

Safeguarding in changing rooms

Our experience shows that incidents of sexual assault and the taking of indecent images still occurs in changing rooms.

It is imperative all Members of the Organisation, including employees and volunteers, understand the individually harmful and legal consequences of a person being sexually assaulted, or having indecent images of them taken. Such behaviour is illegal and will not be tolerated in any form.

We strongly recommend that Organisations engage locally with pool providers to create simple barrier systems, or make use of natural barriers between cubicles (e.g. lockers) to enable mixed 'changing villages' to be used only as separate changing areas for either sex. Children of different sexes should change in separate areas, never in the same cubicle, or adjoining cubicles. This will help in preventing crimes involving covert use of cameras or phones.

! Mobile phones and devices should not be used under any circumstances in a changing room area during Swim England regulated activity. This should be supported by clear signage in changing rooms confirming a zero-tolerance approach to the use of mobile phones in changing areas.

All use of mobile devices in a changing room must be reported to the Organisation Welfare Officer and venue.

The Welfare Officer should decide whether or not the breach of Wavepower is a safeguarding concern (such as the reported taking of images/video, or the placing of a phone over/under a changing cubicle) and if so, this must be referred to the Swim England Safeguarding and Welfare Team as soon as possible. If the breach of this policy is not deemed to be a direct safeguarding concern (such as a Member using their phone to make a phone call in a changing area) then this should be dealt with under the Organisation's behaviour and code of conduct process. If a potential crime has been committed, this must be reported to the Police immediately, and the venue must be informed.

Responsibility

Under the duty of care to safeguard children, the Organisation has a responsibility for the wellbeing of children in the changing rooms. This does not mean that parents/guardians have no responsibility, but parents/guardians are often not in the pool complex at the time

when children are swimming and training to exercise their duty of care. For this reason, Organisations must be clear to parents/guardians under what circumstances they require parents/guardians to remain at the pool throughout a session. For example, children who require assistance with changing, or for those children with a disability who may require additional help that the Organisation is unable to provide.

While a child is training or being taught, they remain under the responsibility and duty of care of the person who is teaching or coaching them at that time. If a Member leaves the pool area, the coach or teacher should be aware of this. If they fail to return within a reasonable time, or appear to be upset upon leaving the poolside, the coach/teacher must request that a suitable person checks on them. It is best practice for two persons to look for the Member (the second person could be a senior Member or a parent/guardian). See **“Missing children” on page 85**.

If a complaint is received about an incident that has occurred in the changing room between a Member of the Organisation and any other person, the Organisation has a duty to act upon that concern as appropriate, following the guidance **on page 34**. If the incident involved possible risk to children or adults at risk, you must also to make pool management aware.

If the incident involves a person not associated with the Organisation, the pool manager must be made aware and consideration given as to whether the statutory agencies need informing.

Information for Organisations regarding changing facilities

- Ensure that parents/guardians are made aware that changing facilities at venues may be shared by both Organisation Members and members of the general public.
- Ensure parents/guardians are made aware of the type of changing room in use, i.e. separate for male and female or mixed changing villages (and what segregation measures are in place).
- Ensure that the behaviour of Members in changing rooms is part of the Member’s Code of Conduct and any behaviour contracts, where appropriate. Masters (adult) Members should be encouraged to use their own area wherever possible, when changing at the same time as children. Where this is not possible adults are to be reminded to change in an appropriate fashion, and to be mindful that they are changing with children.
- Ensure parents/guardians are aware that they should not be alone in the changing room whilst children are changing, unless their child is of an age where help is required from parents/guardians or if the child requires additional specific assistance. This is generally at an age that is stipulated by the pool hirer, usually seven or eight years of age. In such circumstances, the parent/guardian must be the same gender as the child, unless the

facility has family changing facilities or is a mixed changing village.

- When organising an event where other Clubs or Swim Schools are involved, ensure that parents/ guardians and competitors are advised (via the event information) whether or not the facilities are likely to be open to the general public at any time during the event.

Swim England does not advise that adults supervise changing facilities as that places them and the children at risk of harm and allegation. Organisations may however place an officer or appointed poolside helper on the outside of the doors in and out of the changing rooms to allow Members to call for assistance if required. Designated Organisation officers may also walk through public areas (including village changing areas), particularly if the changing space is shared with members of the public, in order to safeguard Members. This approach has proved helpful to many Organisations when children have reported incidents of bullying or general behaviour issues between Members in the changing rooms.