

# RLSS UK Mother and drowning prevention charity in hot tub warning

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**The mother of a boy who almost drowned after being sucked onto an underwater drain in a hot tub has spoken out to warn other parents of the dangers.**

Lucinda Leathes was on holiday in South Africa with her family in April this year when her five-year-old son Sam almost lost his life when a seemingly fun and harmless activity turned into a nightmare.

Lucinda, 38, of, Wandsworth, was enjoying time in the villa's hot tub with Sam and her eldest son, seven-year-old Alfie. Sammy, a strong swimmer, was enjoying the water as he had on most days on the holiday, immersing himself in the bubbles while his mum and brother watched.

But, after just a few seconds, Lucinda noticed that Sam had not surfaced and reached down to pull him up when she realised he was somehow stuck or trapped under the water.

“I could see his blue and white shorts under the bubbles and put my arm down to help him up. It was like pulling on a lump of concrete. I thought I was imagining it but quickly realised this was a really, really bad situation and I screamed for help,” she said.

Sam had swam over the hot tub's drain while under the water and his tummy had covered the grill when the suction and pressure of the water caused his flesh to cover and seal the drain.

Lucinda's husband Tim and her uncle were upstairs in the villa, finishing lunch, heard the screams and raced to help where they discovered Sam under the water. Her uncle started pulling Sam as Tim was still holding his baby girl, but then Tim also started to pull when he didn't come up out of the water.

Lucinda added: “At first I thought his foot was stuck and we couldn't see clearly through the bubbles but when two grown men were pulling on him and he wouldn't come up I realised it was the drain and they were pulling against all that pressure and all that water. I thought that was it – he would be dead.”



As the men pulled Sam, Lucinda frantically found the hot tub's control buttons but none were labelled but she pressed them hoping it would switch off. Eventually, the men felt the vacuum release and Sam was pulled, floppy, unconscious and blue out of the water.

Lucinda's uncle, a doctor, quickly attended to Sam who thankfully recovered quickly, being sick but coming round after a few seconds.

And after the traumatic experience of nearly losing her son, Lucinda, wants to raise awareness of the dangers of some hot tubs and that standards can vary around the world.

“This hot tub was small and shallow and, although I knew they recommend only over 16s go in them, I thought it was because of the heat or bacteria and as I was right next to Sam, touching him, I thought he was safe. I would never have ever thought of the danger of drains.

“I would urge people to be aware of the risks of hot tubs, and indeed any water, especially while on holiday with unfamiliar pools and hot tubs and varying safety laws.

“I am so, so grateful that Sam is okay, he has scars on his tummy, but thankfully didn’t realise the gravity of what had happened. We were lucky but I do not want anything like this happening to anyone else.”

Lucinda is now working with the Royal Life Saving Society UK (RLSS UK), the Drowning Prevention Charity, to highlight what happened to Sammy and potentially save lives.

RLSS UK’s CEO, Di Steer, said: “What happened to Sam must have been terrifying for all involved and we are so pleased he is now okay.

“Tragically, we work with many families who have lost loved ones in drowning incidents, in all different circumstances and we are so grateful to Lucinda for being brave enough to tell her story and possibly save the lives of others who may not be aware of these dangers.

“We urge people to please always take time to look for and identify any potential water dangers when at home or, particularly on holiday when people’s guards are down and they are relaxing and less familiar with their surroundings.”

Di added the importance of observing any safety notices that are present and to also remember that safety standards vary considerably and, even when lifeguards are present, nothing can replace the safety of constant supervision by a parent or family member.

She said: “It is only because Lucinda was so close to Sam that he is alive and well today.”

For more information on the drowning prevention charity and for water safety advice –

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Follow us on Twitter – [@RLSSUK](https://twitter.com/RLSSUK)

Visit our Facebook page – [www.facebook.com/RLSSUK](https://www.facebook.com/RLSSUK)

Call – 01789 773994

A film on drain safety has been created by Zac Foundation in America and can be found here – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vHv6ky7UZ8U>