Aquatics Facilities Guidelines

4. Facility Operation

Water Safety NEW ZEALAND

Recreation Aotearoa Te Whai Oranga

SPORT NEW ZEALAND IHI AOTEAROA

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The Aquatic Facility Guidelines have been developed for use by aquatic managers. They provide detailed information covering the management and operation of an aquatic facility.

This document is a companion document to the Facility Management Manual, which can be found on the Sport NZ website and the Recreation Aotearoa website.

Contents

1. Introduction

Facility operation covers the everyday running of aquatic facilities, the effective operation of which depends on several factors:

» Developing Normal Operating Procedures (NOPs) that specify every aspect of the day-to-day running of the facility.

» Having well developed supervision systems that are understood and effectively carried out by staff.

» Developing effective communication between staff, and between staff and customers.

This chapter provides operational guidelines for the supervision of special equipment and activities such as inflatables, water slides and water features.

Considerations of managing use generally and programmes and events specifically are outlined.

There are sections on aquatic education and fitness as well as fitness suites and childcare.

Unique requirements of school and community pools, hospitality and thermal pools are discussed.

Figure 1: Sign telling parents about the pool depths and supervision requirements

2. Normal Operating Procedures

Normal Operating Procedures (NOPs) describes the way facilities will operate on a day-to-day basis. Developed specifically for each facility, it includes layout, opening hours, reporting policies, operational duties, equipment, inspection and maintenance of emergency equipment, hazard identification and management, customer relations, staff roles, emergency action plan and pool specific requirements.

The complexity of the NOP depends on the nature, design, size and location of the facility. NOPs require regular reviewing and updating to take account of changes in facility management and use. All staff need to be involved in the development of the procedures and fully understand how they impact on their roles and responsibilities.

Regular meetings for staff should be established to enable them to make contributions for implementing policies and procedures.

2.1 Business continuation plan

A business continuation plan providing guidelines for communicating to customers and procedures for staff should be developed to cover the situation of an unexpected partial or full closure of the facility. An example of a business continuity plan can be found here.

Further information

» The following example shows what information should be included in an NOP:

Normal Operating Procedure - Levin Aquatic Centre

» The following example shows what information should be included in a business continuation plan:

Business continuation plan

Template: Normal operating procedure content guideline

3. Facility supervision

All staff have a responsibility for ensuring customer safety through encouraging responsible behaviour. Key supervision staff include:

» Reception and frontline staff who can advise customers of facility policies.

» Lifeguards in and around pools.

» Aquatic programme personnel.

» Other staff as appropriate.

Signage detailing appropriate behaviour is a simple, positive and easily understood means of communicating facility expectations.

Supervision of changing areas, including shower and toilet blocks, is important. These areas should be checked and inspected regularly to ensure high levels of facility presentation and customer safety, reduce the likelihood of assaults and thefts, and to monitor behaviour of customers.

Staff need to be aware that pool environments can attract people with harmful intentions towards children. When supervising the facility, care needs to be taken to check dark or hidden areas and take notice of unsupervised children over eight years old.

Regular checks on the condition of equipment, including mobility equipment should be undertaken and programmed into the daily, weekly, and monthly checks of the facility.

Further information

Template: Poolside checklist

4. Pool Alone policy

A code of practice and policy on child safety called the 'The Pool Alone Policy' was developed in 1997 and revised in 2002. The policy states that:

> **Children under eight must be actively supervised by a caregiver 16 or over. Actively supervised means watching your child at all times and able to provide immediate assistance.**

This code should be displayed at the reception area to alert all who are entering the facility of the accepted code. Children under eight years can be refused entry or can be asked to leave the facility if they are found unsupervised. If a child is found unsupervised, attempt to contact a parent or caregiver to collect the child. If this is unsuccessful contact the local Police.

Tools for promoting this policy are available on the Recreation Association website.

This Pool Alone Industry standard, endorsed by Water Safety New Zealand, can be legally binding if local authorities pass a bylaw on swimming pool use and management. It is the minimum policy, and individual facilities may choose to increase the supervision age.

Pools should also consider provision for the supervision of under 5s. This could include caregivers in the water or within arm's reach.

Parent-to-child ratios should also be considered for under 5s and under 8s. These should be decided by the individual facility and will reflect the design of the facility and pools.

Further information

www.nzrecreation.org.nz

Templates:

- Pool Alone poster
- Pool Alone procedure flowchart
- Pool Alone register

Case Study 1: Christchurch City Council Supervision Policy

In Christchurch, our Pool Alone Policy states the following:

- Children under five years old must be within arm's reach and under constant supervision by a responsible caregiver aged 16 years or older in the pool at all times, who is wearing an orange wristband.
- Children between the ages of five and seven (inclusive) must be wearing a purple wristband and actively supervised by a responsible caregiver aged 16 years or older, who is to be within the pool area at all times and able to provide immediate assistance.

The maximum adult-to-child ratios are:

- One adult to two under 5yr olds.
- One adult to one under 5 and two 5-7yr olds.
- One adult to four 5-7yr olds.

Guardians sometimes believed our Pool Alone Policy meant that their children could attend our facilities unsupervised from 8 years old, which we thought was too young. We looked at increasing the Pool Alone Policy age, for example from under 8, to under 10 or 11 but decided that the change we were looking for wasn't purely about water safety, but more about general supervision for a range of reasons. Therefore, we made the following facility-wide addition to the policy:

> **Children aged 8 to 11 years (inclusive) must have a responsible caregiver 16 years or older on site unless they are in a supervised programme, such as swimming lessons. If they are swimming before or after their programme, their caregiver must be onsite.**

Our reasons for the change are:

- Children 8-11yrs should have someone to watch over them in changing rooms, storerooms and other areas of the facilities, for their own security.
- Parents may expect children are well supervised by staff at our facilities, but they are mostly only supervised by staff while in the water.

- Controlling bad behaviour in this age range can sometimes be challenging. Asking someone to leave the facility due to bad behaviour may not be safe/appropriate for this age range. Staff sometimes need to spend a lot of time calling parents and waiting for them to arrive after incidents of bad behaviour.
- Children 8-11yrs have a range of swimming abilities. Many of them will need guardian supervision to ensure they are swimming in locations that are within their ability.

To implement we used a range of public communication channels including press release, members newsletters, reaching out to regular user groups, social media posts, and updating our website and group booking information. Most importantly we used an 'educational approach' for the first couple of months. So rather than turning people away who didn't meet the new standard, we let them know what they'd need to do on their next visit.

Internal communication was also key to create a strong consistent message for our pool users. We updated our policies, communicated them out with FAQs, and included it in training sessions for our customer experience, aquatics, and gymnasium teams.

During implementation we expected the same push-back associated with any change. However, the feedback was overwhelmingly positive with the general theme being 'I can't believe people would let 8 to 11-year-olds go to the pool unsupervised!'.

Bad behaviour events involving under 12-year-olds have subsequently reduced. While we still have occasional cases of guardians disappearing when their children are in our pools, with the new rule to lean on, these situations are easier for staff to deal with. We now have fewer children being left at our facilities for long periods, more supervision of 8 to 11-year-olds in and around the pools, and less of our lifeguards' time being taken up dealing with unsupervised children, which has improved water safety at our facilities.

4.1 Pool supervision guidelines

Pool supervision involves the observation and management of customers participating in an activity. The New Zealand guideline for swimming pool supervision, endorsed by the Recreation Aotearoa and Water Safety New Zealand is as follows.

Minimum lifeguard qualifications:

» All swimming pool lifeguards shall possess a current Pool Lifeguard Practicing Certificate (PLPC).

Minimum swimming pool supervision levels (lifeguard):

» During any session when a pool is in use there shall be a minimum of one qualified lifeguard who will be designated to supervise that body of water. This supervision level shall apply to the lifeguard's line-of-sight, as appropriate to the design, function and layout of the facility.

» Increased numbers of lifeguards shall be determined by; the number of customers; the number of pools within a facility and the environment of the facility; specialised equipment such as slides, diving boards, and wave pools; and specialist activities such as canoeing, aqua-fitness, water polo, inflatables.

» Each facility shall set explicit poolside supervision levels (ratio of lifeguards to customers) for each component of their operation, and these shall be incorporated into operational policy.

» In the instance of a sole lifeguard being on duty in a facility, that lifeguard must not be expected to and must not conduct any other tasks or duties whilst supervising the pool.

Minimum Staffing levels (all staff)

In addition to the supervision levels mentioned above, there should be a minimum of two staff on duty at all times that the facility is open to the public. This is to promote the safety of the pool staff and the public. Where a facility operates below this minimum, comprehensive emergency response procedures and risk assessment for solo lifeguards must be explicitly documented within the Normal Operating Procedures (NOPs) and Emergency Action Procedures (EAPs)."

Any non-lifeguard staff members expected to assist the lifeguards in an emergency must undergo training alongside lifeguards to fully understand their supporting role. Their role should be detailed in the emergency procedures and included in their induction. All staff should be trained to use site specific emergency equipment.

Non-Supervised Facilities

The pool supervision guidelines do not support the use of unsupervised facilities. If these guidelines are not followed, alternative arrangements are recommended, and these must include:

» A policy established detailing right of access and hours of use, which is provided to customers, and clearly displayed at the pool.

» A clear notice to customers that the facility is unsupervised and has no lifeguarding service.

» A code of acceptable customer behaviour must be established and clearly displayed at the pool.

» Poolside alarm or telephone to summon help in an emergency.

» Suitable and clearly identified rescue equipment (poles, rescue tubes) available by poolside.

» A clearly displayed notice, which shows customers how to summon help, and what actions are required in an emergency.

Figure 2: Lifeguards on duty supervising a pool

4.2 Effective pool supervision

To supervise a pool effectively, both as an individual or part of a team, requires continuous scanning of the pool. Different methods of pool supervision are outlined below. The use of each method, or a combination of these, will depend upon the layout of your facility and the number of customers.

Effective scanning requires lifeguards to:

» be positioned with clear, unobstructed lines of sight.

