



Positive Touch Policy

2021-22

This policy is reviewed annually by the Trustees.

Version number	1
Date of issue	October 2021
Next review	October 2022
Staff Lead	Social Communication Lead
Approved by	Principal and Trustees

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History of revisions

Version 1

James Cook, October 2021

- Original policy



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Rationale

Touch is essential in order to provide sensitive and high quality care for the individuals we support. Used in context and with empathy, touch supports the development of our natural interactions with the individuals we support, teach and care for.

Why use touch

Used in context and with empathy, touch supports the development of our natural interactions with the students and young people we care for.

Social Communication

It can also be key to developing fundamental social, behavioural and attention skills. Whilst offering physical support to those students who need it. The guidelines that follow describe Future Horizons Leeds' procedures on the use of appropriate physical touch.

Touch is important and may be used routinely for the following reasons:

- Communication – touch is beneficial as part of the process of establishing the fundamentals of communication (Nind and Hewett, 1994) for people at early communication levels.
- Touch is necessary to reinforce other communication (e.g. hand on shoulder when speaking) or to function as the main form of communication in itself.

Touch enables staff and students to respond non-verbally or to respond to another person's own use of physical contact for communication and to make social connections. This is particularly likely to occur during intensive interaction or day to day greetings (hand shakes, high fives etc.) Touch cues, hand over hand signing, physical prompts, on body signing and Intensive Interaction are aided and developed by the use of supportive touch.

Educational Tasks

Touch can also be used to direct students in educational tasks and developing skills. Physical prompting and support, gestural and physical prompts during learning activities such as hand-over-hand support and hand-under-hand support. Play activities naturally include touch. People of any age who are at early levels of development are likely to be quite tactile and physical.

Physical support

Physical support may also be necessary to include a pupil in activities such as; sensory circuits, swimming and Physical Education or to carry out therapy programmes such as; massage, sensory stimulation, Tac Pac, occupational therapy, rebound therapy and Sensory Integration either by the therapist or by another member of staff carrying out a programme or following therapy advice or supporting a student.



Mobility

Physical support around mobility may be used as guidance and/or to help with mobility or as part of an activity where a pupil needs support when moving. Some students may need moving and handling to protect students from harming themselves or others, including restrictive physical intervention (Team Teach).

Emotional reasons

Touch is an effective way to communicate affection and warmth. It gives reassurance and can communicate security and comfort. Touch enables the person to develop understanding of these positive emotions and the ability to communicate them. Touch can offer reassurance and support, comforting distressed or upset students, communicating warmth, comfort, and reassurance and to develop positive emotions. Please use in accordance with individuals risk assessments and support plans.

Intimate Care

Touch is necessary in order to carry out and support students' personal care and intimate care routines. In using touch during personal care routines staff should ensure students are comfortable and familiar with the staff members delivering the personal care as well as following the students personalised support plan around intimate care/bathroom use.

Medical care

To provide medical care such as administration of medication, first Aid, rescue medication etc (See First Aid policy and individual risk assessments relevant).

Appropriate Touch and Potential Hazards

It should always be considered by staff that for touch to provide positive experiences it should be consensual. As far as possible, the Student/Service user involved should consent to any touch given and staff should be sensitive to any verbal and nonverbal communication they give that might indicate that they don't want to be touched.

Staff should be sensitive to any changes in the Student/Service user's behaviour (e.g. overexcitement or negative reactions) that might indicate the need to reduce or withdraw touch or adapt level of physical input during the interaction, particularly during play or Intensive Interaction. Significant changes in behaviour should be clearly recorded.

The people we support should be given opportunities to touch each other while interacting and playing as would happen naturally for any child or Student/Service user. Attention should always be given to ensure that both parties are safe and happy with this.

Staff must be aware of potential hazards in respect of sexual issues: Staff must be sensitive to the danger of touch being misunderstood and triggering sexual arousal and so must be alert to all

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Future Horizons Leeds, 2 Wyther Lane, Kirkstall, Leeds, LS5 3BT
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feedback signals from the person they are working with. The young people we support may occasionally inadvertently touch intimate parts of a member of staff's body when there is no sexual understanding or intent.

The member of staff should withdraw without giving significant negative feedback in this situation and the incident should be reported/recorded.

It is never appropriate for staff to touch a Student/Service user's intimate body areas except as part of intimate medical care. If staff are in any doubt about issues concerning appropriate touch, or observe any practice that causes them any concern, they should discuss with a member of the Safeguarding team.

Staff should be aware that there have been many instances of abuse perpetrated in Hospitals, Schools and residential care establishments. The best method of prevention is transparency, openness and teamwork, and staff should always try to monitor and assist each other in carrying out their work.

Conclusion

Touch is necessary and desirable as part of the development, emotional well-being, care, education, and quality of life of the people we support and care for. This policy outlines when this may be needed, and it provides staff with the necessary direction and security for this to occur positively and productively, while still protecting the people in our care.