**CIMSPA guidance for parents**

The following guidance outlines recommendations for parents when using swimming pools with children.

Operators of swimming pools, following similar guidance, will have produced rules to ensure the safety of all users. Compliance with these rules is of paramount importance to ensure everyone can use the facilities safely.

Please ask for a copy of the rules from the pool you wish to swim at so you can ensure you understand and comply with the operator’s requirements.

1. All children under the age of eight should always be accompanied in the water and changing rooms during public swimming sessions by a parent. Such sessions are those that are open for public recreational swimming as opposed to those under the direct control or instruction of a group organiser or class teacher/coach where different rules may apply.

2. A parent is defined as someone over the age of sixteen or younger if the person is the biological parent of the child or children. The parent must be in the water with the children. They must maintain a constant watch over them and be in close contact with those of the children who are weak or non-swimmers. Parents who are supervising children must themselves determine that they have the required competencies to undertake this task.

3. Parents should be aware that operators, when looking at their own facilities and considering the guidance offered, will implement rules they feel best suits their individual circumstances. Parents would be advised, therefore, to make appropriate inquiries if the pool isn’t one they are familiar with.

* As a starting point, the ratio of parent supervision for all children under eight should be 1:2.
* This ratio may be increased subject to the pool and its features (teaching pool, shallow water pools, use of approved swimming aids etc.), but should never be more than 1:3.
* Circumstances (flumes, wave machines, inflatables etc.) may even require a 1:1 ratio.

The operator will consider a multitude of factors for increasing ratios including the following:

3.1 The activity takes place in a designated safe area e.g. shallow pool, teaching pool, roped off shallow area of a standard pool etc.

3.2 Approved floatation devices are worn by weak and non-swimmers.

3.3 Any child not in an approved floatation device shall either be a babe in arms or who can demonstrate a standard of swimming ability in excess of the minimum set by the National Curriculum Key Stage 2 requirements and/or the ASA Learn to Swim Framework Phase 7 or equivalent.

Similarly, factors that might be taken into account when deciding to decrease the ratio of parent/child supervision to 1:1 include:

3.4 The parent is unable to maintain a constant watch and/or be in close contact with more than one of the children.

3.5 A busy pool environment with a number of features or other factors determined by the pool operator (e.g. wave machine, waterslides, multi-pool layouts), where there is a realistic risk of the party being separated and as a result of which parents cannot maintain close supervision.

4. Parents should also be aware that children over the age of eight, particularly those who cannot swim or are weak swimmers, may also require supervision of a similar level. Those responsible for the children must therefore consider the swimming abilities of all children and the appropriate supervision required, and heed the advice/instruction of the swimming pool staff.

5. Parents accompanying children to a pool should be able to take under eights into an ‘opposite sex’ changing room or alternative facilities should be provided. It is reasonable to assume that a child deemed too young to swim unaccompanied is also too young to look after him or herself in a changing room or to change unaccompanied.

6. Parents are advised to use only approved floatation devices compliant with BSN 13138 parts 1-3 –Buoyant Aids for Swimming Instruction as confirmed by the CEN mark.