



Frequently Asked Questions

Q. When can my child start swimming lessons?

A. It is always good to introduce children to the water as soon as possible but placing a child into a class they are not mature enough to participate in could hinder their progression.

Q. Is there a waiting list?

A. No, to book swimming lessons you need to contact the reception desk of the venue you wish to attend. Please note, booking is done on a first come first served basis and subject to availability.

Q. When do you run swimming lessons?

A. All classes are subject to change, availability and minimum numbers:

Discovery Duckling: 4 months to 2 years

Consett Leisure Centre - Monday, Thursday, Saturday

Louisa Centre, Stanley – Tuesday

Duckling: 2 to 3 years

Consett Leisure Centre – Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday

Louisa Centre, Stanley - Tuesday

Dippers: Pre-School 3 to 4 years

Consett Leisure Centre - Monday to Sunday

Louisa Centre, Stanley - Monday to Saturday

Dippers: 4+ years

Consett Leisure Centre - Monday to Sunday, Saturday Disability classes

Louisa Centre, Stanley - Monday to Saturday

Q. How long does each session last?

A. All group sessions are 30 minutes in duration and include a welcome, register, pool entry, warm up, main theme, contrasting activity, exit and farewell.

Q. How do I pay for sessions?

A. A minimum of 10 sessions can be purchased by debit/credit card or cash at the Reception desk of the venue you wish to attend. Sessions must be paid for in full at the time of booking prior to commencement of the first session. You will need to provide us with the email address that you wish to receive your Time to swim pathway communication as there is no hard copied information distributed.

NB Advanced bookings cannot be made and all sessions are subject to change and availability. To continue sessions a top up payment must be made before the final session begins or the space will go on general sale and another booking will need to be made which will not guarantee the same space.

Q. What is the Top up process?

A. Towards the end of the current 10 sessions customers will receive 3, 2, 1 count down automated email reminders via the email address supplied to inform them that they only have a short time remaining in the current sessions. All sessions are subject to change and availability and it is the customer's responsibility to top up sessions at the reception desk of the venue before the final session takes place.

Q. Do I have to wait until I receive my final reminder to top up?

A. No, you can top up at any one time after the initial booking but it must be done before the start time of the final session to keep the place or it will become available for general sale and another booking will need to be made which would not guarantee the same space.

Q. Do parents get in the pool?

A. Yes, Discovery Duckling & Duckling classes require an adult to be responsible for the participant at all times on a 12:1 ratio basis. Dippers sessions are supervised by qualified lifeguards and the teachers will enter the water to support when needed.



Time to swim pathway: Information



Q. Where can I view the sessions?

A. There is limited viewing of the small pool in the foyer at both venues and the main pool can be viewed from the upstairs balcony at the Louisa Centre, Stanley.

Q. What should we bring to the sessions?

A. All equipment is provided but you may wish to supply your child with goggles. Participant's need to be dressed in suitable attire of good condition for practical purposes, be of the correct size and shorts must be above the knee to allow full range of movement. Jewellery should not be worn and long hair must be tied back out of the face.

Q. I have more than one child in the scheme, can I split the payment?

A. No, unfortunately there are no staggered payments, however a top up payment can be made at any time during the 10 sessions to create staggered reminders and payments.

Q. My child is ill/injured, can I have a refund?

A. Medical refunds for the missed sessions will only be issued to customers who fit the criteria upon receipt of appropriate proof from a GP or other suitably qualified practitioner. Where possible the customer must inform Durham County Council of the absent participant before the session takes place and again on return. No refund will be offered where a participant fails to attend for other reasons.

Q. Can I try the class for a week to see if my child likes it before I pay for 10 sessions?

A. No, the minimum payment accepted is for 10 sessions only and fees must be paid in full in advance of the commencement of the first session.

Q. Are the sessions still on during the school holidays?

A. Yes, sessions run throughout all school holidays including the half term breaks. The pathway is a continuous assessment and Durham County Council provide lessons over a 40 week minimum period in any calendar year with an approximate 2 week break at Christmas.

NB The buildings are closed during all Bank Holidays including Good Friday, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, therefore sessions will not take place at these times and an automated email will be sent to inform customers of this cancellation. The Louisa Centre, Stanley is a competition pool and some weekend sessions will be cancelled. Please check at the reception desk, of the venue or visit www.durham.gov.uk/leisure for details.

Q. Will the same teacher take the session every week?

A. We do endeavour to ensure the class always has the same teacher; Durham County Council cannot guarantee all sessions will be conducted by one teacher throughout although we do try to limit it. Unfortunately we cannot give advanced warning when this may happen.

Q. Will my child's session always be the same day/time?

A. Durham County Council reserves the right to advise a change of day and time of sessions for progression purposes. Please note it is the responsibility of the customer to top up sessions and make the correct required movement and booking.

