

## **Water Activities Policy**

Water activities can be dangerous.

Everyone at Interchange will have information about swimming in their support information if swimming might be particularly dangerous for them.

Swimming in dirty water (like lakes) can be even more dangerous, because you can't always see what is in the water.

This policy is about every time that Interchange is responsible for people who are swimming. It is also about times when the family or parent of a person is present and responsible for watching a person who is swimming.

### **Definition:**

- Swimming – where the water is deeper than the person's waist.
- Paddling – where the water is not as deep as the person's waist.
- Water Craft – anything that a person can be on to stay on top of the water (blow up toys, mattresses, canoes)

These things need to be considered when doing a water activity:

### **Swimming & Paddling**

- Water activities should happen in safe areas - swimming pools, between the flags at the beach etc
- If there are no flags at the beach, Interchange staff need to check for a safe place to swim and make sure everyone stays in the safe area.
- Water activities are not allowed where there is something to say it is not safe – for example if a sign says swimming is not advised.
- If using a water craft, all participants must wear a life jacket.
- When working 1: 1
  - Swimming must only occur where a lifeguard is present.
  - Paddling is ok if the water is safe, and the person doesn't have anything in their support information to say that it is not safe for them to do this.
  - Paddling and swimming at surf beaches must be between the flags and where lifeguards are present.
  - Swimming in backyard pools is allowed only if the person's family agree
- For group activities
  - A staff member must be in the water at all times and another staff member/ volunteer (older than 16 years) should watch from the outside of the pool if there is no lifeguard.
  - The person watching from outside the pool needs to watch for everyone and make sure everyone is safe. If this person is worried about someone they

need to tell the staff member in the pool to go and check on someone immediately.

- Extra care should be taken for people who have a disability or medical condition which might make swimming more dangerous (physical disability, asthma, epilepsy etc).  
Staff need to make sure they know about swimming information in people's support information

### **Water craft activities**

- For all water craft activities that happen on rivers, lakes, dams, or beach, all participants must wear a life jacket
- For group activities there must be one staff member / volunteer (older than 16years) watching the activity from outside the water.

### **Water activities when someone has epilepsy:**

- If swimming somewhere where there are lifeguards, the life guard should be told that the person has epilepsy.
- Interchange will talk to people and their families about swimming, and will put information about how to support the person with epilepsy in the water into their epilepsy plan.
- Epilepsy plans must have information about support the person needs in the water. The person might only be allowed to swim where there are lifeguards, might need to wear a life jacket, or might need to stay near the staff member in the water to make sure they are safe.
- Before a group does a water activity, staff need to look at if it is safe – for example if many people in the group have epilepsy or need extra support in the water, staff might not be able to take the group if they cannot make sure everyone is safe.
- A person with epilepsy that is not controlled should always be less than an arm's reach away while in the water. They need to be near a staff member or volunteer (aged 16+) who understands their epilepsy. This person must read the person's epilepsy plan before going swimming.
- The only time this does not need to happen is when everyone – the person, their family, co-ordinator etc have all talked about and understand how dangerous it might be to not follow this, and have signed the epilepsy plan to say that this person does not need to be this close to a staff/volunteer in the water.

### **Life jackets:**

Interchange Staff will be aware of the different types of life jackets and make sure that people are wearing the right life jacket when they need to.