



POSITIVE HANDLING POLICY

Policy Statement

F4YP Personnel working with children under their care have a duty to intervene to prevent young people from hurting themselves or others.

F4YP Personnel working with children under their care must be aware of which staff members or other personnel present have Positive Handling Training. Under no circumstance should anyone attempt to use Positive Handling techniques without the appropriate training.

All Parents/Guardians and Personnel must be aware of the Positive Handling Policy.

Only Staff or Personnel with Positive Handling training can use physical interventions, as a response to extreme behaviour and in doing so must adhere to F4YP's Positive Handling Policy.

Scope

This policy applies to: -

- All personnel this includes employees, casual and sessional contractors, volunteers and trustees, as well as all other persons supporting, providing, or delivering services for or on behalf of F4YP
- Parent/carer/guardian and service users.

Introduction

Staff at F4YP are trained to look after the young people in their care. There may be situations in which a young person seriously disrupts good order in the service or causes damage to property. Any parents/carers wishing to view this policy may do so on request.

The term 'Positive Handling' includes a wide range of supportive strategies for managing challenging behaviour. Included in this framework are a small number of responses which may involve the use of force to control or restrain a young person. The term 'physical restraint' is used when force is used to overcome active resistance. These are referred to as 'Restrictive Physical Interventions' in national Guidance (DfES/DoH 2002). A clear and consistent positive handling policy supports young people who have social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties within an ethos of mutual respect, care and safety.

Young people with behavioural difficulties sometimes present a risk to themselves and others. Section 550A of the Education Act 1996 describes the circumstances in which teachers and others authorised by the Headteacher may use reasonable force to control or restrain young people and although F4YP is not a school nor bound by this Act, we have aligned our use of physical restraint.

This policy details how we implement the guidance in this project. It should be considered alongside the most recent local and national guidance. It is designed to help staff to ensure that any actions they take are reasonable, proportionate and absolutely necessary.

Project Expectations

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F4YP management takes seriously its duty of care towards young people, employees and visitors to the project. Staff protection is an important part of child protection; both depend on confident and competent staff who feel supported by the management. This policy has a clear focus.

- The first and paramount consideration is the welfare of the young people in our care.
- The second is the welfare and protection of the adults who look after them.

Positive Behaviour Management

All physical interventions at this project are conducted within a framework of positive behaviour management. The project Behaviour Policy is intended to reward effort and application and encourage young people to take responsibility for improving their own behaviour. Part of our preventative approach to risk reduction involves looking for early warning signs, learning and communicating any factors which may influence negative behaviour and taking steps to divert behaviours leading towards foreseeable risk. Young people are encouraged to participate in the development of their own positive handling plans by focusing on positive alternatives and choices. Parents are also encouraged to contribute. However, if problems arise, staff have an additional responsibility to support all young people when they are under pressure and safely manage crises if, and when, they occur.

Alternatives to Physical Controls

A member of staff who chooses not to make a physical intervention can still take effective action to reduce risk. They can:

- Show care and concern by acknowledging unacceptable behaviour and requesting alternatives using negotiation and reason.
- Give clear directions for young people to stop.
- Remind them about rules and likely outcomes.
- Remove an audience or take vulnerable young people to a safer place.
- Make the environment safer by moving furniture and removing objects which could be used as weapons.
- Use positive touch to guide or escort young people to somewhere less pressured.
- Ensure that colleagues know what is happening and get help.

Modifications to Environment

Ideally, staff will not be waiting until a crisis is underway before conducting a risk assessment of the environment. We know that some young people at this project may exhibit extreme and possibly dangerous behaviour. In general, it is a good rule to keep the environment clutter free.

Help Protocols

The expectation at F4YP is that all staff should support one another. This means that staff always offer help and always accept it. Help does not always mean taking over. It may mean just staying around in case you are needed, getting somebody else or looking after somebody else's group. Supporting a colleague does not only mean agreeing with their suggestions and offering sympathy when things go wrong. Real support sometimes means acting as a critical friend to help colleagues become aware of possible alternative strategies. Good communication is necessary so that colleagues avoid confusion when help is offered and accepted. They need to agree scripts so that all parties understand what sort of assistance is required and what is available.

Well Chosen Words

A well-chosen word can sometimes avert an escalating crisis. When young people are becoming angry there is no point in getting into an argument. Telling people to calm down can wind them up. Pointing out what they have done wrong can make things worse. The only purpose in communicating with an angry person is to prevent further escalation. It is better to say nothing and

take time to choose your words carefully than to say the wrong thing and provoke a further escalation.

The Last Resort Principal

At this project we only use physical restraint when there is no realistic alternative. This does not mean that we always expect people to methodically work their way through a series of failing strategies, before attempting an intervention in which they have some confidence. Nor does it mean always waiting until the danger is imminent, by which time the prospect of safely managing it may be significantly reduced. National guidance is clear on this point.

