



Policies & Procedures
Title: Positive Handling Policy
Policy Owner: Chief Executive Officer

POSITIVE HANDLING POLICY

Policy Statement

F4YP personnel working with young people have a duty to take appropriate action to prevent harm, including physical or psychological harm to a young person or to others.

Staff must be aware of which colleagues on site hold current, accredited Team Teach Positive Handling training. Under no circumstances should any member of staff attempt to use Positive Handling techniques without appropriate and up-to-date training.

All parents, carers and personnel will be made aware of the Positive Handling Policy, which is available on our website.

Only staff who hold current Team Teach Positive Handling training may use physical intervention, and only as a last resort in response to behaviour that presents a risk of harm. Any such intervention must be reasonable, proportionate, and carried out in full accordance with 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.

Related Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with F4YP's:
Positive Handling Policy
Safeguarding Policy

Introduction

All staff at F4YP are trained and supported to safeguard and promote the welfare of the young people in their care. Our approach to behaviour is rooted in respect, positive relationships, and early intervention.

There may be occasions where a young person seriously disrupts the safe and orderly running of the service, causes damage to property, or presents a risk of harm to themselves or others. In such circumstances, staff will always seek to de-escalate situations using supportive, preventative strategies before considering any form of physical intervention.

The term *Positive Handling* describes a broad range of supportive and preventative strategies used to manage challenging behaviour. These include verbal de-escalation, distraction, environmental adjustments and supportive guidance. In exceptional circumstances, it may include the use of reasonable force.

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The use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions refers to physical or other actions intended to prevent a young person from:

- causing physical or psychological harm to themselves or others
- seriously disrupting good order in a way that presents a risk of physical or psychological harm to themselves or others
- causing damage to property
- committing an offence

Physical intervention will only ever be used as a last resort, when it is reasonable, proportionate, and absolutely necessary to prevent harm. Any such intervention must be the minimum required to achieve safety and must cease as soon as the risk has reduced.

Although F4YP is not a school, our practice aligns with Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and reflects current Department for Education guidance on restrictive interventions, including the Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools guidance effective from 1 April 2026. This updated guidance emphasises prevention, de-escalation, lawful and proportionate practice, and clear expectations on recording and reporting significant incidents involving restrictive interventions.

This policy outlines how F4YP ensures that all behaviour support and any use of physical intervention is lawful, proportionate, recorded, reviewed, and consistent with our safeguarding responsibilities and organisational values.

Project Expectations

F4YP recognises its duty of care to young people, staff and visitors. Safeguarding and health and safety responsibilities are taken seriously at all levels of the organisation. The protection of young people and the protection of staff are closely linked; both rely on confident, competent professionals who are appropriately trained and supported by leadership.

This policy is underpinned by two clear priorities:

- The first and overriding consideration is the welfare, safety and dignity of the young people in our care.
- The second is the welfare, safety and professional protection of the adults who support them.

All practice must reflect these principles and be consistent with safeguarding guidance, equality duties and the organisation's commitment to lawful, proportionate and transparent decision-making.

Positive Behaviour Management

All physical interventions at F4YP 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 Pastoral support; positive handling plans and individual risk assessments by focusing on positive alternatives and choices.

Parents/ carers are also encouraged to contribute, and information is also gathered from school and other services involved with the YP. This can include information on previous incidents where

use of reasonable force has been used, and incidents where a YP has been unsafe to self or others. 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.

Equality, SEND and Reasonable Adjustments

F4YP recognises its duties under the Equality Act 2010. When implementing this Positive Handling Policy, we will ensure that reasonable adjustments are made for young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Behaviour that is linked to a young person's disability, communication needs, trauma history or developmental stage will be understood within that context. Responses must take account of individual needs and must not discriminate directly or indirectly.

Pastoral Support Plans and risk assessments will reflect any identified needs and outline appropriate adjustments, preventative strategies and supportive interventions. The aim is always to reduce risk while preserving dignity, promoting inclusion and maintaining equitable access to provision.

The use of restrictive intervention must never be a substitute for appropriate support, planning or reasonable adjustment.

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 F4YP 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

Carefully chosen language can often prevent a situation from escalating. When a young person is becoming distressed or dysregulated, engaging in debate or confrontation is unlikely to be helpful.

Directives such as telling someone to “calm down” may increase agitation, and focusing on what they have done wrong can heighten defensiveness.

The purpose of communication at this stage is to reduce escalation and support regulation. Staff should use calm, measured language, offer reassurance where appropriate, and allow time and space for the young person to regain control. At times, it may be more effective to pause and choose words carefully, rather than respond immediately in a way that could unintentionally escalate the situation.

The Last Resort Principal

F4YP is committed to minimising the use of restrictive physical intervention. Physical intervention will only ever be used as a last resort, when there is no safe and realistic alternative to prevent physical or psychological harm to a young person or others.

