

## Chief Instructor's Tips

We try our best to help all our members at the Turtles. This month, I would like to share with our members some information on visual impairment and how our sessions are designed to help the visually impaired swimmer. Please read even if you are not visually impaired, as there may be tips that could help with your swimming and so that you can be more aware of those swimming alongside you.



### Understanding visual impairment in relation to swimming

Visual impairment can range from Visual Acuity; The ability to read fine detail e.g. a car number plate to Visual Field; the boundaries/distance of what a person can see without moving their head or body. There are many different visual impairments (Diabetic Retinopathy, Macular degeneration, Glaucoma and Retinitis Pigmentosa to name a few) and for some it isn't in isolation from other conditions (Usher's syndrome). Swimmers with visual impairment may have the following challenges in a swimming pool:

- Light reflection on the water could make it difficult for swimmers to recognise the top of the water, the edge of the pool and other people in the pool
- They may not be able to see forward so tend to swim with their face to the side to see forward on all strokes.
- Not being able to see directly in front of them so pool entry & exits plus moving around the pool is often an issue
- Difficulty seeing in dim light/ shadows of diving boards.

### Turtles Facilities for the Visually Impaired

#### Pool Set-Up - Dedicated Lane

We have a dedicated 25 metre swimming lane to the far left of the pool for the visually impaired, competent regular swimmers. It is the lane positioned to the far left (furthest from the changing rooms) for ease of pool orientation and the use of the handrail. The lane is utilised by other vulnerable members when we do not have any visually impaired swimmers present. These vulnerable members are asked to vacate the lane when visually impaired swimmers are present.

#### Pool Set-Up – Main Pool Training Area

In addition, for our non- swimmers we have a training area that is width ways of the main pool. This is shared with all our other members and their carers We do not offer teaching lessons as such, but we do have volunteers who will work with as many members and carers as possible in the pool area. We have a variety of equipment that we can use to support members' swimming aims from belts, aqua floats, noodles and floating toys. We also have spare goggles. However, we would always recommend that you bring along your own goggles. Furthermore, it now possible to buy prescription goggles suited to your individual needs. We also have on request a wooden man which can be used by the helper (on poolside) to explain the swimming action required by touch. (See image opposite).



#### Gala Support

At galas, the Team Manager or an assigned Turtles Helper will escort the visually impaired member from poolside to the edge of the pool so as to participate in their events. However, the visually impaired member should be accompanied and assisted in the Changing Rooms by a personal carer or companion.

If required, coloured floats can be held in the water by the Team Manager or designated Turtles Helper so that the swimmer can better visualise the end of the pool.

## Chief Instructor's Tips (Contd.)

### Swimming Progression

The Turtles S.C is a community, grassroots club that progresses swimmers (where possible) to elite swimmers. If we see potential, we will suggest other Swimming Clubs, near you, to join to progress your swimming to the next stage beyond Turtles. The 'Visually Impaired' is classified as a para swimming sport and the classifications are as followed:

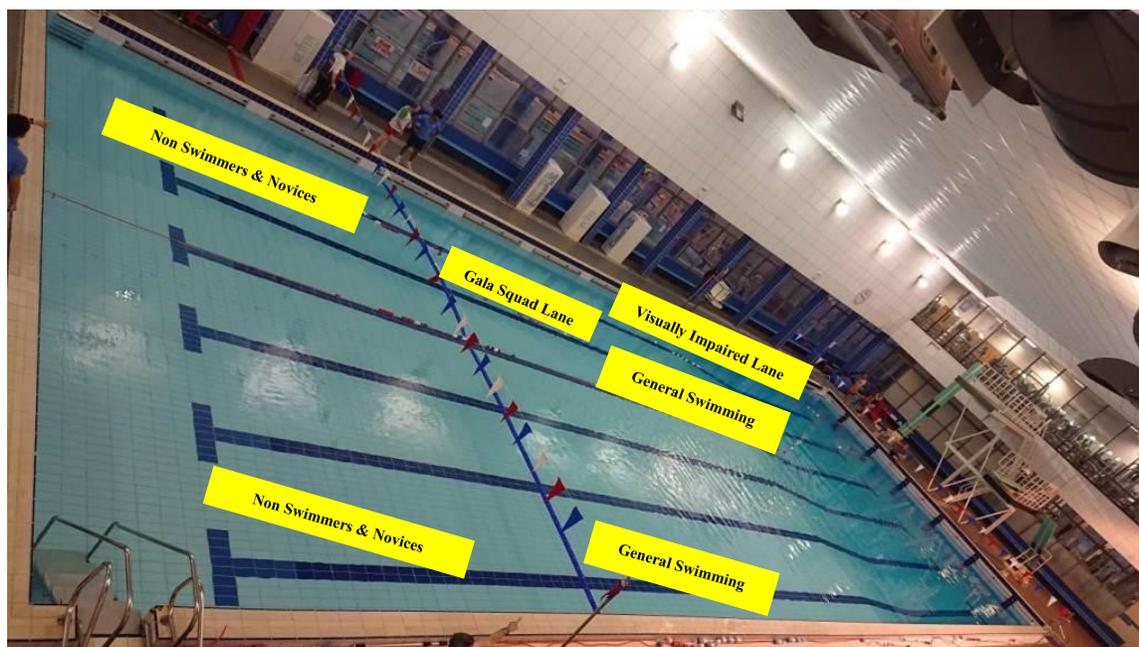
S11, SB11, SM11	Are unable to see at all and are considered totally blind
S12, SB12, SM12	These swimmers can recognise shapes and have some ability to see
S13, SB13, SM13	Swimmers with some sight and are considered to have a visual impairment.

Source: Swim England website

<https://www.paralympic.org/swimming>

<https://www.rnib.org.uk/eye-health/eye-conditions>

Please note the advice in these articles is only general advice and you should always follow the advice of your G.P.



**The Highrove Pool Saturday Set Up.**

If the lane for the Visually Impaired is not being utilized, then the Gala Squad use two lanes.