» understand the signs of potential trouble and the characteristic behaviour of those in need of help.

» practice and develop supervision skills.

» minimise the effect of reflection or glare.

» be aware of weather changes for outdoor pools and their effect on visibility.

» be aware of customers using hot areas, e.g. spa, and saunas.

» be aware of the effect of steam and bubbles on visibility with thermal pools.

Lifeguards must also make themselves familiar with the seven elements of dead water. Dead water is an area of the pool that cannot be seen (or supervised) because of factors specific to the water, pool design and/or human behaviours. These elements are:

» **Disturbance** – movement on the surface means that you cannot see under water.

» **Distraction** – can be internal and external, thoughts and activities.

» **Glare** – where light shines on the water and creates a mirror effect.

» **Interruption** – to your primary focus of supervision.

» **Refraction** – the way light changes angles when it hits water which creates changes the way things appear underwater.

» **Line-of-sight** - your ability to keep a clear view of customers in your area.

» **Shade** – makes it harder to spot someone underwater.

4.3 Methods of pool supervision

Approach	Advantages	Disadvantages
Intensive zone	Lifeguards rotate to the adjacent zone at regular intervals to help stay alert. Some zones may be more demanding than others in terms of activity, physical characteristics, angle of the sun, and comfort. Zone rotation allows lifeguards to share less demanding and more demanding positions. Lifeguards may be more experienced at some skills than others. It is possible to assign lifeguards to a zone where their experience matches the zone requirements (e.g. use of special equipment). Where a facility is large or has multiple activity areas, the intensive approach is the only practical solution providing adequate observation of the entire area.	Where zone margins are not well defined, lifeguards may not cover their entire zone.
Extensive coverage	Each lifeguard observes the entire area. Where two lifeguards are on duty customers are scanned by two pairs of eyes. Lifeguards can adjust position more freely to suit the activities and locations of customers.	Lifeguards do not rotate positions and have little change of pace throughout the hours on duty. The size of the zone supervised is often large, therefore, observation of customers is usually made from a greater distance.

Approach	Advantages	Disadvantages
Combined approach	Overlapping of intensive zone and extensive coverage provides better supervision. A lifeguard in the extensive supervision role has an overview of all activity and is best positioned to relay communication to the entire team. From their overview position, lifeguards can identify trends and patterns in facility use. A lifeguard in the extensive supervision role can provide quick contact with emergency services.	Because of the nature of the extensive role, the position usually requires height (as high chairs) or mobility.
Patrolling	Patrolling on poolside allows a lifeguard to communicate with customers and prevent accidents more easily. Lifeguards can move continuously around the patrol area to gain the most advantageous observation view of all the pool and can move to deal with any minor problems which may arise. Provide immediate support of others in the team while still maintaining a view of the area or zone for which they are responsible.	The principal disadvantages of poolside patrolling which can reduce efficiency include: A lifeguard is likely to get wet, particularly when the pool is very busy. Lengthy periods of standing can lead to rapid fatigue. A lifeguard needs to take regular breaks and a change of view.

Approach	Advantages	Disadvantages
Lifeguard chair	A lifeguard chair usually elevated about 2 metres above poolside, allows a lifeguard to scan the pool from a sitting position. Removes a lifeguard from immediate contact with customers. Gives an excellent field of view. Overcomes problems created by surface reflection. Allows a lifeguard to see the pool floor easily, even when the water is very deep. Removes the lifeguard from noise, splashing from the water and other distractions. Allows customers an easy and immediate view of the lifeguard.	Removes a lifeguard from immediate contact with customers. Can reduce a lifeguard's ability to concentrate. Can lead to accidents as lifeguards leave the chair to perform a rescue.

Further information

Te Mahi Ako

4.4 Drowning Prevention System and AI Lifeguard Assisted Technology

There are several drowning detection systems available on the commercial market which facilities can install to enhance their lifeguard supervision. As this is a relatively new option for facilities in New Zealand, there is not enough information on their operation to provide guidelines to the sector.

Currently there are two facilities in Aotearoa New Zealand with Lifeguard Assisted Technology. As these facilities operate with these systems, the data and processes they develop will help to inform industry best practice guidelines and operating policy and procedures.

Further information

The following document produced by RLSS UK gives some guidance around the types of systems available and how to determine which is suitable for your facility:

Swimming Pool Supervision Technology Guidance

4.5 Lifeguarding duty periods

The length and nature of duty spells are dependent upon the facility environment. Duty periods and supervision methods should be organised to ensure adequate cover is provided for all users.

Times of high or low demand, complacency, fatigue or lack of concentration may result in compromised customer safety and needs to be factored into duty rosters and staff rotation schedules. The maximum period a lifeguard can effectively supervise a particular area, or activity will be dependent upon the environment in which it occurs. Ideally a lifeguard should change their position once every 15 minutes, and no longer than once every 30 minutes.

Regular breaks, besides those for morning/afternoon tea, lunch or dinner breaks, should be routine throughout their shift to ensure their attention span is retained.

4.6 Lifeguarding duty rotation

When a pool is very busy, rotation around poolside to a chair can allow some relief from fatigue associated with lengthy periods of standing. Combining both stationary and mobile patrolling depends on the facility design and the number of lifeguards.

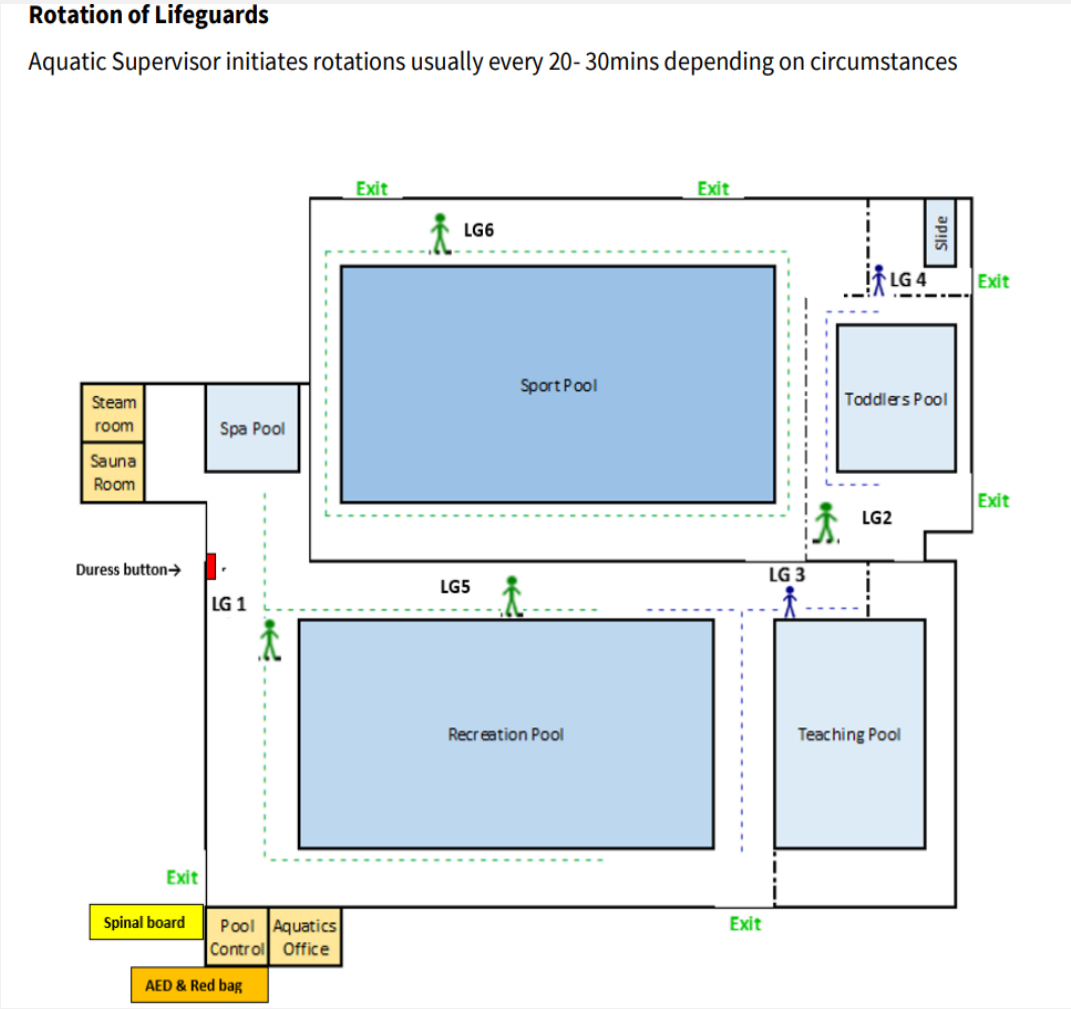
Using both techniques allows a combination of supervision methods and allows for good rotation of staff and an interchange of information between staff.

Including checks of changing facilities and rotation through reception station can help provide variety of supervision and help with attention span.

The NOP should include a rotation plan detailing the maximum period a lifeguard should be on continuous duty at poolside. Rotation plans should ensure a lifeguard located in a high stress area, such as a slide splashdown, is relieved first and given a break or duties away from poolside.

Sample rotation

Figure 3: Example of lifeguards' rotation around a pool facility



5. Supervising specialist equipment and activities

The provision of special features and activities in a facility requires additional lifeguard supervision. The continued development of leisure pools requires a lifeguard to be fully aware of the operation and safe supervision of a wide range of equipment and activities. While water slides, wave machines, and inflatable and floating structures are becoming more common, so too are the range of activities and sports undertaken within aquatic facilities.

The NOP should identify which lifeguards are able to supervise specified activities and the method of supervision. Staff also need to understand the operation of these activities and the policies relating to their use. Customers should also be made aware of any policies covering the operation of special equipment and activities.

Accidents from specialist activities are often related to:

» poor visibility at entry/exit points

» misuse of equipment

» poorly maintained equipment

» weak or non-swimmers in deep or moving water

» customers failing to clear the area after using equipment

» diving from the side of a board or platform or poolside

» use of electricity or machinery.

