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Understanding and Supporting Behaviour in Education Settings

(Safer practice for settings, including the use of restrictive / non-restrictive physical intervention, use of reasonable force)

Guidance for education settings

Autumn 2025

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Introduction – a whole setting approach

There is much in educational literature on the essential best practice requirement for a whole setting approach when promoting healthy emotional wellbeing and positive behaviour. Positive behaviour in settings is key to academic achievement, and inseparable from safeguarding, the wellbeing of children and young people (CYP) / staff and all other aspects of learning. Setting senior leaders should be active in promoting a positive approach to this and there should be a shared ethos for the setting, which emphasises care, respect and responsibility. The cornerstone of such an approach is that it is owned and implemented by the whole setting community, including staff, CYP, parents and the setting governors.

The Department for Education (DfE) within the guidance [Behaviour in schools guidance (publishing.service.gov.uk)](#) requires settings to have a Behaviour Policy. This should set out a setting's approach to behaviour for all CYP and for those with more difficult or harmful behaviour. It should be clear, well-understood by all CYP, staff and parents and consistently applied.

The Behaviour Policy should be transparent about the setting's use of day-to-day physical contact with CYP and should set out very clearly its procedures and supportive and helpful strategies in respect of behaviour management. It should include when a setting may use restrictive and non-restrictive physical intervention as a response to difficult and harmful behaviour, how this is recorded and how it will be communicated to parents. The policy must comply with the Equality Act 2010 (settings must ensure their policies and practices do not discriminate against any CYP by unfairly increasing the risk of suspension or exclusion for them).

For all settings, establishing and maintaining high standards of behaviour is not only vital in ensuring that teachers can deliver the curriculum, but also plays a critical role in ensuring that the setting is a safe environment for all pupils. The behaviour policy should be aligned with the setting's legal duties and standards relating to the welfare of CYP. All staff should be aware of the measures outlined in the setting's behaviour policy and how they should implement these measures - this is one of the key systems in place in settings which supports safeguarding. It is essential that all staff are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities, as set out in the statutory guidance: [Keeping children safe in education](#)

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) sets out that all setting staff have a responsibility to provide a safe environment in which pupils can learn. The setting Behaviour Policy should be designed to reflect this, and it should link closely with safeguarding policies. As part of taking a whole-setting approach to behaviour and safeguarding, it will be important that the respective policies complement one another.

Settings should always consider behaviour (and responses to it) in the context of keeping CYP safe. Keeping Children Safe in Education states that safeguarding and promoting the welfare of CYP is everyone's responsibility.   It explicitly states that:

> "*everyone who comes into contact with chilren and their families has a role to play. In order to fulfil this responsibility effectively, all professionals should make sure their approach is CYP centred. This means that they should consider, at all times, what is in the best interests of the child*".

Staff should work positively and confidently with CYP and find the least intrusive way possible to support, empower and them safe.

- building relationships of trust and understanding
- understanding triggers and finding solutions
- if incidents do occur, defusing the situation and/or distracting the CYP wherever possible.

Governors / Boards must make, and periodically review, a written statement of principles to help Headteachers and leaders determine the measures that make up the setting's behaviour policy. There must be consultation with the Headteacher / leader, other appropriate members of staff, parents and all registered CYP before making or changing this 'statement of principles' – this supports the expectation that approaches to behaviour are owned by the whole setting community. Further advice is available in the DfE guidance: [Behaviour in schools (DfE 2024)](#)

A whole-setting approach to the promotion of positive behaviour and emotional wellbeing enables staff to support each other and involves them in open discussions about behaviour and safeguarding, without individuals feeling their classroom management skills are being questioned. Because staff support has been identified as one of the major factors in coping effectively with difficult and harmful behaviour, best practice is where they receive appropriate training which is regularly updated. Staff should be supported and empowered through training that supports understanding and identifies interventions to respond appropriately. When this happens effectively it should reduce the number of significant incidents in future.

The importance of relationships in supporting wellbeing and mental health
Settings should be mindful of the impact of any practice or policy that they adopt on the wellbeing and mental health of their CYP and staff. Positive emotional wellbeing and mental health begins during childhood and, naturally, settings have an integral part to play in this because of the amount of time CYP spend in their education setting.

It is paramount that settings provide environments which are relationally enriched, safe, predictable, and nurturing. Adults in settings must be good role models in their interactions with CYP, and should be attentive, respectful, honest, and caring.

Behaviour should be understood as a form of communication. In Essex, there is a trauma informed approach to understanding and supporting behaviour. This is known as Trauma Perceptive Practice (TPP) and it helps settings support CYP whose unmet needs manifest themselves in communicating behaviours.

Expecting, creating, and maintaining high standards of behaviour
All settings should ensure CYP are able to learn in a calm, safe, and supportive environment. The behaviour policy is the starting point for setting out the culture and expectations for behaviour and is a way of communicating to staff, pupils and parents / carers the setting's approach to this. The setting should have high expectations for conduct of behaviour and the policy should be owned and understood by the whole setting community.

The DfE expects settings to reflect the following principles within its Behaviour Policy and to be:

- ✓ **accessible and easily understood:** clear and easily understood by pupils, staff and parents
- ✓ **aligned and coherent:** aligned to other key policy documents
- ✓ **inclusive:** consider the needs of all pupils and staff, so all members of the setting community can feel safe and that they belong
- ✓ **consistent and detailed**: have sufficient detail to ensure meaningful and consistent implementation by all members
- ✓ **supportive:** address how pupils will be supported to meet high standards of behaviour

The Behaviour Policy should be a sufficient framework for the majority of CYP, especially when it values and emphasises the importance of relationships. However, it should be recognised there are some CYP who have needs that require a more personalised approach. This is particularly relevant where behaviour may compromise the safety and / or wellbeing of themselves or others. Settings should seek to understand the range of behaviours and respond with, respect, calmness, and logical consistency.

