

Managing Behaviour

SCOPE OF THIS CHAPTER

Many children or young people may display some difficult and/or challenging behaviour. This behaviour is often a response to their previous experiences and the situation the child or young person finds themselves in.

This chapter sets out the position of Durham Fostering Service regarding physical restraint of children and young people and applies to all carers and staff.

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1. Context

The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 (Regulation 13 and Standard 3 of the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards) states the Fostering Service shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that:

- No form of corporal punishment is used on any child placed with a foster carer
- No child placed with a foster carer is subject to any measure of control, restraint or discipline which is excessive or unreasonable
- Physical restraint is only used on a child where it is necessary to prevent injury to the child or other persons or likely to cause severe damage to property.

2. Definitions

Physical Restraint is defined as a method of direct physical force which limits or restricts the movement or mobility.

Physical Intervention is defined as taking action to alert or move a child away from a hazard.

Legislation recognises that the Fostering Service and the foster carers have a “duty of care” to children and will safeguard their welfare of children.

Not all physical action taken by a Foster Carer involving children is seen as physical restraint. In order to ensure the duty of care towards a child “physical intervention” may be appropriate to safeguard. For example, placing hands on a child to alert them or prevent an imminent danger such as approaching traffic should not be seen as “physical restraint” and would be an appropriate “physical intervention” upholding reasonable action to promote the foster carers duty of care towards the child.

3. Training

Understanding and managing difficult behaviour is a skilled task.

Training Foster Carers how to manage behaviour begins at the Preparation Training stage and continues throughout the foster carer’s career as part of the extensive ongoing training package provided for carers.

Most behaviour management training focuses on the use of rewards and positive reinforcement for good behaviour, as this has been found to be more effective than punishment for bad behaviour.

Training provided for Foster Carers is based upon de-escalation techniques using non-violent crisis management interventions. Training involves physical and situational safety and identifying potential threatening/escalating situations.

4. Pre-Placement/Placement Planning Meetings

A child or young person's behaviour will be addressed at pre-placement and placement meetings. Strategies, and appropriate ways to manage behaviours will be discussed and agreed with the child’s Social Worker and Supervising Social Worker. The effectiveness of strategies will be monitored continuously and reviewed at Care Team Meetings and Looked After Reviews.

5. Managing Behaviour

There may be occasions when Foster Carers find a child or young person's behaviour particularly difficult to manage. In these circumstances the following acceptable actions are advised:

- **Restitution:** Fixing broken items/tidying up/apologising.
- **Reparation:** Paying back or contributing towards the cost of repairs. (any deductions from pocket money must not exceed 2/3).
- **Restriction or Loss of Activities:** For a time limited period.
- **Grounding:** Not allowing a child/young person out for a time limited period - but not restricting their liberty.
- **Confiscation of any property which is considered dangerous or inappropriate:** Subject to the child/young person's right to the return of the property when circumstances permit.

When discipline is used it must be:

- As soon after the event as possible;
- Relevant;
- Just and fair;
- Appropriate to the age, understanding, needs and circumstances of the young person;
- For a specified and time limited period;
- Clearly explained to the young person.

If there is any doubt about discipline the Supervising Social Worker and/or child's Social Worker must be informed and able to discuss this with the Foster Carer.

Any punishment or use of disciplinary measures must be recorded and discussed with the Supervising Social Worker/child's Social Worker as soon as possible after the event.

6.Preventing Physical Intervention

Prevention is always the better strategy. Before any physical intervention is considered, Foster Carers must consider:

- What will happen if they do nothing, or leave the area?
- If there is someone else who can intervene to reduce the need for physical intervention?

- Can the child/young person be distracted away from their intended action?
- Is there a root cause that may be addressed to negate the need for intervention?
- Can the situation be calmed by another course of action e.g. asking someone else to leave the vicinity or removing harmful object?
- Can the child/young person be deflected long enough so that they defer their actions, giving an opportunity to talk?

7. Self-Awareness in Physical Intervention

- Foster Carers may feel a whole range of human emotions when faced with a possible restraint situation.
- Some emotions will be positive and helpful, some negative and destructive.

If your emotions effect your actions severely, move away and get someone else involved or phone for assistance.

8. If Physical Intervention is Unavoidable

If physical intervention is unavoidable Foster Carers should be aware that:

1. An attempt to physically intervene should only be made if there is a reasonable expectation that it is safe to do so.
2. Foster Carers must be acutely aware of their surroundings before any intervention is made, the physical conditions, location, and the group around the event.
3. Under no circumstances should undue pressure be placed on the head or body.
4. Under no circumstances will the child or young person be placed face down on the floor.
5. Under no circumstances will child or young people be held in such a way that will impede their breathing or circulatory system.
6. Foster Carers must only use acceptable forms of physical intervention which does not include hitting, striking, punching, nipping, strangling, biting or squeezing a young person.
7. Foster Carers must have clear intentions of helping a young person regain composure and self-control when holding a young person.

