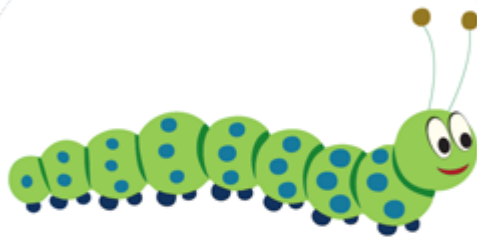


LEVEL WATER

MonLife



READY STEADY GO
Activity Club for Young Children with Autism

Level Water 1:1 Swimming Lessons

CALDICOT LEISURE CENTRE

Case study | 2023-2024 | Jodie Hunt

REFERENCES

- Level Water website:
[Level Water: The Power of Swimming](#)

- Monmouthshire website:
[Things to do \(monmouthshire.gov.uk\)](#)

- Ready Steady Go website:
[ReadySteadyGo \(readysteadygoclub.co.uk\)](#)

How has Level Water helped level accessibility?

WHO ARE LEVEL WATER?

Level Water say “Everyone should have the opportunity to learn to swim and fall in love with the water. So we work in partnership with pools and swim schools around the country. We train teachers and help with funding to offer high-quality one-to-one lessons to children with disabilities”. Level water primarily provide funding for children with a range of physical disabilities to those with social and emotional confidence. Over the past year, together with MonLife at Caldicot Leisure Centre, Level Water have introduced a pilot scheme to offer 1:1 lessons to those with Autism.

WHO ARE MONLIFE?

MonLife are a service group, supported by Monmouthshire County Council. Who run many sub-brands delivering a wide range of services across Monmouthshire. The sub-brand that is relevant to this case study is leisure.

WHY THE PARTNERSHIP?

Across MonLife’s four leisure centres, there are a wide range of swimming lessons delivered, that provide accessibility to a wide range of pool users. However, a gap was identified that meant many children with Autism were finding group lessons difficult, some were no longer attending swimming lessons for many reasons that made lessons unsuitable for them.

HOW DID WE GET STARTED?

The manager from Caldicot Leisure Centre reached out to Level Water to discuss a partnership, after all of the details were finalized, One of Level Water’s specialized and experienced teachers came to Caldicot Leisure Centre and delivered training to MonLife level 2 teachers from across the county.

We learned about Level Water, the process of how the lessons are structured and about children with a range of disabilities such as hearing or visual impairments to those with physical disabilities. The teacher shared stories and experiences with us from her previous and current swimmers. One of those swimmers went on to compete in the Paralympics. During the training we went into the pool and used props that attempt to simulate how one of Level Waters swimmers may feel in and around the pool environment, such as blackout or blurred goggles, ear defenders and weights on limbs. This provided a lot of discussions, thoughts and considerations among the teachers. After the training was complete, we started the process of informing swimmers and families about the 1:1 lessons.

HOW WAS THE PARTNERSHIP RECEIVED?

Level Water 1:1s were first introduced at Caldicot Leisure Centre for children, with the majority of the lessons giving opportunity to children with Autism. We first offered these lessons to children who were currently attending our ALN swimming lessons that fit the Level Water criteria – unable to swim 10m independently. The positive experiences of the 1:1 lessons was soon shared within a local group that supports children with Autism – Ready Steady Go. We then had more children join our 1:1 lessons after completing their application to Level Water.

WHO ARE READY STEADY GO?

A local support group for children and families with Autism. RSG's goal "is to assist these children in developing social interaction skills, forming friendships, and gaining confidence and independence so that they can achieve their goals based on their unique abilities and reach their full potential."

Here at Caldicot Leisure Centre, we have partnered with RSG to support their goal. This is how RSG have described their swimming session. "Our monthly exclusive swimming session at Caldicot Leisure Centre. It's a great opportunity to have a fun and refreshing swim with friends and family. Our friendly and experienced lifeguards are always there to ensure your safety and make your experience enjoyable."

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

We currently have 7 children who access our 1:1 lessons at Caldicot Leisure Centre and are hoping to have a few more start soon at Caldicot and at other MonLife centres. We have a waiting list of swimmers who are hoping to join in the near future to begin their aquatic journey.

Our swimmers have become safer in and around the water, they are more comfortable with the teachers and are continually developing their swimming skills each week.

DEVELOPMENT?

Some of our Level Water teachers were able to attend the Makaton taster session that was run by Level Water, this training was found to be really useful to the teachers and has been practiced in the 1:1 lessons. One of our teachers is also attending the full level 1 Makaton course, which has been gratefully funded by Level Water.

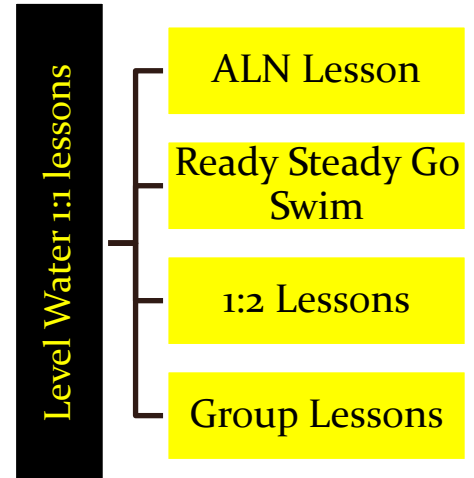
The teachers along with all staff at MonLife have completed an Autism friendly course, which has been helpful when working with children. Another Autism based course that our teachers attended was to experience how someone with Autism may feel when being given information and asked to complete a series of tasks. The teachers had most of their senses altered, with distorted glasses, headphones that altered the sounded level and pitch of noises around, the seat had fine bumps on, an overwhelming smell was put in the room, all while watching a video of a

normal morning routine at home, during the video a series of tasks were asked of the teachers, at the end of the video the teachers had to remember what each task required. Out of 5 tasks, no teacher was able to complete more than 2. This experience provided some insights for teachers and gave a deeper understanding of how the environment may affect learning.

