

WORKSTREAM 5 – Minimum operating standards

Action 1: define safeguarding procedures regarding changing facilities

Changing rooms can pose a risk for enabling interpersonal violence. It is therefore important to identify possible risk scenarios and make clear arrangements with everyone who uses these facilities at the club. The club should incorporate these agreements into its internal regulations, ensuring they are easily accessible to all. To foster safety and transparency, communicate these rules regularly through various channels to athletes, parents and club staff.

This document outlines potential risk situations along with suggestions for guidelines that the club board can adopt. These recommendations are intended as guidance and should be discussed and tailored to your specific context, taking into account local and national legislation, the nature of your sport and other relevant factors.

Potential risk situations in shared changing rooms

1) Presence of adults during changing times for (underage) athletes

For young or vulnerable athletes, it is understandable that parents may wish to assist their children while changing. This should certainly be permitted, but as a club, it's advisable to establish clear guidelines, such as specifying up to what age parental assistance is allowed or identifying specific groups for whom this remains appropriate (e.g. adult athletes with intellectual or physical disabilities).

2) Smartphone use in the changing room

Smartphone use in changing rooms can lead to serious privacy violations, such as taking photos of teammates who are partially undressed or secretly capturing images in shower areas. These kind of incidents not only cause distress but can also have lasting consequences for those involved.

To prevent such situations, it is essential for the club to establish and communicate clear rules regarding smartphone use in changing areas. Setting expectations in advance helps to protect the privacy and safety of all athletes.

3) Mixed-sex athletes in shared changing rooms

While younger mixed-sex athletes may feel comfortable changing together in the same changing room, this often becomes less appropriate as they grow older and experience physical development. Increasing body awareness and sensitivity can lead to discomfort and awkwardness, as well as unintended comments or social pressure.

To safeguard everyone's wellbeing, it's important for the club to regularly review arrangements based on age and developmental stage, and to communicate clearly with athletes and parents. Consider implementing flexible solutions such as separate changing time or areas, while maintaining inclusion and respect for all athletes.

4) Unsupervised underage athletes in changing rooms

A lack of supervision in changing rooms can increase the risk of bullying and other forms of interpersonal violence among underage athletes. However, introducing adult supervision also poses its own safeguarding concerns. This creates a delicate balance for clubs to manage.

It is therefore important as a club to consider how to ensure that changing rooms are used for changing and not for the occurrence of transgressive behavior, even without an adult in the changing room. Clear guidelines, such as designated changing times, staff presence nearby, knock-before-entry policies, and regular checks, can help ensure changing rooms are used appropriately and that all athletes feel safe and respected.

5) Age gaps among same-sex underage athletes

A significant age difference between same-sex underage athletes sharing a changing room may increase the risk of interpersonal violence. Younger athletes can feel intimidated by older peers or pressured to adopt certain behaviors to gain their respect or fit in.

To minimize this risk, clubs are encouraged to establish clear guidelines regarding which age groups may change together.

Risk	Possible guidelines	Advice
Presence of adults during changing times for (underage) athletes	<p>Agreements on the maximum age at which (grand)parents/guardians may assist their child with changing.</p> <p>Agreements on the maximum age at which coaches may help children change clothes.</p>	<p>Always prioritize children’s self-reliance. If a child can change clothes entirely on their own, assistance or supervision is not required, and a supervisor does not need to be present in the same room.</p> <p>Support or supervision may be provided up to age 8. Beyond this age, children are generally expected to be able to change independently.</p>
Smartphone use in the changing room	<p>Agreements regarding a potential smartphone ban in changing rooms.</p>	<p>As a club, it is advisable to consider banning smartphones in changing rooms and shower areas to protect privacy. You can implement rules requiring athletes to keep their phones in their gym bags or establish a system where smartphones are stored in lockers before entering the changing room.</p>

	<p>Agreements on requesting permission when taking photos in the club context.</p>	<p>Create awareness among athletes, parents and staff regarding the respectful use of photography. Promote a simple reflex: photos should only be taken when everyone involved has clearly agreed. This helps foster a culture of consent and mutual respect within the club environment.</p>
	<p>Agreements on sharing photos taken in the club context.</p>	<p>Agree that photos may only be shared, either privately or on social media, if everyone in the photo has given clear consent. Additionally, establish that if anyone expresses discomfort or disapproval about a photo already posted, the image will be removed immediately.</p>
<p>Mixed-sex athletes in shared changing rooms</p>	<p>Agreements on the age at which separate changing rooms are provided for boys and girls.</p>	<p>From the age of 8, clubs should offer the option of separate changing rooms for boys and girls. This is a general guideline and may be adapted based on specific circumstances. Ensure open communication with athletes, parents and staff, and remain flexible to adjust arrangements when needed.</p>
<p>Unsupervised underage athletes in changing rooms</p>	<p>Agreements on the duration of changing time.</p> <p>Assign a supervisor outside the changing room for each group.</p>	<p>Agree with young athletes on how much time they need to shower and change. This gives them a voice in the process.</p> <p>Supervisors respect the privacy of the athletes by knocking before entering and staying in the changing</p>

		room only as long as necessary.
Age gaps among same-sex underage athletes	Agreements on the maximum age gap between same-sex young athletes sharing a changing room.	<p>Children up to age 8 may change in the same changing room.</p> <p>Children age 8 to 12 can also change together.</p> <p>From age 12 onward, a maximum age gap of 3 years between young athletes is recommended.</p> <p>Adults should ideally use separate changing rooms.</p>