Figure 4: Crocodile inflatable pool equipment

5.1 Diving

The provision of diving boards and bombing platforms which can be used by recreational swimmers requires additional supervision. Ensuring both users and other swimmers are safe when diving boards and bombing platforms are in use needs to be taken into consideration when developing the NOP.

Diving into pools without using diving boards is generally discouraged during periods of high use. Managed appropriately and located in deep water, diving and jumping/bombing from poolside can widen the range of activities undertaken in a pool without requiring special equipment.

5.2 Bulkheads

Many facilities can change the configuration and size of the pool by using bulkheads. When pools are divided by bulkheads, lifeguards can use them as a guarding station to enable easy observation of swimmers on both sides of the bulkhead.

NOPs must include the positioning and repositioning of the bulkheads, supervision requirements under different configurations, as well as maintenance scheduling for the bulkhead and its mechanisms.

5.3 Inflatable play equipment

Careful consideration should be given to the location of play equipment to optimise use and minimise risk. Risks of inflatables and other play structures include customers becoming entangled in mooring lines, swimmers getting trapped beneath the structure and customers diving from raised structures into shallow water.

Safe operating principles include:

» Equipment is positioned so swimmers cannot fall from it and strike the poolside.

» Positioning and tethering of larger floating inflatable structures in deep water.

» Lifeguard positions allow a clear view of all parts of the equipment and the surrounding water. In some cases, a lifeguard may be stationed in the water if the pool is not too deep.

» Lifeguards may need to restrict the use of certain equipment to those above or below a given size or age or swimming ability.

» Lifeguards need to educate customers in the use of flotation aids and aquatic toys and be aware of their impact on pool supervision.

» Position equipment away from other users such as lane swimmers.

» Position air hoses, pumps, and electrical cords to avoid the risk of trips, falls or harm to customers, swimmers or facility staff.

5.4 Interactive play equipment

Interactive play equipment can be described as children's playground equipment in an aquatic environment. Purpose built equipment is available which assists in minimising the risks and hazards associated with this equipment.

Increased supervision may be required when this equipment is in use. NOPs should include the location of equipment (often in toddlers pools), permitted age ranges, maximum number of users and parental supervision requirements.

5.5 Underwater activities

Lifeguards need to be aware of the nature, risks and special equipment of underwater activities, and understand recommended safe practices. The demand for time in pools for underwater activities, such as scuba diving, snorkelling and underwater hockey, has increased. Special skills are often required to supervise these activities and respond to an emergency.

Facilities should consider whether to allow these activities at their facility. A proper policy should be put in place for organised groups and casual users should be discouraged from partaking in these activities. If you have regular users who do underwater activities it is advisable to discuss a working policy and procedures for emergency response.

» These activities should only be done as organised activities with the permission of the facility manager.

» The group/organisation must provide out-of-water supervisors and a risk assessment/Health and Safety Plan as part of their booking process.

» Lifeguards must be made aware that a breath-holding activity is taking place and check in regularly with the group.

» Free diving and hypoxic training should have one-on-one spotters on poolside.

» Underwater sports/synchro swimming should have a minimum of one spotter. The number would be agreed in risk assessment management plan depending on the size of the group.

» Spotters should be able to demonstrate competency in managing the risks associated with breath-holding.

» Casual swimmers should be discouraged/prevented from breath-holding activities and lifeguards need to be proactive in educating customers on this.

See **Chapter 2 – Health and Safety for more information on shallow water blackout**.

5.6 Canoes and goals

The use of pools for canoe training and canoe polo is common. Canoeing equipment, particularly the bow or stern of canoes, can damage the pool. To minimise this risk, staff should ensure that adequate protection is fitted to canoes.

The fitting of sports goals for canoe polo, water polo and underwater hockey must be to secure fittings poolside. Fittings should not protrude from poolside as they may be a risk to swimmers when not in use.

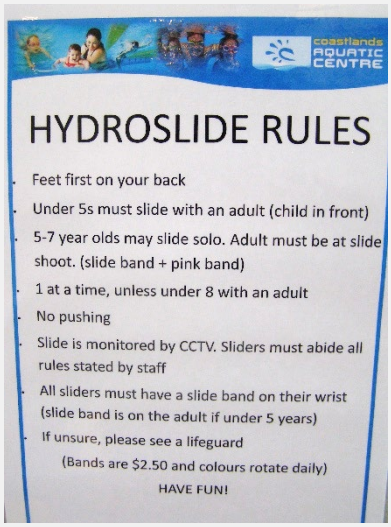
5.7 Water slides

Although water slides (hydroslides) have a perceived high level of danger, it is a lower risk activity. Inappropriate management or misuse of water slides can however lead to accidents. Accidents can occur because of slips and falls on steps, falling out of open slides, collisions on slides or in the splashdown pool, and equipment failure.

Positioning of lifeguards at slides will depend on the design of the slide and use of cameras/monitors at either the entrance or splash down area or lights indicating when users can enter the slide. If cameras or lights are not used, lifeguards should be located at both the top of a slide and in, or immediately adjacent to, the splashdown area. Lifeguards at water slide splashdown areas and wave pools must be aware that constant water turbulence makes supervision difficult.

Communication methods between lifeguards supervising water slides may include two-way radios, telephones, loud hailers or hand signals, and should take into consideration the ease and effectiveness of each method given the layout and design of the water slide within a facility.

Figure 5: Example of hydroslide rules sign



5.8 River rides

River rides (lazy rivers) are usually shallow channels designed to allow water to flow at varying speeds. A lifeguards' position must allow for supervision of the entire ride. Depending upon the design of the ride, more than one lifeguard may be required to supervise the river ride.

Guidelines for customers safety on river rides include:

» enter and exit ride at designated points only

» no jumping or diving

» where tubes are used, swimmers should always stay in tubes and only one swimmer should be allowed per tube.

5.9 Wave pools

In closely controlled situations, wave pools are safe, however the use of wave pools requires more lifeguards to maintain constant supervision.

Lifeguard-to-swimmer ratio for wave pools will be defined by the layout, design and wave patterns/operation of the pool. Royal Life Saving Society of Australia recommends a minimum ratio of 1 lifeguard to 40 swimmers for wave pools.

Lifeguards should be aware of the following:

» Sudden influx of customers into the pool.

» Customers kept away from wave chamber outlet.

» Access to the pool when the waves are in operation should be limited to the beach area.

» Waves can cause disorientation, particularly with weaker swimmers.

» Smaller customers may be knocked over by the force of waves.

» Diving and jumping from poolside into waves should be prohibited.

» Turbulence from waves results in very poor visibility through the water.

» Use of flotation devices should be closely monitored and permitted only during periods of low patronage.

Controls for the operation of the wave pool including sirens and emergency stop buttons should be located on the pool deck allowing lifeguards to operate while still being able to supervise the pool.

Figure 6: Customers using flotation devices

5.10 Hydrotheraphy pools and warm water pools

Hydrotherapy pools and warm water pools are heated pools, typically maintained at temperatures between 33°C and 36°C, designed to facilitate therapeutic exercises and relaxation. They often feature massage jets and other water features to enhance wellness and aid in rehabilitation and pain relief.

Customers using hydrotherapy pools will having varying support needs, therefore lifeguards need to be aware of the customer ages and access requirements. It is important to remember that not all impairments are visible, and all customers should be made to feel welcome in the hydrotherapy space.

Figure 7: Example of hydrotherapy pool rules

Heat exhaustion from staying in too long can occur, so guidance around usage (like spas) should be displayed. As hydrotherapy pools tend to be deeper than learner pools, children should be supervised when using and adequate signage should be displayed to this effect.

Most hydrotherapy pools will have accessibility features such as ramps or hoists. These should be properly maintained, and staff should be trained in how to assist customers with their use.

5.11 Steam rooms, spa and saunas

Supervising hot areas such as spas, steam rooms, and saunas can be challenging due to the nature of the environment (steam, bubbles and customer privacy) and their location in the facility. Safety messages can be delivered to customers using good signage, and verbal instructions from lifeguards and reception staff. Regular checking of these areas must be included in the staff supervision plan, and for areas of private pools, staff should be located within hearing distance. Staff need to be proactive and interactive with customers in these areas.

Dizziness, fainting, dehydration and heat exhaustion are common risks when people stay in the spa, sauna or steam room for too long. It is recommended customers:

» do not enter these areas on their own but have a minimum of two people

» do not exceed 15 minutes in saunas and 30 minutes in spas/hot pools

» are fully hydrated

» shower before entering the pool again.

Clear signage advising customers of safety information should be visible. These signs should clearly display the recommended time spent in the hot environment, and care to be taken by pregnant women and customers with medical conditions such as high/low blood pressure and heart conditions.

It is recommended that age restrictions be placed on the use of these facilities or that as a minimum, customers under the age of 16 years be accompanied by an adult.

Further information

Template: Spa & Sauna Operating and Usage Policy – Auckland Council

5.12 Mobility equipment and accessibility features

Mobility equipment and accessibility features such as pool hoists, ramps, and water wheelchairs can be critical features for many customers with access needs to use the facilities. These spaces and equipment may require supervision when they are in use on poolside.

Staff should be trained how to assist customers with their use and should always the ask the customer before providing assistance.

Customers should not be expected to give notice in advance to use the pool hoist and aquatic wheelchairs. Just like all customers, customers with access needs should be able to use the facilities without needing to give notice. This means that regular maintenance checks of the equipment and staff training are essential, to make sure the equipment and staff are always ready to support disabled customers.

If equipment is not properly checked or maintained, it presents a safety risk to staff and customers. Flat batteries and broken equipment can also be a complete access barrier for customers who rely on this equipment to enter/exit the water.

6. Supervising programmes and events

6.1 Supervision of swim carnivals and meets

Operating policies, supervision levels and normal operating procedures for the facility should be applied consistently for all customers.

Arrangements agreed in advance with carnival organisers should be set out in writing and include all safety requirements and expectations for using the facility including:

» Information on numbers participating, the activity and skill level of the group and any assistance required.

