

Guidance on lane sharing between adults and children

Swimming is a physical sport and like many physical activities there are inherent risks in taking part. Swim England is committed to ensuring that any risks to all participants are kept to an absolute minimum.

Swim England recognise that children and adults may train together if they are of a similar standard. However, it is necessary to consider the implications of children and adults sharing lanes in order to safeguard children in our sports.

Unfortunately, whilst incidents within training sessions are rare, Swim England has identified some problems arising from training activities and warm-ups where adults and children swim in the same lane. This includes allegations of sexual and physical assault, both intentional and accidental. Such situations have caused considerable concern and distress for the children and sometimes also for the adults involved. Swim England has a duty of care to all Swim England members alongside a duty to safeguard members under the age of 18.

Clubs may believe that the best solution would be to have adults training separately to children. However, Swim England recognise that, in some situations, it is neither appropriate nor possible for swimmers of different ages to train separately. This could include the development need of older children to train alongside adults, where training together can greatly enhance the experience for both parties, or at times where lane availability is limited. We recognise that an increase of participants in masters swimming creates added pressure on pool availability.

Safeguarding can even be made more effective by allowing an appropriate mix of masters swimmers and older children, which can actively prevent bullying and sexual advances between older children themselves. Co-training can also aid the vital transition between juniors and masters swimming. Swim England considers that in such situations, club officers and coaches must consider the risk involved and put procedures in place to ensure training activities are organised and concluded in as safe an environment as possible, minimising both the health and safety risks and any child welfare risks that these situations may pose.

When lane sharing between children and adults is unavoidable, coaches and clubs are required to conduct a thorough risk assessment. Particular attention should be given to the mix of swimmers in each lane and the following factors should be taken into consideration:

- Suitability of lane supervision at club sessions involving under 18s.
- The ages and sex of the swimmers.
- The relative sizes and abilities of the swimmers.
- The swimmers' lane discipline and precision of strokes.
- Any lane etiquette guides e.g. overtaking

- The presence of lifeguards.
- The width of each training lane.
- The number of swimmers in each lane
- Whether the session is open to spectators.
- Whether they have ensured that the club has an identified and publicised process by which concerns can be raised with an identified child Welfare Officer.

The list above is not exhaustive but is intended to provide clubs with a starting point for evaluating the risks to swimmers, and highlights certain factors they should be considering to ensure their training sessions are incident free.

Swim England's statement on adults and children sharing lanes in training

Swim England suggests that training sessions with both children and adults should not automatically be ruled out. Swim England recognises that children and adults may train together in the same lane if they are of a like standard and physical size, but additional consideration to child safeguarding must be undertaken by the club.

Where separate lanes are impractical, it is vital that the club adopts a critical appraisal of the swimmers in the water and completes a careful risk assessment to ensure that the sessions are incident free.

During competition warm-ups that involve both children and adult swimmers, promoters should consider providing opportunities for groups of different abilities and physical sizes, or masters groups, to warm up at different times, or within separate lanes.

For clarity, masters who are training with younger swimmers do not require a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, unless they are also taking part in an eligible role (see DBS guidance on pages 47-52 of Wavepower). When using changing facilities together please refer to the advice provided in the Changing Room Policy