This does not mean that staff are required to work through a fixed sequence of unsuccessful strategies before acting. Nor does it mean waiting until harm is imminent if a dynamic risk assessment indicates that early intervention is necessary to prevent foreseeable harm.

In line with Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and current Department for Education guidance on restrictive interventions (effective from 1 April 2026), staff may use reasonable force where it is necessary to prevent injury, damage to property, the commission of an offence, or serious disruption that presents a risk of harm. Any action taken must be reasonable, proportionate, and the minimum required to achieve safety.

Staff are expected to undertake an ongoing dynamic risk assessment, weighing the risks of intervening against the risks of not intervening. Wherever possible, staff should use preventative and de-escalation strategies and think creatively about alternatives to physical intervention. The safety and dignity of the young person, other young people, and staff must remain central to all decision-making.

Proactive Physical Interventions

In limited circumstances, it may be appropriate to use planned and proportionate physical intervention to prevent behaviour from escalating to a point where it presents a risk of physical or psychological harm. Any such intervention must form part of agreed practice and be consistent with the Positive Handling training delivered to F4YP staff.

For example, where a young person has demonstrated identifiable patterns of behaviour that have previously led to significant distress or unsafe conduct, it may be appropriate to guide or support them to move to a safer space at an early stage, rather than waiting until the situation escalates further.

Any proactive physical intervention must be reasonable, proportionate, and based on a dynamic risk assessment. The primary consideration must always be the safety, dignity and wellbeing of the young person and others, and the action taken must reduce – not increase – the level of risk.

Reasonable and Proportionate

Any response to behaviour that is dysregulated or unsafe must be reasonable, proportionate and necessary in the circumstances. Staff must remain calm and professional at all times. If a member of staff feels unable to respond appropriately, they should seek support from a colleague wherever possible.

Where staff act in good faith, in accordance with training, policy and a dynamic risk assessment, and their actions are reasonable and proportionate, they will be supported by the organisation.

Before using any form of physical intervention, staff should consider:

- Is this action in the best interests of the young person and others?
- Have less intrusive strategies been attempted or considered?
- Is intervention required at this stage to prevent physical or psychological harm?
- Am I appropriately trained and the most suitable person available to intervene?
- Is this the minimum level of intervention necessary to achieve safety?

Being able to clearly justify these considerations will help ensure that any intervention is reasonable, proportionate and necessary, consistent with current guidance and F4YP policy.

Unreasonable use of Force

Force must never be used to secure compliance where there is no risk of physical or psychological harm. Any intervention must be the minimum necessary to reduce risk and must cease as soon as it is safe to do so.

The deliberate infliction of pain, the use of degrading or humiliating treatment, or any action that compromises a young person's dignity is strictly prohibited. This does not include reasonable and proportionate actions taken to disengage from an assault or to protect oneself or others from injury, in line with approved training (e.g. bites, grabs, hair pulling)

Force must not be used as a form of punishment. It must not be used to intimidate, coerce, or exert authority.

Seclusion – defined as the involuntary isolation of a young person in a room or area from which they are prevented from leaving – must not be used as a planned behaviour management strategy at F4YP. Current Department for Education guidance (effective from 1 April 2026) makes clear that seclusion is not a lawful disciplinary measure. Any removal of a young person from an area must be proportionate, time-limited, continuously supervised, and carried out solely to reduce immediate risk.

Team Teach

It is the policy of F4YP that staff working directly with young people receive accredited training in the preventative and responsive strategies of Team Teach. This training supports staff to use de-escalation, positive behaviour support and, where absolutely necessary, reasonable and proportionate physical intervention.

Team Teach techniques are used to complement the approaches set out in F4YP's Behaviour Policy and are consistent with current Department for Education guidance on restrictive interventions, including guidance effective from 1 April 2026. The emphasis of the approach is on prevention, reducing risk, preserving dignity and using the minimum intervention necessary to maintain safety.

Only staff who hold current Team Teach accreditation may use Team Teach physical techniques. All interventions must be recorded, reviewed and monitored in line with F4YP policy and safeguarding procedures.

Further information about the Team Teach approach is available within the organisation's training materials and from Team Teach directly. (www.team-teach.co.uk).

Health and Safety

Where behaviour presents a significant risk of physical or psychological harm, this must be treated as a health and safety matter. Unsafe behaviour should be addressed with the same level of seriousness as any other hazard within the environment.

All incidents and dangerous occurrences must be reported in accordance with F4YP's reporting procedures. Risk identification and reduction is a shared responsibility. Staff are expected to recognise potential hazards, communicate concerns promptly, and take reasonable steps to reduce risk wherever possible.

