
- Aqua health clubs, which include advice on fitness and diet for adults
- One to one lessons

Many useful ideas for programming came from the Everyday Swim project and you can order a DVD which contains handy hints

<http://www.everydayswim.org/>



The 10 minute video shows real cases of how to get people swimming and is directed towards pool operators.