"If necessary staff have the authority to take immediate action to prevent harm occurring even if the harm is expected to happen sometime in the predictable future."

Para 10 Page 4 Department of Health - 1997 - *"The Control of Children in the Public Care: Interpretation of the Children Act 1989"* - London: H M S O

It does mean that we expect staff to conduct a risk assessment and choose the safest alternative. It also means that we expect staff to experiment and think creatively about any alternatives to physical intervention which may be effective.

Proactive Physical Interventions

It is sometimes reasonable to use physical controls to prevent extreme behaviour from becoming dangerous provided that it is an agreed part of the Positive Handling training delivered to project staff. Examples of this are where a young person has shown ritual patterns of behaviour, which in the past have led to the child becoming more distressed and violent. In such circumstances it may be reasonable to withdraw the child to a safer place when the

pattern of behaviour begins, rather than wait until the child is distressed and out of control. The paramount consideration is that the action is taken in the interest of the child and that it reduces, rather than increases, risk.

Reasonable and Proportionate

Any response to extreme behaviour should be reasonable and proportionate. People should not react in anger. If they feel they are becoming angry they should consider withdrawing to allow someone else to deal with the situation. Where staff act in good faith, and their actions are reasonable and proportionate, they will be supported.

When physical controls are considered, staff should think about the answers to the following questions:

How is this in the best interest of the young person?

Why is a less intrusive intervention not preferable?

Why do we have to act now?

Why am I the best person to be doing this?

Why is this absolutely necessary?

If staff can answer these questions it is more likely that a physical intervention will be judged to be reasonable and proportionate.

Unreasonable use of Force

It is not reasonable to use force simply to enforce compliance in circumstances where there is no risk. Nor is it reasonable to use any more force than is necessary to achieve a reduction in risk. Under no circumstances should pain be deliberately inflicted or should young people be deliberately subjected to undignified or humiliating treatment (this should not be confused with the unavoidable discomfort associated with some approved techniques for disengaging from assaults

such as bites and grabs). Other than as a one-off emergency measure to protect health and safety, force should never be used to keep a young person secluded. Seclusion is only lawful by specific court order and cannot become part of a planned strategy at F4YP.

Team Teach

It is the policy of F4YP that staff working closely with young people are trained in the pre-emptive and responsive positive handling strategies and techniques of Team Teach, to complement the behaviour management approaches and strategies reflected in the project's Behaviour Policy. Further details of the Team Teach approach can be found in the Beormund Team Teach documents and on the Team Teach website (www.team-teach.co.uk).

Health and Safety

If dangerous behaviour presents a significant risk of injury to people, there is a legal Health and Safety issue to be addressed. Dangerous behaviour should be regarded just as seriously as dangerous equipment. Dangerous occurrences should be reported via F4YP's reporting procedure. We all have shared responsibility to identify risk, communicate potential risks and take active steps to reduce risk wherever possible. We recognise that it is not possible to entirely remove risk. Sometimes things go wrong even when we make our best efforts to do the right thing. Sometimes we are faced with unpalatable choices. In these circumstances we have to try and think through the outcomes of the options available, balance the risks and choose whatever course of action which seems to involve the least risk.

As a minimum requirement, in order to comply with health and safety legislation, each employee has a responsibility to ensure that they are conversant with project policy and guidance, and to cooperate to make the project safer. It is also a requirement that they participate in training if they are directed to do so. This does not necessarily mean that all staff can be involved in all the physical activities. The non-physical aspects of positive handling training are crucially important too.

When considering a young person's behaviour staff should think about the following questions:

- Can we anticipate a Health and Safety risk related to this young person's behaviour?
- Have we got all the information we need to conduct a risk assessment?
- Have we provided a written plan as a result?
- What further steps can we take to prevent dangerous behaviour from developing?

Risk Assessment

Informal risk assessments should be a routine part of life for staff working with young people who may exhibit extreme behaviour. Responsible staff should think ahead to anticipate what might go wrong. If a proposed activity or course of action involves unacceptable risk the correct decision is to do something else.

Factors which might influence a more immediate risk assessment, and therefore a decision about how to intervene, might include the state of health and fitness of the staff member, their physical stature, competence, confidence and relationships with the young people concerned. Confidence and competence are often related to the level of staff training. Other than in an emergency, staff should only attempt physical controls when they are confident that such action will result in a reduction of risk. When faced by extreme behaviour, or even in a fight situation, the judgement may be that by becoming involved, the member of staff will increase the chance of somebody getting hurt. In this the correct decision is to hold back from the physical controls.

Getting Help

At this project the following support structures are in place:

- Behaviour Support plans are shared to ensure all relevant information about each young person is available to all members of staff working with them.