8. Foster Carers must be ready and able to withdraw any intervention as soon as the young person shows signs of resuming self-control.
9. Children and young people must be afforded as much dignity as possible.

9. Crisis Management

It is impossible to plan for every possible situation when caring for children or young people. In some circumstances the agreed planned strategies when managing potential volatile behaviour may not provide an immediate positive outcome.

In crisis situations emotions can run high, keeping calm in order to think through how to manage a situation is important. Resisting acting on impulse or frustration without regard to the potential consequences of any ill-considered action runs the risk of exacerbating the situation.

It is critical that Foster Carers are aware of their own emotions and feelings at times of crisis in order to ensure the safest possible outcome for the child or young person and others.

Physical intervention can only be undertaken to prevent a child injuring her/himself, others or seriously damaging property or where there is significant likelihood of this. For example, where children are assaulting one another and serious injury may be likely and all reasonable action has not calmed the situation as a last resort “physical intervention” may be required. This action must be protective, with minimum force, for a minimum period of time and with continued attempts of verbal reasoning not aggressively carried out.

A Foster Carer should not attempt “physical intervention” unless they feel confident the action can be undertaken safely, and the action is likely to have a positive outcome.

The Foster carer must always seek help and advice from another responsible adult or professional wherever possible.

10. Reporting Critical Incidents

All critical incidents must be reported as soon as possible to the child’s Social Worker, or the Social Worker’s Team Manager and the Supervising Social Worker as soon as possible.

The **Notifiable Incidents and Significant Events** procedure must be followed. The incident should be recorded on the appropriate form, as well as recorded in detail on the carers recording sheets.

11. Prohibited Punishments

Corporal Punishment

Corporal punishment is defined as:

"any intentional application of force as punishment, including slapping, punching, squeezing, shaking, throwing missiles and rough handling and all other humiliating forms of treatment or punishment. It would also include, punching or pushing in the heat of the moment response to violence from a child. It does not prevent a person taking necessary physical action, where any other course of action would be unlikely to avert an immediate danger of personal injury to the child or another person or to avoid immediate danger to property".

Corporal punishment of any form (including slapping, hitting using hands or instruments, shaking, kicking, pulling hair) as well as any other forms of aggressive or threatening behaviour is prohibited.

Foster Carers sign the SS147 Foster Carer Agreement and agree not to use corporal punishment on any child placed with them. Carers who have decided to smack their own children need to think carefully about the potential difficulties or dealing with two sets of children in different ways.

One of the advantages to carers of a no corporal punishment policy is the protection it affords carers against abuse allegations.

Physical Restraint

The Fostering Service does **not** advocate or facilitate the use of "physical restraint" as a behaviour management strategy within foster placements.

The planned use of "physical restraint" as a response to potential challenging behaviour is inappropriate and will never be used as part of the safer caring family policy, placement plan or any other care planning documents or plans.

The use of physical restraint techniques in domestic settings is unreasonable and impractical.

Identifying managing behaviour strategies from all risk assessments, information and children's needs must be the primary focus in order to develop non-physical approaches to safer caring.

An updated risk assessment will be undertaken by the Supervising Social Worker in conjunction with the child's Social Worker, Foster Carer and all relevant parties. The risk assessment will outline the behaviour management intervention required.

Other prohibited actions

The following prohibited punishments and actions are not under any circumstances acceptable in reprimanding or disciplining a child. These actions are contrary to the principles of the Fostering Service and any such instances coming to light are required to be reported through the **Notifiable Incidents and Significant Events** procedure and may be party to investigation under child protection procedures and possible criminal investigation.

- Any punching or pushing in the heat of the moment response to violence from a child or young person.
- Deprivation of food and drink.
- Using the threat of/or restricting of family contact or restriction/delay in communication by post or telephone or other communication by post or telephone or other communication methods.
- Locking a child or young person in a room or confined space or restraining device.
- Intentional deprivation of sleep.
- Any form of racism or discriminatory practice.
- Use of threatening/abusive/intimidating and/or demeaning language or gesture.
- Bullying of any kind.
- Intimately frisking/checking through the clothes worn by the young person.
- Criticism of parents, relatives or friends in the presence of a child.
- The use of any measure which deprives the child of dignity e.g. 'sending to Coventry', calling the child names.

- Any form of racist, sexist or other discriminatory practice directed towards the child.
- The removal of a child's clothing to prevent him/her running away.
- Any action designed to humiliate the child.