» Name of the hire representative who will be in charge and assume responsibility for the group.

» Who will provide pool supervision staff to comply with the facility's supervision standards, i.e. the hirer or the facility manager.

» Number and skills/qualifications of available lifeguards or staff.

» The hiring party understands and accepts emergency procedures and the specific responsibilities of the facility manager and the hirer in the event of an emergency. The agreement should make a distinction between an emergency arising from the actions of the group and those such as the failure of the facility, e.g. power, structure or equipment.

» Conditions and rules agreed upon for the behaviour and conduct of the group during use, and safety advice to be conveyed to participants prior to their use of the facility.

Figure 8: Swim meet event

Poolsafe facilities must have a facility employed PLPC qualified lifeguard on duty for all bookings.

6.2 School and holiday programmes

Schools

Schools often use local pools for swimming and water safety teaching. Guidelines for facility use must be established to ensure the supervision standard is maintained at all times.

Each facility will have different requirements for school programmes. Principals, teachers and parents need to be aware of those requirements and the issues of health and safety related to the pool environment.

It is usually expected that the facility provides swim teachers to run the school water safety programme.

Facilities should proactively communicate with schools around any support and assistance that may be required by the facility ahead of time.

Holiday Programmes

Many facilities undertake planned programmes in addition to learn-to-swim, fitness and swimming programmes. These recreation and holiday programmes provide a service which includes, in most cases, total supervision of participants.

The facility manager, therefore, accepts certain obligations when running these programmes and must ensure staff are aware of the legal implications which accompany this responsibility. It is wise to assume liability where it is clear a parent or guardian is relying on facility staff, or programme staff, or when programme information suggests the facility manager will take responsibility for children enrolled in the programme.

6.3 Targeted participation programmes

Programmes specifically designed to meet specific community needs can create safe spaces and enhance access for all members of the community regardless of gender, age, ability, culture and ethnicity. Aquatic facilities can work with community groups and funding providers to deliver high quality programmes and events that cater for the minority groups within the community. These programmes can include Women’s only sessions, sensory sessions, parent and baby, Gender diverse community only sessions, and others.

Case Study 2: Sensory Session – Queenstown Lakes District Council

A bit about our sensory sessions:

Our community lacked physical activities that were suitable or accessible for people with sensory access needs. Aquatic centres can be a good option because they are more controlled environments. However, they can be overwhelming due to sensory stimuli such as noise, bright lighting, crowds, and high activity levels.

We set up our sensory session to offer a calm environment for members in the community with intellectual impairments, who are neurodivergent, suffering from previous head injuries (concussion) or that benefit from a quiet/non-stimulating space.

Our Aquatic Centres are designating a timeframe whereby we reduce our lighting, block the booking space, offer sensory support equipment and a team with awareness and some training around supporting people with sensory access needs.

As a result of the program

» Four children who had never entered the Aquatic Centre before have trialled and been able to use the centre within the timeframe.

» Two children that were never able to leave the learners pool have now had the space to move towards the big pool where they are practicing taking their feet off the ground.

We ensure the ongoing quality of the program by putting our crew through training specific to sessions timeframes so that they can better support the community.

We have designated toys for the session timeframe and signage is placed at our entry so that the community are aware and mindful of the session. All departments are onboard, with reducing music in the foyer.

Case Study 3: Sensory Sessions – Upper Hutt City Council

More about how H20 have also provided a more relaxed experience at their pool for anyone who prefers a quieter environment, including Autistic and neurodivergent people.

Case Study 4: Women's Only Wednesdays – Te Pou Toetoe Linwood pool

Women's Wednesdays is the biggest offering for the use of a public aquatic facility as a women's only environment in New Zealand. The entire pool area is open only to women, girls and boys up to six years old, from 3pm to 9:30pm every Wednesday, all year round.

The women's swimming session aims to ensure that women and girls from all our communities have equitable access to our pools. By removing a barrier for participation, the women's swimming sessions broadly benefit women of all ages. This affects particularly those who may not feel comfortable swimming in a mixed gendered environment. These sessions are inclusive of all women including trans women. This may be due to religious or cultural beliefs or who just feel more comfortable or safer in a women's only environment in their swimwear.

Prior to the opening of Te Pou Toetoe we engaged with community, at their places of gathering, to consult on what programmes they wanted at the new facility We intended to create a session that appealed to women from all backgrounds and encourage participation of users who don't often use our aquatic services. Through this we wanted to improve general well-being of the users and increase water safety skills through this participation. By installing privacy screens around the pool area and scheduling our rosters to be staffed by women, we can utilise all of the pool areas. Part of the programming has also included swim education lessons and aqua fit classes.

Through staff reporting we know that there is a significant reduction in assistance required from the lifeguards from the first few sessions. We have achieved our objectives as our participation numbers are good and participants report increased benefits in their well-being, confidence and water safety skills.

Case Study 5: Out in the Pool events – Wellington City Council

A series of events and regular sessions aimed at the LGBTQI+ community, these sessions provide a safe and welcoming environment for swimming.

The sessions have gender neutral changing rooms and bathrooms, and a variety of activities are made available, such as recreation swimming, inflatables, diving/manu board open, spa and sauna, as well as lane swimming, aqua jogging. In addition, swim instructors will be available for swimming tips and coaching.

6.4 Social events, consumption of food and drink

There should be specific areas where food and drink may be consumed. During social events, extra careful supervision is necessary, and it is essential that activities in the water take place before the consumption of food or drink.

When facilities are hired by external individuals or organisations outside public operating hours for events, normal operating procedures including supervision levels must be maintained.

Figure 9: Designated area for consuming food and drinks

7. Communication

Effective communication between staff, especially lifeguards, and between staff and customers, is key to effective service. Without a means of communication staff only act as individuals. Good communication builds good teamwork and adds to the strength of a team.

Communication between customers and staff is vital for safety and positive customer relations. Do not restrict communication to disciplinary and emergency actions. Engage in friendly interchange whenever possible. This approach will create the right environment for future cooperation, particularly should an emergency arise. An outward appearance which is friendly yet professional is most likely to get a positive response from customers.

Several communication methods should be considered in a pool taking into consideration environmental factors (such as noise, different areas), communication preferences and needs of both staff and customers. Make sure you do not rely solely on one communication method particularly in the event of an emergency, e.g. spoken instructions might not be understood by people whose first language isn't English or by people who have hearing impairments. In this case an alternative could be utilising communication flash cards.

7.1 Communication methods

Type of communication	When to use
Spoken word	An essential part of staff communication, particularly when giving specific instructions or in the case of an emergency.
Whistle	Particularly for alerting other staff in the event of an emergency.
Hand signals	Useful if a prearranged system of hand signals is established. Hand signals can effectively convey a simple message after eye contact is established.
Individual Radios	Used in large facilities or outdoor facilities where other methods of communication are limited. Where staff have access to radios, they should ensure that they are fully conversant with their use, operational procedures and limitations.
PA systems	Can be used for making announcements or to assist in crowd control during an emergency.

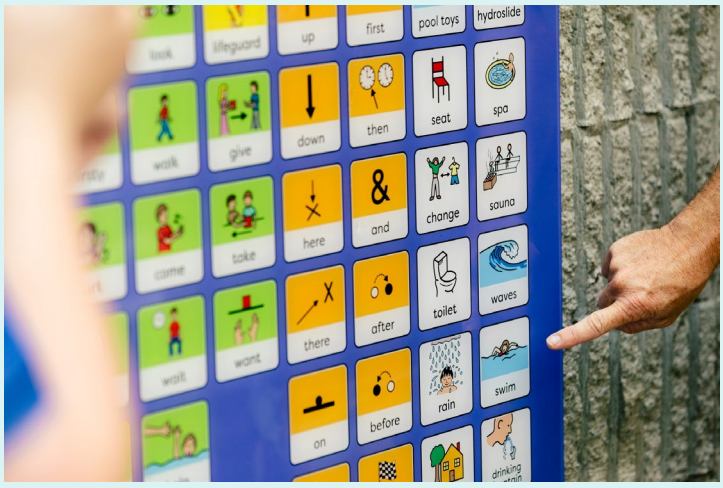
Type of communication	When to use
Alarms	Can convey a variety of messages to customers and staff. There is every likelihood, particularly in the larger leisure pools with a variety of features, there may be alarms for fire, poolside incident, or wave machine use. Where possible, alarms should have both audible and visual indicators, e.g. a wave machine alarm may be supported by a light and a customer service announcement. Staff must be fully conversant with the sound and meaning of all alarm systems and be prepared to explain them to customers. **Hot Tip**: Loud alarms with no prior warning can be unsettling for pool users. If this is a regular alarm (e.g. for a wave pool) then it should be preceded by a verbal announcement. This is also useful information to share in your accessibility information on your website.
Visual Alarms	All emergency and safety alarms should have a visual alarm accompanying any audible alarm, e.g. Visual alerting devices.
Signage/Digital Signage	Signage is a useful way to display information for customers. Signage can be in the form of static signage or digital signage boards which change regularly and can display more than one message. If a video display is being used ensure that there are also closed captions.
Communication Board	A core board can assist customers using alternative communications. They are especially useful for non-verbal communication or for those who speak a different language. See Case study 6 Te Rauparaha Arena Communication Board, Porirua City Council
Flash Cards	Used for communication with customers and can be carried by the lifeguards or staff around the facility. Belgravia Leisure have developed Aquatic Communication cards to download.

Case Study 6: Te Rauparaha Arena
Communication board – Porirua City Council

We embarked on a project which centred on five strands of innovation in inclusivity through our aquatic environment. The aim was to create places and spaces that people feel safe, included, respected, and enjoy and make people want to return to our place.

One strand of this project was to enhance communication for people who are non-verbal. We decided on installing accessible, easy to use and purpose-built communication boards that enhances the visit for groups who struggle with verbal communication. The boards are constructed with long term sustainability planned for, meaning that we can add to them if we find the need.

Figure 10: Communication board



They have proven successful in removing accessibility barriers for users who are nonverbal or have nonverbal people in their whanau/class. Local colleges have been particularly engaged with these.