While every effort is made to minimise risk, it is recognised that risk cannot be eliminated entirely. In complex or rapidly evolving situations, staff may be required to make professional judgements, balancing available options and selecting the course of action that presents the least risk of harm.

In line with health and safety legislation, including the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, all employees are required to familiarise themselves with relevant policies and guidance, cooperate with safety measures, and participate in training as directed. Positive Handling training includes both physical and non-physical strategies, and the preventative elements are essential in reducing risk. Not all staff will be required to undertake physical techniques, but all staff share responsibility for maintaining a safe environment.

When assessing behaviour that may present a risk, staff should consider:

- Is there a foreseeable health and safety risk associated with this behaviour?
- Do we have sufficient information to undertake an appropriate risk assessment?
- Is a written risk assessment or behaviour support plan required?
- What preventative steps can be taken to reduce the likelihood of unsafe behaviour developing?

Risk Assessment

Ongoing and dynamic risk assessment is a routine part of practice when working with young people, particularly where behaviour may become dysregulated or unsafe. Staff are expected to think ahead, anticipate potential risks and consider what could go wrong. Where an activity or proposed course of action presents an unacceptable level of risk, an alternative approach should be taken.

In situations requiring immediate decision-making, staff must undertake a dynamic risk assessment. Factors that may influence how, or whether, to intervene include the nature and level of risk presented, the vulnerability of those involved, the environment, and the availability of appropriately trained staff. Consideration should also be given to a staff member's competence, confidence, current accreditation, and relationship with the young person.

Physical intervention should only be considered where it is likely to reduce the risk of physical or psychological harm and where the member of staff is appropriately trained and confident in applying the technique safely. Except in an emergency to prevent immediate harm, staff should not attempt physical intervention if doing so may increase the likelihood of injury.

In some circumstances, the safest and most proportionate response may be to step back, seek assistance, continue verbal de-escalation, or prioritise the removal of others from risk. Decisions must always be guided by necessity, proportionality, and the primary objective of maintaining safety and dignity.

Getting Help

F4YP recognises the importance of clear support structures to enable staff to respond safely and consistently to behaviour that may become dysregulated or unsafe. The following arrangements are in place:

- Pastoral Support Plans and Individual Risk Assessments are developed and shared, ensuring that relevant information about each young person is accessible to staff working directly with them.
- Pre-session briefings provide opportunities to update staff on current issues, emerging risks and agreed approaches.
- Agreed help protocols and consistent language are used to signal when support is required, enabling colleagues to assist promptly, including structured staff changeovers during heightened situations where appropriate.
- Post-incident debriefs take place following significant incidents. These provide an opportunity to reflect with the young person and staff involved, review how the situation was managed, and identify any learning or adjustments required.
- Annual refresher and reaccreditation training in Team Teach strategies and techniques is provided, alongside ongoing review by the Senior Management Team to ensure practice remains current, proportionate and aligned with guidance.

These structures are intended to promote consistency, shared responsibility and continuous improvement in safeguarding and behaviour support practice.

Positive Handling Plans

Risk management is an integral part of behaviour support planning. Any young person identified as presenting a foreseeable risk of physical or psychological harm should have a Behaviour Support Plan (Positive Handling Plan) in place.

The plan should outline known triggers, early warning signs, effective de-escalation strategies, and agreed responses. It should clearly identify approaches that are not recommended, based on previous experience or assessed risk. Where specific physical techniques form part of an agreed strategy, these must be identified, alongside any techniques that are contraindicated or have previously been ineffective.

Plans must take account of the young person's age, developmental stage, physical and emotional needs, any special educational needs or disabilities, medical considerations, and social context. Wherever possible, plans should be developed in collaboration with parents or carers and relevant professionals and reviewed regularly to ensure they remain appropriate and proportionate.

Responding to Unforeseen Emergencies

Even with robust planning, situations may arise that are unforeseen or require immediate action. In such circumstances, staff must undertake a dynamic risk assessment and act in accordance with safeguarding principles and current guidance.

Any physical intervention must be:

- in the best interests of the young person and others
- reasonable, proportionate and necessary in the circumstances
- intended solely to reduce the risk of physical or psychological harm
- the least intrusive and restrictive option likely to be effective

Where possible, staff should provide a clear verbal warning before using physical intervention and continue to prioritise de-escalation and diversion strategies. Only approved techniques, consistent with current training and organisational policy, may be used.

Where staff act in good faith, in line with training, policy and a dynamic risk assessment, and their actions are reasonable and proportionate, they will be supported by F4YP.

