

# Winchester Aqua Bests 2025



**Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> October 2025**  
**Winchester Sport & Leisure Park**



**WINCHESTER  
AQUA BESTS**



**Active LD**

## Aqua Bests Purpose

The Aqua Bests, a new inclusive, pool-based event for adults with learning disabilities, building on the success of the Winchester Personal Bests. This half-day celebration offered three supported water activities: swimming, water polo and aqua aerobics, delivered with expert help from Winchester City Swim Club, Winchester Water Polo Club and Everyone Active.

The event aimed to:

- Celebrate every individual's effort and 'personal best'
- Inspire ongoing participation by connecting people with local coaches, clubs and new opportunities.

## Beneficiaries

A total of 93 people benefited from the event – participants, family carers, support staff, volunteers and coaches.

We were delighted to welcome 34 participants to this, our first ever Aqua Bests.

20 (60%) of participants live within a Winchester City and District postcode. The remaining 14 participants travelled from Southampton, Gosport and Whitchurch to attend the Aqua Bests.

26 (76%) of participants had previously attended one or more land-based Personal Bests event.

8 (24%) participants were new connections to Active LD.

Every participant received a medal and certificate for participating. Trophies were awarded to for standout effort.

Over 25 family carers attended and 12 support staff. Some joined participants poolside while others took the opportunity to relax and connect in the leisure centre café.



## Participant Feedback



“I liked the swimming the best”  
James W, participant

“It was a great day. We should do the same next year. Water polo was my favourite activity because I really like working in a team. It was great fun to work together and help each other”  
James S, participant

“I absolutely loved it. I'd like to do more Aqua Aerobics. It was brilliant”  
Ros, participants

“The service users, staff and parents...thoroughly enjoyed it and cannot wait for the next one next year”  
Hayley, Havant Keystone

“I really enjoyed Aqua Bests as swimming is my favourite hobby...I will definitely sign up again next year”  
Katie, participant

“I just wanted to contact you to say that the students were very happy with the Aqua bests that you organised. It looks like it went very well”  
Susie,  
Learning Diversities  
Coordinator for adults with Neurodiversity at AHED



## VIP

We were delighted to welcome Cllr Sudhakar Achwal, the Mayor of Winchester – who’s interest and energy inspired, encouraged and supported everyone participants, volunteers, coaches and supporters.



## Event Management Team



Lead by a strong and trusted collaboration between Active LD, Everyone Active and Winchester City Council we ensure the Aqua Bests benefitted from robust event planning, governance and risk management.



## Volunteers

17 volunteers helped on the day

- 4 from Winchester City Swimming Club
- 3 from Winchester Water Polo Club
- 2 Corporate volunteers (Simplyhealth)
- 8 Local supporters

Volunteers provided vital community involvement – increasing awareness, enabling inclusion and breaking down barriers.

A live online briefing was given 2 days before the event (a recording was posted on Active LD’s website immediately afterwards).

[www.activeld.org/news-article/aqua-bests-volunteer-briefing](http://www.activeld.org/news-article/aqua-bests-volunteer-briefing)

“Just to say a big thank you for allowing me to come along today. Joining in was great fun. I thoroughly enjoyed myself. It was great to see everyone having a great time. I must say the organisation was brilliant. Thanks once again”

Sue, volunteer

“It was a real pleasure and a delight to help at the inaugural Aqua Best. I thought it proved a great success”

Helen, volunteer

## Photographs

Photos are available to view on our website: Permission has been given for these to be shared.

<https://www.activeld.org/photos>

## Coaches

The water polo session was delivered by Winchester Waterpolo Club, the structured swim session by Winchester City Swimming Club, and the aqua aerobics session by Everyone Active. All three activities were highly popular with participants.

We're delighted that the coaches have all expressed interest in being involved in future Aqua Bests events.

Active LD is also pleased to be working with Everyone Active to extend their accessible aqua aerobics programme, with the aim of launching a regular disability session in 2026. In addition, we are excited to explore more opportunities for accessible and regular structured swimming sessions with Winchester City Swimming Club; supported by participant feedback and our own observations at the weekly Everyone Active disability swimming session.

### Autism Awareness

Active LD created Autism awareness training online (live webinar and a recorded session) with the help and experience of adults with autism and learning disabilities. This was delivered as an optional session for volunteers and coaches – these were extremely helpful in increasing understanding of neurodiversity and how autism and anxiety can affect Aqua Bests participants.

<https://www.activeld.org/news-article/autism-awareness-training>

10 Aqua Bests volunteers/coaches have attended the training.

### Training future coaches

Active LD are excited to be working with University of Winchester.

3 Aqua Bests participants have already drawn on their lived experience with Active LD to successfully deliver workshops on 'Diversity, Inclusion and Being Active' to year 2 Sports Coaching and PE undergraduates.



## Fundraising and Finance

Please refer to separate finance document for detail of budget, actual spend and supporting evidence (invoices and receipts).

## Next steps

The success of Aqua Bests has reinforced our core belief that people with learning disabilities enjoy being active and thrive when given the right opportunities. Physical activity supports mental and physical wellbeing, builds confidence, strengthens social connections, and creates a genuine sense of belonging. Aqua Bests also provides an important platform for participants to be recognised and celebrated for their achievements.

Building on this success, Active LD is committed to turning learning into action. Our next steps focus on growing accessible opportunities, strengthening local partnerships, and increasing impact:

- Responding directly to participant demand by developing more local, accessible water-based activities
- Introducing accessible aqua aerobics sessions for adults with learning disabilities
- Reviewing the current disability swimming offer and working with partners to explore structured, coached swimming opportunities
- Increasing awareness, confidence, and training around learning disabilities, autism, and the importance of physical activity within the LD community
- Growing Aqua Bests in 2026 and beyond by engaging more care providers, day services, and local partners

Feedback from participants, carers, volunteers, and coaches has been overwhelmingly positive. In response, we aim to increase the scale of the event by 30% in its second year, welcoming up to 45 participants to the 2026 Winchester Aqua Bests. We will grow our target to 50 participants in 2027.

These next steps reflect Active LD's ambition to improve, our belief in what people with learning disabilities can achieve, and our determination to deliver meaningful, lasting change.

# Together we're active and able



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