7.2 Signage

Signage is an effective way to communicate messages around rules, expected behaviours and supervision policy within an Aquatic Facility. It is important that signage is clear and easy to understand and is displayed in the appropriate areas and clearly visible to all users.

Signage should reflect the policies contained within your NOPs and all staff should be fully conversant with the information and policies displayed. Choice of

material is important as it must be able to withstand the aquatic facility environment. Digital signage is also a popular choice.

Figure 11: Examples of signage

Further information

» Recreation Aotearoa supervision signage and digital signage packages available to purchase.

» Sign accessibility considerations: Check out Blind Low Vision NZ - Accessible Signage and Spaces for more information on developing inclusive and accessible signage.

Template: Hand signals

8. Managing use

Programming regular activities and one-off events ensures an aquatic facility is well-utilised and caters to as wide a customer group as possible.

Providing structured programming for activities creates a sense of certainty for all users. In most facilities, non-programmed time is set aside especially for the casual walk-in user. It is important that non-programmed and programmed time is booked into the daily/weekly schedule.

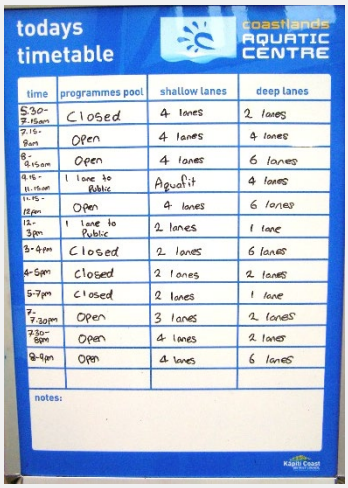
Scheduling the programmed activities at times to suit the various user groups will ensure best use of the facilities, e.g. aquafit for older adults can be scheduled for mid-morning, while aqua fun aimed at children can be scheduled for weekend afternoons and school holidays.

Communicating with users about programmes and events, and specifically the impact upon their use of the facility, as early as possible helps with customer service and user expectations. Signage, notices, Facebook and website updates, and using reception staff are all important methods to communicate to both regular and casual users about upcoming events.

Some aquatic facilities provide regular updates (email, newsletter etc) to clubs and coaches who are regular users of their facility. Be as proactive as possible, especially with one-off events.

Consider using live updates and social media channels to keep customers informed of last-minute changes. This is particularly important for customers who need to plan their visit in advance.

Figure 12: Example of a pool timetable



8.1 Booking systems

There are many electronic booking systems available for aquatic facilities. Many of these systems are fully integrated financial, user, staff and resource monitoring systems. No matter what type of system is used, it is important all staff, not just reception staff or managers, are aware of what is happening within the facility.

Further Information

Sport New Zealand Accessible Websites
https://sportnz.org.nz/accessibility/website-accessibility/

Sport New Zealand Accessible Social Media
https://sportnz.org.nz/accessibility/social-media-accessibility/

9. Programmes and events

Programmes and events are the engine house of a successful facility – they bring people and life into an aquatic facility. To ensure that success, programmes will need to align with both the facility strategic direction and the needs of the community.

Figure 13: Special event at a facility

There are four key steps to running a programme or event, however large or small.

Scoping

» Checking the organisation's strategic fit in relation to programmes and events. Misaligned programmes or events can lead to a downturn in customer use and demand.

» Identifying target communities and getting their input.

» Developing programme concepts, goals and design.

Planning

» All operational aspects of planning.

» Feasibility, timing, pricing, and budgets.

» Identifying barriers to participation.

» Marketing.

» Risk management.

Implementation

» Preparing the facility and staff to implement.

» Delivering the planned programme.

Evaluation

» Evaluating goals, participation, satisfaction, health and safety and budgets.

» Acting on findings.

9.1 Programme feasibility

To determine the feasibility of a programme or event in the facility, consider the following:

» **Target audience** – who are they and can the facility provide what they want?

» **Partners** – are there groups the facility could partner with?

» **Programme goals and objectives** – do they match needs and the strategic direction of the facility as well as the needs of the target audience?

» **Budget** – what is the financial goal, income and expenditure, and what can people pay?

» **Timing** – what frequency, duration, time of day/week/year that will suit the facility and target audience?

» **Resources** – what will the facility need in staffing, venue, and equipment?

» **Promotion** – what is the best and most effective way to reach the audience?

» **Safety** – what is the health and safety plan?

» **Cost/benefits** – what are the extra costs of cleaning, non-programme staff, or conflict with other users/events?

Further information

Recreation Aotearoa Quality Programmes and Events

https://sportnz.org.nz/accessibility/event-accessibility/

10. Aquatic education

Aquatic education covers two areas: dedicated learn to swim schools and programmes and water safety, taught to primary aged pupils through school programmes. Swim schools and learn to swim facilities are included within the framework of these guidelines generally, while specific areas of concern are detailed in this section.

Aquatic skills are a compulsory component of the education curriculum in primary schools. Teaching swimming through schools should be undertaken by suitably trained instructors. Traditional high student to teacher ratios in schools makes it more difficult to teach students specific water skills compared to smaller, dedicated learn to swim classes. Utilising external providers and facilities may be the best means of providing more than just exposure to water or skills maintenance.

Figure 14: Example of signage to educate parents about the levels of swim lessons

Further information

» https://www.waterskills.org/

10.1 Facilities

Pool depth

The desirable pool depth for teaching swimming is chest height, to enable students to stand up for recovery. Age and height of students vary, therefore strategies for achieving this range from having a maximum pool depth of 0.90m, to providing platforms for use in deeper pools.

For more advanced swim teaching and water safety education, deeper water experiences are desirable but should be closely monitored and managed.

Water temperature

Water temperature in learn-to-swim pools is an important factor. Keeping the water warmer than 30ºC ensures students and instructors do not get cold during lessons.

Instructors teaching for any length of time in the pool will be susceptible to cold. Providing instructors with wetsuits or vests will reduce the likelihood of staff become cold, tired and fatigued.

Leasing facilities

When leasing or using other aquatic facilities to provide swim lessons, it is the responsibility of the swim school operator to ensure the health and safety of staff, students and parents/caregivers.

It is the responsibility of the asset owner to ensure that the facility is compliant, e.g. building WoF, an emergency evacuation system is operable and to ensure the operator has health and safety plans in place.

Consider the following when undertaking a facility check before agreeing to use a facility:

» Access and car parking.

» Pool depth and provision/storage of platforms.

» Provision of in-water teaching bar.

» Entry steps.

» Pool surrounds.

» Accessibility of the facility and the pool.

» Seating.

» Water temperature in changing rooms/showers.

» Working toilets with working door latches.

» Safety signage.

» Emergency exits are clearly marked.

» Filtration and pool water quality compliance with NZS5826:2010.

10.2 Customers

Minimum age

The minimum age for formal water instruction lessons is six months at public pools. Children younger than six months should not be encouraged into a public aquatic environment as their immune system is not fully developed and may be susceptible to waterborne illnesses. Once six months old, a child also has better head and neck control.

Water confidence classes for babies focusing on exposing young children to the aquatic environment, developing their comfort and familiarisation of water, and educating the parents/caregivers rather than skill development.

Student ratios

Appropriate student to instructor ratios is dependent on:

» facility and pool environment (pool depth, water temperature and allocated working space)

» age of students

» ability level of class

» level of support required by students

» type of activity.

Ratios should be determined and evaluated at the beginning of each lesson by the instructor in charge of the group. To maintain levels of safety for swim school students, the following student to instructor ratios are recommended.

Student: Instructor ratio

Level	Student: Instructor ratio
Beginners	3:1
Pre-schoolers	4:1
School age	6:1
School groups	10:1*
Swimmers who are unable to participate in group lessons**	1:1

* School group ratio based on class teacher being in attendance but not in water.
** It should not be assumed that all disabled swimmers require 1:1 tuition.

Using two instructors per group not only increases the number of students per group but can enhance the skill teaching and learning achievable in each lesson period.

Considerations when teaching disabled students:

» Understanding the disability and support needs of individuals.

» Instructor experience and competency.

» Student/instructor relationship.

» Instructor/parent or support person relationship.

» Student comfort within an aquatic environment.

» Lesson length and structure - how does your class structure support all learners to succeed?

  – For example: People with cerebral palsy may fatigue quickly. Starting with key skill activities when energy is highest at the start, before moving to games or lighter activities at the end of the session, can be a good way to support learner success. These adjustments can also support all students, such as fatigued tamariki and rangatahi after a long school day.

» Skill acquisition expectation.

» Can the student participate in group lessons and activities?

  – In some instances, smaller groups may be appropriate, before jumping straight to 1-1 lessons. Consider how students can be connected across

the swim school to facilitate small group sessions. Sharing information about learner needs between teachers is key to achieving this.

Case study 7: Bringing Teacher Aides (TAs) together

Recognising the need for improved skills and confidence, the Leaping Frog Swim School Coordinator took the initiative to organise a collaborative meeting for teacher aids from Gore and the surrounding districts, focusing on aqua therapy sessions. This initiative highlighted the common challenges faced by TAs in delivering effective support to their students, particularly in the context of aquatic activities. Emails were sent out to invite TAs to discuss their challenges, share solutions, and learn essential aquatic teaching skills, including hand positioning, aquatic progressions, and adaptations for individual needs.

The primary objective of this initiative was to build confidence and skills among local TAs, foster a stronger connection between the aquatic facility and TAs, and ultimately enhance the benefits for both students and TAs. The first meeting was a resounding success, addressing significant challenges such as transportation and time allocation by schools. Through active group discussions, participants were able to find solutions and gain confidence in overcoming these obstacles.

The in-water training sessions were particularly impactful, providing TAs with hands-on experience and boosting their confidence in water delivery. This practical training was complemented by the opportunity to ask questions and engage in meaningful discussions, further enhancing their understanding and skills.

This initiative has since evolved into regular term-by-term get-togethers and training sessions, featuring external presenters who cover a range of relevant topics. These sessions not only continue to build on the skills and confidence of TAs but also create a supportive community where they can share experiences and learn from each other.

