

# Swim England Safety Guidance

## Supervision of Swimming Club Children in Changing Areas

*Swimming club officers frequently question whose responsibility it is to supervise club swimmers in the changing rooms.*

### **Supervision of swimming club children in changing areas**

This is a frequently asked question because swimming club officers are acutely aware that different supervisory systems operate in swimming pools and in some facilities it appears that the club swimmers may be vulnerable and at risk of abuse.

Obviously all pool operators are ultimately responsible for the safe management of their swimming pools and changing rooms and they must ensure that systems are in place to safeguard users and in particular children and vulnerable adults; however there are many ways that this can be achieved and the swimming club officers must be aware of their responsibilities within that process.

The pool operator is required by law to undertake a risk assessment of all activities and managerial practices in their centres and produce operational systems that ensure safety. As a result of the risk assessment the pool operator is required to produce Pool Safety Operating Procedures (PSOP), which includes the Normal Operating Procedures of the facility and the Emergency Action Plans. Within the PSOP the methodology of how the changing rooms are operated, supervised and cleaned etc. should be included.

In years past nearly all municipal swimming pool changing rooms were manned by attendants who ensured they were clean and usually operated some sort of clothing security system. With the advent of lockers the systems changed as the area did not necessarily need a permanent staff presence.

Improvements in locker systems and cubicle quality have also allowed the creation of 'village change' areas as well as single sex changing rooms. Many of these 'village change' areas are open to the pool side giving lifeguards a view of the changing area and allowing some moderate supervision from the poolside.

In addition to the PSOP the swimming club will have a contract hire agreement for the use of the swimming pool. This hire agreement should detail what areas of the complex the club has exclusive use of (the whole pool, or several lanes), what areas may be shared (changing rooms) and what areas the club has no exclusive use of (cafeteria, fitness suite).

If the changing room is exclusively for the use of the swimming club the pool operator may decide that supervision in that area is not necessary or that it is the responsibility of the club to do so. However if there is a history of damage to the changing room area the pool operator may decide that they or the club must supervise the changing rooms to some degree. This decision should then be written into the contract hire agreement and the PSOP.

If the changing rooms are shared and it is quite common for the previous session prior to the club times are still dressing when the club are preparing for their first session if the pool operator does not normally permanently supervise the changing room he may not do so at that point.

This means that the club children may be in the changing room unsupervised whilst adults are still dressing. In this situation the club officers have to undertake, as part of their risk assessment process, a review of the safety of the club swimmers in that environment and decide if they need to provide adult supervision from the club volunteers to reduce their vulnerability.

In a way this may run contrary to the pool operator's decisions on how the changing area should be supervised and logically the outcome on whether to supervise the changing area should be in agreement with the pool operator.

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Readers are advised that the guidance or advice given in this information sheet is not inclusive and any decisions on swimming pool design should first be discussed with a member of the Swim England's Facilities Team. Contact details: [facilities@swimming.org](mailto:facilities@swimming.org) or telephone: 01509 618700.