



# BSSC GUIDE TO COMPETITIONS

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**Attending your first competition can be rather intimidating for swimmers (and their parents!) so we've created a guide that aims to answer those common questions of what should we bring, where are we going, what do we do when we get there etc etc!**

**This guide will chat you through:**

- Types of competitions and explanation of Level 1-4
- Entering Open meets
- Recommended equipment to pack
- Food and drink to organise
- Arriving at the pool
- Warm ups / Pre-race / The Race / Post-race
- Results and Rankings

We will also share useful tips from swimmers and parents. If you have any other questions please do chat to your squad coordinator, the gala team or the communications team.

# BEFORE THE DAY - TYPES OF COMPETITIONS

There are many different competitions available to our swimmers, but they typically fall into a few categories - Open Meets, Team Galas, Counties, Regionals & Nationals.

## Open Meets

- **BSSC Level 4 Meets:** run by our club that are only for our club members
- **BSSC Level 2/3 Open Meets:** run by our club that are open for other clubs to join
- **Open Meets:** run by other clubs that we send groups of swimmers to attend

Our coaches decide which Open meets each squad will attend throughout a season (Sept-July) and that is shared by email with parents so you can mark dates in your diaries. Not every squad attends each meet as some are aimed at older, faster swimmers. Sometimes plans have to change, so keep an eye on emails from the club regarding entry to meets.

## Team Galas

- **Hertfordshire Peanuts League:** "Peanuts" is a series of three galas, usually run May/June/July, where we compete as a club against other Hertfordshire clubs. This is aimed at younger competitors.
- **National Arena League:** "Arena League" is a national league, usually running Oct-Dec, where we compete in the London league against other clubs.

Swimmers are selected to swim for the Club in these team events. If your child is chosen, see it as an honour for them to be able to compete for their Club. Please don't see it as a waste of time if your child is only chosen to swim one race in the relay team. We have all been there and every race is great experience. Galas are fantastic occasions where the comradery of the swimmers and the cheering parents in the gallery comes to the fore. You will leave with ringing ears & no voice!

## Counties, Regionals & Nationals

- **Swim England Hertfordshire County Championships:** "Counties" are held Jan-Feb and swimmers must meet qualifying times to attend
- **Swim England East Region events:** these events, "Regionals", are a step up from "Counties" and swimmers must meet times to qualify
- **British Swimming / Swim England events:** "Nationals" are what the older swimmers aspire to and many are by invitation only

Our **BSSC [event calendar](#)** is stored on our website and contains lots of useful information about all of these events for each season.

# LEVEL 1-4

# MEETS??!

# WHAT'S THAT ABOUT?

Here's our quick guide to the four levels of licensed meets. Licensed Meets are swimming events where the license has been granted to the hosting club by Swim England (or one of its regions), which means they have to meet certain standards to ensure fair competition.

All licensed meets are subject to the Swim England Regulations and the Swim England Technical Rules of Racing. Swim England has a detailed description of each level on their website [here](#), but the basic details are:

**Level 1 Meets are long course (50m) only and cover National, Regional and County Championships.** Their purpose is to enable athletes to achieve qualifying times for entry into National, Regional and County Championships.

**Level 2 Meets are short course (25m) only and cover National, Regional and County Championships.** Their purpose is to enable athletes to achieve qualifying times for entry into short course National, Regional and County Championships. Herts County Championships is a Level 2 meet. Some of the Open Meets that our older squads attend are level 2 meets.

**Level 3 Meets can be long or short course events.** They enable athletes to achieve times for entry into Regional and County Championships (not Nationals) and other Meets at Level 1 or Level 2. As a club we have run Level 3 meets (25m and 50m) that other clubs attended.

**Level 4 Meets are entry level events in pools 25m or greater.** A Level 4 Open Meet would be for inexperienced athletes and swimmers seeking to compete outside their club environment. If times are good, athletes progress to Level 3 Meets. A single club competition that is restricted to its own members such as Club Championships, or our No Frills meets, would be a level 4 meet.

