
RESTRICTIVE PHYSICAL INTERVENTION POLICY

Responsible Cabinet Member(s) – Councillor Chris McEwan, Children’s Services Portfolio
Responsible Director(s) – Geoffrey Pennington

Purpose of Report

1. This report on a new restrictive physical intervention policy seeks its approval for adoption as Council policy.

Background

2. The draft policy on restrictive physical intervention (RPI) is attached to this report as Appendix 1. Appendix 2 comprises the record of incidents form which is completed by schools when an RPI incident occurs. A copy of the form is sent to the Education Department’s Child Protection School Support and Development Officer for monitoring purposes.
3. The draft RPI policy replaces previous guidance which was provided for schools.
4. In developing the new RPI policy and guidance, a working group was established which included representation from amongst experienced headteachers/school staff, and colleagues from the Police and Social Services Department. Consultation with professional associations has also taken place.
5. RPI can be defined as those actions in which physical intervention techniques and approaches, ranging from an assertion of the member of staff’s physical presence, to physical diversion, to full restrictive physical intervention.
6. The vast majority of pupils in Darlington schools conform to the expectations of normal behaviour every day in every school and the use of RPI is unnecessary. However, it is recognised that in certain unusual circumstances the use of RPI by teachers or other authorised persons may be necessary. On those rare occasions, and more so because those occasions are rare, it is essential that staff in schools are provided with clear policy and practice guidance on the use of restrictive physical interventions with pupils, so that staff and pupils are fully protected.
7. The circumstances where RPI may be considered, as a last resort, are those where there is a concern that the pupil in question is likely to cause injury to him/herself or others, or to property; where there is a significant threat to the establishment and to the maintenance of a safe and secure learning environment and where a range of de-escalation strategies has been applied and have failed to resolve the situation.
8. Key principles underpinning the use of PRI are that staff should not work with young people in isolated situations where the young persons behaviour is such that the likelihood

of confrontation is increased; that the emphasis should always be on de-escalation rather than direct RPI and that PRI should always be a last resort.

9. There are key managerial issues arising from the use of RPI, which include: ensuring that staff are aware of the RPI guidance and are trained, as appropriate; recording and reporting of incidents; communication with the young person/s in questions and their parents/carers, and how RPI interfaces with child protection issues.
10. As a result of the close link of the RPI policy and guidance with child protection issues, once the former has been adopted as Council policy it will be jointly launched with the revised Child Protection Handbook for Schools, and will be included as a part of that handbook. To emphasise the link between RPI and Child Protection, there are cross references in the texts of the two policies and practice guidance.

Outcome of Consultation

11. The RPI policy and practice working group involved headteachers, however, all headteachers were asked to comment on the document and responses considered for incorporation into the text. A number of positive responses from schools were received. Professional associations were sent a copy of the document, for their comments and views, where they wished to express them. No responses were received from professional associations. The Area Child Protection Committee Executive Group has agreed to the principles underpinning the policy and guidance.

Legal Implications

12. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

13. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

Council Policy Framework

14. The issues contained within this report represent change to Council policy or the Council's policy framework

Conclusion

15. On the very rare occasions when physical intervention is required to be used by staff in schools, it is important that they have a framework within which they can work confidently and effectively. The RPI provides this framework.

Recommendation

16. It is recommended that Council approve the RPI policy and guidance attached as annexes to this report.

Reasons

17. To ensure that staff in schools have a framework for dealing with rare instances where physical restraint is needed.

Geoffrey Pennington
Director of Education

Background Papers

The RPI policy is attached to this report as Appendix 1 + 2.

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