



NSSA Changing Room Guidance

Issued November 2023

Whilst recognising that the NSSA do not have their own club or venue, the NSSA will endeavour to follow the changing room guidance which was issued by the RYA October 2023 to ensure that there is safe use of changing rooms / toilet areas.

The NSSA will ensure that at an NSSA event

- 1) Team managers are informed of the hosts venues changing room policy before the event**
- 2) The briefing on the introductory morning will remind competitors, team managers, parents etc what the policy is regarding changing rooms and toilets**
- 3) Remind everyone that any concerns should be reported to the Event Manager or the Safeguarding Lead**
- 4) Where changing rooms are shared with adults: a sign should go on the door advising that a junior and youth event is taking place and discretion should be used**

RYA Guidance

The term 'children' is used to describe any person under the age of 18 years old. The term 'adult at risk' is used to describe any person over the age of 18 years with additional vulnerability.

Clubs, centres, and those with responsibility to children and adults at risk have a general duty of care towards them. However, there are no specific legal requirements regarding the use of changing rooms.

Supervision

Shower and changing areas should, where possible, be designed to allow both adults and children to shower and dress in reasonable privacy. Adults often feel uncomfortable either showering and changing in front of children and vice versa. It is important that staff and volunteers try to balance the needs of adults and children with the right to privacy and manage supervision where necessary. Supervision may be necessary because:

- Children are too young to be left alone to change by themselves
- Organisations may have a policy that children under the age of 8 years old must be accompanied by an adult whilst using the changing facilities
- Organisations may have a policy that states that children over of 8 should not use the changing facilities outside of their own sex or gender
- Children or adults with disabilities may require additional help and support to assist them in the changing room

- Bullying can be an issue in changing rooms and showers, or fighting or other harmful behaviours that could be taking place that may need to be managed
- There may be concerns about the risk of photographs being taken in the changing room. The use of mobile phones and/or photographic equipment with video recording capabilities by staff, volunteers, and children themselves should be prohibited in general and should not be used under any circumstance in changing rooms.

As a minimum there should be separate male and female changing rooms and, if relevant, unisex disabled changing.

There may be clubs and centres which do not have any changing facilities at all within their setting. If this is the case, members, volunteers, staff and any visiting groups should be made aware of this prior to their visit to ensure they can make the appropriate alternative arrangements.

Who Should Supervise?

If it is decided that children or young people need the supervision of, staff and or volunteers, consideration should be given to ensure that those undertaking this role have been assessed as suitable to do so.

- It is recommended that at least two adults supervise children and adults at risk. This will cover if an emergency arises resulting in one of the supervisors being called away ensuring that vulnerable groups are then not unsupervised. Remember that if one adult is called away, another should come and assist the supervision asap, as leaving one adult alone with children puts the adult themselves in a vulnerable position
- It is good practice to ensure that children are supervised by staff and or volunteers of the same gender while changing
- Older teenagers may not require any supervision, however a club may wish to have an appropriately recruited adult within the vicinity of the changing facilities to ensure their welfare is monitored
- You may have to consider agreed timings for groups of adults or children to use the changing facilities so that the risk associated to any extended contact between adults and children in this area is minimised
- If it is essential, in an emergency, for a male to enter a female changing area or vice versa, it is advised that they are accompanied by another adult of the opposite sex.
- Carry out safe recruitment practices such as :- Criminal record checks, self-declarations, references, clear role descriptions and code of conducts.

Parents' (or carers') responsibilities

Parents and carers have a responsibility to ensure that their children are appropriately supervised while they are attending the venue. It is parents' responsibility to judge whether it is safe and appropriate to allow their unaccompanied child to visit a venue.

This judgement should be based on:

- their child's general developmental maturity
- their child's awareness of the potential risks

- the level of supervision and care provided within the facility

Parents may wrongly assume that staff or volunteers will take responsibility for their children within a venue, or within specific areas such as changing rooms. Parents should therefore be informed about the facility's expectations about supervision of their children, including the use of changing rooms and shower areas. Parents should clarify these points before they let their children go to a facility alone

Photography in changing rooms and showers

An increasing number of incidents involving inappropriate or illegal photography of children and adults in changing and shower areas of many sports and leisure facilities are being reported. What are the risks? Some incidents clearly involve an individual with bad intent, deliberately targeting a child or adult at risk to take and misuse images. These images may be uploaded to social media or shared with other likeminded individuals or groups motivated by sexual interest. Occasionally, these images are also used to threaten and force the child or adult into unwanted, illegal sexual activity.

Up skirting

Although not specific to changing rooms, it can be a risk in this setting and is a distressing violation of privacy. It is where someone takes a picture under a person's clothing without their permission and or knowledge. This is now a criminal offence in England and Wales. Taking and sharing images like this may form part of wider bullying of the targeted person by other people, motivated more by a wish to cause humiliation and embarrassment. Even in the context of a shared joke among friends, without abusive intent, a person taking and sharing inappropriate images may be committing a serious offence and risk criminal prosecution.

Minimising the risks

Many organisations and venues have put in place policies and procedures to reduce the likelihood of such incidents taking place. These almost always include imposing a ban on photography of any form in these areas of the facility (regardless of rules that apply in other areas). Such bans cover participants, spectators, all staff, and volunteers. It can be difficult to be sure whether someone using a mobile phone is taking photos or videoing their environment. To further deter photography in changing and shower areas, some operators have banned the use of mobiles and other equipment capable of taking images altogether from these areas. It is important that all users, staff, and volunteers within the facility understand the operator's stance on photography.

Responding to concerns

Everyone should be made aware of what they should do if they have concerns about the behaviour of any other person in this context. If anyone is suspected of taking images of children or adults in a state of undress, the venue manager or safeguarding lead should be informed immediately, and the police consulted.