Pro-social and positive behaviour
Recognising pro-social and positive behaviour is vital and provides an opportunity to reward it. This reinforces the expectations and values set out in the policy and there

should process in place to encourage positive behaviour across the whole setting community.

Anti-social (difficult and harmful) behaviour
When examining and talking about anti-social behaviour, it is useful to separate it into two types: *difficult* behaviour and *harmful behaviour* (sometimes referred to as '*dangerous behaviour*').

Difficult behaviour, in the setting context, encompasses behaviour that has duration, frequency, intensity or persistence and is beyond the typical range for the setting. It generally:

- interferes with the CYP or young person's own and / or other CYP' learning; disrupts the day-to-day functioning of the setting, making it a less safe and orderly environment

- is less likely to be responsive to the usual range of interventions identified within the setting behaviour policy.

It should be recognised that difficult behaviour may also include withdrawn behaviour, including any reluctance to respond or engage in learning or socialising.

Harmful behaviour in the setting context encompasses behaviour that is generally:

- physically aggressive towards adults or other CYP (including pushing, punching, kicking, biting, scratching, spitting, head-butting)

- verbally abusive (and may include racist/homophobic/sexist abuse)

- destructive, including destruction of property and the environment

- self-harming, including head banging, scratching, hitting, kicking, biting and poking

- striking another adult / CYP or young person with an object

Responding to difficult behaviour
Evidence suggests that CYP will do better where they have strong relationships with staff. It is these staff who will be able to support them at the times of most difficulty. Therefore, developing good relationships with all CYP is a vital precursor to managing

behaviour and supporting emotional wellbeing. Positive relationships are also a reliable strong protective factor in helping CYP to become resilient.

It is important to remember that some behaviour, which may be deemed 'difficult', may be characteristic of a particular need and particularly prevalent in CYP with learning disabilities or who are neurodiverse. For these CYP, it will be necessary to adopt a proactive approach to support their needs and to raise awareness of their behaviour with other staff and explain why it is happening. This should be done using the One Plan (assess, plan, do and review) framework and accessing external support if appropriate.

Responding to harmful behaviour

Most CYP do not become dysregulated to a level where they compromise themselves and or others through harmful behaviour. When such incidents occur, they are deemed serious and can cause a great deal of stress for those involved. Best practice expects that careful and purposeful 'one planning' will have been used to mitigate against such harmful behaviour. This will ensure that effective 'Adult Response Plans' are in place for those CYP requiring them. The key to the success of any plan is that it is fully discussed, understood and implemented consistently by all staff, CYP and parents / carers.

The Behaviour Policy should set out systems to respond to harmful behaviour. This may include when staff should call for assistance and other supportive and helpful responses, such as those detailed below.

When faced with potentially harmful behaviour, a prepared adult response, using a 'script', may prove useful to support the CYP. The CYP should always be spoken to calmly and respectfully. Below are some recommended examples of phrases that can be used in a script. For example;

> *I can see there's something wrong (acknowledge their right to their feelings)*

> *Tell me what happened. I'm here to help and listen.*

> *You are safe – I care about you – I am here to keep you safe*

> *I'm here to help (tell them why you are here)*

> *I'll listen if you think speaking to me will help you (it may be possible for staff to find out how the situation has developed, or how it may be resolved)*

Come with me and we can....... (giving the CYP or young person an 'out' to withdraw from the situation)

I can see this is difficult – you need to try and use your words to tell me

During this period, the CYP should be given physical space and time to recover and respond to requests. Where co-regulation has not been possible and difficult or harmful behaviour continues, they should be guided / supported from the classroom to a place of safety, with the assistance of another member of staff. Where this is not possible, an alternative is for the rest of the class to be removed from a potentially dangerous or harmful situation. Staff should always stay with the CYP, but at a safe distance (this is usually at least an extended arm's length away from them). At this point, it is important not to raise the stress of the CYP any further. Staff should maintain an open stance, actively guiding them to a place of safety, rather than blocking them or backing them into a corner, as this could increase the level of stress and make the situation worse. As part of safeguarding, following any serious harmful (or potentially harmful) incident, a risk assessment should be completed to inform planning and future practice. The member of staff should also be offered a 'debrief' to look after their wellbeing.

Use of consequences

'Consequences' can be a useful response to particular behaviours. Evidence suggests that punishments and sanctions alone have limited long-term effects, so it is important for the CYP or young person to see a logical link between their behaviour and the response. Consequences should have a clear link to the incident and help the CYP or young person to learn how to behave more appropriately should a similar situation occur, tailoring this to the needs of the individual.

It is helpful to view consequences as protective and / or educational.

Protective consequences: required to protect the rights of others and keep a CYP or young person safe
- ✓ increased staff ratio
- ✓ change of setting day / timetable
- ✓ arrangements for access to outside space
- ✓ CYP or young person escorted in social situations
- ✓ differentiated teaching space
- ✓ appropriate use of suspension (using the time to reflect, amend plans and identify needs and other appropriate interventions to support the CYP upon return).

Best practice suggests that all protective consequences should run alongside educational consequences, as there is the risk that long-term behavioural change will be limited without this.

Educational consequences: these are often required through intentional teaching, to encourage, support and motivate the CYP to behave differently next time though better understanding. Examples include

- ✓ ensuring the CYP completes the task they have disrupted
- ✓ rehearsing / modelling situations through intentional teaching of pro-social behaviour
- ✓ ensure the CYP assists with repairs where they have caused damage (when possible and practical)
- ✓ intentionally provide educational opportunities for the CYP to learn about the impact of certain actions and behaviours
- ✓ providing the CYP with an opportunity to 'put things right' through a process of reflecting, repairing and restoring relationships (the Restorative Justice approach is one that could be used).

