A LACK OF QUALIFIED SWIMMING TEACHERS IS IMPACTING ON THE OPPORTUNITY FOR UK YOUNGSTERS TO LEARN HOW TO SWIM

Friday 4 October, 2019

Ahead of World Teachers' Day on 5th October, a survey carried out by STA shows that difficulties in recruiting trained swimming teachers are continuing to create widespread problems for many swim schools across the UK – with 62% of swim schools saying this is also majorly impacting on the opportunity for children to learn how to swim.

The 2019 Industry Swimming Teachers Recruitment Survey by STA, found that more than half of UK swim schools, operating in both the public and private sector, have a waiting list for lesson spaces, while 77% said they could not find appropriately qualified swimming teaching staff to meet this demand – swim schools operating in the West Midlands, South East, South, North West, North, London and East Midlands were revealed to be the biggest problem areas for recruitment.

This latest study, designed to understand how widespread of an issue swimming teacher recruitment is in the UK, is being used to monitor and benchmark against similar research that was undertaken by STA in 2015 and then in 2018.

The 2019 research indicates the national recruitment situation is relatively static, no worse or no better than 12 months ago, which gives continual cause for concern and especially where its impacting on children not being able to access local swimming lessons and learn a vital key lifesaving skill as a result. All areas confirm that it is continuing to have an impact – the highest* in particular is the South East, South West and London.

Kaylë Brightwell, Head of Qualification Development at STA said: "Recruitment continues to a widespread problem and causes many operational issues for swim schools; from them not being able to cope with demand, being forced to cancel swimming lessons and longer waiting lists, which all impacts on their future growth. While the research shows some pockets of improvement as compared to the 2015 survey, the issue of recruitment and how it's impacting on the opportunity for children to learn how to swim remains a major concern – and especially when you consider that less and less children are actively participating in primary school swimming programmes which is pushing even more demand onto swim schools."

"Unfortunately the issue is also being further compounded in the private sector by the fact that many swim schools already find it difficult to cope with the increased demand for lessons because of pool time availability and a limited number of swimming pools. Increased swim school competition is also perpetuating the skills shortage – over the last 10-15 years, the number of new private swim schools that have opened has increased exponentially."

"As an industry we have a big job to do in attracting new people to the industry, which is why we are raising awareness about the all benefits of becoming a professional swimming teacher around World Teachers' Day and the 2019 theme *'Young Teachers: The future of the profession'*," added Kaylë.

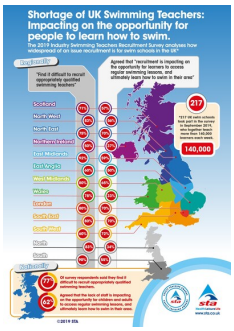
"It's a profession that offers flexible teaching hours to fit around a person's lifestyle with good rates of pay – great for parents who want a better work/life balance for example and students, as STA's qualifications are internationally recognised so are transferable abroad too. As the research shows there are countless opportunities for employment as well, with nearly two-thirds of UK swim schools currently looking to recruit qualified teachers and three-quarters prepared to financially invest in professional training for non-qualified candidates."

"Plus there is the incredible job satisfaction you get from teaching an incredible and important life skill," confirmed Kayle.

To find out more about becoming a professional swimming teacher and to find a local course, please visit https://www.sta.co.uk/become-a-swimming-teacher/

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About STA (Swimming Teachers' Association)

STA is an international charity working towards the objective of preserving human life by the teaching of swimming, lifesaving and survival techniques.

This objective underpins all of STA's activities, and since 1932 has driven its commitment to providing the highest quality qualifications and charitable services within leisure.

As a national governing body for swimming and lifesaving with over 12,000 members, STA continues to develop qualifications in swimming teaching, lifesaving and leisure management to support the needs of the industry.

Editors Notes –

A total of 217 respondents, representing swim schools in both private and public sector and who together teach in excess of 140,000 learners each week, responded to the 2019 STA survey.

The main findings were:

- 62% agreed that the lack of staff is impacting on the opportunity for learners to access regular swimming lessons, and ultimately learn how to swim in their area.
- 61% said they had a waiting list for swimming lessons.
- 77% said they find it difficult to recruit appropriately qualified swimming teachers to meet demand, and a third have been forced to cancel scheduled lessons as a result. Qualified Baby and Pre-school teachers are the most difficult to recruit.
- 60% said they were looking to recruit swimming teachers to meet demand.
- 70% said difficulty in finding appropriate staff was affecting their business growth plans.
- 73% said they were prepared to invest in training unqualified staff.

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