

GUIDANCE NOTE

CHANGING AND USE OF CHANGING ROOMS

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1. PURPOSE OF DOCUMENT

British Fencing has a duty of care to people, especially children and adults at risk, while they are participating in fencing. This may at times extent to issues around changing. Often fencing clubs may use facilities that already have their own policies in place, this would include schools, leisure centres and private sports facilities. It is likely that they will have changing room policies in place, in which case they should be followed by clubs or user groups.

It is important to remember that some people are very self-conscious and anxious about their body image and undressing in front of others. Adults may also feel uncomfortable about changing when minors are present

Many people will opt to change at home and therefore changing may not be a major issue. Wherever possible, provision should be made for those who choose to change at the venue.

Where no pre-existing policy is in place, anyone involved in fencing should follow the following guidance. There are two formats:

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- Where a changing room(s) will be used exclusively by a club or fencing activity
- Where changing room(s) will be shared with others outside of the sport

In addition, this document also covers changing in areas other than changing rooms and guidance about use of single sex changing facilities for those who identify as transgender, non-binary or gender questioning.

2. EXCLUSIVE CHANGING ROOMS

Typically, this would be the case where a club, organisation, event or other fencing activity owns, hires or manages its own facility, or has negotiated sole use of a more public facility at a particular time. The advantage of this type of arrangement is that it negates any concerns arising from children mixing with unassociated adults when changing or showering.

3. SHARED CHANGING ROOMS

Ideally, children and adults at risk should have sole use of changing facilities. However, many clubs will use venues where changing facilities are used by other adults; this can include other sports teams, individual athletes or members of the public. This is typical in venues such as leisure centres or schools.

In these circumstances, there is a need for additional steps to be taken to ensure adequate supervision of children while changing. This will avoid risks associated with mixed-facility use and to prevent or reduce opportunities for unwanted contact between the young people and these adults when changing or showering. It is important for staff/volunteers to balance the need for adequate supervision with the need to ensure young children are afforded appropriate levels of privacy.

Where shared changing rooms are to be used, the following options should be explored:

- Is there a separate room/facility available that can be used?
- Can specific time slots be negotiated to have exclusive use of the changing room?
- Can access to a designated area of the changing room for sole use be negotiated?
- Can participants change at home?

4. SUPERVISION

Supervision in the changing facility may also be necessary when:

- There are people changing that are too young to be left alone or change themselves. Organisers of groups of children under eight years should arrange for their supervision while changing before and after the activity. Although most children of school age may be capable

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of changing their clothes, many leisure facilities have established guidelines that any child below the age of eight years must be accompanied.

- The group includes disabled people who require additional support and assistance with changing (note this should be undertaken by prior agreement with their parent or professional carer).
- Children could injure themselves or access a potential risk such as a swimming pool that is unattended.
- There are concerns about bullying, fighting or other troublesome behaviour taking place which need to be managed.
- There are concerns about the prospect of photographs being taken in changing rooms.
- Where sole use cannot be secured, the best solution is that supervision of changing of children should be the responsibility of parents or carers. Where this is not possible, at least two members of staff should supervise the group. Ideally, those staff should be of the same gender as the children. A clear timetable for this supervision should be agreed in advance.

4.1 WHO SHOULD SUPERVISE

If you have decided that there is a need for supervision, staff/volunteers should consider who will carry this out. This task provides access to people in circumstances of increased vulnerability and therefore careful consideration should be given to ensuring that those undertaking this task have been assessed as being suitable to do so. The following options can be considered:

- Numbers – organisers are recommended to have more than one adult supervising, as this will ensure cover in the event of an accident or incident occurring or if one supervisor is called away.
- Gender – it is considered good practice to ensure that people are supervised by staff/volunteers of the same gender while changing. If there are designated single-sex facilities, supervisions should respect the single sex nature of the space.
- Timings – by agreeing a very clear timetable for use of the changing facilities, the supervising adults and any coaches or officials respectively, the risks associated to any extended contact between the adults and children are minimised.
- Carry out safe recruitment practices including:
 - Criminal records checks for individuals whose roles make them eligible by virtue of their role meeting the current definition of regulated activity
 - References – these should include a reference from a recent, previous employer/club appropriate to their role
 - Role description – providing clear details about the boundaries of their role

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- Code of conduct – a document that individuals sign up to that clarifies the standards of behaviour expected of staff/volunteers.

4.2 PARENTS/CARERS AS SUPERVISORS

Parents/carers are often involved in supervising people during sports activities and outings, and can provide valuable support to organisers and coaches. Where they are responsible only for their own child or the person that they care for (or by agreement their relatives' or friends' child/ren) this constitutes a private arrangement outside the responsibility of the activity organisers.

However, when parents undertake a formal supervisory role at the request of or with the agreement of the organiser which includes having responsibility for others, the same steps should be taken to establish their suitability as for any other supervisory position (as outlined above).

5. PARENTS' (OR CARERS') RESPONSIBILITIES

Parents and carers have a responsibility to ensure that the person that they are responsible for are appropriately supervised while they are attending a sport or leisure facility. It is parents/carers' responsibility to judge whether it is safe and appropriate to allow them to visit a sport or leisure facility. This judgement should be based on:

- their person's general developmental maturity
- the person's awareness of the potential risks
- the level of supervision and care provided within the facility

6. TRANSGENDER AND NON-BINARY CONSIDERATIONS

Following the withdrawal in October 2025 of the previous guidance issued by the Equality and Human Rights Commission as a result of the judgement from the Supreme Court in April 2025, there is currently a lack of clarity over the legal status in relation to single sex changing.

We will need to wait for further statutory advice.

In the meantime clubs with their own managed facilities should perform a case by case risk assessment taking into consideration:

- Where facilities are available to both men and women, trans people should not be put in a position where there are no facilities for them to use.
- Where possible, mixed-sex toilet, washing or changing facilities in addition to sufficient single-sex facilities should be provided.

Clubs that hire facilities should follow the guidance from the owners of those facilities.

7. CHANGING IN NON CHANGING AREAS

It is common in fencing for people to get changed in and out of their fencing kit in the area in which they are participating. People should be reminded that:

- they should not remove clothing beyond their fencing kit
- if they do so they should ensure that they are wearing appropriate non transparent clothing (eg the kind of clothing you might wear when working out in a public gym) under their kit
- CCTV is often in place and recording in venues, and therefore anyone may be observed by people who have access to any recordings made
- live streaming may be in place at events, and it is possible that a person could inadvertently be streamed while they are changing
- people may be filming , especially at events, for their own personal use and this can result in images being captured on recordings being made which could cause embarrassment to all parties concerned.

Please note that in competitions being held in accordance with FIE and EFC rules, it is against the rules to take off fencing kit in field of play.

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