The Post Incident Support Structure for Young People and Staff

Following a serious incident, it is the policy of F4YP 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

F4YP is committed to using Team Teach strategies and any form of physical intervention only as a last resort, in line with the young person's Behaviour Support Plan and a dynamic risk assessment. In order to maintain the safety and wellbeing of all young people and staff, the following threshold applies:

A young person will be sent home where:

- Three sequential physical interventions are required within the same incident or escalation sequence, each lasting up to ten minutes, with no sustained period of regulation or de-escalation of at least 15 minutes between interventions;
- or
- Two separate incidents requiring physical intervention occur within a single day.

This decision will be made by the most senior member of staff on site, in consultation with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or Deputy, where appropriate). The purpose of this measure is to reduce risk, allow the young person time to regulate in a different environment, and support a planned and safe return.

In exceptional circumstances, where F4YP is unable to reduce or safely manage the level of risk despite reasonable and proportionate intervention, external support may be required. This may include contacting emergency services, including the police, where there is a significant and immediate risk of harm.

Any decision to send a young person home or to involve external agencies will be recorded, communicated with parents or carers in a timely manner, and reviewed to inform future risk assessment and planning.

Safeguarding Leads:

Designated Safeguarding Lead: Sophie Stock - CEO

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead: Sarah Collins - Head of Operations

Trustee with safeguarding responsibility: Becky Ireland - Trustee

Office safeguarding number: 0300 102 4541 (Option 4)

Complaints

It is recognised that following a serious incident, including where physical intervention has been used, a young person may raise concerns or make a complaint. F4YP has a formal Complaints Procedure, which is accessible to young people, parents and carers. Young people should be reminded of this process and supported to use the appropriate channels where they wish to do so.

The Complaints Procedure applies equally to staff. F4YP promotes openness, transparency and accountability in order to safeguard the interests of both young people and staff.

Any concerns relating to the welfare or protection of a child must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or Deputy). Concerns relating to health and safety must be reported in accordance with F4YP's health and safety procedures. Whistleblowing procedures are also available where appropriate.

Training

Staff who may be required to use planned physical intervention must hold appropriate, current and accredited training. F4YP adopts the Team Teach model of training, which emphasises prevention, de-escalation and the use of reasonable and proportionate physical intervention only as a last resort.

Training is delivered by accredited Team Teach instructors and aligned with current Department for Education guidance on restrictive interventions.

The level of training required is proportionate to the level of foreseeable risk associated with a staff member's role. Wherever possible, a whole-team approach to training is adopted to promote consistency of practice. While not all staff require the same level of physical technique training, all staff benefit from training in preventative and de-escalation strategies.

Training needs are reviewed regularly and may be adjusted in response to emerging risks or changes in the needs of the young people attending the service. Staff are expected to maintain their competence through refresher training and to seek guidance from senior staff where they have concerns or require additional support.

Recording and Reporting

All incidents involving physical intervention or other restrictive practices must be recorded as soon as possible and no later than the end of the working day. Records must be factual, clear and proportionate, and include:

- the date, time and location of the incident
- the antecedents and early warning signs observed
- de-escalation strategies attempted
- the reason physical intervention was necessary
- the type and duration of intervention used
- any injuries sustained and action taken
- the outcome of the incident

- details of post-incident support and parental communication

The record must be reviewed by a senior member of staff and shared with the Designated Safeguarding Lead where appropriate. Incidents must trigger a review of the young person's Pastoral Support Plan and risk assessment.

Parents or carers will be informed on the same day where physical intervention has been used, in line with F4YP's duty of care and commitment to transparency.

Safeguarding and External Reporting Thresholds

Where concerns arise in connection with the use of positive handling or restrictive intervention, F4YP will consider whether external reporting thresholds have been met.

If the circumstances of an incident raise safeguarding concerns about a young person's welfare, a referral will be made to Children's Services in line with local safeguarding procedures.

Where an allegation suggests that a member of staff or volunteer has harmed, may have harmed, or poses a risk of harm to a child, or may have committed a criminal offence in the course of an intervention, a referral will be made to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

Where a serious injury to a member of staff occurs as a result of a physical intervention, consideration will be given to reporting under RIDDOR in accordance with Health and Safety Executive guidance.

In situations where risk cannot be safely reduced through reasonable and proportionate measures, emergency services, including the police, may be contacted to prevent significant and immediate harm.

Governance and Monitoring

F4YP recognises that the use of restrictive intervention requires robust oversight. The Senior Leadership Team is responsible for monitoring the frequency, nature and context of incidents involving physical intervention to ensure practice remains lawful, proportionate and consistent with current guidance.

Incident data will be reviewed regularly to identify patterns, emerging risks or any disproportionate impact on particular groups of young people. Where concerns are identified, appropriate action will be taken, including review of individual plans, additional staff training or wider service adjustments.

Trustees maintain oversight of safeguarding and behaviour management practice through regular reporting and policy review. This policy will be reviewed at least annually, or sooner if required, to ensure continued alignment with statutory guidance and best practice.