

Britain Yearly Meeting Children and Young People's Work



Event & Activity Management Policy Procedures & Guidance 18

Appropriate physical contact, personal care and physical intervention.

This policy applies to all Britain Yearly Meeting centrally managed work with children and young people (see <http://www.quaker.org.uk/event-and-activity-management>).

This policy and guidance embraces the following principles.

- Every child has the right to feel safe and secure.
- Every child has the right to be treated as an individual.
- Every child has the right to remain healthy.
- Every child has the right to privacy, dignity and a professional approach from all staff and volunteers when meeting their needs.
- Every child has the right to information and support that will enable them to make informed and appropriate choices.
- Every child has the right to be accepted for who they are, without regard to age, gender, ability, race, culture or beliefs.
- Every child has the right to information and procedures for any complaint or queries they may have regarding intimate care.

Physical Contact

- Any physical contact should be age-appropriate and primarily initiated by the child/young person rather than the adult. Where possible permission should be sought from the child/young person.
- Any physical contact should take place where other people are present - a hug in the context of a group is very different from a hug behind closed doors.
- Volunteers or staff members must avoid any physical contact that is, or may be thought to be, sexually stimulating to the adult or the child/young person or that can be perceived as indicating or with sexual intentions.
- Volunteers or staff members should feel able not to engage in any physical contact with children/young people (for example not accepting a hug offered by a young person) and not feel guilty about this.
- Children/ young people have the right to decide how much physical contact they have with others, except in exceptional circumstances when they need medical attention, in this case volunteers or staff members should explain what they are doing or about to do.
- Volunteers or staff members should be aware of other volunteers/staff members in the area of physical contact and should constructively challenge anything which could be misunderstood or misconstrued.
- Concerns about abuse should always be reported.

Personal Care

Personal care may be defined as any activity that is required to meet the personal needs of an individual child on a regular basis or during a one-off incident. Such activities can include: toileting; feeding; oral care; washing; changing clothes; first aid and medical assistance; supervision of a child involved in intimate self-care.

Parents have a responsibility to advise the staff member responsible for the event of any particular needs relating to their child. This forms part of the Consent and Information form at the time of booking. Only in an emergency would staff / volunteers undertake any aspect of intimate care outside of what is normal that has not been agreed by the parents. Such acts of personal care should be reported to a member of staff and parents at the earliest possible time following the event and recorded on an incident form.

When providing personal care:

- Involve the child in the intimate care. Always avoid doing things for the child if they are able to do it for themselves.
- Be aware of your own limitations. Only carry out activities you understand and feel competent with. Never do something unless you are sure how to do it. If in doubt, ask.
- Be aware and responsive to the child's reactions. Always check your practice by involving and talking to the child such as, 'can you wash there?'
- If you have any concerns you must report them. If you observe any unusual markings, discolouration or swelling or if a child is accidentally hurt during intimate care, misunderstands or misinterprets something, reassure the child, ensure their safety and report the incident to the Safeguarding Coordinator.

Physical intervention

Use of physical intervention is a sensitive topic. Physical intervention is only used as a last resort and always with great caution. Staff and volunteers may face a range of situations, not all of which can be anticipated and may have to make rapid decisions and take appropriate action. This guidance is meant to provide reassurance and to support staff and volunteers and to ensure that practice always maintains the safety of participants as paramount. The purpose of restraint is to restore safety and remove risk.

- Staff and volunteers are allowed to use such force as is reasonable in circumstances where a child/young person may need to be prevented from engaging in behaviour that is likely to cause injury to themselves, others or damage to property. There is no legal definition of reasonable force. The Criminal Law Act (1967) allows any person to use such force as is reasonable in circumstances to prevent an offence (or injury) being committed.
- The use of restraint should always be a last resort and should only be taken when it is likely to be effective. Before using restraint volunteers and staff should, wherever possible have addressed the issue using positive behaviour management practices (Managing Behaviour Issues Event & Activity Management Policy Procedures & Guidance 13).
- Brief periods of withdrawal away from the point of conflict to a calmer environment may be more effective for an agitated child/young person than restraining although this may not be possible in a situation of conflict or tension.
- Before using restraint volunteers/staff members should consider if it is possible and appropriate to remove other individuals from the situation of risk.
- Physical intervention should normally only be used when verbal requests or even commands are insufficient to calm or control the situation.
- No more than minimum necessary force should be used, taking all circumstances into account.
- Physical contact and restraint should never be used in anger. Sometimes it may also be necessary for the adult involved to move themselves a distance from the situation to help it defuse (but only where this is a safe thing to do).
- When using physical intervention staff and volunteers should make every effort to avoid any injury to the child/young person.
- The child/young person should continually be offered the space and opportunity to regain self-control.

- Restraint should only be used for the time necessary to restore safety or remove risk; in particular a child/young person should absolutely not be restrained for an unreasonable length of time without relief.
- Volunteers and staff members must never hit or strike a child/young person. If a young person is assaulting a volunteer/staff member they may, to protect themselves, use the minimum force necessary to prevent or deflect the assault – this should only be by blocking the assault or by moving away from the child/young person.
- Staff and volunteers are not expected to restrain a young person if by doing so they will put themselves at risk.
- If it is necessary to restrain a young person it is recommended that more than one adult be present and remain present.
- When restraining, gender or cultural differences must be taken into account.
- Children/young people should never be locked in a room even if a team member is with them.
- Young people must never be restrained by being tied up or bound.
- Any incident should be clearly recorded on an incident/accident reporting form and specify
 - why restraint was necessary;
 - how restraint was carried out;
 - who restrained the young person;
 - how long this restraint lasted;
 - who was present during this period of restraint;
 - any marks noted on the young person as a result of the incident and how they occurred;
 - action taken (e.g. treatment) in relation to any marks or injuries occurring as a result of the incident.
- The young person's parent/guardian should be informed when physical intervention has been necessary. The possibility that a complaint may be lodged by a parent/guardian whose child has been physically restrained cannot be ruled out, this is less likely if the parents are informed about the action taken and reasons why, should an incident occur.
- A young person attempting to leave an event/venue should only be physically restrained if they are considered to be at risk of harming themselves or others. If a child/young person who is not allowed to leave an event without prior parent/guardian permission leaves then parents/guardians should be informed as soon as possible that their child has left the group.
- Staff should monitor the use of physical intervention (via Incident/Accident Reporting Forms) and this should inform procedure and guidance and training programmes.
- When a young person is suspected of concealing unacceptable items, staff should not carry out a physical search. The young person should be asked to satisfy staff they are not concealing unacceptable items. This might be done by asking all present so as to avoid the risk of targeting particular participants. This should always take place in front of an appropriate witness. If they refuse staff may ask them to leave the event or inform parents/guardians or police as appropriate.

Physical intervention source: Isle of Wight Youth and Community Service: *Physical intervention of Young People Guidelines and Information for Youth and Community Workers* August 2005.