This initiative has made a significant impact on the local community, improving the quality of support provided to students and strengthening the professional development of TAs. By addressing key challenges and fostering a collaborative environment, the Gore Multisports Complex and the Leaping Frog Swim School have created a sustainable model for ongoing improvement and support in aquatic education.

Further information

Resources and Support to assist disability inclusive swim education:

» Coaching people with Autism, Special Olympics New Zealand free Sport Tutor online training.

» Level Up, Impairment Specific coaching modules, Paralympics NZ free Sport Tutor online training.

» You Me Us Disability Inclusion Training, Belgravia Leisure.

» New Zealand Sign Language courses for Water Safety, Merge NZ.

» Water-related Signs, Deaf Aotearoa.

» Aquatics Communication cards, Belgravia Leisure.

» Support is also available for your swim school beyond formal education and training. Contact Swimming NZ to see how their staff can support you to create more inclusive swim school environments.

Learn more about the sign-supported swimming lessons at Bay Venues:

» Sign-Supported Swimming Lessons

Case study 8: Auckland Council

At Auckland Council, we recognise the need for greater diversity in the way we teach our students. Over the past three to four years, we've made significant progress in creating a more inclusive learning environment where both staff and students can thrive.

As part of this journey, we have worked closely with Safe for Children, a specialist organisation that has supported us with online training and guidance on tools that can benefit our neurodiverse students and their families. Many families have already been using these tools with their swim teachers, and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. I've personally heard from parents that the tools have helped their children focus better, feel excited about swimming, and build confidence in the water.

We understand that inclusion is a continually evolving space, and while we may not be experts yet, we are committed to learning and doing more.

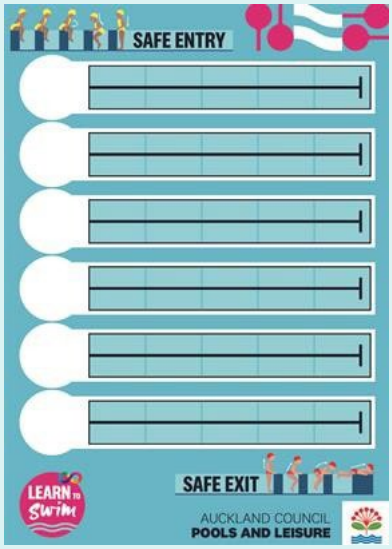
To support this goal, we've introduced three key tools:

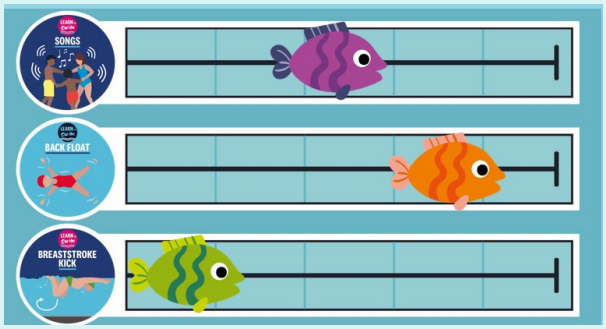
» **Emotion Cards**: Visual aids that help students express how they are feeling, making communication easier and more accessible.

Figure 15: Example of emotion cards

» **Activity Boards**: These boards provide a visual outline of the lesson structure, helping students understand what to expect.

Figure 16: Example of activity boards





» **Social Stories**: These visual guides take students on a step-by-step tour through our centres, designed to reduce anxiety about entering a new environment.

10.3 Staff education and training

There is a range of swim teaching qualifications considered by those in the industry as suitable for New Zealand:

» New Zealand Swim Coaches and Teachers Association (NZSCTA) is responsible for the needs of professional swim teachers, coaches and providers across New Zealand.

» AUSTSWIM is Australia's national organisation for teaching swimming and water safety, and their qualifications are taught and recognised in New Zealand. These are delivered via Swimming New Zealand:

- Access and Inclusion.
- Teacher of Swimming and Water Safety.
- Competitive Strokes.
- Adults.
- Baby and Infants.

» Te Mahi Ako also offer New Zealand Certificate in Aquatics (Swim & Water Safety Teacher) Level 3 and New Zealand Apprenticeship Specialised Swim and Water Safety Teacher Level 4.

Staff must hold a current first aid certificate and can train in risk management and customer service.

Further information

Swim Teachers and Coaches of NZ

Swimming NZ

AUSTSWIM Aotearoa

Te Mahi Ako

10.4 In-water vs. poolside teaching

To achieve best results instructors should be in the water with students rather than teaching poolside, provided the instructor can observe all students during class. This may change as students' skills advance to a level where they are able to freely swim and a greater viewing and vantage point is required.

10.5 Supervision

Supervision by instructors is for the class being taught, not for all the users in the facility. It is vital that all staff are first aid trained, parents/caregivers remain in the facility during lessons, and student to instructor ratios are within the recommended levels.

Supervision of swim lessons within a public aquatic facility should be covered by normal supervision practices of the lifeguards but in a more general manner by instructors.

10.6 Use of teaching platforms

There are several different styles of teaching platform used in swimming lessons to adjust the depth of the pool for small children. These pose a potential risk with children falling off them or getting stuck underneath them. Consideration needs to be given to the placement of platforms and positioning of the swim teachers so that supervision of all pupils in their class is always maintained. This should be included in staff training for swim instructors.

10.7 Water safety programmes

As well as teaching swimming skills, water safety is an important part of aquatic education. Teaching people how to act and react when in unexpected aquatic situations, can be the difference between survival and drowning.

Case study 9: Hamilton Pools Learn to Swim

Hamilton Pools redeveloped their Learn to Swim programme from a traditional 4 term programme teaching traditional stroke progression swimming lessons to an all-year-round programme with an increased focus on swim and survive skills that can be applied to real life natural water situations. The students were taken through a variety of activities including boat safety, the use of lifejackets, snorkelling, kayaking, safer bombing etc, as well as learning swimming strokes.

The new programme provides opportunities for students to experience activities that they may face in a natural water environment within a controlled and safe environment, exposing them to “what could go wrong” (e.g. a boat tipping over) and being able to demonstrate what they would do to be safe if they found themselves in undesirable situations. It allows students to experience situations outside their comfort and ability, (e.g. swimming in clothes) to not panic if they found themselves in an “accidental immersion” situation.

The new programme was launched in January 2022 with 80% of parents taking up the earlier than usual start in mid-January and continuing lessons through the April school holidays. The best thing about it was the kids had so much fun in the boats, in deepwater, bombing, kayaks and snorkelling that it felt to them more like a fun holiday activity than a swimming lesson. The best way to learn!

11. Aquafitness

Participation in aquafitness is increasing. It is recognised as beneficial for maintaining fitness levels for recreational, amateur and professional sports people. Aquafitness caters to a wide range of participants wanting to improve fitness and strength to customers requiring rehabilitation. It uses water for resistance while providing a low impact environment and can be adapted to different levels of fitness and ability.

Classes must be run by trained instructors who understand the effects of training in water on the body. Workshops and training for staff can be provided by AUSTSWIM Aotearoa and other providers.

Examples of aquafit programmes are:

» **Aquajog Fit:** Customers experience a low impact, high-level cardio workout. Ideal for focused training needs, muscle toning, and rehabilitation.

» **Aqua Fit:** This is a fun workout designed to improve or maintain fitness. The dynamic cardiovascular base is intensified through learning how to move and use the water.

» **Aqua Low impact:** Designed to help increase cardiovascular fitness, improve flexibility and reduce pain for overall improved health. Ideal for those recovering from surgery, injury, pre/post-natal and those involved in the Green Prescription ‘Kick-Start’ programme.

» **50's Forward Aquajog Fit:** A low impact, gentle cardio workout. Ideal for muscle toning.

» **50's Forward Aquafit:** A gentle cardio workout to music. It is a fun exercise session for anyone aiming to improve or maintain fitness. A low impact, medium intensity workout for all levels.

Figure 17: Pool sign for Aqua jogging

Further information

Swimming NZ Water safety and education

Aqua Alliance Australia

12. Other aquatic programmes

Depending on the size and layout of the facility and the needs of the community various aquatic programmes can be offered in addition to swim school and aquafitness. These can be run either through local sporting clubs or directly by the facility if there are appropriately trained staff. Some of those aquatic programmes are:

» Water safety

» Swim squad

» Water polo

» Flippaball

» Outrigger canoeing

» Kayaking

» Snorkelling

» Scuba diving

» Kiwi Surf

» Springboard diving.

Figure 18: Swim squad

13. Fitness suites and gyms

13.1 Introduction

Fitness areas and gyms within an aquatic facility are now commonplace. Creating a fitness area or gym requires changes to operating a swimming pool in terms of equipment and technical requirements, and staff skills and qualifications.

13.2 Customer requirements

Customer requirements for fitness areas and gyms differ from swimming customers. Many fitness area and gym users may not use the swimming pool. Isolating access to fitness areas and gyms may not be practical, but providing access to dry changing facilities is important.

Maintaining customer comfort, safety and security ranges from temperature, noise, and lighting to customer and staff interaction and crowding. Overcrowding can create both hazards and frustrations to users. Limiting class numbers, advising users of quiet times, and placing time limits on popular machines during peak times are strategies to avoid overcrowding and user frustration.

13.3 Location of fitness areas and gyms

The location and siting of fitness areas and gyms need to be carefully considered during the design phase. Locating these areas above the swimming pools can create an uncomfortable atmosphere for pool users who do not wish to be watched while using the pool.

In determining the location of fitness areas and gyms, the ways to manage members' use of either or both gym and pool amenities needs to be considered. Do separate membership and/or entrance fees require separate entrances and accesses?

Air temperature and humidity requirements for fitness areas and gyms differ from swimming pool requirements. Most pools aim to achieve an air temperature around 30°C+ while fitness areas and gyms usually operate at a maximum of 18°C. Ventilation requirements for pools and fitness areas also differ as fitness areas need to provide suitable ventilation to minimise sweat and body odour.

