



department for  
**culture, media  
and sport**

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# news release

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## **Massive sport reform to spearhead 2012 legacy plans Free swimming plan for over 60s at the forefront**

A new £140 million fund to boost sport and fitness through free swimming for the over 60s was announced by the Government today as part of a drive to get two million people more active by the London 2012 Olympics.

The fund, announced alongside a new strategy for sport in England, will encourage local authorities to open up nearly 1,600 publicly owned swimming pools free to over 60s. More than 10 million older people in England stand to benefit from the move.

It will also be used as a challenge fund to encourage local authorities to offer free swimming to under 16's and to rejuvenate and maintain pools. The fund will also support initiatives such as the provision of free lessons for adults who cannot swim, and the introduction of swimming coordinators to maximise and sustain uptake.

Precise details of how the scheme will be delivered will be agreed over the summer with the fund being available from 2009.

Culture Secretary Andy Burnham also announced today radical plans to create a world-leading community sports structure by transforming the Government's approach to funding and delivering grass roots sport.

The reforms, driven by a refocused Sport England, will use sports' national governing bodies to sustain and increase participation in sport and bring on new talent. The reforms will reduce bureaucracy and lead to savings of £20 million over the next three years, which will go to community sport.

At the same time Olympic Minister Tessa Jowell published the Government's legacy action plan for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The plan spells out how the Government is using the Games to deliver positive changes in line with its five promises for 2012: promoting sport, regenerating east London, inspiring young people, promoting sustainability and business, tourism, jobs and skills.

The legacy action plan includes new initiatives and ones that have been enhanced as a result of London staging the Games. As well as free swimming, it includes schemes to encourage walking and cycling, a huge investment in construction skills and, for the first time ever, an 'Inspire' mark - using the London 2012 logo to recognise outstanding non-commercial projects and events inspired by the Games.

Andy Burnham said:

"Offering free swimming is just the kind of imaginative action required to make us a more active nation by 2012. We have chose swimming because its appeal is universal. It is the perfect antidote to the couch potato culture.

"That's why since 1997 almost £250 million of public money has been invested in swimming - more than any other sport. Over the last three years, more swimming pools have opened than closed. So the pools are there, we now need to make sure they are world class facilities and that people use them.

"My ambition is that by 2012 as many areas as possible open their public pools for free. This is the first step on that journey. What a fantastic Olympic legacy that would leave."

Tessa Jowell said:

"My ambition has always been that the Games will offer not just a great summer of sport, but the prize of changing people's lives for the better for generations to come.

Today we are demonstrating how we will turn the rhetoric of the Olympic Legacy into fact. There is something for everyone in our plans - every part of the country, every section of the population. Ten million people stand to benefit from our exciting free swimming plan alone. I hope that this is just the beginning and that by 2012 we can offer free swimming to all.

For the first time we have outlined a comprehensive plan for everyone - be it through sport, volunteering, culture or business. Our Legacy Action Plan offers practical advice to stakeholders

across England and the whole UK so they can get involved in and maximise their opportunities from the Games."

Health Secretary Alan Johnson said:

"Swimming is all-round good exercise - whatever age you are. If we're going to be a world-leading sporting nation, we need to be a fitter nation.

"If we don't take more exercise and eat more healthily, by 2050 almost nine in ten adults and two thirds of children will be overweight or obese.

Subsidised gyms and free swims will help the nation to get fitter and build physical activity into people's lives."

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions James Purnell said:

"The DWP will contribute £22 million over three years to encourage people aged over 60 to take up free swimming sessions from April next year. We want to promote well-being in later life, and swimming has proven health benefits. It develops strength and stamina and has a low risk of injury.

"Swimming is already one of the most popular activities for over 60s, with around seven per cent going swimming at least once a month. I hope, with this help, many more older people will be able to take the plunge."

Communities Secretary Hazel Blears said:

"More people get involved in swimming than almost any other sport. It's a great way for people of all backgrounds and all ages from across the community to come together, keep fit and have fun. This is a fantastic initiative and I am delighted to support it."

## Notes to Editors

1. For further details of Sport England's new strategy go to:  
[www.sportengland.org](http://www.sportengland.org)
2. For further information on the Olympics Legacy Action Plan go to:  
[http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference\\_library/publications/5161.aspx](http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/publications/5161.aspx)
3. The swimming scheme is jointly funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Department of Health, Department for Work and Pensions, the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Communities and Local Government.
4. At least half of existing local authorities already provide some form of free swimming, usually to young people at certain times of the day. The fund will enable other local authorities to offer free swimming and enable those local authorities that already do so to extend their provision to other age groups.
5. Swimming is one of the most popular activities with 17 percent of women and 12 percent of men swimming at least once a month. It is the second highest participation sport for 11-16's, with 38% of them taking part and the most popular for over 60s, with seven percent taking part at least once a month.
6. The £140 million fund will be available to Local Authorities from 2009/10 for two years. Of that £80 million will be available as resource funding (essentially helping waive admission costs) and £60m will be available as a capital fund to help rejuvenate and maintain existing swimming pools.

Press enquiries: 020 7211 6931  
Out of hours telephone pager: 07699 751 153  
Public enquiries: 020 7211 6200  
[www.culture.gov.uk](http://www.culture.gov.uk)

2-4 Cockspur Street  
London SW1Y 5DH  
[www.culture.gov.uk](http://www.culture.gov.uk)