Reflect, repair and restore

There is strong research evidence that restorative processes, where reflections and learning take place, are successful in supporting wellbeing and long-term behaviour change.

During any incident the CYP's behaviour is likely to be influenced by a strong emotion such as a feeling of anger, frustration, or disappointment. It must be remembered that the CYP will not be ready to engage in anything until they have calmed sufficiently. Equally, the impact of the incident on the staff and others involved should also be recognised.

Once it is considered the CYP is ready for the restorative process, this can take place and should involve all relevant persons (for example, key staff, parents, other CYP). The purpose of reflect, repair and restore is to re-visit the experience with the CYP when they are calm, relaxed and receptive to being reflective about the incident.

The discussion, *once the situation has been sufficiently calmed* may be as follows:

1. Explore what happened (tell the story)

2. Explore what people were thinking and feeling at the time

3. Explore who has been affected and how

4. Explore how relationships can be repaired

5. Summarise what has been learnt so there can be different responses next time

Some examples of restorative questions within this discussion may be:
- What would you like to happen next?

- How can we make things better for you and others affected?

- If everything was going to be alright, what would need to happen?

- How can you help to put this right?

- How can we make it OK for you next time something happens?

To be effective, the reflect, repair and restore process should be adjusted according to the age, understanding and other needs of the CYP.

Use of physical contact
There are occasions when staff will have cause to have physical contact with CYP for a variety of reasons, this may include:

- to comfort a CYP in distress *(appropriate to their age and individual specific needs identified through a risk assessment);*
- to direct a CYP;
- for curricular reasons *(for example in PE, Music, Drama etc);*
- in an emergency, to avert danger to the CYP or young person or others;

The guidance produced by the Department for Education [Use of Reasonable Force (DfE, 2013)](#) states that:

> *"Schools **should not** have a 'no contact' policy. There is a real risk that such a policy might place a member of staff in breach of their duty of care towards a child or young person or prevent them taking action needed to prevent a child or young person causing harm."*

Where physical contact is used, protective steps must be taken to ensure it is legal and will prevent harm. In all situations where physical contact between staff and CYP takes place, staff must consider the following:

- the CYP's age and level of understanding
- the CYP's individual needs and history

- the location where the contact takes place (ideally it should not take place in private without others present)

When might you use physical contact?

Settings may choose to use touch with CYP for a variety of reasons but, in general terms, they would normally do so for comfort, reward or guidance. It should be acknowledged that some CYP will not want to be touched and this should be respected.

How might you use physical contact?

Hugging: A sideways on hug, with the adult putting their hands on the CYP's shoulders is by far the safest way to do this as both hands of the adult can be seen. Hugging can be used either standing or seated. This discourages 'front on' cuddling and placing the adult's hands on the shoulders limits the ability of the CYP to turn themselves into them.

Hand-Holding: It is natural that young CYP sometimes enjoy being able to hold hands with adults around them. This is perfectly acceptable when the hand holding is compliant. However, if the handholding is being used by an adult as a method of control to move CYP, this can become a restraint.

Therefore, the best practice is the use of the 'offering an arm'. This is done by the adult holding their arm out, and the CYP is encouraged to wrap their hand around the adult's lower arm. The adult's other hand can then be placed over the CYP for a little extra security if it is required.

In summary, it is generally deemed appropriate to touch others on the upper arm and shoulders.

Lap-Sitting: There are very clear potential risks with this and, as such, lap-sitting should be discouraged, so neither staff nor CYP are vulnerable. CYP should be taught to seek comfort / attention through other means. If a CYP attempts to sit on an adult's lap there should be immediate active guidance to a more appropriate seating position alongside the adult.

The searching and screening of CYP

Guidance from the Department for Education is called Searching, Screening and Confiscation Advice for settings: Searching, Screening and Confiscation (DfE 2022). This document makes it very clear that settings and their staff are an important part of the wider safeguarding system for CYP (as set out in the statutory guidance Working together to safeguard Children). Before screening or conducting a search of a pupil, it is vital that settings consider their obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights. Under Article 8, pupils have a right to respect for their private life. In the context

of these rights and obligations, this means that pupils have the right to expect a reasonable level of personal privacy. The right under Article 8 is not absolute (as all settings have duties around safeguarding which may override it); it can be interfered with, but any interference with this right by a setting (or other agency) must be justified and proportionate. The powers to search in the Education Act 1996 are compatible with Article 8. Any setting exercising those powers lawfully should have no difficulty in demonstrating that it has also acted in accordance with Article 8. This advice will assist settings in deciding how to exercise their searching powers in a lawful way."

The key messages from the guidance are contained below.

Key messages

Screening
Screening is the use of a walk-through or hand-held metal detector (arch or wand) to scan all pupils for weapons before they enter the setting premises. Before considering the installation and use of any technology for screening, the setting should consult with the local police who may be able to provide advice about whether installation of these devices is appropriate. Where it is introduced, there should be clear communication on to pupils, staff and parent / carers the rationale for doing so and arrangements going forward.

Searching
The guidance clearly states searching can play a critical role in ensuring that settings are safe environments for all pupils and staff. It is a vital measure to safeguard and promote staff and pupil welfare, and to maintain high standards of behaviour through which pupils can learn and thrive.

Headteachers and staff they authorise have a statutory power to search a pupil or their possessions where they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the pupil may have a prohibited item listed in paragraph (or any other item that the Behaviour Policy identifies as a prohibited item which may be searched for).

The list of prohibited items is:

- knives and weapons
- alcohol
- illegal drugs
- stolen items
- fireworks
- pornographic images

- tobacco and cigarette papers (this does not include e-cigarettes or vapes)
- any article that the member of staff reasonably suspects has been, or is likely to be used:

  ➢ to commit an offence
  ➢ to cause personal injury to
  ➢ to damage to property of any person (including the pupil)

In addition, under common law, setting staff have the power to search a pupil for any item if the pupil agrees. The member of staff should ensure the pupil understands the reason for the search and how it will be conducted so that their agreement is informed.

