

Supporting Distressed and Challenging Behaviour in Educational Settings

Educational Services Policy – Revised January 2019

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Section 1: Introduction: Core principles and values

Purpose and rationale of the policy and guidance

West Dunbartonshire Council (WDC) educational policy and guidance is based on the principle that *all learners* should be included and engaged in their learning community. At the heart of a successful and achieving learning organisation is a safe and nurturing ethos and a culture based on positive and mutually respectful relationships.

A minority of pupils find accessing the routine and expectations of a learning and social environment more difficult and can display behaviour that appears challenging or confrontational as a response. This can be for a number of reasons, including, additional learning or support needs or adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Behaviour that challenges within a school setting can take a number of different forms, however, the focus here is on behaviour that may lead to the child putting either their own wellbeing or that of others at risk due to their response to a situation which, in turn, may be dynamically assessed as requiring forms of de-escalation and possible restraint or seclusion to reduce immediate risk. Restraint and seclusion measures will only be used as a last resort and for the least amount of time

The very specific definitions of seclusion and restraint adopted for this policy have been taken from the recent investigation by the Children and Young People's Commissioner in this area. They are as follows:

- *'Restraint' is defined as "holding a child or young person to restrict their movement". This would include such techniques as CALM or MAPA manoeuvres. It includes mechanical restraints (e.g. wheelchair straps) except those used during the course of normal activities or transportation (e.g. seatbelts or wheelchair harnesses). Any restriction of movement must be justified, proportionate and lawful.*
- *'Seclusion' is defined as "the confinement of a child, without their consent, by shutting them alone in a room or other area which they are prevented from leaving". Seclusion is not the same as a 'time out' which is defined as a behavioural intervention used as part of a structured behaviour support plan which does not necessarily involve being physically removed to a separate room or area.*

If not carried out under strict protocols, the seclusion of a child may constitute deprivation of liberty in terms of Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

It is recognised within this definition that there is a difference between restraining and secluding an individual as a response to a situation or incident and planned 'time out'. In this latter case, planned or reactive 'time out' may be part of a child or young person's support plan. For example, it can include a child or young person having a 'time out' card which they can use to withdraw from class when they are feeling

emotionally overwhelmed or the option of a child or young person with autism to access a room which promotes a sense of calm through reduced sensory input. It is also acknowledged that some children and young people require alternative curricular activities and timetables which may be highly individualised. These may involve individual and small group working for periods out with the mainstream classroom.

Strategies and interventions such as time out or individual teaching sessions are not considered seclusion provided they have evolved from the child or young person's wellbeing assessment and are part of a support plan and risk assessment which has been formed by the team around the child (TATC) and is subject to regular monitoring, review and revision. The parents or carers and, where appropriate depending on age and stage of development, the child or young person should be at the centre of such planning and must offer consent to such arrangements. There should be evidence in minutes of meetings and planning documents of the families' full involvement in the planning and review process.

The purpose of this policy is to set out the frameworks and protocols for supporting pupils to prevent and minimise behaviours that demonstrate distress and are challenging, to develop trusting relationships with peers and adults and thus to achieve more effective access to the academic and social curriculum. It is recognised that each school will develop their own positive relationship policy which have embedded the principles of the primacy of good relationships in building good learning environments.

Core principles and values

There are core principles on which all intervention and approaches should be based. They are:

- **All behaviour is communication** and any planning requires a shared understanding, through collaborative analysis and review of the underlying causes of each individual patterns of behaviour- including the context in which the behaviour is most likely to occur (See Appendix 1 and 3).
- **Children and adults should have access to safe environments** where risk is minimised and there is a shared understanding of expectations, responsibilities and boundaries. (See Appendix 1 and 3).
- **Positive relationships are the key to increasing pupil engagement and inclusion.** All adults working with children and young people need regular opportunities for training and reflection on the underlying reasons for different behavioural responses in various contexts and to develop strategies to improve their own capacity to communicate effectively and develop trusting and affirmative relationships with young people. Training offered to teaching and support staff will take into account;
 - A solution focused approach
 - Restorative conversations and approaches to conflict and conflict resolution
 - Trauma, nurture and attachment informed practice
 - Becoming an attuned practitioner
 - Crisis intervention

- Supporting emotional awareness and development, through strategies such as, scaling, emotional coaching, 'Promoting alternative Thinking Strategies' (PATHS), and *Emotion Works*.
- Assessment, Planning and Risk assessing for pupils likely to exhibit distressed behaviour

Most of these areas are available via Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) calendar. Some training, such as Nurture, PATHs and Attachment informed practice can be accessed via your link Educational Psychologist and should be negotiated and planned as part of regular processes of quality improvement.

