

For Staff/Parents

Weighted Equipment Guidelines

Weighted equipment used to support a child's sensory processing needs should only be used following assessment and recommendation by an occupational therapist and should form part of an overall strategy to help the child manage in their sensory needs.

Consent

Consent should be gained from parents and the child, where applicable, before any weighted equipment is issued.

Observations during use

Those working with the child should watch for any negative reactions shown by the child when using the weighted equipment, these could include:

- Difficulty breathing
- Nausea
- Increase in temperature
- Any behavioural signs or physical reactions demonstrating the child's discomfort or anxiety.

If any of these signs are observed then stop using the piece of equipment immediately and report this to the occupational therapist

Assessing Safe Weight

There is no evidence specifying the weight of a weighted blanket or vest in relation to the child's body size or weight. However, good practice suggests that the equipment should be as light as possible, whilst still achieving any agreed outcomes.

Weighted equipment is recommended on a child-by-child basis and should only be used with that child following assessment stated above.

It is recommended that a weighted blanket should be no more than 10% of the child's body weight. Manufacturers recommend that a weighted vest should be between 5 and 10% of the child's body weight

- A 20KG child should not use a weighted blanket exceeding 2kg and this is the maximum weight a lighter weight should be trialled initially.
- A 20KG child could wear a weighted vest between 1 and 2KG but not exceeding 2KG
- The weight should be evenly distributed across the child's body

Duration of Use

Weighted equipment as stated above should only be worn for short periods of time to reduce the diminished returns.

- The equipment should NOT be used or worn for longer than 20 minutes at a time

- Weight should be evenly distributed to ensure no orthopaedic deformity, stress or misalignment occurs
- Those supporting the child should monitor for any significant change in the child's weight and adjust the weight of the equipment accordingly.

Weighted equipment is to be used for the following therapeutic purposes:

- To support self-regulation
- To lower heightened state of arousal
- To reduce anxious or agitated behaviour
- To support attention and function during daily activities
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Weighted Equipment must NOT be used:

- Over the head or in any other manner that could lead to suffocation
- Without a full individualised assessment by a suitably qualified therapist
- As a method of restraint
- To restrict movement
- If there are respiratory, cardiac or circulatory concerns
- If the individual has broken skin or open wounds
- To cover the individual's head when sleeping
- To cover an individual who may engage in risky behaviours that cannot be observed under the blanket

Looking After Weighted Equipment

Weighted Equipment:

- Must be maintained in accordance with the Manufacturers' Guidelines
- Fabric may not be certified fire retardant therefore it should be kept away from naked flames, cigarettes and should not be placed on heaters or radiators.
- Should not be used if the material is ripped or if any weighted material comes out of the sacks/casing
- Should be checked every time before it is used to ensure its integrity
- Should be stored out of direct sunlight and when not in use it should not be accessible by the young person
- Should be washed according to the manufacturer's instructions
- If the weighted equipment is damaged, then it should not be used