

## What is Northcott's policy?

- ✓ Positive relationships and sexuality are important to our physical and emotional wellbeing and give meaning to our lives.
- ✓ We all have the right to:
  - Make our own choices
  - Learn about our body
  - Learn about sex and relationships
  - Enjoy sexual relationships
  - Be free from abuse
- ✓ Many people with disability do not need support in creating positive relationships and exploring their sexuality. However, some people with disability may need assistance.
- ✓ We understand that people have their own values and attitudes. Sometimes people don't share the same values as the people they support. That's OK. However, we must respect the values and attitudes of the people we work with and respect their decisions and actions. Talk to your manager if you are unsure.
- ✓ We respect everyone's right to make their own choices and their right for privacy.
- ✓ We will provide opportunities for staff to attend positive relationship and sexual health training as required.
- ✓ We will provide information for staff on services available in the community and resources that are able to provide assistance e.g. Family Planning, Community Health Programs.
- ✓ We will make sure staff have access to education and resources for people that need help with creating and maintaining relationships.
- ✓ We will make sure staff know their rights.
- ✓ We will help staff to be clear about complex issues regarding sexuality and where to get help from.



**We will help staff better understand sexuality and be confident talking about it.**

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**We will only support the sexual activity of Northcott customers if:**

- ✓ Under NSW Crimes Act 1900, the person/s is over 16 – unless assessed as not having the capacity to consent or if one of the person's holds a supervisory role under care.
  - In NSW to have capacity to consent the person needs to understand the nature of a sexual act and understand the difference between sexual touch and non-sexual touch.
  - If there is uncertainty about the person's capacity to consent to sexual activity a team approach including staff who know the person well, psychologists and a medical practitioner can be adopted. It is not the role of an individual staff member to decide if a person has capacity to consent. Contact Northcott's Sexuality and Relationship Education Service if you have any questions about capacity to give consent.
  - In NSW it is an offence for any person to sexually engage another person under his or her special care who is aged 16 or 17 years. That supervisory role would include teachers, religious leaders, support staff etc.
- ✓ All people involved consent to the sexual act. This consent does not need to be communicated verbally.
- ✓ All people involved have been offered sexual health information, for example, advice on contraception and safe sex.
- ✓ The level of support has been agreed:
  - **Low Level** – Access to space only.
  - **Medium Level** – The person/s need support to undress and be positioned in location e.g. on bed, set up correct aids and equipment. They can have sex or masturbate without physical help e.g. positioning during sex.
  - **High level** – The person/s need physical help during sex or masturbation and putting on/insertion of contraception. At this level a sex worker or sex facilitator is required. Refer to Page 6 for more information on Guidelines for staff supporting people to a Sex Worker.
- ✓ A private and safe space for the sexual act has been agreed.
- ✓ A safe space for staff has been agreed. Note: Staff should never be in the same room or waiting at the door, they should be in a completely separate room.
- ✓ A minimum of two staff must work together for this process to ensure staff and person/s safety. This does not apply for masturbation, one staff member can set up or give the person/s the sex aids or toys they require to independently masturbate.
- ✓ Staff have had Manual Handling training for people that need Medium Level help.

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- ✓ Communication arrangements have been discussed. How will staff know when the person/s is finished and needs assistance. Suggestions include a buzzer, phone nearby to call.

## Who needs to know about this Policy?

- All Northcott staff
- All Northcott customers

## What are Positive Relationships?

Relationships are the connections we have with a wide range of people including partners, family, friends, people we work with and strangers. Some people with disability may not have the opportunities to create and grow relationships and would like some help to do so.

### Supporting Positive Relationships

All staff have a responsibility to:

- Offer the opportunity for positive relationship education to the people they support.
- Model positive relationships in their workplace environment.
- Support the person with disability to create social opportunities when needed.
- Respect the choices people with disability make about their relationships.
- Refer to additional services (e.g. counselling or medical professionals) when needed.

## What is Sexuality?

Sexuality is a central feature of being human throughout a person's lifetime, from birth to death. Sexuality is not only "sex" and not just for adults. It includes sexual feelings, preferences, identity, thoughts and attractions.



At times, staff might find themselves dealing with complex or sensitive personal relationship issues. Staff should listen in a non judgmental way, and provide support if requested. However the role of staff does not extend to solving relationship issues.

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## Staff Expectations of Staff Supporting Sexual Activity

The role of the support worker, when needed, is to provide assistance without judgement, to people with disability so that they can experience the same life experiences as other people. This includes support to access sex services and preparation support with sexual activity.

- Once we have prepared the person/s (as above) for the sexual act staff must leave the room and only return when the person/s are finished and have called staff back in.
- If the person/s call staff into the room to assist with a physical task within the sexual act e.g. they can't get the condom on, staff must refuse.

If you are unclear about anything, talk to your Manager.

