



Behaviour Support and Restrictive Intervention Policy

EmpowerEd North policy suite

This policy has been adopted for use from May 2026 and should be reviewed against current legal, safeguarding, commissioning and operational requirements at least annually and whenever guidance or operational arrangements change.

Policy information	Details
Date adopted	May 2026
Review date	May 2027, or sooner following any review trigger listed in this policy
Approved by	EmpowerEd North Founder/Director
Named lead	Designated Safeguarding Lead / Behaviour Support Lead - Janice March
Version	1.0 -
Owner/responsible person	EmpowerEd North Founder/Director
Completion status	CURRENT - adopted for use from May 2026.

1. Purpose

This policy sets out EmpowerEd North's approach to understanding behaviour, promoting regulation, reducing distress, preventing harm and responding safely to behaviour of concern. It is intended for a specialist alternative provision working with autistic learners and learners with severe learning disabilities, communication differences, sensory processing needs, anxiety and other complex needs.

The policy is based on proactive, person-centred, sensory-informed and communication-led practice. It aims to reduce the likelihood of restrictive intervention and ensure that any intervention used is lawful, necessary, proportionate, recorded, reported and reviewed.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all EmpowerEd North directors, staff, volunteers, contractors, visiting professionals and any person working with or on behalf of EmpowerEd North. It applies across any main base, community venue, off-site activity, home/community-based support, transition visit, transport arrangement where EmpowerEd North has responsibility, and digital/remote activity where behaviour support or safeguarding concerns arise.

Where a learner is placed by a school, local authority or other commissioner, EmpowerEd North will agree behaviour, incident, safeguarding, attendance, parent/carer and commissioner notification arrangements before the placement begins.

3. Legal and guidance framework

- Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2025, where relevant to safeguarding practice;
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026;
- Alternative provision statutory guidance, Department for Education, last updated 5 February 2025;



- DfE non-school alternative provision (AP) voluntary national standards, published August 2025;
- Restrictive interventions guidance for schools, Department for Education, effective from 1 April 2026, used as relevant good practice for safe, dignified and recorded restrictive intervention;
- Reducing the Need for Restraint and Restrictive Intervention, Department for Education / Department of Health and Social Care, 2019;
- Equality Act 2010, including reasonable adjustments and anti-discrimination duties;
- SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years;
- Human Rights Act 1998;
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974;
- UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018.

EmpowerEd North operates as a specialist alternative provision at this stage. Where school-specific guidance is referenced, it is used as a relevant benchmark for safe and dignified practice in a commissioned SEND/AP context.

4. Core principles

- Behaviour is communication, but it is not the learner’s only communication. Staff must actively support speech, AAC, signs, gesture, behaviour, body language, refusal, withdrawal and other communication methods.
- Learners must be treated with dignity, respect and kindness, including during distress, dysregulation, refusal, aggression, shutdown, self-injury or absconding risk.
- Support will focus on prevention, relationships, predictability, communication, sensory regulation, meaningful occupation and quality of life.
- Restrictive intervention is a last resort. Staff must use the least restrictive approach that is safe and proportionate in the circumstances.
- Consequences must not be punitive, humiliating, exclusionary or based on shame. Responses must teach safer alternatives and repair relationships where possible.
- Safeguarding overrides behaviour management. A change in presentation, distress, sexualised behaviour, aggression, self-injury, withdrawal or refusal may indicate abuse, neglect, exploitation, pain, illness, trauma or unmet need.
- Staff must avoid diagnostic overshadowing and must not attribute all distress to autism, learning disability, sensory needs or “challenging behaviour”.

5. Definitions

Term	Meaning
Behaviour of concern	Behaviour that indicates distress or unmet need, or that creates actual or potential risk to the learner, other learners, staff, the public, property or the learning environment.
Regulation	The learner’s ability to manage sensory, emotional, physiological and cognitive demands with the right support, environment and communication.
Co-regulation	Support from a trusted adult to help a learner feel safe, reduce arousal and regain readiness for communication, participation or learning.



Positive Behaviour Support / behaviour support plan	A person-centred plan that identifies strengths, triggers, early signs, proactive support, communication approaches, sensory needs, de-escalation and safe responses.
Restrictive intervention	Any intervention that restricts a learner’s movement, liberty or usual choices, including physical intervention, supported separation from a situation, removal, seclusion-like practice or other restrictive approaches.
Restrictive physical intervention / physical restraint	Direct physical contact used to prevent immediate harm where no less restrictive option is sufficient. It must be necessary, proportionate and used for the shortest time possible.
Seclusion	A learner spending time alone against their will in a room or space they cannot freely leave. EmpowerEd North will not use planned seclusion.
Withdrawal / regulation space	A supportive, non-punitive option where a learner is helped to access a quieter or safer space and remains supervised according to risk assessment.

