



press clippings

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TODAY'S PULL-OUTS: TV & RADIO GUIDE, BUSINESS

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THE COUNTRY'S TOP-SELLING REGIONAL MORNING NEWSPAPER



FUN: Amelia Waghorn enjoys her swim.

Splashing time for the water babies

We have all heard of making people jump through hoops but yesterday it was about encouraging babies to swim through them.

The 40 Water Babies, many of whom have been learning to swim since they were only weeks old, were taking part in a splashathon in Norwich to raise money for the charity Tommy's, which funds research into pregnancy and birth.

But to make it a bit more of a challenge for the babies and toddlers, who range from 10 weeks to two years old, swimming teacher Kim Bennett decided to up the stakes for the more advanced groups with the underwater hoop exercise.

"It gives parents and babies something to work towards," said Ms Bennett. "Babies can start to



LOOK AT ME! Lucyle Simoes, aged nine months, swims with dad Nicholas during the Water Babies class.

learn to swim as soon as their parents are confident but my personal opinion is the sooner the better.

"A baby has just spent nine months suspended in fluid so being in water is a natural feeling for them. They love it.

"They don't have the fear factor until about nine months so it's

important to get them started before then."

Ms Bennett got involved with the Water Babies franchise while she was living in Yorkshire and decided to move to Norfolk to set one up with her partner, Mark Crocombe.

They teach a special way of getting babies to hold their

breath underwater. "Babies have a gag reflex which kicks in when they are fully submerged but we do it through word association," said Ms Bennett, whose son, Franklin, was in the pool at two weeks old. "We say their name then 'ready, steady, go' before putting water on their face.

"It can take 10 weeks to teach it

but once they have learn it, if they don't want to do it they cry, tip their heads back or screw their face up. We never force a baby under the water."

Across the country about 4,000 Water Babies are taking part in the ninth annual splashathon, together with other groups during May and June.