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Use Of Restrictive Interventions Procedure	LSPRO022	3.0	
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USE OF RESTRICTIVE INTERVENTIONS PROCEDURE

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Procedure Statement

Activate Learning is committed to creating a safe, caring, and respectful environment that reflects our Learning Philosophy and trauma-informed approach.

This procedure guides staff on the safe, appropriate, and lawful use of restrictive interventions (including reasonable force and seclusion) when needed to protect the safety, dignity, and wellbeing of learners and others.

It also supports staff to reduce the need for restrictive interventions through early support, prevention, and de-escalation strategies, and to feel confident in responding effectively when interventions are required.

This procedure aligns with the Department for Education guidance "[Restrictive Interventions, Including The Use Of Reasonable Force, In Schools](#)". For guidance on positive touch and personal care, refer to Activate Learning's 'People Moving and Handling and Personal Care Guidelines'.

Scope

This procedure applies to everyone working for or on behalf of Activate Learning (including staff, volunteers, and contractors) and to all learners under our care or supervision, including all learners and apprentices. It also applies to those in residential accommodation and during trips, visits, and work placements.

Procedure

1. Definitions:

Restrictive intervention: An intervention that prevents, restricts or subdues a learner's movement, or part of their body. This includes physical and non-physical actions aimed to restrain learners in different ways.

Reasonable force: A legal term referring to physical restrictive interventions. Reasonable means using no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time, the application of which will depend on the circumstances.

Significant incident: Any incident involving the use of reasonable force or restrictive intervention beyond routine, appropriate physical contact.

Seclusion: A non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a learner confined to a place away from others, and preventing them from leaving either by physical obstruction, blocking, or making them believe they will be punished if they try to leave. Seclusion, as defined in this guidance, is not a disciplinary response to deliberate or wilful misbehaviour e.g., removal from a classroom.

Restraint: A term used in legislation referring to a non-disciplinary intervention which immobilises a learner or limits their movement. This may or may not include direct physical contact. For example, holding a learner's arms to their sides.

2. Guiding Principles:

All decisions relating to restrictive intervention or reasonable force must be guided by the following principles:

- The best interests and welfare of the learner are paramount.
- Prevention and de-escalation are always the first response. Restrictive intervention is always a last resort.
- Any intervention must be reasonable, proportionate, necessary, and time-limited. The least intrusive intervention should always be used.
- Staff must consider individual vulnerabilities, including special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), trauma, medical needs, and communication differences.
- Dignity, respect, wellbeing, and safeguarding must always be maintained. The safety and care of everyone involved must be the primary consideration when deciding whether to use restraint, seclusion or reasonable force.
- Staff must not intervene in a way that places themselves or others at unacceptable risk.

3. Legal Framework:

- All staff have a legal power to use reasonable force under [Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006](#).
- Use of reasonable force provides a lawful defence, where applied appropriately.
- Staff do not require parental consent to use reasonable force on a learner. However, we are required to inform parents/carers about incidents involving the use of restrictive interventions.
- Force must never be used for the purpose of punishment – this is illegal.

4. When Can Reasonable Force Be Used:

All members of staff have a legal power to use reasonable force in certain circumstances. Reasonable force may only be used to stop or prevent a learner from:

- Causing injury to themselves or others
- Committing a criminal offence
- Damaging property
- Causing disorder among learners, whether during a teaching session or otherwise

Examples include but are not limited to:

- Preventing a physical assault or stopping a fight
- Preventing self-harm
- Removing a learner from a situation where behaviour presents immediate danger
- Preventing a learner from leaving a safe area where this would place them at risk

- Conducting a lawful search for prohibited items, where permitted by the [Student Search Policy](#) and [Searching, screening and confiscation in schools](#) Guidance e.g., weapons, illegal drugs, alcohol, etc. This cannot be used to search for items banned under the [Student Code of Conduct](#) only.

5. Using Force:

5.1 Use of Force: Decision-Making and Risk Considerations

The decision on whether it is reasonable to use a restrictive intervention depends on the individual circumstances of each situation. To make this assessment, the member of staff should consider the following:

Is it necessary?

- Staff should consider whether there are other more effective, less restrictive ways to manage a situation.
- Staff should assess whether a restrictive intervention is likely to successfully reduce the relevant risks, or whether its use would escalate the situation further or cause more harm than the behaviour itself.
- Where possible, staff should communicate with other staff members to understand any broader risks in the environment.

Is it proportionate?

- Staff should use the least amount of force or least restrictive intervention necessary for the least amount of time required to reduce the relevant risks.
- If the intervention itself is escalating the situation, staff should reconsider their approach and attempt an alternative strategy.
- Staff should consider the personal circumstances of the learner such as medical conditions, special educational needs or other vulnerabilities, their characteristics such as age and size, and must consider relevant equality implications under the [Equality Act 2010](#).