6. Pre-placement behaviour and risk planning

Before a learner starts, EmpowerEd North will review referral information, EHCP outcomes, known risks, communication needs, sensory profile, medical needs, attendance/absence concerns, previous incidents, restrictive intervention history, triggers, preferred regulation strategies and any safeguarding concerns. Where information is incomplete, EmpowerEd North will request further information before agreeing the placement or will begin only within a clearly risk-assessed transition plan.

Where appropriate, each learner will have:

- an individual learner profile or one-page summary;
- an individual risk assessment covering venue, community, staffing, lone working, transport/off-site risk and known behaviour risks;
- a communication profile, including AAC, visual supports, processing time and signs of distress;
- a sensory/regulation plan;
- a Positive Behaviour Support or behaviour support plan where behaviour of concern is known or anticipated;
- a physical intervention/restrictive intervention risk assessment only where there is a foreseeable risk that such intervention may be required;
- medical and first aid information, including contraindications to restraint or physical contact;
- agreed notification arrangements with parents/carers, placing school, local authority and other professionals.

Plans must be proportionate and reviewed after any significant incident, change in presentation, new safeguarding concern, change of venue, change of staffing, escalation in risk, parent/carer or commissioner concern, or at least termly while the learner is placed.

7. Proactive support

Environment

- predictable routines, clear transitions and reduced unnecessary demand;



- structured spaces and visual clarity;
- management of lighting, noise, clutter, smell, crowding, temperature and movement needs;
- safe access to regulation spaces, outdoor time or movement where appropriate.

Communication

- communication at the learner's level, including AAC, visuals, objects of reference, signs, gesture and reduced verbal load;
- processing time and clear language;
- support for choice, refusal, requesting help, requesting a break and expressing discomfort safely;
- staff attention to changes in communication, avoidance, shutdown and body language.

Relationships and demand

- trusted adults and consistent staffing wherever possible;
- low-arousal, low-demand approaches where required;
- collaborative problem-solving and gradual re-engagement;
- meaningful participation linked to EHCP outcomes and Preparing for Adulthood.

Sensory regulation

- planned regulation opportunities rather than waiting for crisis;
- individualised sensory strategies based on observation and known profile;
- monitoring of pain, fatigue, hunger, thirst, toileting, illness and medication effects as possible contributors to distress.

8. Responding to behaviour of concern

- Stay calm, reduce language, give space and avoid confrontation where safe.
- Check immediate safety, remove unnecessary audience or triggers and protect dignity.
- Offer known regulation strategies, communication supports and choices.
- Consider pain, illness, sensory overload, fear, trauma, misunderstanding, unmet need, safeguarding, family stress or environmental triggers.
- Use planned de-escalation responses before considering any restrictive option.
- Call for help early if risk is escalating.
- Do not shame, threaten, corner, block exits unnecessarily, provoke, argue, remove essential communication aids or use punitive isolation.
- Record the incident factually and review what can be changed to reduce recurrence.

9. Restrictive intervention

EmpowerEd North will seek to avoid restrictive intervention wherever possible. Restrictive physical intervention may only be used where it is necessary to prevent immediate harm and where no less restrictive option is sufficient in the circumstances. It must be proportionate to the risk, used for the shortest possible time, and stopped as soon as the immediate risk has reduced.

Staff must not use physical intervention as punishment, to secure compliance, because of refusal alone, for staff convenience, as a response to verbal aggression alone, or where it would be unsafe due to medical, physical, sensory, trauma-related or communication factors.



Where a learner has foreseeable risk of behaviour of concern or restrictive intervention, staff will follow the learner's individual risk assessment and Positive Behaviour Support or behaviour support plan. Planning must set out preventative strategies, communication approaches, sensory and environmental adjustments, staffing, medical considerations, recording and notification arrangements.

Any restrictive intervention or significant incident must be recorded and reported in line with this policy, the Safeguarding, Child Protection and Safer Recruitment Policy and any agreed commissioner/placing-school requirements.