- Briefing sessions before sessions to update staff on current issues and share information.
- Use of help protocols and language to remind all staff of availability of colleagues to offer help including change-overs of staff during a crisis situation with a young person.
- Debrief sessions after a crisis with the young person(s) involved, reflecting on how crisis was managed by all involved and identifying any points for review or learning.
- 6 Monthly (normally July and January) refresher meetings in the Team Teach strategies and techniques for all staff, and continuous review by SMT to inform these.

Positive Handling Plans

Risk management is regarded as an integral part of behaviour management planning. All young people who have been identified as presenting a risk should have a Behaviour Plan. The plan details any strategies which have been found to be effective for that individual, along with any particular responses which are not recommended. If particular physical techniques have been found to be effective they should be named, along with alerts to any which have proved ineffective or which caused problems in the past. They should take account of age, sex, level of physical, emotional and intellectual development, special need and social context. Behaviour Plans should result from multi-professional collaboration wherever possible.

Responding to Unforeseen Emergencies

Even the best planning systems cannot cover every eventuality and F4YP recognises that there are unforeseen or emergency situations in which staff have to think on their feet. It is not enough to thoughtlessly apply rules without thinking through the likely consequences. The key principals are that any physical intervention should be:

- in the best interest of the child;
- reasonable and proportionate;
- intended to reduce risk;
- the least intrusive and restrictive of those options available which are likely to be effective.

Whenever a physical intervention has to be made there should be a verbal warning. Where possible, staff should always attempt to use diversion or diffusion in preference to physical interventions. They should only use the techniques and methods approved for use in this project. In general, if staff act in good faith and their actions are reasonable and proportionate, they will be supported.

The Post Incident Support Structure for Young People and Staff

Following a serious incident, it is the policy of this project to offer support for all involved. People take time to recover from a serious incident. Until the incident has subsided, the only priority is to reduce risk and calm the situation down. Staff should avoid saying or doing anything which could inflame the situation during the recovery phase. Immediate action should be taken to ensure medical help is sought if there are any injuries which require more than basic first aid. All injuries should be reported and recorded using the project's systems. It is important to note that injury in itself is not evidence of malpractice. Even when staff attempt to do everything right, things can go wrong. Part of the post incident support for staff may involve a reminder of this, as people tend to blame themselves when things go wrong. Time needs to be found to repair relationships. When careful steps are taken to repair relationships a serious incident does not necessarily result in long term damage. This is an opportunity for learning for all concerned. Time needs to be given to following up incidents so that young people have an opportunity to express their feelings, suggest alternative courses of action for the future and appreciate other people's perspective. When time and effort are put into a post incident support structure the outcome of a serious incident can be learning, growth and strengthened relationships.

Use of Physical Intervention – Threshold for Sending a Young Person Home

At F4YP, we are committed to using Team Teach positive handling strategies only as a last resort and always in line with the young person's individual risk assessment and behaviour plan.

To ensure safety and to support reflection and de-escalation, the following threshold will apply:

A young person will be sent home if:

- Three (3) consecutive physical interventions ('holds') are required, each lasting up to ten (10) minutes. The interventions occur one after the other in the same behavioural incident or escalation sequence, with no successful period of calm or de-escalation lasting at least 15 minutes between the end of one hold and the start of the next.
or;
- Two (2) separate incidents requiring physical intervention occur within a single day.

This decision will be made by the senior staff member on site, in consultation with the Designated Safeguarding Lead. It is intended to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all young people and staff, and to provide an opportunity for the young person to regulate and reflect outside of the immediate environment.

The senior leadership team and designated safeguarding leads are:

Designated Safeguarding Lead: Sophie Stock – CEO

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead: Sarah Collins – HOO

Trustee designated safeguarding: Becky Ireland – Trustee

Office safeguarding number: 0300 102 4541 - Option 4

Complaints

It is not uncommon for young people to make allegations of inappropriate or excessive use of force following an incident. F4YP has a formal Complaints Procedure. Young people should be reminded of the procedure and encouraged to use the appropriate channels. The complaints policy applies equally to staff. We are an open project and promote transparent policy and practice in order to protect the interests of staff and young people alike. Any staff concerns regarding the welfare of children should be taken to the designated person for child protection. Any safety concerns should be reported to the designated person for Health and Safety.

Training

Any staffs that are expected to use planned physical techniques should be trained. This project has adopted the Team Teach Model of training. All training courses have been fully accredited by the British Institute of Learning Disabilities (BILD) in accordance with DfES and Department of Health guidance. Positive handling training is always provided by qualified instructors with rigorous guidelines.

The level of training recommended is related to the level of risk faced by the member of staff. Our preferred approach is for whole staff team training. Management staff may not require the same level of training in physical techniques as those working directly with the most challenging young people, however all staff benefit from the whole project training. The level of training required is kept under review and may change in response to the needs of our clients. Once

trained, staff should practice regularly guidance of our Pastoral Team and bring any problems or concerns to them.