Have you considered the learner's welfare?

- Staff should consider the impact on the learner's overall welfare, balanced against any actions taken. For example, learners who have SEND, experienced an adverse life event, with diagnosed or undiagnosed medical conditions or sensory impairments, past trauma or neglect, communication differences, or other needs, may find the use of restrictive interventions particularly distressing.

- Staff should seek to maintain respect for a learner's dignity. They should also be mindful of the potential emotional impact on other learners who may witness the intervention, as this could be upsetting. Wherever possible, staff should consider the location and environment and take steps to move the situation away from peers or public areas to protect privacy and minimise distress.

- Where possible, staff should clearly and calmly communicate to the learner what is happening, why, and explain what the learner needs to do.

- For learners with difficulties with SEND, speech, language and communication, or with English as an additional language, verbal and/or non-verbal strategies should be used to ensure the learner understands what is happening and has adequate time to process information and respond.

- Staff should seek to understand how the learner is feeling and use this information to determine whether the restrictive intervention should be, or continue to be, applied, reduced or stopped. Staff should explain what will happen next to reassure the learner.

This list of factors is not exhaustive, and staff should also take into account other relevant considerations.

5.2 Unacceptable Uses of Force:

The following actions are not permitted, as they create unacceptable risk of harm:

- For the purposes of punishment
- Restrained in a way that affects their airway, breathing or circulation e.g., by covering the mouth and/or nose, applying pressure to the neck region or abdomen.

- Slapping, punching, kicking, or striking
- Twisting joints or forcing limbs
- Pulling hair or ears
- Using clothing, belts, or objects to restrict movement
- Any contact that could be considered indecent

5.3 Unplanned and Emergency Interventions:

Unplanned interventions may be required in rapidly developing situations and may involve split-second decision-making. Where the situation is not urgent, staff should seek support from colleagues. If assistance is not available, any response must still be reasonable, proportionate, and use the minimum force necessary to manage the immediate risk.

Police may be called in exceptional circumstances. Activate Learning staff remain responsible for sharing relevant risk information (including SEND or medical needs) and for monitoring the learner's physical and emotional wellbeing throughout.

6. Seclusion:

Seclusion is a non-disciplinary intervention where a learner is confined to a place away from others and prevented from leaving. It must only be used as a short-term safety measure to protect others from harm when a learner is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation. It should not be implemented through threat of punishment.

The space used for seclusion must be safe and non-threatening. The learner must be always supervised and allowed to leave as soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced.

7. Learners With Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or Additional Needs:

Activate Learning is committed to meeting its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and makes reasonable adjustments for learners with additional needs, including communication, learning, medical, or behavioural needs.

We will utilise staff who know individual learners well to help identify and manage risk such as trigger points when challenging behaviour is more likely to occur and develop proactive strategies to reduce the likelihood of restrictive interventions being used. We will work with the learner, parents/carers, and other professionals to develop prevention and de-escalation strategies documented in an agreed behaviour support plan and where necessary, a Risk Assessment. The learner and their parent/carer (where appropriate, including learners under 18 or adults with an EHCP) should be involved in developing the support plan, and it must be shared with all staff involved in implementing it.

Where appropriate, trained staff may use approved techniques (e.g., CPI) only where these are specified in the learner's risk assessment and behaviour support plan. Any incident involving restrictive intervention must prompt a review of the learner's support plan and risk assessment, utilising the Antecedent-Behaviour-Consequence (ABC) process to understand the triggers, uncover underlying needs and develop effective intervention strategies. This review should include the learner's Faculty or Study Programme area and the Learning Support Team.

8. Reporting and Recording

8.1 Reporting

Significant incidents (see Section 1: Definitions) involving restrictive intervention, reasonable force, or seclusion must be reported as soon as practicable and no later than the end of the working day.

Unplanned interventions and incidents should be reported as soon as is practicably possible to the:

- Behaviour and Welfare Officer

- Head of Student Experience
- Relevant Curriculum Manager
- A member of the Safeguarding Team
- Group Director for Faculty and College
- Duty Manager (where there is a direct or immediate risk to staff and students)
- Incidents involving 14–16- year-olds should also be reported to the 14-16 Programme Manager, and the appropriate secondary school informed
- Incidents involved residents of our Halls of Residence, should also be reported to the relevant Residential Manager

Parents/carers must be informed as soon as practicable and no later than the same day. The learner's Faculty or Study Programme area is responsible for making this contact and recording that communication.

In line with the Department for Education guidance, parents/carers do not need to be informed where:

- The learner is aged 20 or over; or
- Doing so would place the learner at risk of serious harm

Where there are concerns that informing parents/carers may place the learner at risk, the Safeguarding Team must be consulted. The Safeguarding Team will advise on next steps and consider whether a referral to the Local Authority is required.