We can help the person/s with disability to:



- Get to/onto the place that they would like to have sex on (e.g. transfer the person/s on the bed referring to standard Manual Handling procedures)
- Undress
- Set up/give the person/s the sex aids, sex toys or contraception they need (e.g. hand the person/s a dam, put vibrating underwear on a person – must be off when staff are in the room)

We can not help the person with disability to:



- Position them sexually (Transfers must refer to standard Manual Handling procedures)
- Help with penetration of any opening (e.g. put a penis inside an anus)
- Physically assist with masturbation (e.g. physically guide someone's hand to masturbate)
- Be in the room during the sexual act
- Put on/insert contraception or sex toys that need to be inserted (e.g. put a condom on a person's penis or insert a dildo into a vagina)

## What should you consider?

### Staff supporting people with disability to engage in sexual activity as requested

*(This includes sexual acts performed alone (e.g. masturbation) or with 1 or more people (e.g. sexual intercourse))*

#### When talking to the customer

- Talk in a private place with only those that need to know
- Always ask for the person's permission before beginning the conversation

#### Discuss what help the person/s would need.

- Remember to look at Northcott's Policy above to make sure you're doing the right thing.
- With permission from the person, discuss the person's sexual needs. Keep in mind that this may be an awkward or embarrassing conversation for the person.
- Staff should discuss masturbation and interest in being in a sexual relationship as options before moving onto discussing seeing a sex worker.
- Often people would like to be able to masturbate rather than using a sex worker but do not know they can masturbate. If they would like to see a sex worker continue.

#### People needing physical help during sex or masturbation

- Are they open to discussing the use of sex aids or equipment to promote independence with the person/s sexual requirements?
- Talk to Northcott's Coordinator of Sexuality and Relationships for support or Northcott Occupational Therapists who are able to assist with advice and prescription of equipment.

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## Supporting people to a Sex Worker

### When talking to the customer and Sex Worker

- Talk in a private place with only those that need to know
- Always ask for the person's permission before discussing their needs with a sex worker

### Identify appropriate service to assist with finding a sex worker that works with people with disability or an accessible commercial sex service premises

- Touching Base is one organisation that people with disability can contact for information about sex services.
- Things to consider include:
  - Do they understand what sex is?
  - Has sexual health training been offered?
  - Do they need help to email or call Touching Base to referral themselves?
  - Do they have an appropriate place to have sex?
  - Is the venue accessible or do they need to sex worker to come to their home?
  - Are they aware of the costs? Have costs been negotiated?
  - Do they need transportation to the sex premise or sex worker?
  - Do they need assistance to transfer onto the bed? Get undressed? Same rules apply of staff expectations when seeing a sex worker (e.g. what a staff member can and can't do)
- If they need assistance to make a booking with Touching Base, ask the person if they would like to see a male, female or transgender sex worker. **Do not assume you know who the person would like.**

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## Where can I Find Help?

If you feel uncomfortable about discussing sexuality and feel like it will stop you from offering support to a person please contact your manager or Northcott's Sexuality and Relationships Coordinator.

## Resources

### **Touching Base Inc.**

[www.touchingbase.org](http://www.touchingbase.org)

Touching Base Inc. is committed to providing high quality services to people with disabilities, sex workers and other community stakeholders. Touching Base Inc can provide information for people with disability or their carers on how to access the sex industry.

### **Family Planning NSW**

[www.fpnsw.org.au](http://www.fpnsw.org.au)

Family Planning NSW is the state's leading provider of reproductive and sexual health services.

### **Sex Workers Outreach Project – SWOP**

[www.swop.org.au](http://www.swop.org.au)

SWOP focuses on safety, dignity, diversity and the changing needs of sex industry workers, to foster an environment which enables and affirms individual choices and occupational rights.

### **People with Disability Australia Inc.**

[www.pwd.com.au](http://www.pwd.com.au)

A state peak disability rights and advocacy organization.

## What other Northcott documents are related?

### **Supporting Documents**

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Duty of Care and Dignity of Risk Policy and Procedure](#)

[Children at Risk of Harm Policy and Procedure](#)

[Responding to a Customer's Disclosure of Abuse Procedure](#)

[Responding to Allegations of Adult Abuse and Neglect Policy and Procedure](#)

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Who is responsible?	What are they responsible for?
<b>Sexuality and Relationships Education Coordinator</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure staff have access to education and resources.</li> <li>• Support staff to access information and for consultation.</li> <li>• Ensure this policy and procedure is up to date.</li> <li>• Set up and management of document control system.</li> </ul>
<b>General Manager Operations Support and Specialist Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain this policy and procedure and associated documents.</li> </ul>
<b>Chief Executive</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final review and approval of this policy.</li> </ul>
<b>Level 2 Manager</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain this policy, its related procedures and documents.</li> </ul>
<b>Level 3 and 4 Manager</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the policy is effectively implemented in their services.</li> <li>• Ensure staff follow the policy.</li> </ul>
<b>Supervisor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure staff have read and understand the policy, and have sufficient skills, knowledge and ability to meet the requirements.</li> </ul>
<b>All Employees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow the requirements of the policy.</li> <li>• Receive enquiry for sexuality support from customer.</li> <li>• Identify what support the customer needs.</li> <li>• Consult with support staff about Northcott's expectations for staff supporting the customer.</li> </ul>

## Definitions, Legislation & Standards Compliance

For Definitions, please refer to Northcott Policy Dictionary.

For Legislation and Standards Compliance, refer to the Service Management Policy.

## Related References

- *ADHC Decision Making and Consent Policy and Procedures (July 2008)*
- *Family Planning NSW Guidelines for Sexuality Policy Development for Disability Service Providers (March 2016)*
- *ADHC Sexuality and Relationship Guidelines (January 2016)*
- *DHS Personal Relationships, Sexuality and Sexual Health Policy and Guidelines (January 2016)*



**Authorised by:** .....

**Kerry Stubbs, Chief Executive Officer**

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