The Behaviour Policy should outline any banned items for which a search can be made. This <u>must</u> include the list of prohibited items and may include other items which a headteacher has decided are detrimental to maintaining high standards of behaviour and a safe environment.

When exercising their powers, settings must consider the age and needs of pupils being searched or screened. This includes the individual needs or learning difficulties of pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and making reasonable adjustments that may be required where a pupil has a disability. Staff may wish to consider using CCTV footage to decide whether to conduct a search for an item.

Leaders must ensure that a culture of safe, proportionate and appropriate searching is in place and understood by the pupils, staff and parent/carers. The headteacher has overall responsibility for searching and ensuring that staff are appropriately trained. Only the headteacher, or a member of staff authorised by the headteacher, can carry out a search.

Processes for searching should be set out as part of safeguarding arrangements. The designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) should be informed of any searching incidents and there should be effective processes in place for recording such incidents and communicating them to parents / carers. If there is any concern about risk of, or actual, harm to a CYP, the usual child protection procedures should be implemented.

A decision about whether to use reasonable force to conduct a search should be made on a case-by-case basis. Consideration should be given to whether conducting the search should be undertaken to safeguard and whether it would prevent the pupil harming themselves or others, damaging property or from causing disorder.

The law states the member of staff conducting the search must be of the same sex as the pupil being searched. There must be another member of staff present as a witness to the search. There is a limited exception to this rule. This is that a member of staff can search a pupil of the opposite sex and/or without a witness present <u>only in exceptional circumstances and where</u>:

- the member of staff carrying out the search reasonably believes there is risk that serious harm will be caused to a person if the search is not carried out as a matter of urgency
- in the time available, it is not reasonably practicable for the search to be carried out by a member of staff who is same sex as the pupil or it is not reasonably practicable for the search to be carried out in the presence of another member of staff

Where a member of staff does conduct a search as an 'emergency' measure, they should immediately report this to an appropriate senior member of staff.

Strip searching

A strip search is a search involving the removal of more than outer clothing (see paragraph 29). Strip searches on setting premises can only be carried out by police officers under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) Code A and in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) Code C.

<u>Strip searches can only be undertaken by the Police and must never be undertaken by staff within the setting</u>. Settings may decide to call the Police themselves to respond to a particular situation, or the Police may arrive at setting with a request to meet with a pupil in relation to a matter they are already dealing. In either scenario, staff retain a duty of care to the pupil(s) involved and should advocate for pupil wellbeing at all times.

Once the police are on-site, the decision on whether to conduct a strip search lies solely with them.

Parents should always be informed once a strip search has taken place (it will be for the setting and the Police involved to agree how this will be done). However, settings must keep records of any strip searches that have been conducted on-site.

Confiscation

An authorised staff member carrying out a search can confiscate any item that they have reasonable grounds for suspecting:
- poses a risk to staff or pupils;
- is prohibited, or identified in the setting rules for which a search can be made
- is evidence in relation to an offence

Use of Reasonable Force and Restrictive Physical Intervention (restraint) – the legal position, human rights and procedural safeguards

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) 'Human Rights Framework for Restraint' (2019) sets out key principles within the Human Rights Act in relation to restraint in order to 'protect and respect the safety and dignity of people being restrained as well as those around them, including staff'.

The EHRC defines restraint as 'an act carried out with the purpose of restricting an individual's movement, liberty and / or freedom to act independently'.

Keeping Children Safe in Education states:

"*When using reasonable force in response to risks presented by incidents involving children with SEN or disabilities or with medical conditions, settings and colleges should in considering the risks carefully recognise the additional vulnerability of these groups. They should also consider their duties under the Equality Act 2010 in relation to making reasonable adjustments, non-discrimination and their* Public Sector Equality Duty. *By planning positive and proactive behaviour support, for instance through drawing up individual behaviour plans for more vulnerable children, and agreeing them with parents and carers, settings and colleges can reduce the occurrence of challenging behaviour and the need to use reasonable force*".

The guidance produced by the Department for Education "Use of Reasonable Force" is helpful and the following section is directly from this guidance.

Within this (in blue), is additional information from the Essex authors.

What is reasonable force?
- The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions used by most teachers at some point in their career that involve a degree of physical contact with CYP.

- Force is usually used either to control or restrain. This can range from guiding a CYP or young person to safety by the arm* through to more extreme circumstances such as breaking up a fight or where a student needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury.

This must not involve gripping as it could result in harm to the CYP. Staff will need training if this is a regular occurrence.

- 'Reasonable in the circumstances' means using no more force than is needed.

- Control means either passive physical contact, such as standing between CYP, redirecting a CYP's path, or active physical contact such as escorting a CYP by the arm or arms out of a classroom. This should never involve pulling or dragging.

- Restraint means to hold back physically or to bring a CYP under control. It is typically used in more extreme circumstances, for example when two CYP are fighting and refuse to separate without physical intervention.

- Setting staff should always try to avoid acting in a way that might cause injury, but in extreme cases it may not always be possible to avoid injuring the CYP**.

**Staff should receive training specific to the identified needs of their setting which will significantly reduce the likelihood of this happening

Who can use reasonable force?
- All members of setting staff have a legal power to use reasonable force

- This power applies to any member of staff at the setting. It can also apply to people whom the headteacher has temporarily put in charge of CYP such as unpaid volunteers or parents accompanying students on a setting organised visit.

When can reasonable force be used?
- Reasonable force can be used to prevent CYP from harming themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing disorder.

- In a setting, force is used for two main purposes – to control CYP or to restrain them.

- The decision on whether or not to physically intervene is down to the professional judgement of the staff member concerned and should always depend on the individual circumstances.

