



Unity College

INTIMATE CARE POLICY

Introduction

Intimate care is any care which involves washing, touching or carrying out an invasive procedure (such as cleaning up a student after they have soiled themselves) to intimate personal areas. In most cases such care will involve cleaning for hygiene purposes as part of a staff members duty of care. In the case of a specific procedure only a person suitably trained and assessed as competent should undertake the procedure (eg the administration of rectal diazepam).

The issue of intimate care is a sensitive one and will require staff to be respectful of the child's needs. The child's dignity should always be preserved with a high level of privacy, choice and control. There shall be a high awareness of child protection issues. Staff behaviour must be open to scrutiny and staff must work in partnership with parents / carers to provide continuity of care to children / young people wherever possible.

Model intimate care policy for Unity College

Unity College is committed to ensuring that all staff responsible for the intimate care of children will undertake their duties in a professional manner at all times. Unity College recognises that there is a need to treat all children with respect when intimate care is given. No child should be attended to in a way that causes distress or pain.

Our approach to best practice

The management of all children with intimate care needs will be carefully planned. The child who requires intimate care is treated with respect at all times; the child's welfare and dignity is of paramount importance.

Staff who provide intimate care are trained to do so (including Child Protection and Health & Safety training in lifting and moving) and are fully aware of best practice. Apparatus will be provided to assist with children who need special arrangements following assessment from physiotherapist / occupational therapist as required. Staff will be supported to adapt their practice in relation to the needs of individual children taking into account developmental changes such as the onset of puberty and menstruation. Wherever possible staff who are involved in the intimate care of children / young people will not usually be involved with the delivery of sex education to the children / young people in their care as an additional safeguard to both staff and children / young people involved.

The child will be supported to achieve the highest level of autonomy that is possible given their age and abilities. Staff will encourage each child to do as much for him / her as he / she can. This may mean, for example, giving the child responsibility for washing themselves, individual intimate care plans will be drawn up for particular children as appropriate to suit the circumstances of the child.

Each child's right to privacy will be respected. Careful consideration will be given to each child's situation to determine how many carers might need to be present when a child is toileted. Where possible one child will be catered for by one adult unless there is a sound reason for having more adults present. If this is the case, the reasons should be clearly documented.

Wherever possible the same child will not be cared for by the same adult on a regular basis; ideally there will be a rota of carers known to the child who will take turns in providing care. This will ensure, as far as possible, that over-familiar relationships are discouraged from developing, whilst at

the same time guarding against the care being carried out by a succession of completely different carers. We are aware that this may not always be appropriate in some extreme cases.

Wherever possible staff should only care intimately for an individual of the same sex. However, in certain circumstances this principle may need to be waived where failure to provide appropriate care would result in negligence for example, female staff supporting boys in a primary school, as no male staff are available.

Intimate care arrangements will be discussed with parents / carers on a regular basis and recorded on the child's care plan. The needs and wishes of children and parents will be taken into account wherever possible within the constraints of staff and equal opportunities legislation.

The Protection of Children

Safeguarding & Child Protection Procedures and Inter-Agency Child Protection procedures will be adhered to.

All children will be taught personal safety skills carefully matched to their level of development and understanding.

If a member of staff has any concerns about physical changes in a child's presentation, eg marks, bruises, soreness etc he/she will immediately report concerns to the appropriate manager / designated person for child protection (see Unity College child Protection Policy).

If a child becomes distressed or unhappy about being cared for by a particular member of staff, the matter will be looked into and outcomes recorded. Parents / carers will be contacted at the earliest opportunity as part of this process in order to reach a resolution. Staffing schedules will be altered until the issues(s) are resolved so that the child's needs remain paramount. Further advice will be taken from outside agencies if necessary.

If a child makes an allegation against a member of staff, all necessary procedures will be followed.

Special Needs

Children with special needs have the same rights to safety and privacy when receiving intimate care. Additional vulnerabilities that may arise from a physical disability or learning difficulty must be considered with regard to individual teaching and care plans for each child. As with all arrangements for intimate care needs, agreements between the child and those with parental responsibility and the organisation should be easily understood and recorded.

Regardless of age and ability, the views and / or emotional responses of children with special needs should be actively sought (with advocacy arrangements made for those who can't) in regular reviews of these arrangements.

Guidance to safeguard children and education staff with regard to situations which may lend themselves to allegations of abuse (physical contact, first aid, showers / changing clothes, out of school activities and photography)

Physical Contact

All staff engaged in the care and education of children and young people need to exercise caution in the use of physical contact.

The expectation is that staff will work in 'limited touch' cultures and that when physical contact is made with students this will be in response to the students needs at the time, will be of limited duration and will be appropriate given their age, stage of development and background.

Staff should be aware that even well intentioned physical contact might be misconstrued directly by the child, an observer or by anyone the action is described to. Staff must therefore always be prepared to justify actions and accept that all physical contact be open to scrutiny.

