Guidance on lane sharing between adults and children

Swimming is a physical sport, and like many sports, there are inherent risks in taking part. The ASA is committed to ensuring that any risks to participants are kept to an absolute minimum.

We recognise that children and Masters (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 sport.

Unfortunately, whilst incidents within training sessions are rare, the ASA 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 distress and concern for the children and sometimes also for the adults involved. The ASA has a duty of care to all ASA 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, the ASA recognises that, in some situations, it is neither appropriate nor possible for swimmers of different ages to train separately. This could include the developmental 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. The ASA considers that in such situations, 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.

They must pay particular attention to the mix of swimmers in each lane whilst taking the following factors 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 individual swimmers' lane discipline and precision of strokes.
- Any lane etiquette guides, e.g. re 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 above list 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.

ASA statement on adults and children sharing lanes in training

The ASA suggests that training sessions with both children and adults should not automatically be ruled out.

The ASA 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.

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

For clarity, Masters who are training with younger members do not require a DBS check, unless they are also taking part in an eligible role (see p. 45). When using changing facilities together please refer to the advice provided in the ASA Changing Room Policy on p. 65.