10. Significant incident recording and reporting

The following must be recorded on the same day, or as soon as possible where immediate safety prevents same-day completion:

- date, time, location, activity and people present;
- what happened before, during and after the incident;
- known or possible triggers, unmet needs or safeguarding concerns;
- de-escalation and support attempted;
- any restrictive intervention used, including who used it, why it was necessary, duration, the nature of any contact or restriction, and when it ended;
- injuries, first aid, medical checks, property damage, absconding, urgent support required or safeguarding referrals;
- who was informed and when, including parent/carer, placing school/commissioner, DSL and senior lead;
- learner voice and staff views, using accessible methods where required;
- follow-up actions, plan changes and review date.

Parents/carers and the placing school/commissioner should be informed promptly and in line with the agreed placement arrangements. Any incident involving restrictive physical intervention, injury, safeguarding concern, significant absconding risk or serious distress must trigger senior review.

11. Post-incident support and review

- Check the learner's physical and emotional welfare and arrange first aid or medical advice where needed.
- Give the learner time to recover before any debrief; do not attempt discussion while they remain dysregulated.
- Use accessible learner debrief methods, such as visuals, AAC, drawing, Talking Mats-style approaches, objects of reference or trusted adult communication.
- Offer staff debrief and wellbeing support, especially after high-risk or distressing incidents.
- Review whether the environment, staffing, communication, sensory plan, timetable, demand level, activity, risk assessment or behaviour plan needs to change.
- Consider whether the incident indicates a safeguarding concern, complaint, allegation, low-level concern, health and safety issue, RIDDOR consideration, data issue or commissioner review need.

12. Seclusion, withdrawal, removal and regulation spaces

EmpowerEd North will not use planned seclusion. A learner must not be locked in a room, left alone in a room they cannot freely leave, or placed in any space as punishment. Any emergency separation used to prevent immediate harm must be actively supervised, time-limited, recorded, reviewed and treated as a significant incident.



A learner may choose, or be supported, to use a quieter regulation space, break area, sensory space or different activity where this is part of their plan and is safe. This must be supportive, non-punitive, supervised according to risk and aligned with the learner's plan.

13. Absconding, community safety and public settings

Because EmpowerEd North may deliver learning in community settings, each learner's risk assessment must consider road safety, absconding, public distress, vulnerability to exploitation, interaction with strangers, sensory triggers, transport arrangements and emergency communication. Staff must follow the individual plan, act early and seek urgent assistance where a learner is missing, at immediate risk, or cannot be kept safe through agreed responses.

14. Training, competence and authorisation

All staff will receive induction covering this policy, safeguarding, SEND-specific behaviour support, communication, sensory regulation, recording, incident reporting, professional boundaries and emergency procedures before working unsupervised with learners.

Staff must not use restrictive physical intervention unless they have received appropriate training, are authorised by EmpowerEd North, understand the learner's plan and are acting in an emergency to prevent immediate harm. Training needs will be reviewed when learners' risk profiles, venues or staffing models change.

15. Monitoring and governance

The leadership team will review behaviour and incident records weekly while learners are placed, and sooner after significant incidents. Monitoring will include frequency, location, activity, antecedents, injuries, RPI/restrictive intervention use, equality considerations, safeguarding concerns, staff involved, learner voice, parent/carer feedback and whether plans are reducing risk.

Patterns must lead to action. Actions may include plan review, environmental change, staffing change, training, professional advice, commissioner review, placement review, safeguarding referral, health referral or leadership oversight.

16. Linked policies and templates

- Safeguarding, Child Protection and Safer Recruitment Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct Policy
- Managing Allegations and Low-Level Concerns Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- First Aid Policy
- Risk Assessment Policy/Template
- Lone Working Policy
- Educational Visits and Community Learning Policy
- Attendance, Absence and Children Missing Education Policy
- Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notice
- Incident Report Form
- Restrictive Intervention Record
- Behaviour Support Plan Template



- Learner Risk Assessment Template



Appendix A: Learner-specific pre-placement behaviour support checklist

This appendix is completed individually for each learner where behaviour support planning is required. It is a working checklist for the learner's file, not an incomplete part of the policy.

Item	Learner-specific notes	Date / initials
Referral information and EHCP reviewed		
Individual risk assessment completed		
Communication profile completed		
Sensory/regulation plan completed		
Behaviour support plan completed if needed		
Medical/first aid contraindications checked		
Staffing and training matched to risk		
Parent/carer and commissioner notification routes agreed		