**24: Intimate Care**

In intimate care situations, the child’s safety, dignity and privacy are of paramount importance. At Willows, children requiring intimate care will be treated respectfully at all times.

‘Intimate care’ covers any task that involves the washing, touching or carrying out a procedure to intimate personal areas and is associated with bodily functions and personal hygiene, including, toileting, washing, dressing, and menstrual care.

Willows staff who provide intimate care, will do so in a professional manner. Staff are aware of safeguarding issues and will have relevant training (health and safety, child protection, manual handling) before providing intimate care. No child should suffer distress or pain as a result of receiving intimate care.

Staff will work in partnership with parents or carers to provide care appropriate to the needs of the individual child and together will produce a care plan. The care plan will set out:

* What care is required
* Number of staff needed to carry out the task, if more than one person is required, reasons will be documented
* Additional equipment required
* Child’s preferred means of communication (eg verbal, visual)
* Child’s level of ability – what tasks they are able to carry out by themselves

**Best practice**

When intimate care is given, the member of staff will explain fully each task that is carried out, and the reasons for it. Staff will encourage children to do as much for themselves as they can.

If a child requires intimate care on a regular basis, where possible, two members of staff will share the care between them. In this way the child should not become overly dependent on a single member of staff, and is less likely to become distressed if their usual carer is occasionally unavailable.

However, parents’ views on the number of staff providing personal care to their child will also be taken into consideration - some children may simply be unable to cope with more than one carer.

Willows have good policies in place that promote safe recruitment, together with regular supervision, and sound safeguarding and intimate care procedures, the child’s need for consistent care will not be compromised if only one member of staff provides the intimate care.

**Protecting children**

Staff are familiar with the Local Safeguarding Children Board booklet Recognising The Signs Of Child Abuse and with the DfE booklet What To Do If You Think A Child Is Being Abused, and will follow the guidance contained in them accordingly.

If a member of staff is concerned about any physical changes to a child, such as marks, bruises, soreness etc, they will inform the manager or designated CPO (child protection officer) immediately. The **Safeguarding Children Policy** will then be implemented.

Should a child become unhappy about being cared for by a particular member of staff, the directors Kym Elliston, Sara Pinch and Helen Howett will look into the situation and record any findings. These will be discussed with the child’s parents or carers in order to resolve the problem. If necessary the proprietor will seek advice from outside agencies.

If a child makes an allegation against a member of staff, the procedure set out in the **Safeguarding Children Policy** will be followed.