

# Parent/Guardian Guide to Swimming



Welcome to City of St Albans Swimming Club (CoStA). If you are new to the world of swimming, it can be bewildering to say the least! Hopefully this document will help answer a few of your questions now or in the months ahead!

This document is designed to be your go-to resource for all the essential information you'll need as a parent/guardian of a swimmer at the club. Whether starting out or settling into your first few months, you'll find helpful guidance, tips, and answers to common questions right here.

## Our Aim

At CoStA we are dedicated to create an environment that fosters friendship, respect, hard work and rewards success. We strive to be the best we can be ... whilst having fun.



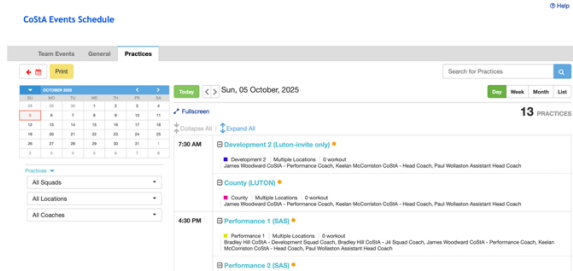
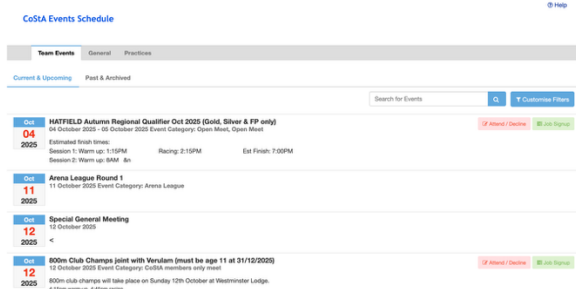
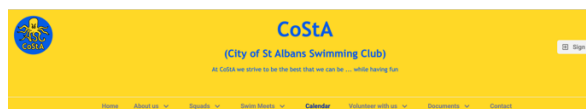
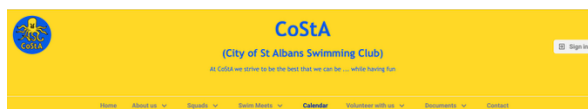
- We want all our club members to develop a lifelong love of aquatics.
  - We aim to include as many swimmers as possible by providing different pathways through the club depending on their goals and commitment and by ensuring swimmers can develop at a pace that suits them e.g. group allocation rather than based on age.
  - We want to develop the Person, the Athlete and the Performer
- Developing a swimmer is a process - each block must be laid and cemented.

## CoStA Website

Our [website](#) contains a wealth of information and will be able to answer many of the questions you may have. We strive to ensure that the website contains all the latest information so make sure to check on the website first for any queries. Make sure to especially look at:



- ['Squads' tab](#) – details about our coaches, club captains, squad structure, squad criteria and kit requirements. Check the pull-down menu for each squad.
- ['Calendar' tab](#) – dates and times for meets/galas ('Team Events') and training sessions ('Practices')



## Communications and social media

Key communications from the club will be shared via the main contact email you have provided, via the [SportsEngine Motion App](#) (discussed later in this document) and via WhatsApp groups. We have WhatsApp groups for each squad, for 'Lost and Found', for volunteers, officials and many other groups within the club. We also love to share our successes, accomplishments and other information via our social media pages. You can follow CoStA on:

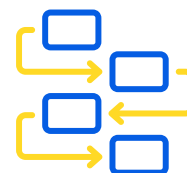


- [Facebook](#)
- [Instagram](#)

To allow us to use your child's photo in these celebrations, you would have given photo consent when you registered. CoStA adheres to strict Swim England social media guidelines so rest assured that photos will be appropriately taken and shared. If you no longer wish to give consent, then please email our Welfare Officer on [welfare@costaasc.org](mailto:welfare@costaasc.org).

## Squad structure

CoStA operates a clear development pathway for our swimmers, starting at the youngest point of entry from external swim school and learn to swim programs, right through to our performance squads for regional, national and higher swimmers. The current [squad structure](#) can be found on the website. Under the 'Squads' dropdown menu, you will also find additional information on each squad such as name and contact of the coach, expectations, kit requirements and more.



