

District Regional Programme 2018-19

Report & Recommendations

256 swimmers, from 70 clubs across the country, qualified for the 2018-19 District Regional Programme (DRP), which was a very similar number to the two preceding years. At 38% of the total, the proportion of male qualifiers showed a very small increase on last year with the difference between genders being most marked in the 12 year old (33%) & 13 year old (35%) age bands. 26 coaches were appointed to the Lead and Assistant Coach roles. They were supported by 2 volunteers acting as first points of contact/Team Managers; a further 9 as Team Managers & Assistant Team Managers; with the 4 District Convenors providing additional support while also filling roles as Team Manager and Assistant Coach in two cases.

Having always been delivered in every District, it was disappointing that this year there was no DRP delivered in Midland. Only 12 swimmers qualified from the Midland clubs (showing a 50% reduction from the average of recent years) and it was decided that this number made the Programme unviable. Thanks should go to the other Districts who rallied round to ensure that the swimmers concerned did not miss out on the opportunity. The Programme was thus delivered in 5 locations across Scotland.

Following completion of the final Day, Coaches and Team Managers (TMs) provided feedback on the Programme. It was decided that we would also seek feedback from all of the swimmers rather than waiting until after the Stroke Camps as has been the case in previous years. Unfortunately the link to this survey did not go out until early January, by which time crucial momentum had been lost, which affected the number of responses we received. The response rate was, at least, large enough to be significant, but it should be noted that it was heavily slanted towards the Programmes delivered in the West from whom we had a nearly 75% return rate as opposed to the North where only 13% of the swimmers responded. The content of all of these surveys forms the basis of this report.

- **Recommendation 1** of this report is that the feedback link should be made available to the swimmers on Day 3 in future years.

This draft report is put to the District Convenors and National Swimming Committee for comment, discussion and additions.

1. Administration & Recruitment

There were no complaints from Coaches or Team Managers about the timing and communication of their appointment, all respondents felt that they had been given sufficient notice of dates for both the Orientation Day and the DRP Days themselves. One Lead Coach felt it would be easier if all of the Districts held Day 2 on the same date. After delivery of Day 3, Stroke Camp selections and associated paperwork were completed in a timely manner.

The content for the 2018-19 DRP was put on a new platform for the first time (HIVE). The response from the Coaches and Team Managers was universally positive, not only from an easy-to-access point of view, but also because it provided an online forum where DRP staff across all of the Programmes could share experiences, learning and ideas. Invitations to join the group on HIVE went out in the week before the Orientation Day, which gave staff an opportunity to look at the content ahead of time and bring any questions they had to the Day. On reflection, and in recognition of the fact that a large proportion of the DRP staff has

occupations outside of swimming, it would seem to make sense to have the content available across a weekend beforehand in order to enable people to spend some quality time exploring it.

- **Recommendation 2** - invitations to HIVE should go out to staff a minimum of 8 days before the Orientation Day with details of all content

2. Orientation Day

The Orientation Day was well received, with Lead Coaches universally valuing the opportunity to meet their Teams and do some initial planning. Meeting the Team was also highly rated by all of the Assistant Coaches, with the additional positives of learning what the expectations of them would be and the fun, practical delivery of land content. The Team Managers valued not only meeting their own Teams, but also having the opportunity to meet other TMs and share knowledge and experience. Several Coaches made suggestions for input around technical delivery, which tie in with their assessment of the DRP Days themselves. 80% of the Assistant Coaches reported that their experience of the Orientation Day had made a difference to their work in their home programme with the information on cross-over turns being particularly valued. 50% of the Lead Coaches also reported changes, citing the information for parents and nutrition information as being useful for them. There was strong Coach feedback that the detail of the Day 3 Process Meet should have been available by the Orientation Day, to enable questions and clarifications and to inform Team planning. All bar one of the Assistant Coaches felt that their roles had been clearly explained, as did all of the Team Managers, but 2 of the Lead Coaches felt the Day would benefit from a short session specifically on roles and expectations.

- **Recommendation 3** - a practical coaching/pool session is included either at the Orientation Day or the Symposium to give guidance on coaching the technical elements in the DRP
- **Recommendation 4** - a short run-down on role expectations to be given at the Orientation Day

3. Delivery & Content

Inter-team communications in the run-up to Day 1 were reported as being good, with all Lead Coaches having contact with their Team Managers and/or District Convenors and all but two of the Assistant Coaches referencing communications with their Team mates around delivery & logistics planning.

This year the Parents' Information session was moved from Day 3 to Day 1 and this move was welcomed by the Coaches. However, many of the Coaches seem unaware of the 2-year rolling curriculum that operates for each Level (& now also for the Parents), to avoid the same subjects being covered every year and to broaden the range of topics that can be addressed.

