



2.10 Guidance note: Privacy and safe use of changing facilities

Ideally, clubs/organisations should develop a policy for the use of changing facilities and showers to reduce the risk of both child-to-child and adult-to-child misconduct or abuse. Children are particularly vulnerable in these areas as they are in various stages of undress and are less supervised than at other times.

General guidance

1. Check what facilities are available, and whether these are for the sole use of children or shared with the general public and adults.
2. Where facilities are used by both adults and children at the same time, there should be access to separate changing, showering and toilet areas. If not, additional supervision will be required, or children should be asked to change before arriving.
3. For mixed-sex activities, separate facilities must be available for boys and girls.
4. If a child feels uncomfortable changing or showering in public, then no pressure should be placed on him/her to do so. Instead, he/she should be encouraged to change at home.
5. Adult staff and volunteers must not change or shower at the same time as children using the same facilities and should, under no circumstances, be undressed in front of the children.
6. The use of mobile phones or equipment with video recording capabilities by volunteers and staff should not be allowed in changing facilities. Children should be discouraged from using phones, as banning their use may be counterproductive, although this can be agreed under behaviour codes. If children are allowed to use phones, they should be given information regarding safe and acceptable usage.
7. Parents should be discouraged from entering changing facilities unless absolutely necessary. In such circumstances, only a parent of the same sex as the children may enter the changing facilities and he/she should inform the coach in advance. At least one member of the coaching staff of the same sex as the children must accompany the parent.
8. Adult staff and volunteers, especially those of the opposite sex, should not be in the changing facilities when children are undressed.

In situations where children must share facilities with adults, risks may be reduced by:

- Negotiating a separate space or times for children only;
- Organising a 'team area' where members of the team change together;
- Asking children to change at home.

Supervision

If mixed use of the changing facility by adults and children is unavoidable, at least two members of staff or volunteers (of the same sex as the children) should supervise the group. It is important for staff and volunteers to try to balance the need for adult supervision with the children's right to privacy. For example, there is no need to observe children in showers.

In particular, supervisors should be conscious of any form of bullying or the use of mobile phones by children to take pictures. If either occur, children should be spoken to and the incident reported to the coach or child safeguarding focal point, as it may indicate a need for improved awareness-raising.

Parents may supervise their own children or, with the agreement of the club/organisation, other children. When supervising other children, it is important to make sure they have signed and understand the general code of conduct for all staff and volunteers.