

ASA changing room policy

Duty of care to swimmers in changing facilities

The ASA have been asked by many clubs to clearly state what responsibility the club has for swimmers in changing rooms before, during and after training or competition.

Under the duty of care to safeguard children the club have a responsibility for the wellbeing of children in the changing rooms.

This does not mean the parents have no responsibility but parents 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 clubs must be clear to parents under what circumstances they require parents to remain at the pool throughout a session. For example, with young children who require assistance in changing or for those children with a disability who may require additional help the club cannot provide.

Responsibility during a club session

The issue of club responsibility during training sessions when a swimmer uses the toilets or changing room has been raised on several occasions. The ASA view is that while a child is training they remain under the responsibility (duty of care) of the person who is teaching / coaching them at that time on behalf of the club. If a swimmer goes out of the pool area, the coach / teacher should be aware of this. If the child fails to return in a reasonable time, or appears upset upon leaving the poolside the coach / teacher should request a suitable club official to check on them. It is best practice for two persons to look for the swimmer (the second person could be a senior swimmer or another parent).

If a complaint is received that an incident has occurred in the changing room between a swimmer and any other person the club has a duty to act upon that concern and investigate appropriately. 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.

Information for parents regarding changing facilities

- Ensure that parents are made aware that changing facilities at venues may be shared by both club members and members of the general public.
- Ensure parents are made aware of the type of changing rooms i.e. separate for male and female or mixed changing villages.
- Ensure behaviour of swimmers in changing rooms is part of the swimmers code of conduct.
- Ensure parents are aware they should not be in the changing room whilst the swimmers are changing, unless their child is of an age where help is required from parents or the swimmer requires additional specific assistance. This is generally at an age that is stipulated by the pool hirer, usually 7 or 8 years of age. In such circumstances the parent must be the same gender as the child, unless the facility has family changing facilities or is a mixed changing village.
- Ensure where running events where other clubs are involved that meet organisers advise parents and competitors (via the meet information) if the facilities are likely to be open to the general public at any time during the meet.

The ASA do not advise that adults supervise changing facilities as that places them and the children at risk of harm and allegation. Clubs may however place a club officer or appointed poolside helper on the outside of the doors in and out the changing rooms. This allows children to call for assistance if this is required. This approach has proved helpful to many clubs when children have reported incidents of bullying or general behaviour issues between swimmers in the changing rooms.



Responsibility after a session is completed

The ASA view is that each affiliated club has a duty of reasonable care to swimmers, which extends to an awareness on the part of the club that their junior members have been collected, in so far as is possible, at the conclusion of a session, i.e. that a swimmer is not left unsupervised if a parent 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 rooms 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 aware that if children are not collected by a parent, then they should make that known to the club Welfare Officer, coach or whoever a club deem to be appropriate, and for the nominated individual to ensure that the club member is supervised appropriately until a parent arrives or the parent communicates alternative arrangements.

If a parent fails to collect a child the club should follow the procedure outlined in the ASA Policy on Guidance on Late Collection of Children.