Written notification to parents/carers should include:

- Date, time, location, and duration of the intervention
- Reason the intervention was necessary, including behaviours and risk posed
- Type and degree of force used
- Details of any injuries or medical treatment
- Confirmation of any follow-up actions and support provided

The requirement to report applies even if the use of restrictive interventions in certain circumstances is agreed with parent/carer(s) as part of a learner's support plan.

8.2 Recording

All incidents must be recorded promptly and accurately using Activate Learning's [Accident and Incident Reporting Form](#).

Records must include:

- Names of learner(s) and staff involved
- Any relevant needs or circumstances, including SEND status
- Time, date, location and duration of the intervention
- Account of the incident, including what led up to it, triggers, de-escalation strategies used
- Type of reasonable force applied and degree of force
- The reason for using force, including the risk assessment at the time
- Details of any injuries sustained or medical treatment. Any injuries will also require a separate entry on the [Accident and Incident Reporting Form](#).
- Any post-incident support or follow-up actions taken

9. Post-Intervention Support and Review:

Following an incident involving restrictive intervention, appropriate follow-up and support must be provided for learners, staff, and others affected. This will be dependent on the nature of the incident, however, ordinarily this should be overseen by the learner's Faculty or Study Programme area, working collaboratively with the relevant support services e.g., Learning Support or Student Support.

Any immediate medical or first aid needs must be addressed in line with health and safety procedures and recorded on an [Accident and Incident Reporting Form](#).

Learner follow-up will be managed in line with the [Student Positive Behaviour Management Procedures](#) or [Fitness to Study / Reside Procedures](#), led by the Faculty and Study Programme area and supported by relevant services such as Group Learning Support and Group Student Support. Actions may include reviewing or

updating support plans or Risk Assessments, timetable adjustments, or other reasonable adjustments focused on ensuring safety and wellbeing.

Learners and, where appropriate, their parents/carers, should be offered an opportunity to reflect on what led to the incident, whether agreed support strategies were in place, and what adjustments may help reduce the risk of recurrence.

Learners requiring ongoing emotional or wellbeing support should be supported through Activate Learning's existing provision, for example, access to ELSA support, or referrals to Wellbeing Advisors, Counselling, or the Student Support and Safeguarding Teams. Where additional support is needed, referrals to appropriate external agencies, such as Social Care, will be considered by the Safeguarding Team.

Staff involved in, affected by, or witnessing an incident should be given the opportunity to de-brief with a manager, reflect on the incident, and identify any learning or development needs. Where a staff member has been injured or emotionally impacted, the relevant HR Business Partner must be informed and appropriate support offered. Ongoing emotional and wellbeing support for staff should be accessed through Activate Learning's existing support routes, including the Employee Assistance Programme or the [Education Support](#) organisation.

10. Monitoring and Oversight:

Recorded incidents are monitored by the Health and Safety Team and reported on at Health and Safety Committee, with Governor oversight. Data is reviewed for patterns, disproportionality, and training needs, and any identified concerns will be raised to the Director - Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Safeguarding Committee.

11. Complaints:

All complaints relating to the use of restrictive intervention, seclusion, or reasonable force will be managed in line with Activate Learning's [Customer Compliments, Comments and Complaints Procedure](#) and will be investigated appropriately.

Where concerns indicate a potential inappropriate, unlawful, or unsafe use of force, or where there are safeguarding implications, the matter will be managed under Activate Learning's Allegations Against Staff Procedure, in line with [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#).

12. Review:

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or sooner if there are significant changes to Department for Education guidance on the use of restrictive interventions, to ensure continued compliance with legislation and best practice. Any updates will be communicated to staff, with additional guidance or training provided where required.

13. References:

This policy complies with:

[European Convention on Human Rights](#)

[Department for Education – Behaviour in Schools Guidance](#)

[Department of Health and Social Care and Department for Education – Reducing the need for Restraint and Restrictive Intervention](#)

[Department for Education - Searching, Screening and Confiscation](#)

[Department for Education – Restrictive Interventions, including Use of Reasonable Force](#)

[Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)

[Equality Act 2010](#)

[Gov.UK - Positive Environments Where Children Can Flourish](#)

[Health and Safety at Work Act](#)

[Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)

Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership guidance

This policy statement should be read in conjunction with the following [Activate Learning Policies and Procedures](#):

Allegations Against Staff Procedure

DBS and Safeguarding Procedure

Safeguarding and Prevent Policy

Safeguarding - Reporting a Concern Procedure

Student Positive Behaviour Management Policy

Student Positive Behaviour Management Procedure

Student Health and Wellbeing Policy

Student Search Procedure