Q. How early should I turn up for sessions?

A. There is no need to arrive any earlier than 5 minutes prior to the start of the session. Participants must remain behind the barrier or seated on the bench or floor against the wall away from the water until the session starts. Please do not return to collect your child earlier than 5 minutes towards the end of the session. A polite request that all outdoor footwear be removed before entering the changing village and customers do not block the 25m pool entrance for other users. The shower area is only used for hygiene purposes and participants are the parents/carers responsibility until staff are ready to start the session.

Q. When will my child progress to the next stage?

A. Individuals learn at different rates; the pathway is designed to give participants the opportunity to progress at their own pace. It may be necessary to move classes providing there is space at the next level but it is not always possible to move immediately. If there is no availability, introduction of the next set of competencies will begin until a suitable a move is possible.





Q. How will my child's progress be assessed?

A. Participants are continually assessed and all criteria must be completed to achieve an award. Please note this does not mean a date stamp for every session attended and there is no final assessment date. If a swimmer is struggling over a period of time to complete only one outcome, they will, if appropriate be moved on to elements of the next stage to continue their progress whilst still working on the skill still required to pass the previous stage. Feedback can be discussed with the teacher however as their time is limited we ask that you leave your details at the reception desk of the venue you attend for teacher to contact you at a convenient time.

Q. Are there any awards my child can achieve?

A. Yes, awards can be purchased at the reception desk of the venue once you have been indicated to do so. The classes are grouped together as mixed abilities and awards are a positive way to recognise true progress and reward hard work, but it is never the main focus of our learning process. It can take anything up to a year for a swimmer to comfortably achieve all competencies of a stage; this naturally varies for individuals. It is not realistic to expect a child to achieve a stage each 10 sessions. Our goal is to produce competent, confident and happy swimmers.

Q. How long will it take for my child to learn to swim?

A. All children progress at different rates, generally the more confident and relaxed your child is, the quicker they will progress. Younger children can find the swimming pool environment and meeting new teachers and fellow pupils daunting. We generally find children need a settling in period of at least 2/3 weeks to become accustomed to their new surroundings and find out how fun swimming is.

Q. Why are different strokes taught?

A. Some children find certain strokes difficult to master so by teaching all strokes it gives children the opportunity to excel with at least one. This not only makes recreational swimming more enjoyable, but also provides variety during sessions and helps to maintain interest. All four strokes are part of the assessment process to achieve awards.

Q. How many widths/lengths can I expect my child to swim during each session?

A. Children should not be expected to swim a specific number of widths/lengths during any one session. Participants need time to understand instructions given and then further time to practice each activity at their own pace. Some activities do not require widths/lengths to participate, therefore it is not measurable during sessions.

Q. What happens if my child cries?

A. Please don't worry, our teachers are experienced at comforting and distracting tearful children. It is quite natural to feel overwhelmed and nervous by the pool surroundings or when swimming without a parent for the first time. If your child is upset before the session, the teacher will ask you to leave your child with them, however should your child become too distressed you will be asked to return to the poolside. We appreciate how difficult it is for parents to leave their children when they are upset, but it can be easier for the teacher to talk to and calm your child when you are not looking for you, and for this reason we sometimes ask you to leave poolside and remain out of site and then invite you back if needed.

Q. What if my child needs the toilet during the session?

A. The teachers are only responsible for the participants when they are on poolside. If your child needs to be excused at any point during the session the responsibility falls to the parent/carer and you will be asked to collect your child.

Q. How do I move the day/time of my session if I need to?

A. If your circumstances change you can change your current session at the reception desk of the venue you attend. Please note spaces are subject to availability and sold on a first come, first served basis.

Q. What if the class change cannot be made?

A. Unfortunately there are times when the change you require may not be available; you will be accommodated as soon as possible.



Time to swim pathway: Information



Q. How long after a meal can my child swim?

A. It is essential that all swimmers finish a meal at least 1 1/2 hours before or 45 minutes for a light snack.

Q. Is my child entitled to free swimming?

A. Yes, in order to encourage your child to practice what they have learnt during their sessions, Durham County Council offer Time to swim pathway members the opportunity to swim for free during public sessions. Membership cards can be obtained at the reception desk of the facilities on booking. A photograph will need to be taken of the participant so that they can be identified on entry to the building.

Q. Can I leave the building or use the facilities while my child is in their class?

A. You must remain in the building while your child is in the session. If you are using other centre facilities you must inform the class teacher and reception of your whereabouts in the building.

Q. Can I take photographs during the sessions?

A. The taking of photographs or video in Durham County Council facilities is not permitted unless prior permission has been granted. All participant's/parents/carers and teaching/lifeguard staff must give permission and a consent form completed. Footage is not permitted for public viewing.

Q. What will happen in the event of a building evacuation?

A. The facilities have emergency procedures for customers to follow. The poolside staff will take care of the participants in the water.

Q. Does the pathway provide crash courses?

A. Yes, crash courses are available during the Durham County Council School holidays including the half term breaks apart from the Christmas break. Please check at the reception desk of the venue or visit www.durham.gov.uk/leisure for details.