Settings can use reasonable force to:

This list is not exhaustive and provides examples of where reasonable can and cannot be used – this is also taken from DfE guidance

- remove disruptive CYP from the classroom where they have refused to follow an instruction to do so;

- prevent a CYP behaving in a way that disrupts a setting event or a setting trip or visit;

- prevent a CYP leaving the classroom where allowing them to leave would risk their safety or lead to behaviour that disrupts the behaviour of others;

- prevent a CYP from attacking a member of staff or another CYP, or to stop a fight in the playground; and

- restrain a CYP at risk of harming themselves through physical outbursts.

Reasonable force should only be used to avoid harm to the CYP or others and where all other strategies have been considered or attempted.

Key messages

Settings cannot use force as a punishment; - *"it is **always** unlawful to use force as a punishment"*

(Use of Reasonable Force - DfE, 2013)

It must be emphasised that the vast majority of CYP misbehaviour can be managed without any use of force or restraint. All behaviour can be seen as communication.

Settings should consider whether the behaviour under review gives cause to suspect that a CYP is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm. Where this may be the case, setting staff should follow the settings' safeguarding policy. They should also consider whether continuing disruptive behaviour might be the result of unmet educational or other needs.

All members of staff have a 'Duty of Care' towards the CYP in their care. Therefore, if a CYP is likely to be at risk from harm in an emergency situation, action must be taken and this may include a physical intervention.

The action taken will be dependent on the level of risk and the assessment that is made at that moment in time.

Where CYP show dangerous or harmful behaviour, identified through a risk assessment, then restrictive physical intervention may be considered as a strategy to manage harm. The necessity to use this should reduce over time. If incidents do not decrease, it is not a successful strategy and risk management plan reviews need to take place regularly (at least termly).

The following principles must be borne in mind when considering any use of physical restraint:

- physical intervention carries the possibility of being interpreted as an assault
- physical intervention may carry the risk of injury to the CYP or to the adult involved
- any consideration of the use of restraint or containment should only occur, as a last resort, where no other intervention is feasible or effective
- the intention of any physical intervention must be clear.

In short, staff should only intervene physically to restrain or contain a CYP:

- where there is a clear danger to the CYP or others (including adults)
- Where all other interventions have failed or are not feasible
- with the clear intention of removing the CYP from danger
- with the minimum force required to ensure the CYP's safety.

Settings should ensure that staff are appropriately trained in non-restrictive and restrictive intervention, and that they remain compliant with the recommended refresher updates, as required by the provider. This should be explicit in all related policies and procedures.

Removal, Withdrawal, Isolation and Seclusion

The language around removal withdrawal, isolation and seclusion is often misinterpreted.

The latest Department for Education Guidance now has a specific section on the removal of CYP: [Behaviour in Settings - Advice for headteachers and setting staff (DfE 2022)](#)

Helpful ways of understanding these terms in the context of this guidance are set out below:

Removal: should be used for the following reasons:

a) to maintain the safety of all pupils and to restore stability following an unreasonably high level of disruption.
b) to enable disruptive pupils to be taken to a place where education can be continued in a managed environment; and
c) to allow the pupil to regain calm in a safe space.

Removal should be distinguished from the use of separation spaces (sometimes known as sensory or nurture rooms) for non-disciplinary reasons. For instance, where a pupil is taken out of the classroom to regulate his or her emotions because of identified sensory overload as part of a planned response.

The following section is directly from this guidance:

Governance of removal
Headteachers should:

a) make clear in the setting behaviour policy that removal may be used as a response to serious misbehaviour
b) maintain overall strategic oversight of the setting's arrangements for any removals, as set out in the setting's behaviour policy
c) make sure the reasons that may lead to pupils being removed are transparent and known to all staff and pupils
 d) outline in the behaviour policy the principles governing the length of time that it is appropriate for a pupil to be in removal
e) ensure that the removal location is in an appropriate area of the setting and stocked with appropriate resources, is a suitable place to learn and refocus, and is supervised by trained members of staff; and
 f) design a clear process for the reintegration of any pupil in removal into the classroom when appropriate and safe to do so.

When dealing with individual removal cases, Headteachers and teachers should:

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a) consider whether any assessment of underlying factors of disruptive behaviour is needed;

b) facilitate reflection by the pupil on the behaviour that led to their removal from the classroom and what they can do to improve and avoid such behaviour in the future;

c) ensure that pupils are never locked in the room of their removal.

There may be exceptional situations in which it is necessary to physically prevent a pupil from leaving a room in order to protect the safety of pupils and staff from immediate risk, but this would be a safety measure and not a disciplinary sanction and therefore is not covered by this section;

d) ensure that the Children and Families Act 2014, the Equality Act 2010 and regulations under those Acts are being complied with; and

e) if a pupil has a social worker, including if they have a Child in Need plan, a Child Protection plan or are looked-after, notify their social worker. If the pupil is looked-after, ensure their Personal Education Plan is appropriately reviewed and amended and notify their Virtual Setting Head.

Key Message

Pupils should not be removed from classrooms for prolonged periods of time without the explicit agreement of the headteacher. These pupils should be given extensive support to continue their education including targeted pastoral support aimed to improve behaviour so they can be reintegrated and succeed within the mainstream setting community.

Staff supervising areas used for removal should be suitably trained in both the setting behaviour policy and the relationship/interpersonal skills necessary to support and understand pupils with a variety of communicating behaviours and contexts.

Withdrawal: the removal of a CYP from a place of stress to a safe place, where they can be supported and monitored until they are ready to re-engage with learning – the CYP may need the choice of some time alone to 'recover', according to their needs

Isolation: the removal of a CYP from their peer group. Settings use this in a range of ways, often in what are referred to as 'internal exclusion', 'reflection' 'isolation' or 'inclusion' rooms / booths

Seclusion: when a CYP is *forced* to spend time *alone* and *against their will* (for example, they are prevented from leaving a room of their own free will (including locking a door,

holding a door closed, a handle or exit button placed out of reach of CYP). Seclusion **must not** be a planned response to behaviour and can only be considered in **exceptional** or **emergency circumstance** (as concluded by the Child C versus Local Authority court case - *Royal Courts of Justice 16th June 2011*).

