

POLICY 1.6 – DUTY OF CARE & DIGNITY OF RISK

WCS is committed to upholding both **Duty of Care** and **Dignity of Risk** for all participants and young persons. These principles guide our approach in providing safe, respectful, and empowering support.

Duty of Care

Duty of Care refers to our legal and moral obligation to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our participants/young persons, staff, the broader community, and the facilities we use.

WCS staff are responsible for:

- Proactively identifying and minimising potential risks to maximise physical and emotional safety.
- Ensuring all participants/young persons are protected from **violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation, and discrimination**.
- Supporting and respecting the **dignity and privacy** of participants/young persons—especially where they may not yet be aware of personal care requirements or social norms.

Staff are expected to remain mindful and responsive to the needs of those in their care at all times.

Dignity of Risk

Dignity of Risk recognises the right of each participant/young person to make choices—including those involving risk—as part of leading a full and meaningful life. WCS supports this right through a person-centred and developmentally appropriate approach.

We are committed to:

- Supporting each participant/young person's right to **decision-making and autonomy**.
- Helping individuals make **informed choices** about risks and benefits.
- Having robust **policies and procedures** in place to prevent and respond to incidents of violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation, or discrimination.
- Supporting individuals to understand the **limits and conditions** under which support may be modified or withdrawn.
- Ensuring no support is withdrawn **solely** based on a participant's/young person's decision to take on risk.

Continuity of Care

WCS will make all reasonable efforts to ensure **Continuity of Care**, including when a participant/young person transitions to or from another service. This may involve sharing reports, participating in handover meetings, or organising buddy shifts.

Please refer to the **Continuity of Care Policy** for detailed guidance.

Special Considerations – Participants/Young Persons Under 18

Balancing safety with autonomy for those under 18 requires nuanced, experienced judgment.

- Adolescents may struggle to make consistently healthy choices or may avoid taking social risks due to past trauma, bullying, or exclusion.
- Others may act impulsively, lacking full awareness of consequences.
- WCS staff are responsible for **supporting safe opportunities for growth**, while intervening when necessary to prevent serious harm.

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For example:

- A young person participating in a high ropes course will be supported to engage at their own pace and comfort level.
- Staff will encourage participation but also respect their right **not** to engage or to pursue greater challenges—**provided it can be done safely and with appropriate support.**

Our aim is to empower young people to experience risk and build resilience, while maintaining a strong duty of care.

DATE	PERSON/S	DETAILS
01.08.2025	Becci Fazldeen	Review and update
20.01.2025	Ashleigh Davis	Review and update
23.10.2024	Cita Carmody-Pearson	Review and update
08.11.2021	Toni Mehigan	Policy created