Our squads are organised broadly by age and ability as swimmers progress through the club they benefit from increased pool time and greater flexibility in achieving session objectives. Recognition for swimmers will be based on their commitment, approach to training, and performance standards. Coaches will review and discuss squad placements three times each year.

## Training attendance and behaviour



As you join the club you and your swimmer will be asked to sign codes of conduct. We have high expectations on how our swimmers behave at training and during competitions, how they interact with our coaching staff and volunteers and the respect they should have for each other. We also expect our parents to behave appropriately and support their swimmers in their own conduct. We also know you have expectations from us and our promise to you is outlined in the documents. If you have any concerns, please contact our Welfare Officer on [welfare@costaasc.org](mailto:welfare@costaasc.org)

We offer multiple training sessions for every squad, and our coaches would love you to attend the recommended number per week for your swimmer's squad as that is the best way to progress. There is a direct correlation between the number of hours/sessions attended and improvement made. –However, we do understand that children lead busy lives and may have other interests which we encourage. For older stronger swimmers who are joining our more competitive squads, make sure you have read the attendance expectation for that squad.

## Competitions

Swimming competitions (often referred to as meets) vary by level, format, and type of event, including Club, League Galas, and Open Meets (individual or team-focused), and National & Regional Championships for licensed, graded levels (1-4), which can be long course (50m) or short course (25m). Competition events also differ by stroke (freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly, and medley) and pool type (50m long course vs. 25m short course).



Your swimmer's first meet will most likely be at a club championship or a local Open Meet.

### *Club Championships*

CoStA holds annual Club Championships, where members can compete in multiple events against their training peers to be the champions for that season. Please visit our [events calendar](#) on our website to view upcoming events. We also hold smaller Splash Nights for younger swimmers. This gala is aimed at our younger swimmers to get their first taste of competition. This gala offers 25m races in all strokes and 50m free. Christmas Splash Night is usually held on a Sunday afternoon, in early December each year.



## Open Meets

Open meets are run by clubs and are open to other clubs to participate in. Eligible swimmers compete individually, with the fastest earning medals and trophies. CoStA organises our own Open Meets and participates in Open Meets organised by other clubs in and around Hertfordshire.

Our coaches decide which Open Meets each squad will attend throughout a season (Sept-July); the head coach will send out a schedule in advance so you can mark dates in your diaries. Dates can also be found on the [events calendar](#) on our website. Not every squad attends each meet as some are aimed at older, faster swimmers.

Meets can fill up quickly, so it's important to submit in plenty of time. Sometimes plans change, so keep an eye on emails from the Club regarding any updates or changes to meets.

The club does not recommend entering meets outside those published on the calendar. It's important that your swimmer is adequately supervised at meets and that there is a good balance between training and racing – over-racing can lead to poor performance.

## League Galas

League Galas are team-based competitions where clubs compete against each other, earning points for each race, and can include both individual and relay events. CoStA participates in three League Galas:

- Peanuts League: Organised by [Hertfordshire Swimming League](#); a series of three galas for 9-12 year old swimmers, usually in May and June each year, and a mix of individual events and relays in which we compete against other teams in Herts. Swimmers are usually advised on the night as to which events they will be competing in. Swimmers may compete in any number of events, but only a maximum of two individual events in their own age group.
- Hertfordshire Major League: Organised by [Hertfordshire Swimming League](#); a series of three galas for 9-15 year old swimmers, usually in March and April each year, and a mix of individual events and relays in which we compete against other teams in Herts. Swimmers are usually advised on the night as to which events they will be competing in. Swimmers may compete in any number of events, but only a maximum of two individual events in their own age group.
- Arena League: The premier swimming league competition in England and Wales organised by the [National Swimming League](#). Swimmers representing CoStA participate in team relays and individual events. There are six individual leagues, CoStA participates in the premier division of the [London League](#). During October, November and December three rounds are held to crown the individual league's champion, and to identify qualifiers for entry into the National Cup Final and the National B Final usually held in Cardiff or Sandwell (the Commonwealth Games pool).



If your child is chosen to represent CoStA in one of the League Galas, 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 good experience. Galas are fantastic occasions where the comradery of the swimmers (and of the cheering parents in the gallery) comes to the fore. You will leave with ringing ears!

