



Down Syndrome
Training & Support
Service Ltd

The Pamela Sunter Centre
2 Whitley Street, Bingley
BD16 4JH

Registered Charity No.1130994
Company Number 6915555

Touch Policy (reviewed April 2017)

Rationale

There may be understandable fears and concerns voiced by staff and volunteers about the appropriateness and use of touch during the provision of our WisH club. This policy intends to clarify the conditions and reasons for touch of young people at the WisH club, and to give guidance and support for the safeguarding of young people, staff and volunteers.

The Down syndrome training and support service Ltd recognises that touch is essential in the provision of good quality and sensitive care when supporting our members. Used appropriately and with empathy, touch is the corner stone of the natural interactions between staff, volunteers and the young people we care for.

Aims

- To outline the importance of touch
- To outline the importance of touch in the WisH club sessions
- To identify the reasons for touch during the WisH club sessions

Purposes

Touch is important in our daily lives. Physical touch is a form of non-verbal communication. If we deny our members access to touch we leave them emotionally isolated and lacking in development. Touch may be used routinely with some members in a number of ways:

Communication

Touch is an important way of communication for young people with communication and interaction problems. Communication can be promoted and reinforced by touch. It can also function as the main form of communication in itself. e.g. in the form of handshake or Hi 5.

Education

Appropriate touch may be necessary for support and guidance during the transition between different activities, e.g. guiding onto fire escape, encouraging to move on to play a different game. This may be a touch on the arm to encourage and help movement.

Play

Young people with delayed development need to play. This may be quite physical and tactile. Social interaction between young people, and between young people and staff /volunteers may involve physical contact in informal situations.

Emotional reasons

Touch is used to communicate warmth and affection, to give reassurance and to communicate security and comfort.

Supportive and caring touch is recognised as being beneficial in lowering blood pressure and stress hormones in young people who are anxious or distressed.

It can also enable the recipient to develop positive emotions and in turn have the ability to communicate them.

Some young people may respond positively or negatively to physical contact. Staff and volunteers need to recognise the individual needs of the young person and respond appropriately by giving personal space or touch.

Medical/Nursing Care and Physical Support

Young people may need to receive passive touch in order to maintain dignity with regards to their physical appearance or their clothing which may require attention from time to time. Touch is necessary in order to carry out personal care and hygiene. If any member of the WisH club needs personal care they should have a care plan in place. See appendix A, B and C.

In order to maintain the persons's privacy, the majority of these actions will take place on a one-to-one basis. Where possible one child will be catered for by one adult unless there is a sound reason for having more adults present. In this case, the reasons should be clearly documented and reassessed regularly.

Two members of staff must only be used where there is a clear need e.g:

- A moving and handling need
- A history of child protection issues
- Behavioural issues

We wish to ensure the safety and welfare of the child/vulnerable adult involved in intimate care routines and safeguard against any potential harm as well as ensuring the staff member involved is fully supported and able to perform their duties safely and confidently. Through the following actions we will endeavour to support all parties:

- Ensure all new staff are fully aware of intimate care routines at induction
- Follow up on these procedures through supervision, meetings and appraisals to identify any areas for development or further training
- Train all staff in the appropriate methods for intimate care routines and access specialist training where required, i.e. first aid training, specialist medical support
- Arrangements for intimate care must be open, transparent and recorded, with the information of where, by who and time taken. Appendix C
- Working closely with parents/carers on all aspects of the person's care plan to ensure needs are met and opportunities to move towards independence are included.

When helping the young adults with changing or more intimate care the member of staff will always ensure they have informed their colleague and record the action in the persons personal hygiene book. See appendix C. If possible the person should be encouraged to perform the task themselves in order to promote their independence

Guidelines

It is important that all staff and volunteers are clear and open as to the reasons for using touch.

The use of touch should be routinely and openly discussed in meetings.

Staff and volunteers working with WisH club members should be able to explain their practice; i.e, there must be clarity and transparency in all issues of touch. A description should be documented in their Care Plan after consultation with parents and, if needed, other professional agencies. Appendix A.

It is recognised that the emotional, developmental and communication needs of some people take precedence over actual chronological age. Therefore staff and volunteers concerned with age appropriateness should consider that people of any age may need touch and physical support and the purposes of touch (as previously outlined) are of major importance for some of the WisH clubs members.

Each young person is an individual and consideration should be given to cultural, ethnic and gender issues in the use of touch.

Some young people may not want to be touched. Staff and volunteers should be sensitive to any communication (verbal or non-verbal). The young people may indicate that touch is not welcome. Touch should provide a positive experience. It should also be provided with the consent of the recipient.

Over-stimulation or negative reactions may be the result of touch. In these circumstances the staff and volunteers should reduce/withdraw touch.

WisH club members are given opportunities to touch each other while interacting and playing. Attention should be given to ensure that both parties are comfortable in these situations. Any inappropriate touch should be used as an opportunity to teach and reinforce appropriate behaviour.

It is NEVER appropriate for staff or volunteers to touch a young person's intimate body areas except as part of medical/hygiene care and only after permission has been sought and received.

Staff and volunteers should feel confident and comfortable around questioning each other's behaviour and all should be aware of child protection protocol. If staff or volunteers have any doubts about the appropriateness of touch in any situation, it is important that these doubts should be raised and discussed with one of the Safeguarding Officers at the Down syndrome training and support service ltd as soon as possible.

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We recognise that our young people can be open to abuse. The best method of prevention is teamwork and a transparency in all activities. Staff and volunteers should try to support, monitor and assist each other during the times when touch is needed.

Appendix A personal care permission

PERSONAL CARE PLAN

We are aware that our young people are going through adolescence and we need to respect their dignity, to this end we would ideally like them to be able to manage their own personal care/hygiene. If however they may need help please can you complete the form below

I need help with

The person I will ask for help is

This named person will always ask me for permission before they help me, ‘Can I wipe your bottom now?’
And record on my notes the help they have given

To preserve the dignity of the young person we suggest just one person to be involved with the personal care detailed above. If however you prefer two adults to be present please let us know
Parent – I give permission for only one person to be present in the personal care of my child yes/no
Signed.....date.....
.....

My private help book



Private help please

I am.....

My helper is.....



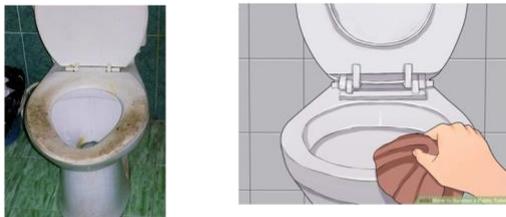
Please help me to sort my bra



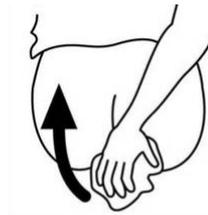
Please remind me to wash my hands



Please remind me to flush the toilet



Please remind me to check



Please help me to wipe my bottom



Please help me to change my pad

