

PLATYPUS SWIMMING CLUB

FOR THE HANDICAPPED

Hatfield Swim Centre, Lemsford Road, Hatfield, Hertfordshire, AL10 OEB



The Platypus Swimming Club was founded in 1966 to enable disabled people and volunteer helpers of all ages and abilities including non-swimmers from the town of Hatfield and the surrounding area to enjoy the benefits of swimming in safety and privacy. The current members range from very young children with congenital and or mental disabilities, to accident and stroke-victims, those with arthritis, learning difficulties, visual impairment, and 80-year olds suffering simply from the effects of age.

The Club is run by a small, dedicated committee of volunteers, some of whom have disabilities or are, or have been, related to disabled members. It meets weekly on Sunday mornings between 11 am and 1 pm (swimming between 11:15am and 12:20pm) with a further 40 minutes to have a shower and get changed. During this time we have the pool and changing rooms exclusively to ensure privacy and time for those who need it in order to exercise or relax in a quiet environment.

The Hatfield Swim Centre has excellent facilities. The main 33m pool allows a full length to be swum in either shallow (1m depth) or deeper water. The pool is accessible by a hoist or by steps, designed especially for the club's members. There is also a learner pool, which is excellent for remedial work and great for babies and young children as it is always kept at 31°C. Professional lifeguards are always in attendance and also available to administer first-aid if required.

Financial support from the Welwyn and Hatfield District Council enables subscriptions to be kept at a reasonable level (currently £5 per annum and 50p per swim session).

The aims of the Club are dependent on the needs of each member, instilling confidence in the water, providing advice and encouragement where necessary. This also includes those in need of remedial treatment such as people recovering from strokes and accidents and can involve one-to-one sessions with volunteers.

The competitive instincts of many of the disabled swimmers are catered for by about 10 annual swimming galas. These are mainly run under the auspices of the National Association of Swimming Clubs for the Handicapped (NASCH) and include the annual Club Championships, friendly races against other clubs of the Eastern Region as well as the National Gala held each autumn. Qualification for the National Finals is achieved by winning events at the Eastern Regional Gala.

New members are always welcome, but as with all voluntary groups, the Club is also in need of more independent volunteer helpers. Not every week, but just by having that extra 2 or 3 people to assist both in the water and in the changing area, would make it a lot easier. Volunteer Helpers are given associate membership with an entitlement, if there is time, to an extra dedicated 20-minute swim from 12:20pm to 12.40pm. There are no particular requirements for Associate Membership (except a willingness to smile, laugh, help and have a good time).

For further information, please contact:

Joan Barratt (Chairman) 01707-264275 or Loraine Selby (Secretary) 01438-716963