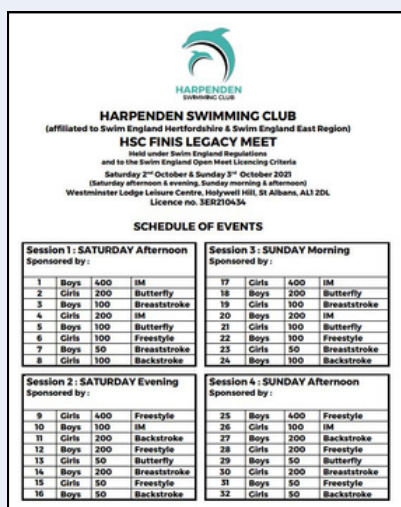
# BEFORE THE DAY - ENTERING OPEN MEETS

**Our coaches are responsible for choosing the Open meets** a squad will attend throughout the season. The dates of the meets they'd like a squad to enter are shared in advance by the coaches and are also stored on our website in the [BSSC Event Calendar](#).



The screenshot shows the website for Bishop's Stortford Swimming Club, affiliated with Swim England East Region. It features a navigation menu with links for Members, Squads, Training, Events, Join the Club, Learn to Swim, and News. Below the menu is an 'Events Calendar' for September 2021, with a view for August and October. The calendar grid shows dates from 30th August to 06th October, with some dates highlighted in blue, indicating events.

The website calendar contains lots of useful information about each event, such as the event specific website, event location and any details passed on to us from the event organiser such as parking information or restrictions.



**HARPENDEN SWIMMING CLUB**  
(affiliated to Swim England Hertfordshire & Swim England East Region)  
**HSC FINIS LEGACY MEET**  
held under Swim England Regulations  
and to the Swim England Open Meet Licensing Criteria  
Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> October & Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2021  
(Saturday afternoon & evening, Sunday morning & afternoon)  
Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre, Holywell Hill, St Albans, AL1 2DL  
Licence no. 3ER210434

**SCHEDULE OF EVENTS**

Session 1: SATURDAY Afternoon	Session 3: SUNDAY Morning
Sponsored by:	Sponsored by:
1 Boys 400 IM	17 Girls 400 IM
2 Girls 200 Butterfly	18 Boys 200 Butterfly
3 Boys 100 Breaststroke	19 Girls 100 Breaststroke
4 Girls 200 IM	20 Boys 200 IM
5 Boys 100 Butterfly	21 Girls 100 Butterfly
6 Girls 100 Freestyle	22 Boys 100 Freestyle
7 Boys 50 Breaststroke	23 Girls 50 Breaststroke
8 Girls 100 Backstroke	24 Boys 100 Backstroke

Session 2: SATURDAY Evening	Session 4: SUNDAY Afternoon
Sponsored by:	Sponsored by:
9 Girls 400 Freestyle	25 Boys 400 Freestyle
10 Boys 100 IM	26 Girls 100 IM
11 Girls 200 Backstroke	27 Boys 200 Backstroke
12 Boys 200 Freestyle	28 Girls 200 Freestyle
13 Girls 50 Butterfly	29 Boys 50 Butterfly
14 Boys 200 Breaststroke	30 Girls 200 Breaststroke
15 Girls 50 Freestyle	31 Boys 50 Freestyle
16 Boys 50 Backstroke	32 Girls 50 Backstroke

**Confirming entry:** we enter our swimmers into external Open meets a few months before they actually happen, especially those at the start of a season - for example, at the start of the summer holidays we may ask if your swimmer is available to attend meets in October. You will be asked by the competitions team to confirm by a certain date if you will be attending the meet or are unable to attend part or all of it. An Open meet typically runs for 1-2 days. Each day is split into multiple sessions, and within each session there will be multiple male/female events.

**Our coaches will normally suggest events for our youngest swimmers to enter.** More experienced swimmers will make their own selections within Swim Manager, but our coaches are always available for advice. Racing is more tiring than you realise when making selections on a computer, and a rule of thumb is at most 2-3 events per session and maybe only two sessions in a single day.

**Accepted swims:** sometimes Open meets can be oversubscribed and even though we entered in time, some of our swimmers may have entries rejected. The information on Accepted Swims is communicated by the competitions team prior to the Open meet. Once this is done, we are good to swim!

**Payments:** you will pay an entry fee for every event entered and also a small admin fee. Once you have confirmed a swimmer is attending a meet by pressing the Submit Entry button in Swim Manager, you will be invoiced immediately as we have to pay all entry fees to the hosting club at the entry point date, often months in advance. Refunds for medical reasons, with a valid medical certificate, are usually allowed (check published meet conditions).

