

POLICY STATEMENT

Guidance for best practice in relation to the management and supervision of swimming pool changing for school swimming

Produced by ISRM and the Child Protection in Sport Unit

The purpose of this guidance is to help safeguard the welfare of children using sport and recreation facilities through clarifying the roles and responsibilities of both the local education authorities and sports service providers. Whilst child protection incidents occurring during school use of facilities are extremely rare there is growing recognition that schools and local authorities need to develop arrangements to promote the safety and welfare of children.

The principle that should underpin local arrangements should be that local education authorities and sports service providers work in partnership to safeguard children and young people. With the implementation of section 175 of the Education Act 2002 LEAs and schools will be required to have in place arrangements for ensuring that their functions are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Swimming is an activity that regularly occurs as part of a school PE programme, particularly at primary school level and should be addressed within the safeguarding arrangements.

The DCMS 'Swimming Charter' launched in Jan 2004 reinforces the principle of working in partnership and the role everyone working with children and young people has in safeguarding their welfare.

The Charter recommends that suitable policies are in place for swimming pools, appropriate vetting and clearance practices are in place and that suitable supervision procedures are in place in changing areas.

The CPSU document 'Standards for Safeguarding Children in Sport¹' relates to the prevention and minimisation of risk and provides guidance on the measures that help minimise the possibility of children being abused in sport and leisure. This is based on the recognition that some people pose a risk to children and young people and will use sport and leisure opportunities to gain access to them. It is possible

to minimise the risks and to prevent abuse by putting safeguards in place and one way is to ensure that activities are planned to ensure children are appropriately and adequately supervised at all times.

It is recognised that there are a number of risks specific to the changing room ranging from health and safety to supervision ratios. The purpose of this guidance is to identify and promote best practice and to minimise these risks.

The presence of unsupervised children, particularly in open changing or shower areas, can cause concern for facility staff and members of the public.

Sport and recreation facilities may provide an environment within which adults who are motivated to harm children may choose to act. Therefore, providing proper supervision at the time a child is most vulnerable is important.

It is recommended that LEAs, schools and sport and recreation service providers have in place the following practices and procedures relating to changing.

- Where possible separate school changing areas should be made available. It is not appropriate for members of the public to share the same changing facilities as those used by school swimmers. Facility providers wherever possible should make arrangements for separate changing areas or changing times to be made available for school swimming sessions where a pool is used by members of the public at the same time. Where this is not possible appropriate supervision arrangements should be agreed between the pool and school.

- Design of the changing rooms should be considered in detail, and in many instances the redesign of changing rooms is the only solution to minimising risk. Changing villages should be designed with three elements: an all female section, an all male section and a buffer in between for family changing. Separate changing rooms for schools and groups should still be provided in addition to the village changing area. Two sets of showers should also be provided – one for pre-swim hygiene available for use by either sex en route to the pool, and single stall private showers within separate toilet areas for each sex, for post swim showers.
- Within facilities providing ‘village’ changing accommodation or equipped with group or family changing, a responsible adult² should undertake the supervision of the changing area. Group or family changing areas may be mixed and may require male and female supervision.
- Club/school changing rooms should be included in the changing area and must be both securable and readily supervised by the responsible adult in charge of the class.

More detailed advice about the design of changing rooms is currently being drawn up by ISRM in order to minimise the risk to children.

- Where single sex changing facilities are provided, a responsible adult of the same sex accompanying the children should undertake the supervision of the changing area.
- The swimming pool provider should have in place a child protection protocol that identifies the relationship between the LEAs child protection procedures, and the pool’s procedures for child protection.
- The swimming pool provider should appoint a designated person³ with responsibility for child protection who should liaise with the school designated teacher in the event of a concern about a child.
- The swimming pool provider should have in place a child protection policy and procedure that clearly identifies what steps should be taken in the event of a concern about a child being raised
- The swimming pool provider should publicise to the school and public users which member of staff within the facility concerns about a child should be reported to.

ISRM produces a manual titled ‘Child Protection Procedures for Sport and Recreation Centres’ which provides further information and guidance about child protection.

ISRM organises training courses entitled ‘Fit and Safe’, about child protection for people working in sport.

ISRM produces a document titled ‘Safe Supervision for teaching and coaching swimming’ which provides further advice about the safe supervision of swimmers and has been agreed by all the relevant swimming organisations including the ASA and the RLSS (UK).

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Footnotes

¹ The Standards for Safeguarding and Protecting Children in Sport were developed by the Child Protection in Sport Unit and adopted by Sport England in 2002. Copies of the Standards are available from www.thecpsu.org.uk

² A responsible adult may be provided by either the school or leisure facility provider. The responsible adult must have been assessed for their suitability to work with children, including obtaining a CRB Disclosure, and have received appropriate information on what to do if they have a concern about a child.

³ The designated person should have undertaken appropriate training in child protection and in the local area child protection procedures.



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