### *County Championships*

The first major competition your swimmer will try to qualify for will be [Swim Herts](#) County Championships, or 'Counties' as they are more commonly referred to, which are held over three weekends in January/February each year. For our younger swimmers their first County time is a Big Deal. There are event consideration and qualification times for each age group/gender which must be achieved within the qualification period.

### *Regional Long Course Championships*

As they progress, your swimmer will aspire to reach 'Regionals'. The [Swim England East Region](#) Long Course (50m) Championships are usually held over the two May bank holiday weekends. Typically, the older age groups compete on the first weekend and the younger at half term. Again, there are event qualification times for each age group/gender which need to be achieved in the allocated window at the right level of meet.

Early November, the Swim England East Region will also hold their Short Course (25m) Winter Championships. This is aimed at older swimmers with single event qualification times for each gender only, which must be achieved within the qualification period at the right level of meet.

### *National Championships*

'Nationals' are what our older swimmers aspire to! The most auspicious is the [British Swimming](#) National Championships held in April, where our swimmers can compete with Team GB athletes such as Adam Peaty, Duncan Scott, Freya Anderson and Freya Colbert. Single event qualification times are set for each gender only, there are no separate age groups and times must have been achieved in the specified window and at the right level meet.



The British Summer Championships and Swim England National Summer Meet are held each July/August. These are by invitation only, based on the long course times (50m pool) achieved during the qualification window which is set from March to May. The top ranked swimmers in each age grouping for each discipline/distance in Great Britain are invited to the British Summer Championships (in 2024 around 28 swimmers) and the next set of eligible swimmers (in 2024 around 30 swimmers) are invited to English, Scottish or Welsh National Meets depending on their Home Nationality.

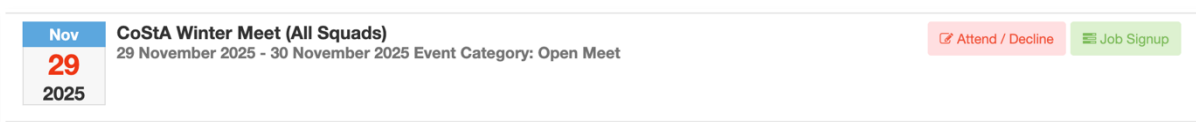


The Swim England National Winter Short Course (25m) Championships are held in December, and qualification times are typically split into two clusters for each gender (16 & Under, 17+ years).

## Getting ready for your first meet

### Signing up

The Open Meets we will be entering as a club are published on the [Calendar](#) on the website. Meet information is available by clicking on the calendar entry. This opens a new page with further information and links to important meet documents for you to download. Amongst these you may find the programme, schedule of events, terms and conditions, and any last-minute information. You enter your swimmer to a meet via the Calendar on our website by clicking the "Attend / Decline" button (see screenshot)



This will open a login page to SportsEngine where you enter your login details given to you when your swimmer joined the club. On the next screen you will click on the swimmer's name (towards the bottom) which opens the events the swimmer can enter for. Follow the online instructions to proceed. Alternatively, you can use the [SportsEngine Motion App](#) to sign up for events (Menu > Events & Jobs > Events & Meet Entries).

Open Meets in and around Herts are very popular and are often oversubscribed. We aim to ensure that our swimmers' entries get accepted and they have the opportunity to compete. Please note the closing date for meet entries for CoStA swimmers is before the official meet entry closing date set by the host club. This is to allow CoStA to check, approve and process entries and to ensure our entries get accepted. For some meets that use a non-regular meet entry system it may be required for parents to ensure their entries are correct; a list of entries will be circulated for parents to check. It is the parent's responsibility to check their swimmer's events are correct.

For more information on meets, how to enter and guidance please visit our website here <https://uk.gomotionapp.com/team/costa/page/club-documents/handbooks>



## What to enter for?

The table below should help guide you towards which events to enter for.

