

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.



Patrons: Sharron Davies MBE, Stephanie Millward MBE

- The width of each training lane.
- The number of swimmers in each lane.

