

BISHOP'S STORTFORD SWIMMING CLUB

(Affiliated to Swim England East Region)



Changing Room Policy

Swim England case records show that incidents of sexual assault and the taking of indecent (child abuse) images have occurred in changing rooms.

It is imperative all members of the club, including employees and volunteers, understand the individually harmful and legal consequences of a child being sexually assaulted, or having indecent images of them taken. We reinforce that such behaviour is illegal and will not be tolerated in any form. All such incidents will be acted on in accordance with specific guidance.

Anyone (including other children) sexually assaulting other, or taking indecent images of children, including over/under adjoining cubicles, for example, renders themselves liable to arrest, prosecution and registration as a Sex Offender.

We strongly recommend that clubs engage locally with pool providers to create simple barrier systems or make use of natural barriers between cubicles (e.g. lockers) 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 is likely to help prevent crimes involving covert use of cameras or phones. This is particularly applicable in squads comprising secondary school age children. The reinforcement of clear facility signage about mobile phones or devices being taken into changing rooms is also recommended.

Responsibility

Under the duty of care to safeguard children, the club 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, club 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 club is unable to provide.

Responsibility during a club session

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 the times. If a member goes out of the pool area, the coach or teacher should be aware of this. If the child fails to return within a reasonable time, or appears to be upset upon leaving the poolside, the coach/teacher should request a suitable official to check on them. It is best practice for two persons to look for the member (the second person should be a senior member or a parent/guardian).

If a complaint is received about an incident that has occurred in the changing room between a member of the club and any other person, the club has a duty to act upon that concern as appropriate. If the incident involved possible risk to children, it is advisable also to make pool management aware.

If the incident involves a person not associated with the club, the pool manager should be made aware and consideration given as to whether the statutory agencies need informing. Swim England continues its work with the Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU), Sport England, Swim England Facilities Team are commercial facility providers to encourage pool providers across the nation to separate the sexes of school-age children in mixed changing villages. Clubs should check with facility providers to determine whether they have adopted Swim England policy in this area.

Information for parents/guardians regarding changing facilities

- 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 contract, 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 schools are involved, ensure that parent/guardian 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. Clubs may however place an officer or appointed poolside helper on the outside of the door in and out of the changing rooms to allow children to call for

assistance if required. This approach has proved helpful to many clubs when children have reported incidents of bullying or general behaviour issues between members in the changing rooms.

Responsibility after a session is completed

The view of Swim England is that each affiliated club has a reasonable duty of care to their members, which extends to an awareness on the part of the club that their junior members have been collected in so far as it is possible, at the conclusion of a session, i.e. that a member is not left unsupervised if a parent/guardian is late. This has to be age appropriate, i.e. a 17-year-old is capable of getting themselves home, but a 12-year old is not.

However, if a club uses changing room that are also accessible to non-club members for public swimming lanes, it would be extreme to expect a club to search the changing areas in case a junior club member was there. Best practice would be for a club to make all junior members and their parents/guardians aware that if children are not collected by a parent/guardian, then they should make that know to the Welfare Officer, coach or whoever the club deems to be appropriate, and for the nominated individual to ensure that the member is supervised appropriately until a parent/guardian arrives or they communicate alternative arrangements.

If a parent/guardian fails to collect a child, the club should follow the procedure outlined in the Late Collection of Children Policy.

If a child whereabouts cannot be accounted for, while under a club activity, then members should invoke the Missing Child Policy.