# ON THE DAY OF AN OPEN MEET - WHAT TO PACK

First off you need to make sure that you've packed the right **equipment** for the meet. Here's what we have found useful:

- **Swimsuit** – a Training suit for warm up and a Racing suit. See note below about costumes
- **Goggles** – two pairs in case one breaks
- **Swimming Hat** – two in case one breaks, both BSSC Club hats
- **Towels** – a towel for poolside and another for getting changed afterwards
- **Clothing** – named club polo top (and club tracksuit top) to put on in between races whilst sitting poolside. Some meets line swimmers up for their races in changing rooms or sports halls and it can be cold, so black joggers or leggings can be useful
- **Pool Shoes** – non outdoor shoes to be worn poolside, e.g. flip flops or sliders

**Race suits:** most swimmers, as they get older and more experienced, will want to wear a racing costume. The first time you buy one you will gasp at the cost, even of the entry level suits! They do come in various specifications and patterns, and cover a wide price range. Joyce and Claire at [Stortford Sports Supplies](#) are excellent and will advise you if you are new to racing costumes and let you try lots on. Do not be tempted to buy large for growth! If you do, they will not work as they should. A racing costume should be very tight and take a long time to get into – ask the older swimmers just how long, especially the girls!

It's important to make sure that you have enough **food and drink** to keep you well-nourished and hydrated at the competition. So what should you bring?

- **Water Bottle** – Filled with Water. Make sure you drink plenty of water before, during and after the competition
- **Snacks** – e.g. Crackers/Oatcakes/Rice Cakes, jelly/Jelly babies/Haribos/dried fruit, fresh fruit (especially bananas), cereal bars/fig rolls/garibaldi, popcorn
- **Packed lunch** – many events will last all day, so you'll need more than snacks. Some locations have cafes, but don't always offer healthy options. Consider packing Sandwiches/Pittas/Bagels with low fat fillings, pasta, rice pots (some swimmers like sushi), low fat yoghurts and fromage frais, low fat milk shakes/fruit smoothies, fruit cake/scones/muffins/malt loaf etc.

# ON THE DAY OF AN OPEN MEET - AT THE POOL

## ARRIVAL & SIGN-IN

**Sign-In:** Pre-Covid, some Open Meets required every swimmer to sign in for their events when they arrive for a session, before warming up, and they will state a cut off time for sign in. More recently, organisers have moved away from this and swimmers haven't been required to sign. Events without sign in assume you are there and racing, and you will physically need to withdraw from an event if you are not.

**Arrival time:** every session has a separate warm up time and a race start time. Make sure you arrive with good time before warm up. You need to be on poolside at least 10 minutes before your warm up time. This gives enough time to check in, and let your coach know you have arrived.

All information on times and whether sign-in is required will be shared before the event by the BSSC gala team, and you can find details on our event calendar and the host club's website.

## WARM-UP

Your coach will provide you with warm up instructions, tell you when to begin your warm up and which lane has been allocated to BSSC. Warm ups are busy, so keep an eye out for other swimmers and flailing arms! Diving is not allowed at the start of a warm up, so remember to jump in. Separate sprint lanes are used at the end of warm up to practice dives.

It is vital that you are on poolside before warm up, so that you know from your coach what your warm up will be. Ideally, you will use a training costume, not your race costume, for warming up unless you are in one of the last warm ups and first races and not have enough time to change.



## PRE-RACE

Make sure you know your heat and lane assignment for your race BEFORE you race. Your coach will have this information on the day as heat sheets are given out to everyone poolside.

# ON THE DAY OF AN OPEN MEET - AT THE POOL

## PRE-RACE CONT'D

When your race is called, you should go to the designated calling area and await your race. Your coach and Team Manager will know where this is, but also ask older swimmers. The race marshals will call each heat in turn (slowest swimmers will be in the first heat) and tell them where to stand. Each heat then moves through different waiting points, or stations, until it is their turn to race. During this time you can start a dry side warmup, doing some light stretches to prepare yourself for the race. Your coach can provide you with guidance before you go to the calling area. Calling areas can be cold and you can be waiting a while at a big meet. You will then be moved to a position behind the blocks where you should go through your final preparations before your race.

## THE RACE

When your race is announced you will hear a series of preparation whistles followed by one Long whistle. Upon hearing the LONG whistle take your place either in the water (for backstroke) or on the blocks.

Once you are on the blocks, the starter will command “Take your marks” at which you will assume and hold your starting position. At this point you must not touch your goggles or change position AT ALL.



The “Take your marks” command will then be followed by the starting signal at which point you will start your race.

