



Title of Report:	Swimming Pool Child Admission & Changing Room Guidance
Committee Report Submitted To:	Leisure & Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	21 May 2024
For Decision or For Information	For Information
To be discussed In Committee	No

Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)	
Strategic Theme	Healthy & Engaged Communities
Outcome	Citizens will have access to a range of leisure, recreational, green and play environments which support better physical and mental health and wellbeing.
Lead Officer	Head of Sport & Wellbeing

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	n/a
Included in Current Year Estimates	n/a
Capital/Revenue	n/a
Code	n/a
Staffing Costs	n/a

Legal Considerations	
Input of Legal Services Required	YES/NO
Legal Opinion Obtained	YES/NO

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to update members on the April 2024 recommendation that 'Council review the Child Admission Policy and changing room procedures' and seek Member approval to commence costed design options for 'upgrading the Leisure Centre Changing Facilities'

2.0 Background

As Swimming Pool operators, Council is responsible for the Health & Safety of employees, pool users and other people who may be in the pool environment. The Health & Safety at Work Act and the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations therefore place general obligations on Council.

To assist Swimming Pool operators in ensuring compliance with their obligations under the above legislation, the Health & Safety Executive issued *HSG179 Health & Safety in Swimming Pools* ([Health and safety in swimming pools - HSG179 \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/hsg179/)), this document is now on its fourth edition, with the latest edition published in 2018, first edition published in 1988.

Within *HSG179 Health & Safety in Swimming Pools*, there is a section which relates to Control of Admissions, with a further section where specific guidance is referred to for Child Admissions as follows;

'You should consider the number of young children (under the age of 8 years) allowed into the pool under the supervision of a responsible person aged 16 or over.'

'Lifeguards should note that some adults may need to be reminded of their responsibility to supervise the children in their care. More information is available at www.cimspa.co.uk/guidance.'

The Health & Safety Executive referenced CIMSPA (Chartered Institute for Sports & Physical Activity) for more information, CIMSPA published further guidance updated in July 2014 entitled, 'Parental and operator guidance for child supervision policies in swimming pools'.

Council's approach to Swimming Pool Child Admission is guided by Health & Safety Executive and Industry Specialist guidance. These two documents along with Site Specific Risk Assessments inform the decision making for the approach taken to Child Admissions with Swimming Pools.

3.0 Child Admissions

As stated, the CIMSPA document identifies key considerations pool operators should take in informing the associated site specific risk assessments and ultimately a suitable 'Child Admission Policy' for the site. Further included within the document is guidance for parents attending pools.

CIMSPA advise consideration should be given to; pool design and layout, designated safe areas, types of activities, age and maturity of child, swimming ability and floatation devices when conducting site specific risk assessments relevant to child admissions.

CIMSPA reinforce the Health & Safety Executive Guidance that all children under the age of 8 should be accompanied in the water by an adult. CIMSPA go further to suggest that as a start point children under the age of 8 should be supervised on a 1:2 ratio. Guidance is also issued for scenarios where the ratio should be decreased. Given the wide range of pool designs across Council's portfolio, the activities which take place within, the wide range of abilities across under 8 users, a ratio of 1:1 is Council's start point for dealing with Child Admissions.

Officers are mindful that this approach may prohibit attendance for some users, to address that issue and included within notifications within the facilities is advice on speaking to a Duty Officer. At which point the Duty Officer may present options, depending on the pool environment at that time where a supervision rate of 1:2 can be facilitated.

4.0 Changing Room Guidance

Changing provision within Council's Leisure Facilities differ from site to site. Roe Valley Leisure Centre operates a 'Village Changing' model whilst both Coleraine and Joey Dunlop Leisure Centres offer single sex changing. In any potential Leisure Centre new build design changing provision is likely to be 'Village Changing.'

Where single sex changing is in place, Officers again rely on industry guidance to inform decision making around the practices implemented within sites. For the purposes of clarity, the suggested use of changing facilities is based on that Industry Guidance and is not deemed Policy by the Organisation.

In the scenario of single sex changing, CIMSPA advise;

'Parents accompanying children to a pool should be able to take under eights into an 'opposite sex' changing room or alternative facilities should be provided. It is reasonable to assume that a child deemed too young to swim unaccompanied is also too young to look after him or herself in a changing room or to change unaccompanied.'

Officers have also considered guidance from the NSPCC, 'Safe Use of Changing Facilities and Toilets', published May 2022. The guidance defines children, as any person under the age of 18.

The NSPCC guidance document recognises the single sex nature of changing facilities within some Leisure sites and details the following;

'Many facilities currently use the age of 8 as a guide (based on sector guidance for an unaccompanied child to attend a swimming pool). In practice, while facilities need to be able to establish a minimum age for admission that is practical to operate, identifying a child's age can be difficult.'

'While the facility may set the lower age limit, it is for parents to judge if their child needs to be accompanied.'

'Facilities should have a process for responding to children below this minimum age of 8 who may arrive, or be left, at the facility alone. Refusing entry or asking an unaccompanied child to leave the centre would raise obvious safeguarding concerns.'

In cognisance of 4.3 and 4.5 above, information on arrangements for changing is placed in facilities as guidance. As per the admissions policy, advice is included on speaking to a Duty Officer. The Duty Officer would then advise or provide suitable alternative changing depending on the requirements of the individual or group.

These alternatives can be provided either by offering a family room or advise on using an internal cubicle within the existing changing rooms.

5.0 Changing Room Upgrades

As part of the recommendation to 'examine the possibility of updating leisure centre changing facilities', Officers have commenced early stage scoping on potential design and will present options and associated costings to Council at a later date.

6.0 Next Steps

Officers recognise the information provided on the Swimming Pool Child Admission Policy and the changing room guidance could be better communicated to users of the facilities and will amend that communication accordingly.

Officers will take steps to identify any underutilised changing areas which could be easily converted into additional family/small group changing solutions.

In an effort to ensure that the dignity of all changing room users is respected, Officers will put in place signage to advise customers that, 'Swimming Costumes must be worn at all times in

the Showers Areas', this practice is already in place within Council's Village Changing provision.