



	West Limerick Independent Living CLG Policies				
Title:	PERSONAL INTIMATE CARE POLICY				
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Category: Operational Policies

Subject: PERSONAL INTIMATE CARE POLICY

Responsible for Review of this Policy: West Limerick Independent Living CLG Board

Introduction

West Limerick Independent Living is committed to supporting people with a wide range of disabilities through the provision of personal support services. This Personal / Intimate Care policy applies to staff in the provision of such care for people availing of our services.

The individual's dignity should always be preserved with the highest level of privacy, choice, control and respect. Personal / intimate care is a sensitive area and will require staff / supports to be respectful to the individual's needs. As part of our person centred approach, staff should have sufficient time to get to know the individual and build up a trusting relationship before providing such care.

Policy Statement

It is the policy of West Limerick Independent Living that personal / intimate care is provided to individuals in accordance with our values. It should be delivered in a manner which is directed by the individual and promotes the person centred ethos of the organisation.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to support individuals who require assistance with their personal / intimate care needs. It will provide staff with guidance on the provision of such care.

Scope

This policy applies to staff of West Limerick Independent Living involved in the provision of personal / intimate care for all people in receipt of a personal support service from West Limerick Independent Living.

Definitions

(This section defines the different types of care individuals may require)

Personal Care involves assisting and supporting individuals with their personal presentation. It is of a less intimate nature as it does not invade personal, private or social space to the same extent as intimate care.



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Table 1: Examples of Personal Care and Intimate care tasks specifically identified (but not exhaustive) as relevant include:

1	Supported eating	
2	Oral care (brushing teeth)	
3	Shaving or Applying deodorant	
4	Skin care or applying external medication	
5	Hair care	
6	Dressing and undressing (underwear and clothing)	
7	Intimate self care - toilet or bathroom	
8	Changing soiled continence pads	
9	Bathing or showering - Washing non intimate body parts	
10	Washing intimate parts of the body i.e. genitalia	
11	Menstrual care	
12	Catheter or stoma care	(Only when instructed by Service Coordinator & received appropriate training)
13	Peg Feeding	(Not included in PA duties)
14	Administering rectal medication	(Not included in PA duties)

Intimate care can occupy a large amount of the day and the way in which it is delivered can significantly affect an individual's quality of life.

It is essential that every person with a disability and older person is treated as an individual when intimate care is being provided and that appropriate time is taken for intimate care. It should enhance the quality of life of the individual receiving care and should be provided as gently and sensitively as possible, while respecting their privacy and dignity at all times.

The individual receiving intimate care should be encouraged to express choice and to have a positive image of his/her body.

There are some basic principles to be borne in mind when providing intimate care:

1. Individuals should give their consent prior to the provision of intimate care.
2. Individuals have a right to feel safe and secure.
3. All individuals have the right to personal privacy.
4. All individuals receiving intimate care should be respected and valued as individuals. Individuals should be listened to and their views taken into account. They should be treated courteously at all times and know who is assisting them.
5. Individuals have a right to be treated with dignity and respect and a professional approach from staff when meeting their needs.
6. Individuals have the right to information and support to enable them to make appropriate choice.
7. All individuals have the right to be involved and consulted in their own intimate care to the best of their abilities.
8. Individuals have the right to be accepted for who they are, without regard to age, gender, ability, race, culture or beliefs.



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9. All individuals have the right to express their views on their own intimate care and to have such views taken into account.
10. Individuals have the right to know how to complain and have their complaint dealt with.
11. An individual's personal care plan should be designed to lead to independence.

There may be circumstances where an individual's personal care may need to be carried out in a specific and consistent manner in accordance with their wishes and when appropriate needs to be captured in their Care Plan.

Definitions of Intimate Care

Intimate Care is any task of an intimate nature which the person is unable to undertake for themselves. It is associated with bodily functions and personal hygiene which necessitate direct or indirect contact with intimate parts of the body.

Intimate care tasks specifically identified (but not exhaustive) as relevant include:

Dressing and undressing (underwear)	
Assistance with use of the toilet	
Changing incontinence wear	
Bathing/showering	
Washing intimate parts of the body	
Changing sanitary wear	
Inserting suppositories/pessaries	(Not included in PA duties)

It is necessary that once intimate care needs are identified and agreed, they must be captured in each individual's Care Plan.

Using the Personal/Intimate Care Plan

When it has been determined that a Personal/Intimate Care Plan is required this should be completed by the individual and/or their representatives, the relevant staff and the relevant professionals.

Staff / Supports Roles and Responsibilities:

- Every individual has their safety, dignity, privacy and right to exercise choice respected at all times
- All aspects of personal / intimate care should be directed and guided by the individual
- All interactions are individualised to promote the health, well-being and fulfilment of the individual



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- If, during personal / intimate care, staff / supports accidentally hurt the individual or suspect that the individual has/or is being abused, they must follow the appropriate policies:
 - Incident Reporting
 - Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse National Policy
- In most situations, personal / intimate care is carried out by one staff / support. Where an issue of concern arises for the first time, staff / supports must report to their Service Coordinator and follow organisational procedures.

Communication

The following are some guidelines which promote best practice in how we communicate:

- Staff ability to communicate well helps to build good relationships with the individual
- The individual's means of communication will be identified in their Individualised file.
- Staff must seek the individual's consent and be clear about their level of understanding
- Where an individual cannot give verbal consent, avail of opportunities to clarify their consent and understanding of the process through their preferred methods of communication
- Before commencing to assist the individual and throughout, explain in a reassuring way what is happening and in a manner that the person understands. In this way, the person is prepared for and can anticipate your assistance
- Physical contact will be affirming and informed by the knowledge of any sensory preferences
- Staff should have a knowledge and understanding of any religious or cultural sensitivities related to aspects of intimate care for each person
- Ensure that non-verbal communication and body language gives the same message as verbal communication

It is important to ensure that staff are self-critical and aware of their verbal and non-verbal communication. A conflict between these forms of communication may cause confusion and lead to distress.