Dealing with a Crisis Situation- strategies to reduce risk and de-escalate crisis situations

The policy on promoting positive relationships and tackling behaviour that challenges is based on the principles that all actions should be taken to minimise risk, pre-empt difficulties and de-escalate aggressive or violent behaviour through the application of approaches and strategies outlined in this document.

It is also based on the principles that any attempt to de-escalate violent or aggressive behaviour should not include any physical intervention or restraint.

Physical intervention or physical restraint are only justified where there is an immediate and significant risk to an individual and/or individuals. Where such action has occurred then the appropriate recording documents should be completed and the child's parents and Link Education Officer (EO) and Senior Education Officer Children's Services (SEO) should be updated and debriefed. In all circumstances a process of debriefing of staff (and where and when appropriate and possible with the child or young person) and planning should occur immediately following any incident. It is anticipated that where positive behaviour policies are in place and employed, the necessity for any such action should be rare.

All incidents of violent/aggressive behaviour, including any MAPA techniques employed during the incident should be recorded via [Figtree](#).

Staff in specialist settings will receive additional training in managing behaviour that challenges. Section 3 of this document sets out the protocol for this training, which includes practical strategies in de-escalation and containing physically aggressive and violent behaviour.

School or provision management roles and responsibilities

School and early years' establishment teams should:

- Introduce (and keep up-to-date) organisational policy and procedures to promote positive relationships and behaviour. This should be created in consultation with all members of the school community including teachers, support staff and children and their families.

- Conduct a regular audit and overview across the school or educational provision of classroom and playground approaches to:
 1. Promoting positive relationships and behaviour
 2. Early identification and employment of strategies to support individual children with behaviour that challenges.
 3. Plan staff training needs
- Ensure regular training opportunities which introduce or reinforce learning on the core principles and values.
- Ensure regular opportunities for whole team and team-around-the-child reflective discussions on practice and guidelines.
- Ensure regular opportunities for the senior management team to reflect on the audit and policy implementation procedures and agree areas of success and areas for development.
- Ensure regular reaffirmation of school values and expectations of learning and social behaviour through assemblies, projects and reward systems. Any success in positive behaviour and relationships should be celebrated and shared.
- Ensure robust processes of communication between school/early years' establishment and parents/carers should be based on solution focused, child centred language that sets out shared expectations and targets for improvement, establishes and identifies progress. Training in solution oriented approaches will facilitate this
- Ensure a clear overview and management in cases where behaviour that challenges is having a significant impact on the day-to-day functioning of the child or young person. Clear processes and procedures for risk assessment, planning, intervention and debriefing should be set out. There should be a clear chronology of recording and analysis of behaviour that informs all aspects of curricular and support planning in Latest Pastoral Notes, SAR1 and GP2
- Ensure that accurate and comprehensive information is provided at all stages of transition

Education Authority Officers' roles and responsibilities

There are times in school or early years' establishments when behaviour that challenges can have a greater impact than usual. This can be for a number of reasons, such as, unexpected changes in staffing and management. The education support team (i.e. Education Officers, link Educational Psychologist and Services for Children and Young People Officers) should be made aware, at the earliest opportunity, of any establishment that is experiencing significant issues with behaviour that challenges.

The following strategies should be considered to offer schools support:

- A Support Visit facilitated by an Education Officer to offer the most appropriate support for each situation to support the senior management team to review practice, plan for change and create a set of clear action points.

Teaching and support staff

All teaching and support staff are responsible for:

- Supporting the core principles and values set out in this document.
- Ensuring that they identify and address with the management team their own training needs with regard to: core values and approaches; risk management and planning; procedures for review and debriefing.
- Being fully aware of establishment policy, procedure and strategies with regard to promoting positive relationships and behaviours.

