

Safe use of changing facilities & toilets

This guidance is designed to answer questions related to the safe use of changing rooms and/or toilets where adults and children (under 18s) are both present. This guidance is based on that provided by the Child Protection in Sport Unit of the NSPCC.

[SAFE USE OF CHANGING FACILITIES \(CPSU Briefing\) - NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit \(thecpsu.org.uk\)](https://www.thecpsu.org.uk)

It is recognised that bowls activities can take place in a variety of settings which include private and public bowls clubs as well as sports centres and community centres which are open to the public. Some will have toilets, changing and showering facilities while others may not have some or all of these.

All participants may be advised to come to the event changed and ready to play so reducing the need for use of changing facilities. Equally participants may be encouraged to shower at home rather than use any shower facilities at the event.

Where facilities are shared by bowlers who are under 18 and others who are 18+, the following should be considered by the club or organisation concerned, as part of its duty of care to children and its safeguarding responsibilities.

Types of Facility

Is the facility to be used exclusively by bowlers who are under 18. This might be where a club owns the facility and is hosting an event solely for under 18s or where it has negotiated sole use in a more public facility, for the time period of its event.

Supervision of changing facilities

If mixed age use of the changing facilities is unavoidable, **at least two** adult members of staff or volunteers of the same gender as the children should supervise the changing facilities. They should be careful to balance the needs for supervision with the rights of children to privacy in this context. Careful consideration should be given to those who are asked to supervise as children will be in circumstances of increased vulnerability. Ideally staff members or volunteers who have a DBS check related to their role should be used.

Supervision might also be necessary when:

- children are too young to be left alone or to get changed themselves
- the group includes children with disabilities who need support to get changed – the nature of this support should be agreed with their parents/carers prior to the event(s)
- children could injure themselves – if changing facilities are close to dangerous equipment
- there are concerns about previous bullying episodes
- there are concerns about use of mobile phone cameras

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Separate changing and showering facilities must be available for males and females. Gender neutral toilets, which are increasingly provided in many settings, are acceptable.

Parents/carers as supervisors

Parents/carers are typically asked to supervise their children at bowls events or arrange for supervision by another responsible adult of their choosing. This could include supervision in changing facilities for younger children. This is considered a private arrangement outside the responsibility of the organiser.

When parents/carers take on a formal supervisory role at the request of a club or event organiser, the club or organiser should ensure their suitability for the role and ensure more than one adult supervisor is present.

Transgender and transitioning children

In most cases, children who are able to identify as transgender are also able to articulate their wishes effectively. There are several factors to consider when addressing the needs of transgender or transitioning children with regard to changing, showering and toilet facilities. These include:

- the child's feelings and preferences about which gendered changing room/shower/toilet they would like to use
- the privacy of the child
- supervision
- any risks of bullying or unwanted behaviour towards that child.

If a child self-identifies as a gender that differs from the gender they were assigned at birth, they may ask for privacy or ask to start changing with other children of the same gender identity. **This area of inclusion for adults and children is covered by documentation from the Government Equalities Office¹. It states: 'A trans person should be free to select the facilities (such as toilets or changing rooms) appropriate to the gender in which they present.'** The Equality Act 2010 identifies gender reassignment as a protected characteristic.

Clubs and other bowls organisations should plan to educate other children/adults on gender identity and celebrating difference reducing the risk of misunderstanding, bullying or distress. There are some short, interactive education materials on this topic on the BDA website under the 'Clubs' tab.

More information is also available at:

[LGBTQ+ young people in sport – safeguarding | CPSU \(thecpsu.org.uk\)](https://www.cpsu.org.uk/lgbtq-young-people-in-sport-safeguarding)

¹ [Department for Education \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk)