

## **Children's Services**

### **Procedure for the exceptional use of restraint as a means of safeguarding in Supported Accommodation**

#### **Introduction**

Providers approved by Dorset Council Supported Accommodation Service will not exercise physical restraint unless there are good grounds for believing that immediate action is necessary to prevent a child or young person causing significant injury to him/herself or to another person or causing serious damage to property.

#### **1. Definition**

- 1.1 In this policy "physical restraint" refers to situations in which an adult has felt it necessary to hold or to hold down a child or young person with the intention of overpowering him/her.
- 1.2 Physical restraint does not include:
  - a) Attempting to control a child's behaviour by techniques which do not involve physical contact (for example emphasising verbal instructions or standing in a doorway to prevent exit).
  - b) Holding or touching a child or young person to persuade him/her to comply; for example, laying hands on shoulders to gain a young person's attention or taking a child's arm to lead him/her away from a situation. This is seen as distinct from restraint as the effect is to persuade rather than to enforce compliance.
- 1.3 Physical restraint includes any action intended to restrict the physical movement of a child or young person other than normal care. For example:
  - a) Putting a child into a car seat during a car journey is normal care: putting a child into a car seat in the home because s/he is having a tantrum is an inappropriate use of restraint.
  - b) Putting a child into a highchair during a meal is normal care: putting a child into a highchair for an extended period to stop him/her moving around is an inappropriate use of restraint.
  - c) Telling a child who is misbehaving to behave more appropriately is normal care: locking a child in a bedroom is an inappropriate use of restraint.
  - d) Locking outer doors is normal domestic security: locking a child out in the garden as a punishment is an inappropriate use of restraint, particularly after dark, in bad weather or if the child is inappropriately dressed.

#### **2. Avoiding the Need for Restraint**

Although the need for restraint is sometimes unavoidable, high-quality childcare draws on a range of techniques to predict and avert conflict. The Dorset Council Supported Accommodation Service has an expectation that

providers will reduce the risk that the use of restraint will become necessary by supporting positive behaviour and de-escalating disputes. This will involve techniques such as:

- Maintaining a non-confrontational atmosphere in the home
- Using the child's Safer Care Plan to identify any risks they may face or pose, and to set out steps for avoiding or reducing these risks
- Listening to children and young people and taking their problems seriously
- Clear communication, particularly when unwelcome messages are concerned
- Rewards for good behaviour
- Negotiation and compromise

Dorset Council is a Therapeutic Thinking authority. The Therapeutic Thinking approach challenges the concepts of 'bribes and sanctions' frequently used to manage behaviour, which often results in children and young people only following instructions because they will 'get something' for doing so. Instead, the approach seeks to foster the independence of children and young people by teaching them how to develop internal discipline. The aim is that they are always able to behave pro socially, without the need for adults to manage this.<sup>1</sup>

### **3. When the Need for Restraint cannot be Avoided**

- 3.1 The use of restraint itself poses a risk to the safety of the child, to the safety of the adult applying it, and potentially to others who are present. It is justifiable only in the limited circumstances in which these risks are balanced against a greater risk of harm if the provider does not intervene physically.
- 3.2 Circumstances which may justify the use of restraint include situations in which a young person:
- Engages in serious self-harming behaviour
  - Exhibits violent behaviour towards others
  - Has caused damage to property and appears to be out of control or acting with the intention of causing serious damage
  - Recklessly puts him/herself or others at imminent risk of significant harm, including actions taken under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- 3.3 When restraint is necessary the provider will:
- a) Apply the minimum force necessary to prevent injury to any person or serious damage to property; and

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<sup>1</sup> See [West Sussex's Therapeutic Thinking Aims | Tools for schools \(local-offer.org\)](#), viewed August 2023

b) Apply force for the minimum period necessary to take control of the situation.

3.4 Any restraint must not deliberately inflict pain and should be used in a way that does not humiliate the child/young person.

#### **4. After Applying Restraint**

4.1 Following the use of restraint, and as soon as possible once the situation is de-escalated, the provider should seek to establish whether the child has been injured in any way, and if they have, to ensure the appropriate medical attention is given.

4.2 When a provider has applied restraint s/he must inform the Supported Accommodation Social Worker or the on-call manager about the incident within 24 hours. If either of these believes that the incident may require [notification to Ofsted](#), they will contact the Supported Accommodation Service Manager for a decision.

4.3 The child's Social Worker will see the child within one working day of notification to understand how the incident has affected the child, and to confirm they are not injured. They will inform the child that the Supported Accommodation Social Worker will visit them to hear how the incident appeared to them; the child's Social Worker will ensure that the child or young person can choose to have a family member or advocate present at this meeting. They will inform the child's parents of the incident. They will remind the child of their right to complain about the incident if they wish.

4.4 Within 3 working days of the incident the provider must provide a written report of the incident giving details of the circumstances (this could be a copy of the note in the provider's own records). The Supported Accommodation Service will arrange for the supervising social worker to discuss the incident and provide appropriate support. The Supported Accommodation manager will discuss the implications of this report with the Head of Supported Accommodation within 10 working days.

4.5 Within 15 working days of the incident the child's Social Work Team Manager will convene a multi-agency meeting to review the incident and the learning from it. The meeting will agree:

- How the child's Safer Care Plan should be updated to reflect any new risks identified and any steps that will be taken to reduce these
- Whether any further assessment of need or risk is required, for example by a specialist
- How future incidents of similar nature can be avoided, or failing that, de-escalated

- An acceptable form(s) of restraint, should this foreseeably be required to de-escalate future incidents

4.6 The multi-agency plan should be shared with Dorset Police once agreed.

## **5. Behaviour management, discipline, control and restraint**

Being able to promote positive behaviour and manage children's behaviour well is central to the quality of care provided in any home. Negative behaviour should usually be managed through building positive relationships with children. Providers should be able to respond positively to each child or young person's individual behaviour and will be skilled at both diffusing difficult situations and averting escalation. The child's placement plan must set out any specific behavioural issues that need to be addressed or approaches to be used.

Every Supported Accommodation service is required to prepare and implement a clear written policy about acceptable measures of control, restraint and discipline of children placed with providers (regulation 13 and standard 3; this procedure meets the regulatory requirement). All providers should be made aware of this procedure and always apply it. The service must ensure that no form of corporal punishment is used on any child by a provider or a member of their household, and that no young person is subject to any excessive or unreasonable measure of control, restraint or discipline.

Restraint should only be used in exceptional circumstances where it is the only appropriate means to prevent likely injury to the child or other people, or likely serious damage to property, and in a manner consistent with the actions of any good parent. Sanctions for poor behaviour must be clear, reasonable and fair and must not include restraint or corporal punishment.

Wherever possible providers should use constructive dialogue with the child or guide them away from a confrontational situation. They should also understand their own emotional response to confrontation or threat, and know when to withdraw, concede or seek help.