Settings **must always** consider the well-being and mental health of all CYP and staff. Whilst settings may use withdrawal and isolation as part of their approach to managing behaviour, they must always act reasonably, proportionately and, most importantly, assess the risk of any consequence being considered. Consequences involving removal, withdrawal, isolation and seclusion, are in themselves potentially damaging to well-being, mental health and positive relationships with CYP. Any practice that promotes repair and restore through relationships and connection will be extremely beneficial and supportive to wellbeing and mental health.

To reiterate, seclusion may only be used in an exceptional or emergency situation and not as a routine approach to behaviour. On the rare occasion that a setting uses seclusion, they must have procedures in place on how to communicate to parents when this has been used with their CYP.

Managing allegations against members of staff / volunteers

Essex data shows that a high number of allegations against the workforce in settings involved allegations of physical abuse. It is frequently the most recorded abuse type for settings, so it is essential all staff members and volunteers are made aware of the boundaries of appropriate behaviour and conduct. This should form part of staff induction and should be outlined in the Staff Behaviour Policy / Code of Conduct. Many allegations against members of setting staff involve situations of 'door-blocking', bag / jumper grabbing (particularly where hair has been caught in a hood) and staff should always be aware of their behaviour towards CYP.

In Essex, every setting must work in accordance with statutory guidance and the Essex [SET Procedures (ESCB)](#) in respect of allegations against an adult working with CYP (in a paid or voluntary capacity). Local Authority Designated Officers (LADOs) work in the Children's Workforce Allegations Team and manage the process for allegations against persons working or volunteering with CYP. Further information about the role of the LADO is available on the [ESCB](#) website.

The LADO should be contacted in the event of an allegation that a worker or volunteer has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a child or young person

- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child or young person

- behaved towards children or young people in a way indicating they may pose a risk of harm to them

- behaved or may have behaved in a way which indicates they may not be suitable to work with children or young people

Any referral relating to a person working with children should be made in writing by emailing lado@essex.gov.uk. The referrer will receive a referral form for completion with instructions on how to submit it.

Staff must feel safe to report any concerns around inappropriate practice and the setting must have a whistleblowing policy in place and ensure all staff are aware of it. Where a concern involves the Headteacher (or senior lead, depending on the setting type), it should be reported direct to the Chair of Governors or Board / Trustee with employment responsibilities.

Reporting and investigation of accidents and incidents

All community and voluntary controlled settings are required to follow the Essex County Council Accident and Incident Reporting Policy (HSP12.0). Where non-community and voluntary controlled settings purchase a Health and Safety service from the local authority, they are encouraged to adopt this policy or similar.

Should advice be required settings may contact the Health and Safety team via HS@essex.gov.uk or on 03330 139818.

Non-community and voluntary controlled settings who do not buy a Health and Safety service from Essex County Council should ensure they have a robust reporting procedure that meets all statutory requirements.

Communication to parents / carers

Where it has been deemed necessary to use a restrictive physical intervention, the detail of this should be accurately recorded and the incident communicated to parents *(see Appendix E)*. Parents should be informed of the incident initially by phone and it should then be followed up in writing (this process should be set out in the setting Behaviour Policy). Where it is necessary to suspend or permanently exclude a pupil for the incident, there is separate guidance on this and supporting model paperwork for settings to use to ensure they meet statutory requirements relating to this.

<u>Further Guidance</u>

1. [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)

2. [Reducing the Need for Restraint and Restrictive Intervention (DfE, 2019)](#)

3. [Searching, Screening and Confiscation (DfE 2022)](#)

4. [Behaviour in Settings - Advice for headteachers and setting staff (DfE 2022)](#)

5. [Further guidance and resources for supporting behaviour in settings - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](#)

6. [Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from maintained settings, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement (DfE 2022)](#)

7. [SET Procedures (ESCB)](#)

8. [The Human Rights Framework for Restraint (EHRC, 2019)](#)

9. [Restraint in settings inquiry: using meaningful data to protect Children's rights (EHRC, 2021)](#)

Appendix A – Template for Recording an Incident

CYP name:	DoB:	Year group:

Date of the incident: **Day of the week:**	
Members of staff involved:	
Where it took place:	
What was the activity:	

Outline of event/ What happened?
Consequences: **Protecting (what will now happen to prevent any immediate further harm occurring)** **Learning/teaching (what needs to be revisited with the CYP or learnt)**
Was safe holding used? yes/no Restraint (Restrictive Physical Intervention) form completed
Parent / carer informed: **Time and date:**

Appendix B - Personalised Stress Management and Adult Response Planning *(developed from the Essex TPP approach)*

This tool is designed to keep everyone safe by enabling staff to think about, plan and be confident in safely supporting CYP.

How to use this tool

This tool should be discussed, constructed and agreed through One Planning. It is important that the CYP and their parent/carer is involved.

- Step 1: Identify the stressors being experienced by the CYP. There are five domains of stress, which are explained later in this document.
- Step 2: Complete the 'Warning Signs of Stress' table below, providing personalised detail of what this looks like and means for the CYP.
- Step 3: Complete the 'Stress Mapping' and 'Level of Harm' tables below. The frequency and severity of these provides an indication of whether an Adult Response Plan is necessary.
- Step 4: If the pupil is assessed to 'always' or 'often' experience stress or the harm is assessed to be of concern, develop both the personalised 'Adult Response Plan' and 'CYP's Self-regulation Plan' for the CYP as part of the One Planning process.
- Step 5: Regularly review and update the information in this tool through One Planning.