All of the respondents on the staffing team enjoyed delivering the 2018-19 DRP. 74% of the swimmers reported enjoying it, citing the opportunity to meet new people and the opportunity to learn from different coaches as the main reasons for this; an overall positive team environment and a fun & informative learning experience also came out strongly. Those who did not enjoy it cited repetitive aspects (both year-on-year and Day-to-Day); non-selection for Stroke Camps; and length & tedium:

“Not because it was bad, but it was the same as before, so I didn’t really feel like I got anything more than I already had from it.”

This contrasts with:

“It was different from previous years which made it more interesting for those that had made DRP before.”

Resourcing of the three Days was reported as being good, with the main challenges being around the function/non-function/availability of the necessary technology (laptops/Wi-Fi/projectors) and the difficulty of resourcing/planning for Day 3 without sufficient detail far enough in advance. The difference in venue specifications across the differing Programmes meant that some of the TMs had to work hard to enable each segment of each day to work and this difference is also reflected in what can practically be included in the Programme.

When asked which aspects of each Day the Coaches felt the swimmers had been most engaged with, the input from the Senior Swimmers was consistently highly rated, alongside the pool sessions, with the combination of storytelling and practical demonstrations really appreciated. Team Managers reported that the swimmers showed a really positive response across the board. The key message with regard to the Senior Swimmers is that they are most effective if given plenty of time and that sharing one swimmer across two Programmes did not really work. Analysis of the swimmer feedback suggests that having the Senior Swimmers present in the non-pool sessions may help with engagement as they can relate their experiences to the key messages that are being given. The technical focus on turns was challenging, but very positive for both swimmers and coaches. As in past years the non-pool elements of the programme were positively received in the most part, but were very dependent on the individual style of delivery and where the sessions were placed in the flow of the Day.

“The land training seemed to be enjoyed by most swimmers. Especially when empowered to make up their own warm up routine to music. This caused a positive buzz around the hall.”

The Process Meet on Day 3 was broadly welcomed, with the previously mentioned caveats around availability of details to allow planning. The swimmers rated the Process Meet as being one of the highlights of the Programme.

Although there were a couple of comments around the time-consuming nature of the Mindset scoring and the difficulty of evaluating swimmers through the Process Meet, none of the Coaches or Team Managers reported any difficulties with the process of selection for Day 3 and for Stroke Camps. Different Programmes ran slightly different feedback and reporting/discussion processes and beyond the difficulty of making judgement calls all seemed satisfied with the end result. Only one of the swimmers referenced the process specifically:

“I believe the selection for stroke camps are already pre determined and I feel that if you make one mistake the coaches ignore you after that.”

- **Recommendation 5** - one Senior Swimmer should be allocated to one venue only and consideration should be given to including them in non-pool based sessions
- **Recommendation 6** - at the Orientation Day time should be given to explaining the education curriculum

4. Impact

When seeking feedback from the swimmers we took the opportunity to ask them which aspects of being a swimmer they felt were currently their strengths - answers fell into a number of broad categories with ‘Training’, ‘Skill Application’ and ‘Ability’ being most frequently mentioned; only a few swimmers rated themselves as being good at ‘Listening to Coach’ or ‘Racing’. We next asked them to identify 3 things that they had learnt at the DRP that they thought would make them a better swimmer - the three highest scoring categories

were 'Turn Development', 'Mind Set Development' (included Senior Swimmer messaging around motivation & determination) and 'Nutrition Information'.

"I learnt so many new tips to help me as a person and a swimmer. I made new friends and met new coaches. I had so much fun and would love to come back next year."

100% of Lead Coaches and 80% of the responding Assistant Coaches reported that coaching the DRP had made a difference to their approach and methods in their home programme. Most frequently this difference has been the introduction of new ideas/ways of delivering coaching points with increased confidence, technical knowledge and improved planning all also being repeatedly mentioned.

All of the Coaches and Team Managers expressed either a definite or probable interest in being involved in DRP 2019-20.

As with all things there are clearly improvements still to be made to the DRP to keep it evolving and moving forward. With the following quotes being typical coach & swimmer responses, recognition should go to all of those involved who have helped to ensure that the Programme continues to deliver against its founding principles of Coach development and the 'promotion of swimmer betterment in the pool as well as a person through a culture of team spirit and togetherness, working together to progress one step closer towards goal attainment'.

"I think being part of DRP has been extremely beneficial for myself as a coach. It feels good to be part of something the swimmers will remember for a long time and hopefully make a positive impact on their performance or them as people."

"DRP was really enjoyable this year due to the variety of the sessions. I learned so much in and out of the pool that I have transferred into my training. As well as learning a lot I had fun and enjoyed spending time with other swimmers."