

COMMUNITY PAEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY AND PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Provision of Weighted Blanket/lap pads etc. Guidelines for Use

The Royal College of Occupational Therapy and Derbyshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust recommend that weighted blankets and other weighted items should only be used following a sensory assessment by a qualified Occupational Therapist who has undertaken post graduate training in Sensory Integration Theory and Practice to a minimum of Level 3. The Community Paediatric Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy Services Local Offer does not include sensory assessments. Private sensory assessments can be sought by contacting www.rcot.co.uk and searching via the Private Practice section to find suitably qualified local practitioners.

If you already use weighted equipment please follow the guidelines below:

- The weighted blanket/pad should only be used for its intended purpose.
- Always supervise your child when using the weighted blanket. Do not leave the weighted blanket with the child when unsupervised.
- We recommend applying the weighted blanket 10 minutes before any situation where you know your child can become over aroused. After 10 minutes, any calming effect should be apparent.
- The weighted blanket/pad could be used on the child's lap over legs, or around the child's shoulders but do not cover the head.
- We would advise using the weighted blanket/pad for no longer than 20 minutes at a time as the nervous system becomes used to the sensation. Allow at least 40 minutes break before using it again.
- The weighted blanket/pad may be used with the child as part of the bedtime routine in preparation for bedtime but should not be used whilst the child is in bed.
- Allow the child to remove the weighted item at any time if they wish to. Remind the child that they can take it off if it's feeling too heavy or hot.
- The weighted blanket should never be used as a restraint.
- Ensure you can observe the child's vital signs at all times when using the weighted blanket e.g. that breathing is not laboured, the airway is not restricted, the weight of the blanket is not concentrated on the chest, neck or mouth where it might restrict breathing, that the child's colour remains constant (does not become pale, red or blue) or that they start sweating. If you observe any of these signs, stop using the weighted blanket immediately.
- If the weighted item causes any pain or discomfort, remove it immediately.
- Do not use the weighted item if it is defective in any way.

IMPORTANT the weight of the blanket/pad should be no more than 10% plus 1lb of your child's weight. Lap pads, wraparounds and small blankets come in standard weights of 2lb, 3lb and 6lb respectively. When deciding upon weight for medium and large blankets the general rule recommended by Occupational Therapists is 10% of body weight plus 1lb.

Note: It is not recommended that weighted blankets are used when the child has a diagnosis of epilepsy.