	50m	100m	200m	400m	800m	1500m
Free	A	B	B	C	D	D
Back	A	B	C			
Breast	A	B	C			
Fly	B	C	D			
IM		A	C	D		

A Events	For new, developing swimmers attending their first meets and for all swimmers to enter regularly to keep their times updated.
B Events	For swimmers who have gained some competition experience and have already completed an A Event at the same stroke (except Fly). All swimmers to enter at least twice a year to keep times updated
C Events	For more experienced swimmers who have already completed a B Event at the same stroke.
D Events	For very experienced swimmers, e.g. Dev 1 and above or aged 10 and older. Consult with coach.

We recommend that you enter no more than 3 events per session (a gala is split in multiple sessions, often two or three per day). If you are swimming a 200m or a 400m do not, make sure you do not enter more than 2 events in total for that session.

Be aware that each session can last three hours. If you enter only one event per session, there will be a lot of sitting around and waiting.

## Last checks and withdrawals

The host club will always publish an 'Accepted Entry List' and 'Pre-Gala Information' (produced normally 1 or 2 weeks prior to the gala). This will give exact schedule of timings, and the withdrawal process. As above, you will be able to access these documents by clicking on the meet in the website's calendar or through the [SportsEngine Motion App](#) (Menu > Events & Jobs > Events & Meet Entries).

Please make sure that you follow the withdrawal process as some meets will charge a penalty (£10 per event) when a swimmer doesn't swim an event they were entered for. Not withdrawing also blocks swimmers from entering the gala if the gala is oversubscribed.

We will aim to communicate via email and/or WhatsApp at key stages (Meet Opening, Entries for Checking and Pre-gala Information) for each meet, but it is the parent/guardian's responsibility to check the website calendar and news.



## At the Gala

### *What to bring*

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

- CoStA swim hat, costume and goggles (and spare of each in case of breakages)
- Towels – a towel for poolside and another for getting changed afterwards
- Clothing – CoStA 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 joggers or leggings can be useful
- Pool Shoes – non outdoor shoes to be worn poolside, e.g. flip flops or sliders
- Extra set of clothes for poolside e.g. T shirt, shorts/jogging bottoms)

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, 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), fruit smoothies, fruit cake/scones/muffins/malt loaf etc.
- Yoghurts, fromage frais, low-fat milk shakes are good to have for after the event to aid recovery/Be aware of eating at the right time for when they are swimming and watch out for sugar highs.

It can sometimes be a wait between events – bring a book or a card game. Preferably no electronic devices (except for emergency contact).

### *Arrival*

Sooner or later, everyone attends their first gala and it's not uncommon that the swimmer will be very nervous about this. Understanding what will happen on the day may help them with their nerves.

They should arrive swim-ready to limit the amount of people in the changing room areas. The swimmers do not have to register with their Team Manager before changing. Once poolside they should find the CoStA Team Area; look out for CoStA kit bags, t-shirts and hats.

Every session has a separate warm-up time and a race start time. Make sure you arrive with good time before warm-up. The swimmer needs to be on poolside at least 10 minutes before warm-up time. This gives enough time to check in, and to





let the Team Manager (usually wearing a CoStA top with 'Team Manager' on the back) know the swimmer have arrived.

All information on times and whether sign-in is required will be shared before the event on our event calendar and the host club's website.

### *Warm-up*

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

### *Pre-Race*

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. The swimmer is then moved to a position behind the blocks. The official in your lane will ask for the swimmer's name to make sure the right swimmer is in the right lane.

### *Race Start*

When your race is announced you will hear a series of preparation whistles followed by one long whistle. Upon hearing the LONG whistle, the swimmers take their place either in the water (for backstroke) or on the blocks. Once on the blocks, the starter the swimmers assume and hold their starting position. The "Take your marks" command will then be followed by the starting signal at which point the swimmers will start their race.

### *Post Race*

When finished their race, the swimmer should see the CoStA coach to get feedback from the race, and areas to improve on. If the swimmer has done something incorrectly, they might get a DQ (Disqualification); the coach can advise on how to avoid this the next time.

When the swimmer has finished all their events in a session, they can leave poolside after they have told their Team Manager.

If you are not volunteering, there will be a spectator fee to watch from the balcony.

### *Key Roles at Galas*

A gala can only run through the work of dozens and dozens of volunteers. Below you find a list of some of the more visible volunteer roles at a gala but there are many, many other roles, from medal desk to announcer to ticket desk.