## POST-RACE

When you have finished your race, exit the pool as instructed by the officials collect your belongings and go and see your coach to get feedback from your race, and areas you could improve on. If you have done something incorrectly, you might get a DQ (Disqualification) - your coach can advise on how to avoid this the next time. Although it's nice to go and sit with your parents, we would like it if you stayed with the team until you have finished all your swims. This way we are more a team and you can cheer for your friends and teammates. When you are leaving the meet, ensure that you tell your coach so that they know you have gone home, and haven't just wandered off!

# HOW TO BE A GOOD SWIM PARENT

**swim parent** (noun)  
'sw-im \per-ənt

1. One that is able to wait multiple hours in anticipation of their offspring racing for 30 seconds.
2. Has a constant supply of food for the HANGRY swimmer.
3. Able to withstand the lingering scent of chlorine.
4. Understands the importance of one second.
5. Provides replacement for lost goggles at a moments notice, usually before a race.
6. Embraces extreme humidity during the coldest months of the year.

**This article was first shared in our Christmas 2019 Babble newsletter by the parents of the Elites squad. It was so good we shared it again Autumn 2021 and thought it was worth another viewing here...**

Always be positive, even when you've driven forever to a Gala and the swimmer adds seconds to their PB. Or as aptly named by Cara, the swimmers Personal Worst!

Never underestimate how much food may be consumed at a Gala. Yours in boredom and theirs in effort

Accept the fact that Coaches have Squads and are not personal coaches to certain swimmers



Don't forget your padded cushion for those long days on hard chairs

Ditto your surgical stockings. An average gala is longer than a flight to India!

Entry fees are the cheap part of the Gala. The raffle, protein bars, merchandise and new equipment are all necessary incidentals

Never assume your swimmer knows which events they've been entered into or even where the gala is

Expect to become an expert in lip reading and sign language from across the pool.

Remember the coaches cannot spend one hour talking with you as there are many swimmers and not enough hours in the day

When filming your child's race remember not to swear when the outcome is not as hoped

Do not underestimate the Coaches knowledge of every swimmer in their Squad. They've spent far longer watching the swimmer than we have

Always research the closest Macdonalds after a Team Event, or have your excuses ready. Please note, granola bars are never an acceptable alternative

Swimmers do not need to be told they haven't swum their best ... THEY ALREADY KNOW!

There is always a valid reason for the team or race selection, even if it is not obvious to you or your swimmer

Never comment on another swimmers times, you may need them to give your swimmer a lift one day.

**SWIM PARENT**



**CHEERING SECTION  
FINANCIAL INVESTOR  
EQUIPMENT MANAGER  
TRAVEL COORDINATOR  
CHAUFFEUR**



# SWIMMER'S FIRST EXPERIENCES & COMPETITION TIPS

We asked some of our more experienced Club members to share their experiences in early competitions. As you can see, even for our most successful swimmers, things don't always go to plan!

- **Hitting my head on 200 back at club champs!**
- My brother belly flopping his first competition dive!
- **Yes, I got disqualified at my first regionals at 100 Fly!**
- My goggles **ALWAYS** come off!
- **In my first race when I was eight I beat my close competitor, it was great!**
- I was so nervous at my first meet but I had great coaches who helped me to think about what I needed to do
- **Nearly missing my first county final**
- Falling over before the 200 IM at the blocks recorded on a counties livestream

That's not all we asked them. We also asked for some top tips for competition days.

Have a good nights sleep, eat a good breakfast  
(Mia)

**Arrive nice and early!**  
(Grace)

Sleep, then just relax on the day  
(James)

Go to bed early the night before and eat a good meal before and after racing. Think positive going into a race.  
(Issy)

**Eat Pasta before swimming and bring shakes.**  
(Jakey)

**Constantly vegging, (just chill) then psyche yourself up. Enjoy the race and the quiet whilst you swim.**  
(David)

Try to relax because the more nervous you are, the worse you will perform  
(Alex)

Eat chicken, chicken is protein, protein is good  
(Tom)

**Good snacks and great music. Competition days can be long, so its important to have the right mindset for each race**  
(Alice)

