



# **Intimate Personal Care**

**Reviewed April 2010**  
**Reviewed April 2012**

**Summary**

Personal care means hands on physical care in areas of hygiene, and physical assistance or observation required during such activities.

- Kingston Mencap must assess the individual needs of service users in terms of personal care and record the needs and actions required in the members care plan
- Personal care should not be used as an alternative if there is equipment that would allow the member to undertake the task independently
- A risk assessment must be done for all cases of personal care in accordance with health and safety procedures and all measures must be taken to minimise risk to the member and person providing personal care
- All employees and volunteers who provide personal care must be trained in the relevant procedure required before providing personal care
- In making a decision about who should carry out personal care for a member Kingston Mencap will take account issues of:
  - Gender – where available the personal care should be delivered by a person of the same gender as the member and in the case of personal care to a female member regarding bathing, toileting and menstrual hygiene this can only be carried out by a male in an emergency
  - Consistency of care – where available the same person should deliver the personal care to the service user
  - Cultural needs
- Kingston Mencap will endeavour to maintain a sufficient mix of both male and female employees or volunteers to meet the gender mix of those using its services.
- Personal care shall be carried out with regards to the members right to dignity and privacy

### **Why do we need a policy on intimate personal care?**

Kingston Mencap provides services and activities which could mean there are situations in which members may require assistance with their personal care.

### **Policy statement**

Where intimate personal care is delivered this will always be done sensitively and appropriately. Club leaders and volunteers will be aware of the need to maintain privacy and dignity when dealing with intimate personal care needs. Delivering intimate personal

care is only undertaken in exceptional circumstances. Members who require regular intimate personal care are accompanied by a carer.

Gender issues are significant in determining the appropriateness of the support and we will endeavour to ensure that the principle of same gender care is applied when meeting the intimate personal care needs of a member.

If intimate personal care is delivered it should always be undertaken with two volunteers present.

## **Definitions**

Intimate personal care is taken to mean:

- ❑ hands-on physical care in areas of personal hygiene, and or physical presence or observation during such activities.

Intimate personal care includes:

- ❑ body bathing
- ❑ toileting, wiping and care in the genital and anal areas
- ❑ incontinence care
- ❑ placement, removal and changing of incontinence pads
- ❑ menstrual hygiene
- ❑ dressing and undressing
- ❑ application of medical treatment, other than to arms, face, and legs below the knee.

## **Deciding on the appropriate person to carry out the task**

It is important that all of the member's needs are considered when deciding on those volunteers who undertake intimate personal care.

The principle of same gender care is subject to the availability of volunteers of the same gender who are competent to deliver intimate personal care. It is acknowledged that at times there may be insufficient volunteers of the same gender to carry out the principle of same gender care. The decision to carry out personal care by someone of the opposite gender will be made after assessing the member's wishes and the necessity of the procedure required.

It is therefore acceptable for the intimate personal care needs of male members to be carried out by female volunteers, if no male volunteer is available. Where a female member requires assistance in the areas of bathing, dressing, toileting and menstrual hygiene, the club leaders must ensure that female volunteers are available to provide this care. Ideally club leaders should ensure a balance of male and female volunteers.

If intimate personal care is delivered it should always be undertaken with two volunteers present.

## **Privacy**

Privacy is a fundamental right, and is of prime importance in the delivery of intimate personal care. Members should not be in the position of having their needs met by volunteers because appropriate aids and adaptations, which would enable them to meet their own needs, have not been made available to them. Every effort should be made to ensure that equipment is provided that would reduce the need for physical assistance or volunteer presence during intimate personal care.

## **Safety**

Meeting the intimate personal care needs of a member carries a measure of risk to both the volunteer and the member. The risks can include the following:

- ❑ injury to members or volunteers due to accidents/poor work practices
- ❑ hot water
- ❑ epilepsy and bathing
- ❑ moving and handling
- ❑ infection from bodily fluids.

It is therefore important that safeguards are put in place to minimise the risk to volunteers and the member.

## **Health care**

If, during the course of assisting a person with their intimate personal care needs, there are any changes in an individual's appearance that may require attention, these should be noted, e.g. rashes, blisters, sores, lumps, and changes in colour and size of skin blemishes. These should be recorded and the member's parents/carers should be informed.

## **Suspected Abuse**

In the event that any bruise or skin damage is noted, this should be recorded and brought to the attention of the club leader. Any signs of suspected abuse will be recorded and reported immediately.

## **Independence**

It is emphasised that in this, as in all other areas of work, a prime aim of carrying out intimate personal care will be to develop the skills and abilities of the individual to enable them to become as independent in the task as possible.

## **Staff support**

Volunteers will have the opportunity to say if they are uncomfortable with a particular area of practice, or if they feel vulnerable in carrying it out. This should include appropriate training.