*Officials:* Swim England officials ensure that swimming competitions are fair, safe, and adhere to the sport's rules by fulfilling various roles, including Referee, Stroke



Judge, Turn Judge, Timekeeper, and Starter. They oversee all aspects of a competition, from starting each event to judging strokes and ensuring proper turns and relay takeovers. This crucial volunteer role is essential for hosting events at all levels, from local club meets to international competitions.

*Team Managers:* Each time we attend a competition, we have to have a certain number of qualified volunteers, Team Managers, poolside with our swimmers in addition to our coaches. Team Managers are DBS certified and have attended a Swim England Safeguarding Course (3 hours online) and a Team Managers course (2.5 hours online). Team Managers are there to secure the safety of the swimmers and to help swimmers with when they are racing. Swimmers should stay on poolside for the whole session. They need to seek permission from the Team Manager to go away from poolside, for example to go to the toilet or to see their parents.

*Marshals:* the role of a marshal is to organise swimmers into their correct heats and lane order at a marshalling area before a race, ensuring they are ready for their event. Marshals check swimmers' names off their heat sheet, guide them into position, and maintain a quiet, orderly environment until the swimmers are sent to the start.

## Personal Bests and Live Results

When your child starts to compete, their times will be logged on the British Swimming database (follow this link: [Swimmers Best Times](#)). Here you can follow your swimmer's progress through the years and look at their ranking within the Club, County, Region and Country.

For most meets you will be able to get live updates from the races albeit with a delay as the results need verification before publishing them. Some meets will have live results on their respective event website whereas others (such as the CoStA Open Meets) will have their results available on [MeetMobile](#) app.

## Volunteering at CoStA

As with many of the clubs your child may be involved in, ours is managed by a team of volunteers. We rely on the generosity of members to give up their valuable spare time. Parent volunteers are crucial to the operation of CoStA Swimming club and carry out a variety of different roles. From Committee Members to Officials to Poolside Helpers (and everything in between!), there are a diverse range of roles to suit all sorts of skills and knowledge.



If you are interested in volunteering at CoStA, please contact our Workforce Coordinator on [volunteer@costaasc.org](mailto:volunteer@costaasc.org).



We are always looking for new people to join the team - see our current list of [volunteering vacancies](#) on our website.

There are also opportunities to become a qualified official such as Timekeeper, Judge or Referee. The club is obliged to provide officials to several events during the year, e.g. the Herts Peanuts League, for the club to take part in that League. Please contact our Officials Coordinators ([officials@costaasc.org](mailto:officials@costaasc.org)) if you would like to become an official or just want to find out a bit more about this area of volunteering.

Did you know that at our last gala, we had over 60 volunteers to help it run smoothly?

However little time you can spare, please consider helping. It is a fantastic way to feel more involved in your Child's sport and make new friends along the way. If swimming is your child's passion, you will find yourself in many swimming pool galleries over the years to come!

## Training Camps & Holiday Sessions

The club offers a range of training camps and holiday opportunities throughout the year. For swimmers in Development squad and above, we run a junior early-season training camp during the October half term, focusing on skills, fitness and team development. For our senior swimmers, we also offer a regional and national preparation camp in a warm-weather overseas location during February half term. These camps are very popular and are booked well in advance, so parents are encouraged to keep these periods free where possible. In addition, we provide skills-based training sessions during school holidays at pools in St Albans for our younger swimmers, offering extra technical development in a fun and supportive environment. Dates and details of how to book will be sent out as soon as these are arranged.

## Useful documents

Visit the [Documents](#) section of the Club website to find:

- Codes of conducts
- Club policies
- Roles and responsibilities

Under the Documents pull down menu are further sections with valuable guides. For example, in the [Handbooks](#) section you will find:



- Introduction to competitions
- Various parent advice handbooks
- CoStA Glossary

Please note that the various sections under the 'Documents' sections will undergo regular updates. If you feel there is anything missing, feel free to contact us (see below).

## Mobile Apps

[SportsEngine Motion App](#); At CoStA, key communication from the club comes via email and the SportsEngine Motion App. All the functionality of the website as described in this document (and more) is also available in the app. The app is free and is essential for managing your swimmer's membership.

[MeetMobile](#); To see live results at many meets.