Class Teachers and Early Years Practitioners are responsible for:

- Ensuring that the classroom or nursery environment promotes a positive ethos and culture with clear expectations of both academic and social behaviour.
- Ensuring that processes of teaching and learning are motivating and engaging.
- Engage in CLPL opportunities to ensure support of Named Persons and Early Years Management Staff in the analysis, planning and review of behaviour that challenges and be aware of de-escalation strategies, risk assessment and safety procedures.

Child or young person

All children and young people can expect:

- Access to a safe and nurturing school or early year's environment with a culture and ethos based on positive relationships.
- That there will be a shared understanding of developmental needs and expectations will be clearly communicated and reinforced.
- That the curriculum and learning environment will be adapted and differentiated to encourage engagement and which celebrates progress in learning and social development.
- That there will be an opportunity for developing an understanding, at a pace that is age and stage appropriate, a self-awareness of emotions and feelings and strategies to support emotional self-regulation.
- Consistent communication, language and approaches to support positive behaviour across all areas of the school and nursery.
- A voice in creating school policy and activity.

Section 3: De-escalation protocol

Universal and targeted approaches to promoting positive relationships and de-escalation

Universal and targeted planning for children and young people should be preventive and solution focussed. A whole school and classroom ethos and culture should include strategies that support all children. Targeted support can be put in place for a minority of children that sets out interventions and controls put in place following identification of risk using the suite of [WDC GIRFEC paperwork](#) now firmly embedded in practice.

This should take the form of a risk assessment based on the SEEMIS chronology of behaviours that are considered challenging. The chronology should include: specific descriptions of behaviour; duration; frequency; context; and outcome. There should also be opportunity for reflective discussions on the possible causes or functions of behaviour and a regular, solution focused review of progress. Pupils who require additional support should have a support plan in place that details changes in the learning environment that should take place as a matter of course and specific strategies to be involved when certain behaviours are displayed. A 'Levels of distressed behaviour' with appropriate actions should be discussed at TATC. It should be a brief accessible summary of key indicators of distress or anxiety and what staff should do and say to support the process of de-escalation and should be recorded on child's current GP2.

Planning of this nature ensures that staff feel confident in addressing challenging behaviour. Staff team confidence and clarity in how to handle behaviour that challenges is critical in creating low arousal and calm environment. Where possible, all adults involved in working with the child or young person should be involved in a collaborative review of planning and risk assessment. The child or young person should be placed at the centre of all discussions and, where appropriate, their views and ideas should be sought.

A targeted GIRFEC plan (GP2) which includes Levels of distressed behaviour + appropriate actions and Risk assessment is required when:

- It is likely that a pupil's future behaviour may endanger his/her or other's safety
- There is a pattern of behaviour which has caused concern over an extended period
- There is a single, exceptional incident which may be repeated in the future
- A pupil cannot access a specific aspect of their learning as a result of risk-taking behaviour or Additional Support Need, e.g. in practical lessons.

<http://intranet.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/transformation/education-learning-attainment/childrens-services/asn/girfec/girfec-assessment-and-planning/>

A targeted GIRFEC plan (GP2) which includes Levels of distressed behaviour + appropriate actions and Risk assessment are all working documents. Initially they would be written by the team around the child. This provides school staff with a simple tool to analyse behaviour and to support learning. When used appropriately they support a proactive, collaborative, solution-focused approach which provides a structure to open up a dialogue about a difficult situation.

There is core practice that must always be in place for a child or young person who requires a GIRFEC plan (GP2) detailing actions to address distressed behaviour and Risk Assessment.

All staff should be familiar with the plan and be proactive in suggesting changes and additional solutions.

- After each incident there should be a debriefing meeting, this will allow for reflection and support for the staff member and the young person. The debriefing procedure is outlined in Appendix 3.
- All staff should be familiar with basic practice in tackling low level disruption, recognising levels of distressed behaviour and appropriate actions to address these.

