



Wear Valley Amateur Swimming Club 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 Wear Valley Amateur swimming Club (WVASC), 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.

Under the duty of care to safeguard children, WVASC has a responsibility for the wellbeing of children in the changing rooms. Please note that parents of children under the age of 10 are expected to remain during their child's session and that WVASC do not permit the use of image capturing equipment (e.g. mobile phones, ipads, smartphones and/or laptops) in the changing rooms.

Responsibility during a club session

While a child is training or competing at galas/competitions, they remain under the responsibility and duty of care of the person who is coaching them at that time. All coaching staff hold the relevant safeguarding/training qualifications. If a swimmer goes out of the pool area, the coach 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 should request a suitable member of the club to check on them. It is best practice for two persons to look for the member (the second person could be a senior swimmer or a parent/guardian). See WVASC Missing Child Policy.

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 appropriately. 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.

Information for parents/guardians regarding changing facilities

- Facilities at Woodhouse Close are shared with members of the public as well as club members. During galas both at home and away swimming complex facilities are open to other club swimmers and members of the public.

- The main changing facilities at Woodhouse Close Leisure Centre are separate for males and females. There are however mixed changing facilities for younger children. Some other swimming complexes which WVASC attends for galas, have mixed changing villages.
- Swimmers should respect other people in the changing rooms and adhere to the Codes of Conduct and/or behaviour contracts 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.
- Parents/guardians should be aware that they should not be alone in the changing room whilst children are changing, unless their child is under the age of 8 where help is required from parents/guardians or if the child requires additional specific assistance. In such circumstances, the parent/guardian must be the same gender as the child.
- Parents/ guardians and competitors need to be informed (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. Wear Valley Amateur Swimming Club may however place an officer or appointed poolside helper on the outside of the doors in and out of the changing rooms to allow children to call for assistance if required. This approach has proved helpful when children have reported incidents of bullying or general behaviour issues between members in the changing rooms.

Responsibility after a session is completed

Swim England's view 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 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 primary aged child is not. If a parent is late in the collection of a child they should notify Woodhouse Close Leisure Centre. If a parent/guardian fails to collect a child, the club should follow the procedure outlined in the WVASC Late Collection of Children Policy. If a child's whereabouts cannot be accounted for, while under a club activity, then members should invoke the WVASC Missing Child Policy.

(Reviewed February 2023 and adapted from Swim England Wavepower 202-23 p.100)