Name:	Date:
Year Group:	Review Date:

Warning Signs of Stress* (see explanations of the stressors below)

Stress Area	What is it that generally causes the stress?	Indicators of excessive stress- how does the CYP show this?
Physiological/sensory		
Emotional		
Thinking/learning related		
Social		

Prosocial		

Stress Mapping

	Not evident	Occasionally	Often	Always
Stress response is easily triggered				
Stress response is not equal with the stressor				
Individual is extremely restless/volatile				
Hard to co-regulate after 'alarm' is triggered				

Harm Mapping

Harm/Behaviour	Yes/No	Harm/Behaviour	Yes/No
Harm to self		Damage to property	
Harm to peers		Harm from disruption	
Harm to staff		Harm from running away	
Other harm			

For Reference:

One Planning Guidance & Templates, from the Essex Local Offer:
http://www.essexlocaloffer.org.uk/one-plan-templates/

Adult Response Plan

Window of Tolerance **What the CYP is like when regulated, calm and engaged?**	**How best to support and maintain this and support regulation**
Dysregulation **What are the first signs that things are becoming too stressful?**	**Strategies to support and to co-regulate**
Where does this stress behaviour lead to next? **What we are trying to avoid?**	
Hyperarousal	**Interventions necessary to support, co-regulate and keep everyone safe**
Hypoarousal	**Interventions necessary to support, co-regulate and keep everyone safe**

CYP Self-Regulation Plan

Stress Level	Strategy to Support
Red emotions Feeling afraid, angry, annoyed	How to best soothe myself
Yellow emotions Feeling worried, disappointed, silly	How to best to soothe myself
My window of Tolerance / Green emotions Feeling calm, happy, proud	How best to maintain
Blue emotions Feeling sad, low, sleepy	How best to re-energise and give myself hope

Notes:

The Adult Response Plan starts with the pupil's 'Window of Tolerance' or 'Green Zone' (from Zones of Regulation©), as it has been found that staff find it more useful to have the proactive strategies for promoting co-regulation at the top of the plan.

The Adult Response Plan and the CYP's Self-regulation Plan have been adapted to align with commonly used good practice, such as Zones of Regulation©.

Appendix C - Explanation of the Stress Areas

Domain and definition	A CYP having difficulty regulating in this area may:	Supportive strategies
Sensory/physiological - factors such as sleep, exercise, health, nutrition and sensory inputs.	o have challenges remaining calm amidst distracting visual and auditory stimuli o have difficulty sitting for more than a few minutes o withdraw (become hypoalert) and need to upregulate o become over-stimulated and need to down regulate	o less intense lighting – soft white light o use blinds to block out light o less bright visual materials o choice in seating (exercise balls, beanbag chairs, rocking chair) o keep clutter to a minimum o oral input (healthy crunchy snacks, water bottles etc.) o plants o removing squeaky chairs o designating areas for quiet and noisy o activities o creating comfortable learning areas to down- regulate o using music to signify transitions o visual schedules (predictable) o noise cancelling headphones o fidget tools (i.e. playdough) o action breaks
Thinking - the CYP's ability to concentrate and switch attention as well as appropriate task and language demands. • focus and switch focus as required • plan and execute several steps consecutively • problem-solve • understand cause and effect • time management • ignoring distractions • delaying gratification • sequencing ideas • tolerating frustration and learning from mistakes • switching focus	o have difficulty focusing attention o give up at the slightest frustration o daydream during class o be distracted by impulsive thoughts	o preferential seating o providing instruction in more than one o mode o quiet place when feeling overwhelmed o learning games (simon says, statues, musical chairs etc....) o breaking down instructions o providing collaborative learning o experiences o allowing CYP's choice and to set o own goals o digital technology o using the CYP's passions to engage o learning (consultation with families) o teaching time management skills o visual timer o self-reflection o providing consistent routines

Emotional		
Emotional - the CYP's ability to monitor, evaluate and modify their emotions • managing the big feelings and strong emotions • ability to recover from adversity • courage to learn new things • desire to achieve goals • healthy and realistic sense of self	o become overly excited when praised o show intense frustration when trying to solve a problem o become anxious when dealing with o confrontation o have difficulty focusing when strong emotions o arise	o holding classroom meetings to check o feelings o mindfulness o breathing exercises o encouraging CYP to express how o they are feeling verbally o using strategies and language from the o SMART thinking- There's always a way back o teaching calm down techniques o (breathing, counting down) o playing calm music during learning tasks o teaching positive self-talk o journaling feelings and experience o role playing how to express and cope
Social - the perspective of the CYP and the impact of their actions on others • understanding the feelings and intentions of self and others • monitoring the effects responses and adjusting when necessary ("appropriate responses") • the ability to be an effective communicator – as a listener and as a speaker • the ability to demonstrate a good sense of humour that does not rely on ridicule • the ability to recover from and repair breakdowns in interactions with others (e.g. through compromise)	o have difficulty listening to the ideas of others o have difficulty taking ownership over actions o respond inappropriately to a situation o have difficulty reading social cues	o collaborative learning experiences o music experiences o demonstrating a good sense of humour o using books to deepen communication of feelings o teaching how to read social cues o using expected and unexpected o behaviour prompts o teaching social media communication o skills o reinforcing rules
Prosocial - the idea that other people's stress also cause stress for the CYP / the ability to help regulate others and to co-regulate with others - this domain is rooted in the development of empathy and doing the "right" thing	As above	o collaborative learning experiences o teaching how to read social cues o using expected and unexpected o behaviour prompts o teaching social media communication o skills o reinforcing rules o reassurance

• a sense of honesty, both with oneself and with others • empathy, or the capacity to care about others' feelings and to help them deal with their emotions • the ability to put the needs and interests of others ahead of one's own • the desire to "do the right thing" and the conviction to act on one's conviction		

