



Age Threshold for Admission to Club Unaccompanied Guidance

Individual clubs will know their context best, so need to establish a threshold for admitting children to the facility as a basic criterion by which the club can operate. In most cases, this means identifying a lower age limit for unaccompanied children.

While the facility will set the lower age limit, **it is for parents to judge if their child needs to be accompanied**, even if the child is older than the facility's-imposed age limit.

Concerns about unaccompanied children

Concerns regarding unaccompanied children within facilities include:

- physical harm from inappropriate use or access to equipment
- contact with dangerous adults or others within the wider facility (potential for grooming or abuse)
- parents' contact details and children's medical information is not available in the event of an emergency
- staff being required to manage children's unruly or dangerous behaviour

Parents' responsibilities

Primarily, it's a parent's or carer's responsibility to judge whether it's safe and appropriate to allow their unaccompanied child to visit a sport or leisure facility.

This decision should be based on their understanding of:

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

Many parents exercise their duty of care responsibly. However, there are parents who allow their children to go to, or be left at, facilities with no supervision at all. This may be due to an assumption about the level of supervision that staff will provide within the facility.

Club responsibilities

When children are given access to facilities, clubs assume a duty of care for them. The level of their responsibility will vary depending on the specific context. For instance, whether the child is:

- alone and unsupervised at the venue
- with parents or carers

- attending an activity
- attending an activity staffed by the facility
- attending a public session

Operators therefore have a responsibility to put appropriate safeguarding arrangements in place that include promoting and implementing a policy for admitting unaccompanied children.

Questions to answer within an 'Unaccompanied Children' policy or statement

- What is the policy based on?
- Does it prioritise the safety and welfare of children?
- Is the policy clearly understood by staff and members?
- How are members informed?
- Do staff/members feel supported?
- Is the policy operated effectively?
- What issues and challenges have arisen?
- Would there be value in a mini-campaign to inform (or remind) staff and all members (particularly parents)?

Promote Understanding of your Policy

- promote the club's policy on admitting unaccompanied children to all users, particularly parents (consider targeting 'drop off' zones for particular attention)
- promote that the expectation is on parents to supervise their children within the club
- provide information about the extent and limitations of the level of supervision provided to children in the facility (including in 'high risk' areas such as changing rooms and toilets)
- emphasise the need to be aware that supervision arrangements before or after any organised activities may not be the same as during the activity
- encourage parents to ensure that anyone providing organised activities for children has access to emergency contact details
- clarify how any safeguarding concerns arising within the facility should be reported