# RESULTS & RANKINGS

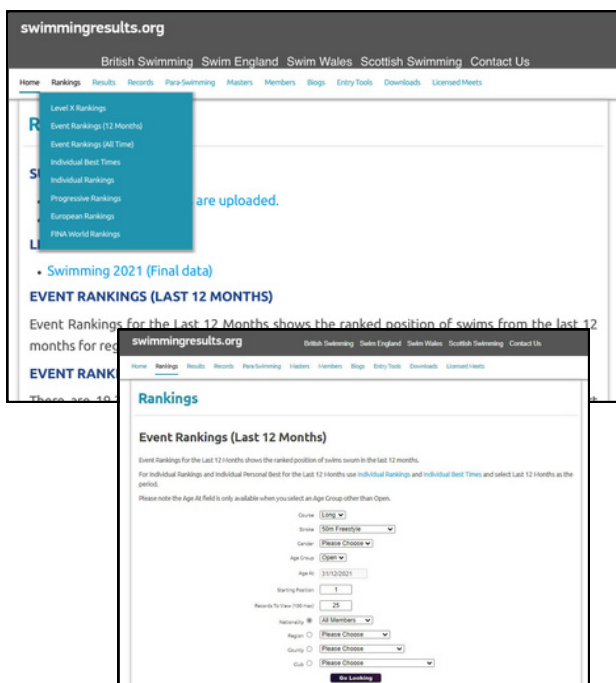
To be able to swim an event in a licensed Open Meet, a swimmer normally needs to have a time registered. **But how do they get that first registered time if the meets need registered times to enter?** Some Open Meets do allow a few swimmers with no times to enter an event and for the younger squads these meets will be targeted by our coaches, otherwise BSSC Level 4 events (Club Champs and No Frills meets) are the occasions where swimmers can get their first times.

When a swimmer starts to compete, their times are logged on the **British Swimming database**. Their progress can be followed through the years and their ranking within the Club, County, Region and even Country can be explored.

To explore your swimmer's times, select the **Rankings** drop down menu at the top of the website. Most options from the drop down display pages that enable you to drill down and find the results you want to explore. **Event Rankings (12 Months)** is the most commonly used option.

Remember that for many Open Meets and events such as Counties etc, swimmers are grouped by the age they will be on 31 December each year, so that is the default for age selection. You can view results at a club, County (Hertfordshire), Region (East) or National (England or Britain) level.

When looking at results for an individual event, you can click on any swimmers name to view their best times. Click on an event and you will see all the swims they have recorded. If you want to explore more, find Adam Peaty or your favourite GB swimmer and see how their results changed over the years.



The screenshot shows the 'Event Rankings (Last 12 Months)' page for the event 'Female - Short Course - 50m Freestyle - Bishops Stortford SC - 15 Years Age Group - At 31st December 2021'. The table below lists the top 8 swimmers.

Rank	Name	Ranked Club	Club	Meet Name	Year	Level	Date	Time
1	Michelle Trenchard	Bishop Stort	06	Bishops Stortford Summer 2021 Club Night	Bishop's Stortford	5	09/01/21	28.80
2	Emma Fields	Bishop Stort	06	Bishops Stortford Summer 2021 Club Night	Bishop's Stortford	4	09/01/21	28.57
3	Liam Ogan	Bishop Stort	06	Bishops Stortford Summer 2021 Club Night	Bishop's Stortford	4	09/01/21	28.81
4	Jessica Fields	Bishop Stort	06	Bishops Stortford Summer 2021 Club Night	Bishop's Stortford	4	09/01/21	29.75
5	Leanne San Saunders	Bishop Stort	06	Bishops Stortford Summer 2021 Club Night	Bishop's Stortford	4	09/01/21	31.12
6	Amy Cude	Bishop Stort	06	Bishops Stortford Summer 2021 Club Night	Bishop's Stortford	4	09/01/21	31.31
7	Elizabeth Cude	Bishop Stort	06	Bishops Stortford Summer 2021 Club Night	Bishop's Stortford	4	09/01/21	31.79
8	Peggy Sheen	Bishop Stort	06	Bishops Stortford Summer 2021 Club Night	Bishop's Stortford	4	09/01/21	32.35

The screenshot shows the 'Individual Best Times (Last 12 Months)' page for swimmer 'Lauren Gore - (1291080) - Bishops Stortford SC'. The table below lists her best times for Long Course and Short Course events.

Stroke	Time	Pool/Pos	Date	Event	Venue	Level	Last
50m Freestyle	37.99	25m	09/01/21	British Swimming Festival of Swimming East Region	London Aquatics Centre	062/10/21	1
100m Freestyle	1:05.71	25m	07/01/21	British Swimming Festival of Swimming East Region	London Aquatics Centre	062/10/21	1