Physical contact which is repeated with an individual child or young person is likely to raise questions unless the justification for this is formally agreed by the child, the organisation and those with parental responsibility.

Children with special needs may require more physical contact to assist their everyday learning. The general culture of 'limited touch' will be adapted where appropriate to the individual requirements of each child. The arrangements must be understood and agreed by all concerned, justified in terms of the child's needs, consistently applied and open to scrutiny. Wherever possible, consultation with colleagues should take place where any deviation from the arrangements is anticipated. Any deviation and the justification for it should be documented and reported.

Extra caution may be required where a child has suffered previous abuse or neglect. In the child's view, physical contact might be associated with such experiences and lead to staff vulnerable to allegations of abuse. Additionally, many such children are extremely needy and seek out inappropriate physical contact. In such circumstances staff should deter the child without causing them a negative experience. Ensuring that a witness is present will help to protect staff from such allegations.

Restraint

There may be occasions where it is necessary for staff to restrain children physically to prevent them from inflicting damage on either themselves, others or property.

In such cases only the minimum force necessary should be used for the minimum length of time required for the child to regain self-control.

In all cases of restraint the incident must be documented and reported. Staff must be fully aware of the school's / organisation's Physical Intervention / Positive Handling Policy.

Under no circumstances would it be permissible to use physical force as a form of punishment, to modify behaviour, or to make a student comply with an instruction. Physical force of this nature can, and is likely to, constitute as a criminal offence.

Students in distress

There may be occasions when a distressed student needs comfort and reassurance that may include physical touch such as a caring parent would give. Staff must remain self-aware at all times to ensure that their contact is not threatening or intrusive and not subject to misinterpretation.

Judgement will need to take account of the circumstances of a student's distress, their age, the extent and cause of the distress. Unless the child needs an immediate response, staff should consider whether they are the most appropriate person to respond. It may be more suitable to involve the child's relative or school's counsellor.

Particular care must be taken in instances which involve the same student over a period of time.

Where a member of staff has a particular concern about the need to provide this type of care and reassurance they should seek further advice, from their line manager or other appropriate person.

First Aid and Intimate Care

Staff who administer first aid should ensure wherever possible that another adult or other children are present. The students' dignity must always be considered and where contact of a more intimate nature is required (eg assisting with toileting or the removal of wet / soiled clothing), another member of staff should be in the vicinity and should be made aware of the task being undertaken.

Regular requirements of an intimate nature should be planned for. Agreements between the school / organisation, those with parental responsibility and the child concerned should be documented and easily understood. The necessity for such requirements should be reviewed regularly. The child's view must also be actively sought and, in particular, any discomfort with the arrangements addressed (see Intimate Care Model Policy and Guidance).

Physical Education and other skills coaching

Some staff are likely to come into physical contact with students from time to time in the course of their duties when participating in games, demonstrating an exercise or the use of equipment.

Staff should be aware of the limits within which such contact should properly take place and of the possibility of misinterpretation.

Where it is anticipated that a student might be prone to misinterpret any such contact, alternatives should be considered, perhaps involving another member of staff or a less vulnerable student in the demonstration.

Showers / changing clothes

Young people are entitled to respect and privacy when changing clothes or taking a shower. However, there must be the required level of supervision to safeguard young people with regard to health and safety considerations and to ensure that bullying or teasing does not occur. This means that adults should announce their intention of entering changing rooms, avoid remaining in changing rooms unless student needs require it, avoid any physical contact when children are in a state of undress and avoid any visually intrusive behaviour.

Given the vulnerabilities of the situation, it is strongly recommended that when supervising children in a state of undress, another member of staff is present. However, this may not always be possible and therefore staff need to be vigilant about their own conduct, eg adults must not change in the same place as children or shower with children.

Out of school trips, clubs etc

Employees should take particular care when supervising students in the less formal atmosphere of a residential setting or after-school activity. Although more informal relationships in such circumstances tend to be usual, the standard of behaviour expected of staff will be no different from the behaviour expected within school. Staff involved in such activities should also be familiar with their school's / establishment's policy and all LEA guidance regarding out of school activities.

To ensure student's safety, increased vigilance may be required when monitoring their behaviour on field trips, holidays etc. It is important to exercise caution so that a student is not compromised and the member of staff does not attract allegations of overly intrusive or abusive behaviour.

On occasions (field trips / days out etc) some students might be short of funds and would be embarrassed or singled out if this were known. It would be acceptable for a member of staff to subsidise a child, provided that this was disclosed to colleagues.

Meetings with students away from the school premises where a chaperone will not be present, are not permitted unless specific approval is obtained from the headteacher or other senior colleague with delegated authority. Staff should not place themselves in a position where they are in a vehicle, house or other venue alone with a child.

If staff come into contact with students whilst off duty, they must behave as though in their professional role and not give conflicting message regarding their own conduct.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Anti Bullying Policy
- Race Equality Policy

This policy is updated and reviewed on a regular basis.