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To:

The Chief Executive  
 Metropolitan District Councils )  
 Non-metropolitan District Councils ) England  
 Unitary Authorities )  
 London Borough Councils  
 Common Council of the City of London  
 Council of the Isles of Scilly

Metropolitan County Councils )  
 Non-metropolitan County Councils ) England  
 Chairs of the Joint Implementation Teams in the restructuring areas )

29 July 2008

Dear Colleague

**FREE SWIMMING PROGRAMME**

**SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND**

1. This circular sets out details in respect of the Government's free swimming programme, in particular the purpose and payment arrangements. The grants will be made pursuant to the powers in section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003. These powers are explained in further detail at Appendix 1.
2. The grants are provided for free swimming schemes, the evaluation of which will be used to determine future funding and delivery arrangements. As such, there will be a need to quantify the success of the schemes through local monitoring. The grant will therefore be ring-fenced in order to allow evaluation of the funding and must be spent in accordance with the conditions outlined below. The grant is not subject to separate auditor certification procedures. This ring fencing will be temporary and will not continue beyond financial year 2010/2011.
3. The Government is keen to encourage as many local authorities as possible to participate in making swimming free for those aged 60 or over and those aged 16 or under in their local communities, but also to stimulate ambitious authorities to maximise and sustain uptake through other initiatives such as free lessons for adults who cannot swim, and free swim co-ordinators which will be a key component to the effectiveness of both free swimming schemes. There will also be incentives for the most ambitious to move further towards a universal free swimming offer.
4. The Government's free swimming programme is also designed to help authorities achieve successful delivery of their national indicator targets, including (but not limited to) NI8, NI55, NI56, NI110 and NI137.

**PAYMENT CONDITIONS AND ARRANGEMENTS**

5. Authorities who wish to participate in the free swimming offer for those aged 60 or over must provide confirmation by 15 September 2008. By confirming participation to DCMS, an authority agrees to spend the grant for free swimming

for those aged 60 or over, as detailed further below. This will be made a condition of the grant. The amount of the grant is pre-fixed, based on an authority's population of those aged 60 or over.

6. Authorities who also wish to participate in the free swimming offer for those aged 16 or under must also submit an expression of interest for this part of the programme by 15 September 2008. For these authorities, Government will then aim to provide details of their prospective allocation by 30 September 2008. Authorities will then be invited to confirm, by 15 October 2008, that they wish to participate in this element of the offer. By confirming participation in this part of the offer, an authority agrees to spend the grant for free swimming for those aged 16 or under as detailed further below. This will be made a condition of the grant.
7. Those authorities who already make available a free swimming offer that would otherwise have qualified for funding may apply to use their allocation on initiatives additional to their existing offer and designed either i) further to increase and sustain participation for these age groups (e.g. structured sessions or classes) and/or ii) to extend their existing programmes to wider groups of the population and move further towards a universal free swimming offer.
8. These authorities should follow the relevant process (depending on their existing offer(s)) for application outlined in paragraphs 5 and 6 above.
9. It is expected that this grant will be paid to participating authorities as early as possible in financial year 2009/10, then again as early as possible in financial year 2010/11.
10. In addition, Government is providing a total of £60,000,000 capital for capital projects designed to modernise pool provision, which are integrated with providing free swimming as outlined above. £10 million from this pot will be made available in financial year 2008/09 to reward those authorities which sign up to both schemes as outlined above (including those who already make available free swimming offers that would otherwise have qualified for funding as outlined above). Those authorities will receive a pro rata population-based share of the £10 million capital in financial year 2008/09 and may submit bids for the remaining funding from financial year 2009/10 onwards. These funds can be used as project development costs for bids for financial year 2009/10 and financial year 2010/11. They cannot however be used for partnership funding for bids from financial year 2009/10 onwards. Sport England will assess bids in the first instance on behalf of Government and will publish a prospectus for bids for funding from financial year 2009/10 onwards.
11. The resource fund is not open to county councils. However, school pools, if they contribute to the overall free swimming scheme, will be considered for capital grants.

#### **PURPOSE OF GRANT**

12. The purpose of the grant is to provide funding to support those local authorities who choose to deliver part or parts of the Government's free swimming programme.
13. Specifically, the grant is provided to enable those local authorities which choose to participate in the programme to offer :

- a. either free swimming for those aged 60 or over,
  - b. or free swimming for those aged 60 or over and free swimming for those aged 16 or under.
14. Free swimming for those aged 60 or over means that people in that age group who wish to swim, at any time throughout the year, when they would normally be admitted to the pool for public swimming, and in accordance with local programming, should not be charged for doing so.
  15. Similarly, free swimming for those aged 16 or under means that people in that age group who wish to swim, out of normal school hours throughout the year, when they would normally be admitted to the pool for public swimming, and in accordance with local programming, should not be charged for doing so.
  16. For those authorities who already make available a free swimming offer that would otherwise have qualified for funding and who choose to participate in the scheme, the purpose of the grant is to provide funding for initiatives additional to their existing offer and designed either i) further to increase and sustain participation for these age groups (e.g. structured sessions or classes) and/or ii) to extend their existing programmes to wider groups of the population and move further towards a universal free swimming offer.
  17. Further information on the free swimming programme is set out at Appendix 2.
  18. Further funding to local authorities to deliver the free swimming programme in financial year 2011/12 and subsequent years will be subject to the outcome of the next Spending Review. The evidence from financial year 2009/10 and financial year 2010/11 will be used to inform future funding and delivery arrangements.

#### **GRANT ALLOCATIONS**

19. The grant has been calculated on the following basis:
  - a) £15,000,000 will be provided according to a formula based on the size of the local 60 or over population to those of the 354 local authorities who choose to provide free swimming for those aged 60 or over.
  - b) £25,000,000 will be available to provide free swimming for those aged 16 or under. Allocations will be determined subject to expressions of interest.
20. Individual local authority allocations for the 60 or over element are set out in Appendix 1 Annex B below. These individual allocations are the amounts authorities receive if they choose to participate in the scheme.

#### **ENQUIRIES**

For further information on this grant, please contact the Department for Culture, Media and Sport on 020 7211 6200 or at [enquiries@culture.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@culture.gov.uk).

**EXERCISE OF POWER TO PAY GRANT UNDER SECTION 31 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2003 FOR THE FREE SWIMMING PROGRAMME GRANT FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2009/10 AND FINANCIAL YEAR 2010/11 (Ref: 31/1247)**

**Introduction**

The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, ("the Secretary of State"), in exercise of the powers conferred on him by section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003, and having obtained the consent of HM Treasury, pays the grants to those local authorities listed in column (1) of Annex A the corresponding amount set out in column (2) of that Annex.

Pursuant to section 31 (4) and (5) of the 2003 Act, the Secretary of State pays the grant to the respective local authorities subject to the conditions set out in Annex B.

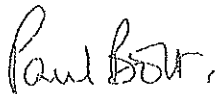
**Consent of Treasury**

Before exercising this power, the Secretary of State obtained the consent of the Treasury.

**Citation**

This grant shall be known as the Free Swimming Programme Grant Determination (Ref: 31/1247).

Signed by the authority of the Secretary of State



Paul Bolt  
Director, Sport and Leisure  
Department for Culture, Media and Sport

29 July 2008