Consent

- Consent from parents / carer is required for children. It is not a requirement for adults; however, best practice should involve consultation with them where appropriate. They may have invaluable advice and guidance regarding the personal / intimate care needs of their son / daughter / sibling
- Individuals will usually voice preferences, comment on their own care or make an observation which will inform their plan
- Where issues remain unresolved for the individual, they can make a formal complaint through the organisation's Procedure for the Resolution of Concerns and Complaints to West Limerick Independent Living.
- Consent should be sought from an individual where information regarding their plan is sought from any external agency.



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Sexual Aspects of Intimate Care

- An individual may be sexually aroused while being supported with intimate care. This is a normal and natural physiological response
- Every effort should be made to ensure that his / her dignity is maintained and that anticipation or evidence of sexual arousal is treated with sensitivity and respect (i.e. not to speak in a dismissive or derogatory way, not to leave the person exposed if in a sexually aroused state, etc.)
- There are specific types of intimate touch that can stimulate sexual arousal, these should be acknowledged to ensure that the agreed care is identified
- As a general guideline, physical contact will not be undertaken while someone is sexually aroused
- Masturbation is a normal sexual expression which may take place in an inappropriate context. To preserve the individual's dignity, he / she should be afforded privacy. This support requirement should be included in the Personal / Intimate Care Plan
- Some individuals may remove their clothing or wear inappropriate clothing in an inappropriate setting. This may or may not be of a sexual nature. To preserve the individual's dignity, he / she should be afforded privacy. This support requirement should be included in the Personal / Intimate Care Plan

Frontline staff should not carry out any holistic therapies such as massage, reiki, aromatherapy etc., only therapists who have a recognized qualification should perform these tasks.

Tasks such as nail care, skin care or any task that requires a recognized qualification should not be carried out by frontline staff.

Safety

- It is sometimes necessary to use equipment while supporting an individual with intimate care
- Each individual must be assessed for any equipment needs by appropriate personnel, i.e. Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist
- All staff should be trained and competent in using the identified equipment
- Staff will establish good working practices and should adhere to the organisation's procedure on Minimal Handling Regulations and other relevant procedures.

Policy Summary

This policy is essential, not only to increase knowledge, enhance skills and promote good practice, but also to provide a forum for staff to reassess their own attitudes and values in this sensitive area. The effectiveness of this policy, its contents and our approach will be informed by maintaining and advocating for every individual's right to privacy, dignity and respect regarding their personal and intimate care.



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Policy and Procedure Feedback Form

A Policy and Procedure Feedback Form is available on the West Limerick Independent Living website which will provide an opportunity to comment on any policy/procedure.

Your comments will be forwarded to the person who has the lead for the on going development of the policy/procedure.

All comments will be collated by the person responsible and will inform the three yearly review cycle for updating procedures.



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APPENDIX 1 - My Personal / Intimate Care Plan

My Personal / Intimate Care Plan

My name is _____ and this is my Care Plan. It has been drawn up by me and those who support me. It is important that all staff in _____ are familiar with it. It will be shared with those significant others who support me in other settings. Everyone who supports me are aware that this plan is in place and has agreed to it.

Describe the type(s) of care that require/s assistance:

I need assistance in the following areas: _____ e.g. Shower/Bathing

Specify preferred means of communication: _____

Who will provide the support and where will it occur? _____

I may have preferences within my support team as to who I would like to support me with my Personal & Intimate Care. Please respect my wishes and preferences.

Identify the areas where support is not required:

- I can dry myself once I am out of the shower/bath and I like the privacy to do this in my room.
- I can dry and brush my hair independently.

Identify the necessary equipment:

In order to complete the care areas referred to earlier I will need my wash bag, shampoo, towels, flannel/sponge, hoist and shower chair.

Care Area: Details the steps involved in supporting the person:

Preparing for Bathing

- Engage with me to ascertain my personal preferences.
- Check the bathroom is clutter free and the bath is clean.
- Check all aids and appliances required are in working order. If not in working order, please ensure that the necessary steps are taken to repair/replace the appliances.
- Check shower/bath mat (if required) to ensure it is securely fastened to the base of shower/bath.
- Wash and dry hands thoroughly and Use gloves and an apron.
- Prepare the shower/bath, running the cold water first before the hot water.
- Before I get into the shower/bath, the person supporting me must check the water temperature with their hand/elbow. The water should feel comfortable warm to the touch.
- Assist me with undressing as required, maintaining my dignity by covering me with a towel.



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- Observe the condition of my skin. Note and report any signs of redness, inflammation, bruising, discoloration or rash.
- During bathing assist me into the shower/bath (if required). It is important to be aware of and adhere to the specific transfer (moving and handling) requirements that I may have and that are in line with my care plan and risk assessment.
- Assist me to wash as required.
- If I can wash myself, leave me, those supporting me should remain within earshot, checking at regular intervals so they can hear me call for assistance, should I need it.
- If required, assist me to wash my hair, using the flannel as an eye guard to avoid getting shampoo in my eyes.
- Assist me in getting out of the bath adhering to my specific moving and handling requirements.
- Cover me with a towel as soon as possible to provide warmth and maintain dignity.

Any other comments:

Date plan drawn up: _____

Agreed by: _____

Review Date: _____

APPENDIX B List of Reference Policies

Manual Handling Regulations (Employee Handbook & Safety Statement)

Medication Policy and Procedure (Employee Handbook)

Incident Reporting Policy