Stroke	Time	Pool/Pos	Date	Event	Venue	Level	Last
50m Freestyle	1:08.05	25m	12/06/21	Bishop's Stortford	Bishop's Stortford	063/10/21	4
100m Freestyle	2:33.71	25m	12/06/21	Bishops Stortford Summer 2021 Club Night	Bishop's Stortford	062/10/21	4
150m Freestyle	3:48.41	25m	24/05/21	Bishop's Stortford	Bishop's Stortford	063/10/21	6
100m Freestyle	1:16.50	25m	25/05/21	Bishop's Stortford	Bishop's Stortford	063/10/21	6
150m Freestyle	2:53.94	25m	16/05/21	Bishops Stortford Summer 2021 Club Night	Bishop's Stortford	062/10/21	4

# FINAL NOTE - VOLUNTEERING

Each time we as a club run a meet, whether it's our Spring or End of Season Open Meets, or our internal No Frills meets, we need help from our parents. The officials (in white) are obviously key attendees and please do let us know if you'd like to become one, but there is a long list of other jobs where we need parent volunteers.

**Below is a little guide to show you how simple the jobs are.** For all of the jobs, you will need to be a member of BSSC and Swim England - just email our membership secretary at [membership@bsswimclub.org.uk](mailto:membership@bsswimclub.org.uk) if you aren't already a member.

## **Event Coordinator / Senior Competitor Steward**

1-2 (more experienced) volunteers who act as main point of contact on the day. They arrive at the pool before the meet starts and ensure everything is running smoothly and check there is someone in all the key positions. Any concerns during the meet will be reported to them by the other helpers.

## **Team Managers (Open Meets and galas)**

Each time we attend a competition, we have to have a certain number of qualified individuals, Team Managers, poolside with our swimmers in addition to our coaches. You will need a Swim England DBS check and will need to attend a Swim England Safeguarding Course (3 hours online) and a Team Managers course (2.5 hours online).

## **Competitive Stewards**

2-3 volunteers needed to marshal the swimmers for each event, ensuring swimmers are lined up in the correct heat according to lane number, and any absences are highlighted to the officials.

## **Event set up**

Typically 2-3 volunteers needed at the start and end of days to help set up the technical equipment. Don't worry, you'll be shown what to do.

## **Announcer**

Typically one per session. The announcer must arrive at the pool well before the warm-up session starts and ensure they know how the equipment works. They typically make the safety announcements before the warm up, and again before the competition starts; announce the lanes for the clubs attending; coordinate with referee and meet coordinator; and make announcements throughout the whole session.

## **Admissions Table/Raffle**

2-3 volunteers needed per session who should be in position a while before the meet starts to allow entry to spectators. They collect money for session entry and the program; organise entries for any games on offer; and help arrange the raffle prizes on display, sell raffle tickets, organise the draw during the meet and hand the winning numbers to the announcer.

# FINAL NOTE - VOLUNTEERING CONT'D

## Changing Room Steward

Ideally one male and one female per session. Arrive before warm up, walk through the changing rooms every 15 minutes to check no one is loitering in the changing rooms, using phones or causing a problem! They would report any issues to the Events Coordinator.

## Medals Table

Two volunteers per session. They receive the events results from the Results Runner and distribute medals to the (very happy!) age group winners (Gold, Silver, Bronze) of each event.



## Poolside Drinks

Two volunteers per session. They arrive at the pool before the meet starts and locate the water supply and drink/sweets supplies! During the session they walk poolside and provide all coaches, poolside officials/volunteers and BSSC office staff with a drink and sweets every 20 - 30 minutes. They help tidy up at the end of the session.

## Results Runner / Posting

1-2 per session. They take the results of each event from the BSSC office staff and distribute a copy to the medals table. They also post copies onto the wall for swimmers and parents to see.

## Volunteer Training

To get more involved as a volunteer and to perform some of the interesting poolside jobs, you will need to be DBS checked and attend a Safeguarding training course. Our welfare officer ([welfare@bsswimclub.org.uk](mailto:welfare@bsswimclub.org.uk)) can arrange a DBS check. Please email them if you are interested.

Swim England East Region runs a number of **Safeguarding courses** that you can book yourself onto and attend. This link shows the latest offerings across the region:

<https://www.eastswimming.org/courses/safeguarding-and-welfare-workshops/>

## Becoming an Official (poolside person in white!)

As swimmers grow older and leave the club, we gradually losing their parents as Officials, so it is important for us as a club to continue to train new parents to take their place. The first step to becoming an Official is registering on a J1 online course hosted for Swim England by the Institute of Swimming. This course will start you on the journey to becoming a level 1 Judge. Once you have completed that online course you will need local mentoring so please email our officials coordinator to let them know of your interest in the course: [officials@bsswimclub.org.uk](mailto:officials@bsswimclub.org.uk)