WHERE NEXT FOR OUR SWIMMERS?

We currently have a quiet ALN class, for children who group lessons do not benefit, these children may be competent swimmers and are not in need of 1:1 lessons, however, they benefit from a quieter lesson.

For those swimmers who are safe in and around water and are no longer in need of 1:1 lessons, we signpost them to the Ready Steady Go, monthly swim session, this encourages socialization and continues to allow swimmers to enjoy the water in an environment where they can be comfortable.



As our Level Water lessons are 1:1, for some children, this can be quite isolating. If the teacher and parents are in agreement, we offer 1:2 swimming lessons so that the children can socialize and begin to take part in group activities and tasks in their lessons.

Some of our Level Water swimmers are unlikely to manage group lessons in the near future due to the number of children per class, number of lessons happening at one time, the changeover between lessons and changing room use, and many other reasons. However, it is still an exit pathway considered to its full potential for every swimmer.

WHAT DO OUR FAMILIES HAVE TO SAY?

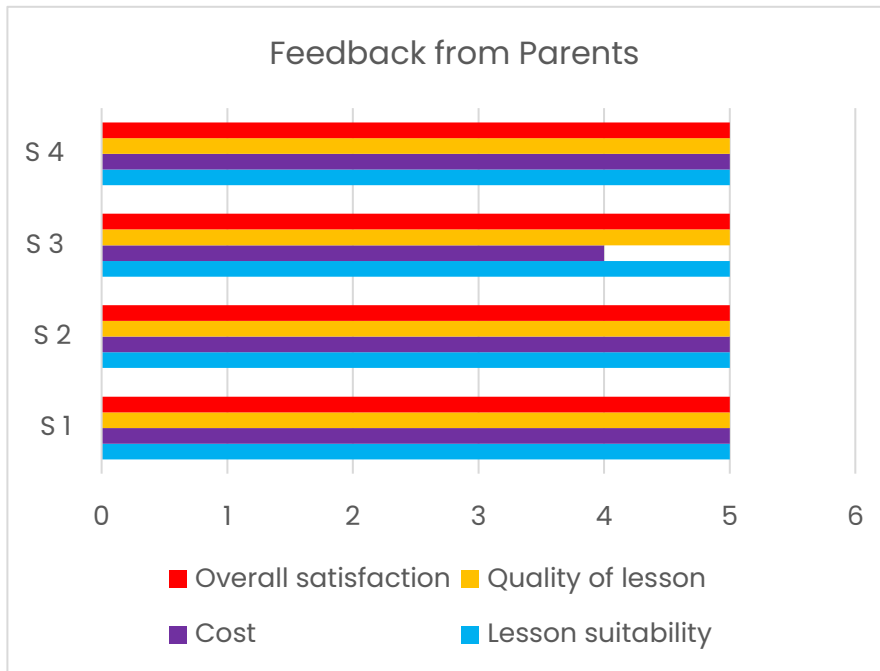
Recently, feedback from the parents of our swimmer has been received via questionnaires. We have received 4 out of 7 questionnaires. Here are some quotes from our parents.

“Excellent – couldn’t ask for more!”

“Nothing – everything available for my child. My child’s swimming tutor has great energy”

“We are very happy with the service we have received”

When asked how we could make swimming lessons more accessible for our families and swimmers, a common area to improve was, the need for multiple accessible changing areas for our swimmers to use. One parent mentioned having a few different time options to attend would be helpful.



Data collected via a questionnaire, using a number scale of 1-5, 1 being negative, 3 neutral and 5 being positive. We received data from 4 out of 7 families.

OPPORTUNITIES?

Along with the rest of the world, watching the Olympics and Paralympics, inspiration was in abundance; Level Water supported this and organised for our swimmers to complete a series of challenges. Each swimmer was rewarded with a medal, certificate and swimming hat. The swimmers here at Caldicot Leisure Centre really enjoyed in participating in the challenges and were very happy with their rewards.

Take a look at our results table for Caldicot Leisure Centre

Participant Name	Swimming Stage	Water Polo	Swimming	Diving	Artistic Swimming
	(1-4)	How many? (0-5)	How long? (seconds)	How far? (metres)	How Many? (1 minute)
Example - TAYLOR SWIFT	2	3	68	0.6	4
Child 1	1	5	15	3	6
Child 2	1	5	20	3	13
Child 3	1	5	75	2	3
Child 4	2 & 3	5	32	4	3
Child 5	2 & 3	4	28	4	28
Child 6	3	2	7	7	4
Child 7	1	0	N/A	N/A	N/A

GRATITUDE

Here at MonLife, we are extremely grateful to Level Water for providing the training, funding and opportunity for teachers to teach children who need extra support to begin or continue their aquatic journey. We also thank Ready Steady Go for all of their support for children with Autism in and around the community.