Appendix D – Template for recording an incident requiring restraint

Record of incident Requiring Physical Intervention (RPI)

CYP name:		DoB:	Year group:

Reporting member of staff:	
Date of incident:	
Start time of incident:	
End time of incident:	
Location of incident:	

Name(s) of additional staff witness:	Name(s) of additional CYP witness:

Stressors leading up to the hyperarousal and distress:

Co-regulation prior to the decision to use of RPI			
Verbal advice and support		Swapping of staff	
Calm talking and Reassurance		Distraction/diversion	
Personalised co-regulation script		Offering choices and options	
Humour		Offering safe space	
Other (specify)			

Why the RPI was deemed absolutely necessary	To prevent harm to self	
	To prevent harm to another CYP	
	To prevent harm to adults	
	To prevent damage to property	

	To prevent harm from absconding (in accordance with policy)	

The harm predicted to be prevented by the RPI

(e.g. bruising to peers, lacerations, destruction of computer, climbing over high fence, climbing on roof)

Unresolved harm/ details of damage to property (costs and details of harm to people including medical intervention or damage to property)

Was a medical record completed	Yes / No

Specific details of the RPI including sequence of techniques, time and staff involved

Time	Technique	Staff name

Duration of RPI:		Duration of the incident:	
Was there any physical mark or harm caused by the use of RPI to the CYP?	Yes/No	Details	
What action has been taken?			
Has the incident been reported to the Children Workforce Allegation Team (Local Authority Designated Officer)?	Yes/No	Details	

Incident reporting and monitoring

	Name	Time and date

Incident reported to Senior staff by:		
Parents / Carer verbally informed by:		
Parents / Carer letter sent:		
CYP wellbeing check by:		
Staff wellbeing verified by:		
Restorative conversation with CYP		

Care for CYP following the RPI

Verification of account of incident
Staff name	Staff signature	Date

Reporting staff name	RPI checker and approver name
Signature	**Signature**

Appendix E - template letter to inform parents of an incident

Dear *(parent / carer)*

Further to our earlier telephone conversation, I am writing to confirm our discussion about the incident in setting today. As discussed, it was deemed necessary to use a physical intervention with *(CYP name)*. You will be aware that such an intervention is used in our setting only as a last resort, where other interventions and de-escalation techniques have not been effective in reducing the harmful behaviour. As shared with you, it was felt by staff involved that, on this occasion, it was absolutely a necessary and appropriate response to *(CYP name)'s* behaviour at the time in order to keep them and everyone else safe.

As I explained, the detail of this incident is available in setting and forms part of *(CYP name)'s* records. If you would like to discuss this matter further, please feel free to contact me and I would be happy to meet with you.

Or

It is important that we continue to work together, going forward. I would like to invite you to a meeting to *write / review* a risk management plan for (*CYP name*) and I can share more detail about the recent incident with you

Yours sincerely

Appendix F - levels of reporting and recording difficult or harmful behaviour

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
When there was no need for first aid or medical attention, or when there is no long-term anxiety or stress as a result of the incident for a member of staff.	When there was a need for first aid or medical attention, or if the staff member experiences long term anxiety or stress as a result. When there was a need for non-restrictive physical intervention.	When it was deemed absolutely necessary to use restrictive physical intervention to co-regulate in order to keep everyone safe and prevent harm. *(when this is an agreed intervention to manage the harm as part of the Adult Response Plan/Behaviour Support/ Management Plan.)*	When it was deemed absolutely necessary to use restrictive physical intervention in order to keep everyone safe and to prevent harm including the CYP. *(when this has not been an agreed intervention to manage the harm as part of the Adult Response Plan/Behaviour Support/ Management Plan.)*
These are behaviours that are likely to be responsive to the usual range of support and interventions set out within the setting behaviour policy. They will be also be monitored and reviewed through personalised 'One Planning' when appropriate. Examples of such behaviours • Eating or mouthing non-edible items, such as stones, dirt, pen lids, bedding, metal, faeces • Smearing of faeces	These will encompass behaviours that have duration, frequency, intensity or persistence and are beyond the typical range for the setting. Such behaviour is less likely to be responsive to the usual range of support and interventions identified within the setting behaviour policy. These behaviours may also • compromise the CYP's own and / or other CYP's learning • disrupt the day to day functioning of the setting, making it a less safe and routine environment.	These will encompass behaviours that are harmful in that they compromise the safety and wellbeing of the CYP or staff: This will include • causing harm towards adults or other CYP (including pushing, punching, kicking, biting, scratching, spitting, head-butting) • causing harm to the learning environment, including that of property • striking another adult / CYP with an object	These will encompass behaviours that are harmful in that they compromise the safety and wellbeing of the CYP or staff: This will include • a one-off serious incident involving behaviour not previously observed in the CYP • causing harm towards adults or other CYP (including pushing, punching, kicking, biting, scratching, spitting, head-butting)

• Rocking, repetitive speech and repetitive actions or manipulation of objects • Absconding • removing of clothing items • Self-injury/harming, including head banging, scratching, hitting, kicking, biting and poking • Language-based personal abuse or sexual comments • Racist, sexist, or homophobic behaviour or comments	• Language-based persistent personal abuse or persistent sexual comments • Persistent racist, sexist, or homophobic behaviour or comments		• causing harm to the learning environment, including that of property • striking another adult / CYP with an object

Expected Reporting and Recording			
Systematic reporting and recording at the setting/setting level in accordance with policy.	Systematic reporting and recording at the setting level in accordance with policy. In all cases of RIDDOR and when Headteacher deems appropriate, these incidents may also be reported to ECC via MySafety.	Systematic reporting and recording at the setting level in accordance with policy. These incidents must be reported to ECC via MySafety.	Systematic reporting and recording at the setting level in accordance with policy. These incidents must be reported to ECC via MySafety.