

Physical Restraint of Children

Children who have been exposed to trauma during their lifetime often have difficulty in trusting adults. They may feel very anxious for long periods of time, get upset more easily and find it difficult to calm down. When a child or young person has an emotional outburst, it can be very confronting. Staff should try to stay calm, not take the behaviour personally and avoid getting into a power struggle. It is helpful for staff to reflect on their own triggers and be ready with strategies to calm down, such as walking away and discussing the issue later.

The use of physical restraint in working with children and young people is considered a restrictive practice. By this, we mean an intervention which has the effect of restricting the rights, freedom of movement, or access of a person with a disability who is displaying a behaviour of concern. Restrictive practices are not to be used as a first response to behaviours of concerns or as a substitute for adequate supervision. Staff using physical restraint should be appropriately trained to use the strategy safely and have discussed this with a manager.

For any type of physical restraint to be used it is required to be part of the child or young person's behaviour support plan as per Section 45 of Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Regulation 2012. A behaviour support plan includes strategies for managing behaviours and any restricted practices nominated in the plan are approved by a restricted practices panel and where possible consent is sought by those responsible for the child or young person. The effects of using unauthorised physical restraint are negative and can cause injury. It is illegal to physically restrain a child or young person because their behaviour is exasperating or to restrain longer or with more force than is necessary as per their plan. Inappropriate use of physical restraint may amount to a critical event and/or reportable conduct.

Continuum Consulting aims to provide an environment that provides children and young people with genuineness (openness and self-disclosure), acceptance (being seen with unconditional positive regard), and empathy (being listened to and understood). One of the key premises Continuum Consulting adopts through unconditional positive regard is that children and young people whom have experienced trauma, abuse and neglect (like all people) are inherently good by nature, despite some negative behaviours and poor choices that they may make. We must provide them with a positive, consistent and non-judgemental environment, whilst educating and supporting the child and young person to continually make better choices and limit negative behaviours.

A range of positive behaviour support strategies may assist in managing challenging behaviour. Consider what environmental supports you have available to manage behaviours. Is there a safe space for yourself or the child or young person to locate themselves so that they can have space to become calm. De-escalation techniques such as breathing exercises, blowing bubbles, singing can be used by yourself and in conjunction with children and young people. Sensory items are useful in providing a safe and comforting feel for children and young people.