[WhatsApp](#); This chat app is used to communicate with and between parents. There will be a specific WhatsApp group for your swimmer's squad or group, and you will be sent a link by your coach or the Membership team when you join that squad. Please use these groups to ask questions where you cannot find the answer elsewhere but be aware that other parents will not be interested in whether your individual swimmer is coming to a training session or not!

## Key Contacts

You will find up-to-date contact names under the [About](#) section of the website. As of writing of this document, the key contacts at CoStA are:

- *Head Coach*: Keelan McCorriston, [headcoach@costaasc.org](mailto:headcoach@costaasc.org)
- *Assistant Head Coach*: Paul Wollaston, [assistanthead@costaasc.org](mailto:assistanthead@costaasc.org)
- *Chair*: Rob Hodgson, [chair@costaasc.org](mailto:chair@costaasc.org)
- *Vice-Chair*: Jo Nelson, [vicechair@costaasc.org](mailto:vicechair@costaasc.org)
- *Secretary*: David Orr, [clubsecretary@costaasc.org](mailto:clubsecretary@costaasc.org)
- *Treasurer*: Claire Eustace-Brown, [treasurer@costaasc.org](mailto:treasurer@costaasc.org)
- *Human Resources*: CJ Bedford, [humanresources@costaasc.org](mailto:humanresources@costaasc.org)
- *CoStA Masters Rep*: Kevin Timmons, [kevin@stamsc.co.uk](mailto:kevin@stamsc.co.uk)
- *Welfare Officer*: Chris Homan, [welfare@costasc.org](mailto:welfare@costasc.org)

## Coaching Team

The current coaching team contacts are as follows:

- *Head Coach*: Keelan McCorriston, [headcoach@costaasc.org](mailto:headcoach@costaasc.org)
- *Assistant Head Coach*: Paul Wollaston, [assistanthead@costaasc.org](mailto:assistanthead@costaasc.org)
- *Lead Performance 1 & 2 Coach*: Keelan McCorriston, [headcoach@costaasc.org](mailto:headcoach@costaasc.org)
- *Junior Performance Coach*: James Woodward, [jp@costaasc.org](mailto:jp@costaasc.org)
- *Lead County Squad Coach*: Paul Wollaston, [assistanthead@costaasc.org](mailto:assistanthead@costaasc.org)
- *Lead Development Coach*: Bradley Hill, [j3@costaasc.org](mailto:j3@costaasc.org)
- *Lead J2 Coach*: Lara Jubb, [j2@costaasc.org](mailto:j2@costaasc.org)



- *Lead J1 Coach:* Debbie Millar, [j1@costaasc.org](mailto:j1@costaasc.org)
- *Lead PreClub Coach:* Sarah Clinch, [preclub@costaasc.org](mailto:preclub@costaasc.org)

## Illness, Injuries and Cancellations

We understand that swimmers can become ill or poorly and the coaches do not need to know if your swimmer is missing the occasional session. However, if they have a long-term illness or injury, please let your coach know. The club offers a discretionary discount for any swimmer with a longer-term injury and cannot swim for at least 4 weeks of 80% discount of squad fees. Please contact your Lead Coach to discuss and request this discount.

If you would like to cancel your membership, we require one month's notice by emailing [membershio@costaasc.org](mailto:membershio@costaasc.org). As fees are collected on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month typically swimmers can swim up until the end of the month or following month.

Occasionally we need to cancel sessions due to a problem with a pool or coach sickness. The club will inform you as soon as possible and where possible make reasonable efforts to provide an alternative session for your swimmer.

## Holidays and Summer Shutdown

The club trains 50 weeks a year. Typically, the club will not train on bank holidays. We have a two-week shutdown in August after National Championships. We understand that you may take a holiday at a different time to the club's holidays. In the junior, development and county squads there is no need to tell your coach when you are going away but Performance Coaches would like to be aware so they can plan your swimmer's training cycle around their holidays.

## Finally...

Swimming will hopefully become a way of life for your child. Through swimming they will learn self-discipline, patience, empathy for others, how to win and very importantly how to lose. They will make friends for life – both within the Club and with swimmers in other Clubs whom they will compete against through the years.

We hope you and your child will have many happy and successful years with CoStA!