

## **Children's Services**

### **Hot tub Guidance and Agreement for Foster Carers**

#### **1. Purpose of this guidance**

The purpose of this guidance is to ensure that Foster Carers understand how they can keep safe the children in their care when using hot tubs, and to receive assurance from Foster Carers that they will follow this guidance at all times.

#### **2. Child safety**

When it comes to hot tub use, most people know that small children shouldn't use hot tubs or spas because they're not able to dissipate the heat as much as adults. But the risk of drowning is an even greater risk for young children. In fact, the 2020 Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) pool and spa submersion report indicates that where hot tubs were involved, 75% of the fatal drownings and 76% of non-fatal drowning injuries treated by emergency departments involved children under the age of 5.

#### **High Temperature**

Nonetheless, high temperatures in hot tubs can be a danger. According to the Pool and Hot Tub Alliance (PHTA), most hot tubs are preset to reach 104 degrees Fahrenheit (40 degrees Centigrade), which can be extremely hot for a young person. High temperatures can result in a loss of consciousness which could result in drowning. Additionally, high temperatures can lead to heat stroke which may also be fatal. If you're considering allowing your children to use a hot tub, make sure you turn the temperature down first; PHTA recommends a maximum of 98 F (36.6 C).

#### **Bacteria**

Hot tub owners should always be knowledgeable and vigilant about maintaining the correct balance of chemicals to keep the tub safe and sanitary. A well-chlorinated hot tub will have a little odor, but if the smell is over-powering, this should be checked by a suitably experienced professional before use.

Failing to keep a hot tub clean could result in bacteria and the spread of diseases. In fact, according to a report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the United States there were more than 27,000 illnesses and eight deaths in 2018 linked to pools, hot tubs, and water playgrounds. Among the outbreaks that occurred, people experienced everything from gastrointestinal illnesses and Legionnaire's disease to hot tub rash and swimmer's ear. Additionally, your child should stay out of the water if they are sick or have diarrhoea to reduce the risk of spreading illness.

#### **Drowning**

To help prevent accidental drownings, hot tubs should be equipped with locking covers and surrounded by fencing so that they are inaccessible when not in supervised use, and children should never be left unsupervised near them.

Another drowning hazard is the entanglement of hair in the suction fitting of a hot tub. Drain covers that reduce the danger of hair entanglement are available, but children should be advised not to go underwater in a hot tub or play in any way that would bring their hair near the drain cover.

Similarly, there is a danger of getting caught by the strong suction of a drain.

### **Hot Tub Safety Rules**

Foster Carers should observe the following guidelines in relation to hot tubs:

- Children under five years should never be allowed in a hot tub.
- If children in your care are going to use a hot tub, turn the thermostat down to 98 F (36.6 C).
- Children should be limited to 5 minutes at a time in a hot tub with adequate breaks between dips.
- Height: Children should not be allowed in hot tubs unless they can stand or support themselves so that their heads are completely out of the water. Children whose disabilities mean that they cannot support themselves in this way must be supported by another person; the steps for doing so should be recorded in their Safer Care Plan.
- Hydration: Children (and adults) should avoid dehydration by drinking fresh water while using the hot tub. If anyone using the hot tub feels sleepy, nauseous, or dizzy, they should leave the hot tub immediately.
- It's safer for children to sit on benches or jump seats that allow partial immersion. Children should not completely immerse themselves in a hot tub
- if your child has a pre-existing medical condition, you should ask your child's GP for advice about hot tub use
- Ensure hot tub has a solid and lockable cover that children cannot open without a responsible adult assisting
- Make sure your hot tub is covered when not in use
- Always ensure children are supervised when near an open hot tub
- Store chemicals safely, out of reach of young children

I have read and understood the above hot tub guidance and agree to abide by it for all children in my care.

Foster carer Date

Foster carer Date

Fostering social worker Date