



The ASA Swimming Officials Group and the ASA Swimming Management Group have recently received questions with regard to swimmers with a hearing impairment. In order to provide practical guidance individuals from Para-Swimming, coaching and officiating strands of our sport have been consulted.

The questions received can be summarised into two specific areas. Firstly “How does an athlete provide evidence of their hearing impairment?” and secondly “Who can act as the assistant to an individual who has a hearing impairment?”

**Q. How does an athlete provide evidence of their hearing impairment?**

A. This will be by way of Certificate of Disability - suitably endorsed.  
Or

A membership check to ensure the athlete has a classification of S15.

However, for those with neither, perhaps because they are only just starting their swimming careers or have only just been diagnosed or who have lost said documents, then a “Common Sense” approach needs to be taken on the day. As ever the final decision on the day will be made by the referee. However ask yourself why would an individual purport to have a hearing impairment in order to get assistance at the start on the day? Common sense would dictate that the use of an assistant at the start disadvantages the swimmers given the delays of two sets of reaction times to the starting signal (the assistant and then theirs). You could further clarify your decision by asking would you refuse to move the strobe so that timekeepers can see/benefit from it?

**Q. Who can act as the assistant?**

A. Anyone who is legitimately on the poolside. Though they will of course be subjected to the rules regarding how they act both on the pool deck and at the start of the race, whilst in the role of assistant.

This is clearly as broad as it can be, it is intended to be this way in order that the athlete can use someone who they are comfortable with and thus give them the opportunity to perform to their best on the day.

That said there are slight differences within the Home Countries and athletes are advised to ensure they know the arrangements in place for events outside of the ASA's remit.

Add this to the question of why are we on the pool deck in the first instance? Hopefully the answer is. "For the benefit of the swimmers" and thus it has to better to get a hearing impaired athlete swimming rather than making things difficult for them for the sake of dose of common sense?

Thank you in advance for your support in this matter.

Mark Davies  
on Behalf of the ASA SOG