The provision and location of fitness equipment that uses electricity is also an important issue. This equipment needs to be kept away from wet areas or areas where condensation may occur to avoid equipment corrosion and possible electrocution.

Group exercise and fitness areas using music and sound systems should be isolated from pool areas to avoid noise drift and conflict between gym and pool users. Similarly sound insulation from pool areas into a fitness area or gym should be considered during design or retrofit phase.

It is essential to consider the accessibility of your fitness area, and the access needs of facility users.

13.4 Equipment issues

The impact of humidity on fitness equipment, rust, electronics and mechanics need to be taken into consideration when designing and developing such areas.

Cleanliness of fitness equipment not only ensures the effective operation of equipment but also maintains a level of hygiene for customers.

Flooring type and protection in fitness areas and gyms should consider the impact of heavy equipment being dropped. Heavy duty rubber insulation should be installed in areas where free-weights are used to minimise damage and noise.

Some fitness equipment requires individual wiring and circuits which incurs considerable expense. A thorough investigation of electrical and maintenance requirements should be undertaken before any equipment is purchased or hired.

It is important that fitness equipment does not leave the dedicated fitness area and gym as it can create a hazard to other fitness and pool users and the facility. Some equipment, such as dumbbells and weights plates should not be taken anywhere near the pool deck or pool itself.

13.5 Fitness industry bodies

Like the recreation industry, the fitness industry is supported by a representative and standard setting organisation. Exercise New Zealand is responsible for representing its members in the fitness industry.

Register of Fitness Professionals (REPS) is the recognised industry standard-setting body. Fitness staff should be registered through REPS to ensure they meet minimum training and qualification standards, and for ongoing training and development requirements.

Further information

Exercise New Zealand

Register of Fitness Professionals

14. Childcare

14.1 Licensed services

The Education Act 1989 defines an early childhood centre as “premises used (exclusively, mainly or regularly) for the education or care of three or more children (not being children of the persons providing the education or care) under 6 years (section 308 (1)”.

Therefore, any situation where a group of three or more children are regularly receiving care from someone other than their parent or caregiver is required to meet legislative requirements.

The Education Act 1989 requires all early childhood education services to be licensed by the Secretary of Education, and it is illegal to operate any premises as an early childhood education service without a licence. Examples of these services are kindergartens, playcentres, kohanga, preschools, casual services such as those in shopping malls.

Licensed services are staffed by qualified teachers who hold the New Zealand Teacher Registration Certificate and there are specific teacher/child ratios depending on the age of the children. Every licensed early childhood education provider must meet certain standards relating to their premises and facilities. These standards cover the range of activities offered, and the amount of space provided for play, toileting, food preparation, and sleep.

Children aged three to five are entitled to 20 hours of early childhood education (ECE) at no charge. This applies to all teacher-led ECE centres. To be eligible children must be enrolled in and going to an early childhood centre offering the subsidy.

14.2 Licence-exempt services

An exemption from the requirement to be licensed has been provided for groups that meet specified conditions. Licence-exempt groups must meet the following requirements:

» More than half the parents of the children attending each session present.

» The group meets for no more than one session of up to three hours on any one day (group rather than child’s hours of attendance).

» The group of parents assume responsibility for each child attending the group.

» The group operates as an informal, non-profit making, community-based group.

Examples of such groups are Pacific Language nests, church groups, playgroups. Childcare facilities offered at aquatic facilities would not meet these criteria.

14.3 Ministry of Education advisory services

Organisations interested in establishing or receiving information regarding any of these services should contact the Ministry of Education, for advice and guidance about the funding and establishment of both licensed, and licence-exempt services.

Further information

Ministry of Education Regulatory Framework for ECE

15. School and community pools

School pools are an important part of the pool network in New Zealand. There are approximately 1,300 school pools in New Zealand, compared with approximately 230 pools provided by councils. Under legislation school pools are required to meet the same standards of supervision and water quality as public pools.

School Boards of Trustees are encouraged to follow best practice methods for the management of school swimming pools as set out by Ministry of Education and they are to comply with all relevant legislation and NZ Standards that apply to water safety and pool use and management.

For many School Boards, the idea of training staff in pool management may not be an option. In such instances, it is recommended the Boards contact their local public swimming pool to determine whether these services can be managed externally.

School Boards are responsible for the health and safety of everyone using the pool with the Board's permission, including after school use by the school and wider community.

Outside school hours, the Board could still be held responsible for harm to any unauthorised pool users, so Boards are advised to maintain and regularly check their security. When a pool is being leased by a third party (e.g. a swim school), the health and safety of the users must be clearly stated under the lease agreement.

Boards must develop rules specific to the use of the pool and provide clear signs displaying those rules. In addition to displaying the rules, the Board must have procedures covering:

» regular checks of locks and gates

» providing first aid equipment

» storage of pool chemicals

» storage of pool equipment

» water quality compliance

» prevention of unauthorised pool use.

Schools can also opt to join the QualityPool accreditation scheme.

Further information

QualityPool® programmes

Guidelines for BOTs school pools

Aktive Increasing Community Access to Schools

16. Thermal pools

Geothermal water can be found in natural outdoor pools, and in commercial pools such as public swimming pools or spas in hotels, motels, health centres and gyms.

16.1 Supervision

The New Zealand guideline for swimming pool supervision applies to thermal pools in general, however, it is recognised that some facilities or amenities within facilities may not be fully compliant due to their make-up and character.

To apply the guideline, the decision on supervision levels must be made by the facility manager after taking into consideration all aspects of risk management. If the New Zealand guideline for swimming pool supervision cannot be applied, then the following minimum levels are required:

» A senior staff member or owner would hold the lifeguard qualification (PLPC).

» All staff hold workplace first aid qualification.

» At all times the complex is open, staff are readily available to customers should an accident happen.

» An emergency response action plan is detailed and is clearly communicated with staff and displayed in an appropriate place for staff to act upon.

» A minimum standard of first aid equipment is maintained on site.

» Private pools (pools which are not in public view or supervised) have a minimum of two people per booking.

» At place of payment and in changing rooms notices state that the pools are not lifeguarded.

In areas of private pools, lifeguards/staff should regularly circulate in the general area, be within hearing distance of the area and be available if the customer requires.

16.2 Customer risks

Common risk areas in thermal pools are the lack of hydration and length of time spent in the hot environment. Clear signage encouraging customers to drink plenty of water and having a recommended maximum time in the hot pools can reduce the risks of heat exhaustion.

Due to the higher water temperature of thermal pools, customers suffering medical conditions such as blood pressure and cardiac conditions, and pregnant women can be at increased risk. The best practice to mitigate any risks is to have clear and visible signs advising of the risks to customers in these higher risk categories.

The nature of the customers using these pools can also increase the risks of injury or accident.

Clear customer instructions on arrival, both verbal and written also help reduce the risk of accident or injury.

Amoebic meningitis is a risk in geothermal pools as the amoeba organisms can live in these pools. Customers need to be advised not to put their heads under water as the amoeba can enter through the nose when a person puts their head under water in a geothermal pool.

16.3 Signage

Good signage governing the rules for thermal pool users' needs to be clearly displayed. Information should identify potential risks to customers including:

» Amoebic Meningitis

» use by pregnant women

» use by customers with medical conditions

» recommended length of time spent in the pool

» risk of dehydration.

Providing customer information on water temperature of each pool is also recommended.

Figure 19: Signs for sulphur pools and geothermal water

Further information

Template: Thermal Mineral Pool rules

17. Hospitality pools

Pools at hospitality establishments (hotels and motels) are subject to the same New Zealand Standards for water quality and safety as commercial and community pools.

It is strongly recommended that hospitality managers establish procedures for the use of the pool. The procedures should include the rules of the pool, use of equipment, location of amenities and incorporate a pool users code for the behaviour of all pool users:

» All children must be supervised.

» Never swim alone.

» Never swim while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

» Take additional care if you have a medical condition.

» Dangerous behaviour is prohibited, e.g. running, jumping.

Risk management identification and planning systems provide a framework for identifying and managing any hazards in the swimming pool area. An emergency action plan should be established and all staff made aware of the plan and its requirements.

Facilities can join the QualityPool® accreditation scheme. See information in 17.3 QualityPool®.

17.1 Signage

Every pool should have clear safety signs. Good signage should detail what the rules are and what to do in the event of an emergency. Appropriate signage can be obtained from Recreation Aotearoa.

Further Information

PoolSafe® signage

17.2 Link to Qualmark

Hospitality pools, including those contained in an accommodation facility with a Qualmark rating must meet a minimum standard. That standard is set by the legal and local government requirements in terms of signage and health and safety. Facilities are visited every 12 to 15 months and if a facility fails to meet the standard their rating will be removed until standards are improved.

17.3 QualityPool®

Developed by Recreation Aotearoa in partnership with Water Safety New Zealand, QualityPool® is targeted at private swimming pools such as holiday parks, gyms, retirement villages, seasonal pools, hotels and motels, and schools. It works as an independent review of an aquatic environment, benchmarking against specific standards. The programme is conducted via a user-friendly online system.

The standards encompass risk assessment and management, pool water quality NZS5826:2010, supervision, emergency procedures, signage, and health and safety. The programme allows operators to review their pools through one simple online assessment system.

Further information

QualityPool® programmes

18. Templates

18.1 Normal operating procedure content guideline

Facility facts and layout	• Plans, diagrams, and map of facility including location of alarms, exits, emergency vehicle access ways, rescue equipment and first aid stations. • Customer access areas and maximum numbers. • Facility management and services.
Opening hours	• Standard hours of opening. • Hours of operation for different services, e.g. swim school, fitness centre, pool.
Personnel	• Identification of persons in charge. • Job descriptions, staff duties and responsibilities. • Performance standards, expectations. • Staff schedules and roster. • Personnel qualifications and accreditation. • Employment contract details including breaks, timekeeping, hours of work. • Training schedule, attendance expectations and consequences.
Daily operational duties	• Opening duties. • Hourly duties. • Daily duties. • Closing duties. • Cleaning procedures.