Additional de-escalation approaches

All children and young people should access educational establishments that promote positive behaviour, are proactive in anticipating and preventing behaviour that challenges and that minimise risk to all. West Dunbartonshire Council are committed to minimising the need for interventions in behaviour that challenges that involves the use of restraint or seclusion. However, very exceptionally some pupils in specialist resources require support based on practices and techniques that may involve some form of physical intervention even at the most minimal level.

MAPA is the chosen approach of West Dunbartonshire Council. The MAPA approach has two levels: Foundation can be accessed by all staff and involves understanding behaviour that challenges and considering effective planning to support children and young people along with effective de-escalation techniques; Advanced also involves focus on de-escalation techniques as well as physical intervention techniques.

The justification for utilising the MAPA philosophy and implementing MAPA advanced techniques in some WDC provisions are as follows:

- MAPA has a comprehensive Quality Assurance procedure.
- MAPA techniques are compliant with Health and Safety legislation in promoting the well-being of staff and pupils.
- MAPA techniques are designed to comply with legal requirements, national policy guidance and current research.

- The safety of both pupils and staff is promoted by only engaging in physical intervention to prevent the pupil harming themselves or others, with an emphasis on employing preventative and positive strategies.
- MAPA physical intervention aims to maintain the dignity of all persons involved both in school and the wider community.
- The hierarchy within MAPA techniques allows the minimum reasonable force to be applied at each level of escalation or de-escalation depending on pupils' behaviour. Minimal hand movements between levels ensure that staff can easily move to a more or a less supportive hold.
- The techniques are reassuring for staff. Increased skills improve the confidence of staff and their ability to manage difficult situations.
- Recording systems alert staff to foreseeable risks and determine the inclusion of specified MAPA techniques in risk assessment planning.
- The use of MAPA techniques is recorded and regularly reviewed.
- De-brief of staff and young people along with restorative practice is a key element of MAPA practice

Education Incident Reporting:

<http://intranet.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/transformation/people-technology/health-and-safety/education-incident-reporting/>

Physical intervention training cannot replace good practice and effective management. No system can offer a stand-alone answer to aggressive/violent behaviour. MAPA should not be seen as the only, or principle response to promoting positive relationships and managing challenging behaviour.

The programme of MAPA training in WDC.

It is envisaged that in WDC educational establishments will have a minimum two to three staff members who are trained in MAPA Foundation level per establishment. Training commenced 2017/2018 and will be refreshed on an annual/2yearly process. Foundation initial training takes a minimum of 1.5 day and refresher courses should take the form of 1 day sessions facilitated by MAPA training team. Advanced training requires annual re-accreditation and all staff trained at this level will be recorded on a [central database](#) held by Educational Services and [MAPA](#). Advanced level training covers physical intervention or 'supportive holds'.

WDC have invested in staff trained to deliver both Foundation and Advanced level and work closely with MAPA to ensure refresher training and reaccreditation takes place.

Summary of requirements of MAPA trained establishments

- A minimum of 2- 3 staff should be trained- ideally all staff will access advanced training in specialist settings.
- Staff must be released for regular recorded practice sessions.
- A bespoke support plan and risk assessment should be in place for each pupil that may require physical intervention. All staff involved should have a copy of this.
- Parents/Carers must be informed if MAPA is used on their child.
- The possible use of MAPA should be highlighted in your school handbook.
- De-briefing must be provided to staff and young person following an incident at the appropriate time.

Appendix 1

pp5.23 Aggression and Threatening situations paperwork

<http://intranet.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/transformation/education-learning-attainment/performance-improvement/policy-guidance/pp5-pupils/>

Education Incident Reporting:

<http://intranet.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/transformation/people-technology/health-and-safety/education-incident-reporting/>

Appendix 3

GIRFEC assessment & Planning

<http://intranet.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/transformation/education-learning-attainment/childrens-services/asn/girfec/girfec-assessment-and-planning/>

No Safe Place

<https://www.cypcs.org.uk/ufiles/No-Safe-Place.pdf>

Resources:

Included, Engaged and Involved

Children & Young People's Commissioner: No Safe Place

East Dunbartonshire Council: Including *Every Learner*:

Promoting positive relationships and tackling behaviour that challenges.