

Questions to ask about the use of physical restraint in schools

Why is physical restraint sometimes called a restrictive physical intervention?

The difference between a restrictive physical intervention and a physical intervention is the use of force. For example, a physical intervention may be guiding a pupil who is going with you willingly, but if the pupil is resisting and force is used it becomes a restrictive physical intervention.

The school's policy on physical interventions or physical restraint might be called a number of different things such as: the physical intervention policy, the restrictive intervention policy, the behaviour management policy or the control and discipline policy

Can physical restraint be used?

Physical restraint can cause injury and distress.

With the current legislation (see below for links to the relevant legislation in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland), physical restraint can be used if there are guidelines on how it is used. Physical restraint must be used lawfully.

Physical restraint should only be used as a last resort. If used, it should be part of an agreed plan about how to support a pupil safely. The plan should be discussed with the pupil and the family.

The individual's plan should have information about what circumstances the pupil may have difficulties with and what things are likely to make them become distressed or over aroused. The plan should clearly state how the staff can support the pupil to feel better and what coping strategies the pupil is being taught to use. The plan should be based on an assessment of the pupils' behaviour that helps identify the reason for it, and an understanding of what the behaviour means. The plan should have different strategies for staff to use to help the pupil before they consider the use of physical restraint.

If you are concerned about the use of physical restraint in a school you may want to ask about these issues:

1. The school policy

Does the school have a policy that:

- Explains clearly when staff can restrain pupils and in what circumstances?
- Is clear that other strategies should be tried before a restraint is considered?
- Is clear that using restraint is a last resort?
- Is clear that each pupil should have an individual plan that sets out how to manage unsafe behaviours which includes understanding why the behaviour is

happening? The plan should also include teaching new skills and coping strategies to the pupil, and different ways that the pupil can be encouraged to communicate their need, anger or distress.

- Explains the training the staff receive in using restraints?
- Explains what kind of restraints are allowed or not allowed to be used?
- Sets out how restraints are reported and recorded?
- Clearly states who should be informed when a restraint has been used and who should receive a copy of the recording form?
- If any injuries are sustained during the restraints by pupils or staff the policy should explain how these are reported and recorded
- Sets out what should happen immediately after a pupil has been restrained including what kind of medical and emotional support will be given to the pupil
- Explains how the school monitors the use of any restraints and how the information is analysed and used to reduce the use of further restraint
- Sets out the process for debriefing and reviewing the incident that led to the restraint
- Is this policy freely available – have you been given a copy of the school policy and/or did you have it explained to you?
- Has the policy been explained to the pupils, families and carers?
- Is the policy written clearly - in a way you can understand it?
- Is it clear who you can discuss any queries you have about the policy or the use of restraints with, and the procedure to follow if you have a complaint or concerns?

2. About staff training

- What training do the staff have in using physical restraints?
- Is the training organisation that provides the training to the school BILD accredited? (see below)
- Who has been trained and to what level?

- When were they trained and what restraints were they trained to use? Were they assessed as competent to use those particular types of restraints?
- How often do the staff have refresher training?
- Does the training cover using alternatives to restraint?
- Does the training cover the meaning of challenging behaviour and how to teach pupils alternative ways to get their needs met?
- Does the training cover teaching pupils coping strategies?
- Does the training cover the dangers of restraint?
- Are supply staff, teaching assistants and other supervisors trained?

The BILD Accreditation Scheme accredits training organisations that deliver behaviour support and management training in conjunction with the use of physical skills or physical restraint.

More information, including a list of those organisations currently accredited, can be found here: www.bild.org.uk/bas

BILD also publishes the *BILD Code of Practice for minimising the use of restrictive physical interventions: planning, developing and delivering training: A guide for purchasers of training, training organisations and trainers*

Find out more at www.bild.org.uk/code

3. About the use of restraint on individual pupils

- Does the pupil have an individual behaviour support plan that specifies what restraints are to be used and in what circumstances?
- Does the plan have a risk assessment for using these specific restraints that assesses the physical and emotional risks to the individual pupil taking into account any relevant health problems, disability or other needs?
- Does the plan detail all the other actions that should be taken before the use of a restraint is considered?

- Does the plan detail the likely triggers or circumstances or environments which are known or are likely to cause the pupil distress or to become over aroused, and the best ways to help the pupil to manage these situations?
- Does the plan include new skills and strategies that the pupil is being encouraged to use?
- Was the plan discussed with and explained to the pupil and to their family?

Legislation and guidance

There are links to information about the relevant legislation and guidance in this area for *England, Scotland, Wales* and *Northern Ireland* here:

www.bild.org.uk/codeofpractice

Reporting or discussing your concerns – what can you do?

Where to begin?

If you are worried about how the behaviour of a child, or young person with learning disabilities and/or autism is being managed, you must share your concerns.

It is important that everyone involved has opportunities to explain the thinking behind any interventions that they are using and to reflect on the impact on the person involved.

So, your first step should be to raise any concerns you have with the school or college.

If you are unhappy with the response you receive, follow the organisation's complaints process and make a formal complaint.

The next steps

If you continue to feel that you are not being heard, then you may need to report your concerns to ensure that any safeguarding issues can be explored.

Safeguarding is the action that is taken to promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults to protect them from harm.

There are separate processes for children and young people up to aged 18 years, and for adults.

For children and young people aged up to 18

In *England, Wales* and *Scotland*, anyone who has a concern about the welfare of a child or a young person should contact their local authority's children's social services/social care team.

You should ask for the Child Protection team and each local authority will have a designated officer who will be responsible for discussing referrals and issues of concern. This officer may be called the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) and this person should be your contact point.

In *Northern Ireland*, concerns should be passed onto the Gateway services teams for children's social work at the Health and Social Care Trust in the area that the child lives. The five HSC Trusts are Belfast, South Eastern, Northern, Southern and Western.

Regulatory bodies

Each country has their own bodies that inspect and regulate services for children and young people. They are:

England: Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Schools) 0300 123 4666 or enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Scotland: Education Scotland, 0141 282 5000 or enquiries@educationscotland.gov.uk

Wales: Estyn, 029 2044 6446 or enquiries@estyn.gov.uk

Northern Ireland: The Education and Training Inspectorate 028 9127 9726 or inspectionsservices@deni.gov.uk

Adults over the age of 18 years

In *England, Scotland* and *Wales*, anyone who has a concern about the welfare of a vulnerable adult should contact the adult safeguarding/protection team in their local authority. Each authority will have a specific manager usually named as the Designated Adult Safeguarding Manager (DASM), responsible for this area of work.

In *Wales*, if the concerns are about a health service or a health worker, you should contact the Designated Adult Safeguarding Manager in the Health Board covering the area where the adult lives.

In *Northern Ireland*, concerns should be passed on to the Adult Protection Coordinator/Designated Officer for the Health and Social Care Trust in the area that the adult lives.

Other bodies

The Mencap Direct helpline offers information and support about learning disabilities, telephone 0808 808 1111 or email: help@mencap.org.uk

In addition, the NSPCC operate a helpline: 0808 800 5000, or email: help@nspcc.org.uk

The Police

Calling the police should be considered in cases of potential serious and sudden harm and/or criminal activity.

Need to know more?

If you would like a confidential conversation about your concerns, please contact BILD by email, setting out your concerns, what support you require, and where you live.

Send your email to: enquiries@bild.org.uk

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