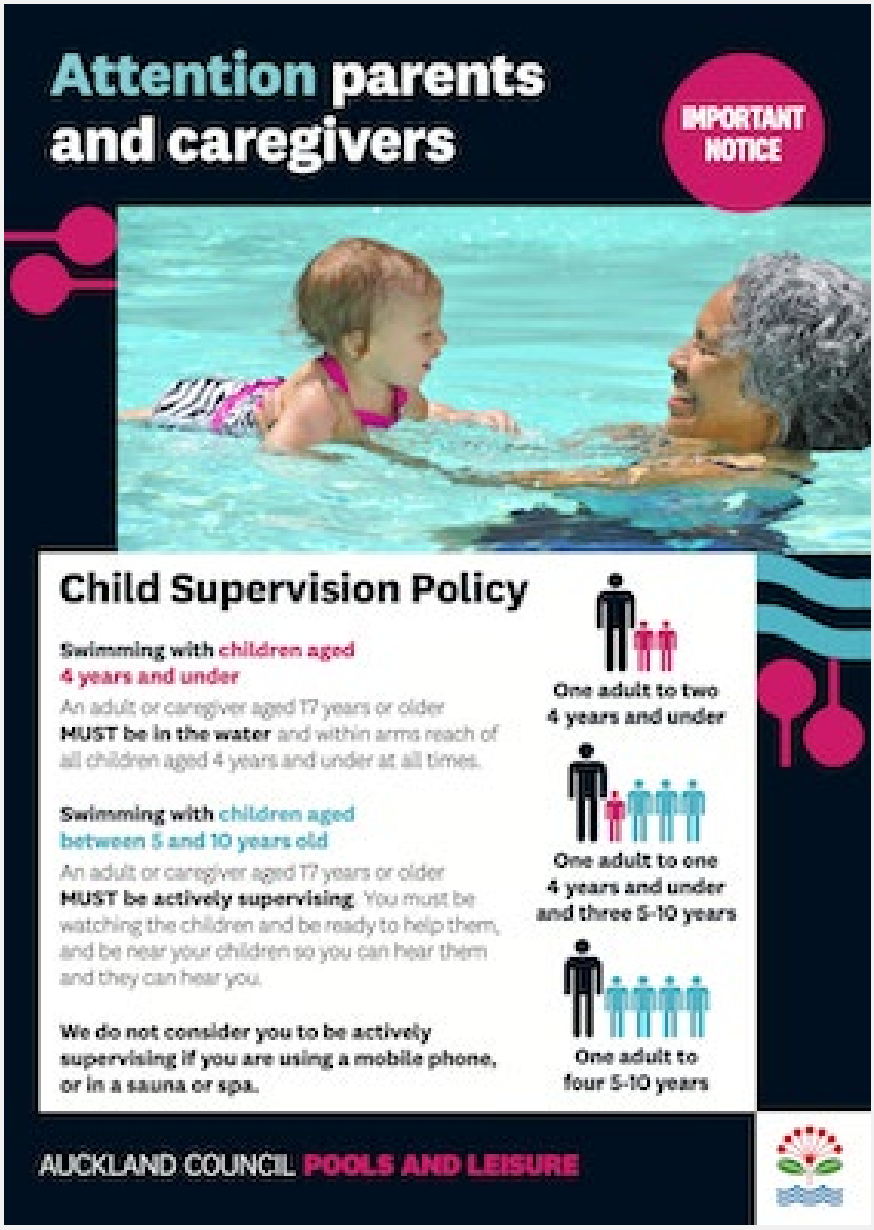
Office operations	• Pool entry, fee structure. • Enquiries, bookings and activities schedules. • Stock and merchandise sales and management. • Equipment loans and hireage. • Vending machine issues. • Banking and till processes. • Security of money and valuables. • Shift handovers.
Customer relations	• Child supervision policies, Pool Alone, ratios. • Customer behaviours, acceptable and unacceptable. • Customer relations (customers and media). • Swimmer etiquette and dress policy.
Reporting policy	• Reporting procedure and authority. • Sample reporting forms and use.
Health and safety	• Procedures for contacting emergency services. • Lifeguard to swimmer ratios. • Caregiver Supervision ratios. • Supervision: scanning systems and methods, lifeguard rotations, different customer groups, different activities. • Communications (radio, telephone and customer address system), lifeguard signal systems. • Correct setup and use of equipment. • Equipment maintenance schedules. • First aid processes (serious incidents should be addressed within the Emergency Action Plan). • Hazard identification and management. • Faecal incident procedures. • Safe use of chemicals and cleaning materials.

Plant operation	• Daily plant check requirements. • Maintenance schedules and requirements. • Troubleshooting checklists. • Manufacturer and supplier contact details. • Delivery and storage of chemicals. • Backup scenarios for equipment breakage and failure.
Water testing procedures	• Water testing. • Plant room procedures. • Microbiological testing.

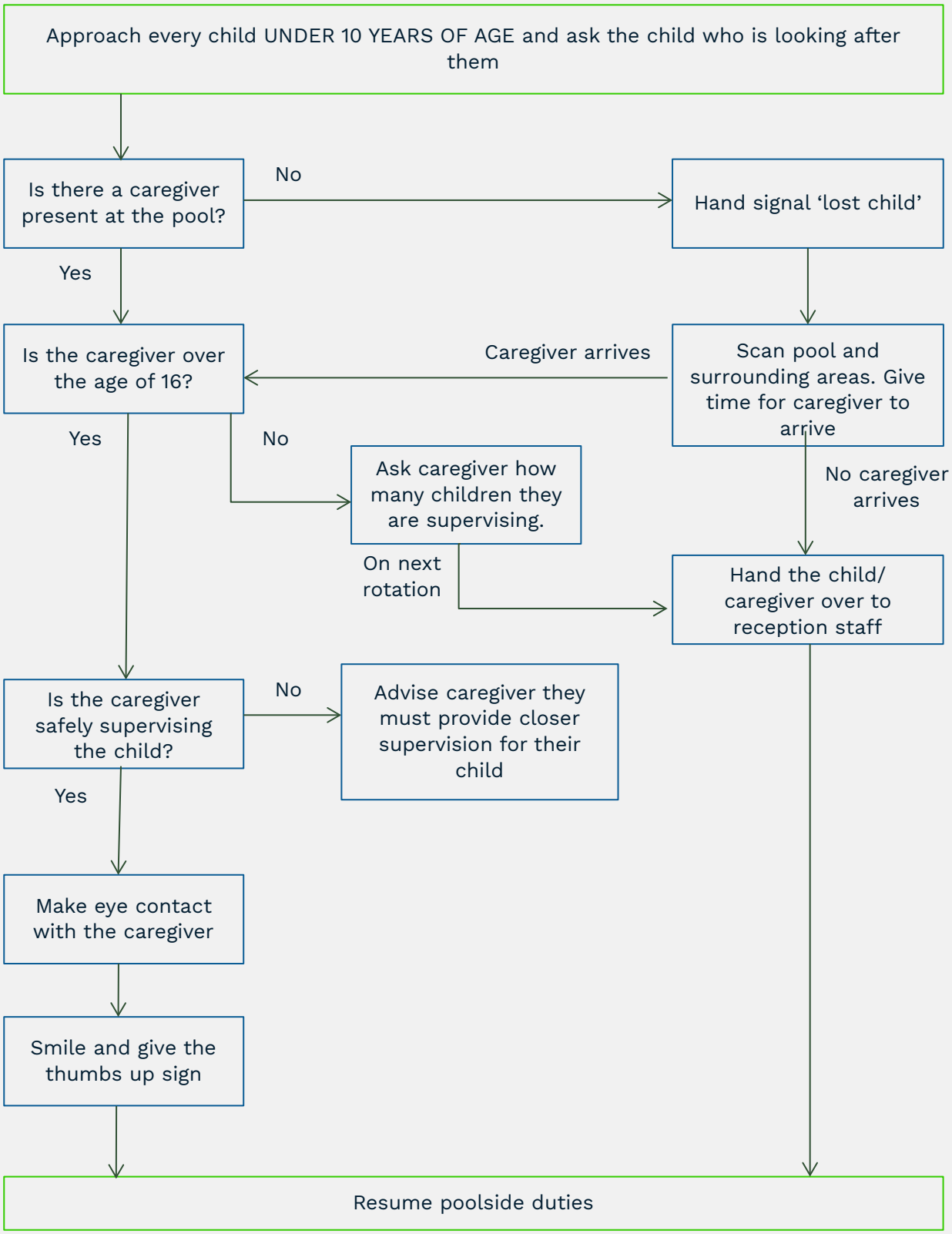
18.2 Poolside checklist

Check	Quantity	Faults	Description
Bulk heads			
Starting blocks			
Lane ropes			
Lap pool flags			
Pool tiles in/out			
Lane speed signs			
Lap pool ladder			
Pool ramp and handrails			
Pool cover rollers			
Pool cover motors			
Pool grates			
Door handles			
Windows and latches			
Bins			
Fire extinguishers			
Hoses			
Hoists			
Aquatic Wheelchairs			
Splash pool features			
Splash & spa jets covers			
Cubby holes			
Sauna			
Seats			
Heater elements			
Rocks			
Lights			
Doors			
Emergency doors			
Egress routes			

18.3 Pool Alone poster



18.4 Pool Alone procedure flowchart (Manurewa)



18.5 Pool Alone register

Date	Time	Name of child	Address	Phone	Age	Comments	Staff signature

18.6 Hand signals

18.7 Thermal mineral pool rules

- No diving, splashing or playing around in these pools.
- **Customers are asked not to put their head under the water in the thermal pools** due to the potential of Amoebic Meningitis being present in the water.
- Pregnant women should consult their doctor prior to using the pools. We advise pregnant women **not to use** the pools hotter than their body temperature as their unborn child will not have sweat glands at this stage and could overheat their bodies.
- Not recommended if you have heart disease or high/low blood pressure.
- Not recommended to bath longer than 20 minutes without a break.
- Thermal water may tarnish some jewellery.