



Children's Views on Restraint

The views of children and
young people in residential
homes and residential
special schools

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The Children's Rights Director

My statutory functions as Children's Rights Director for England are set out in the Children's Rights Director Regulations 2004. Under these Regulations, I work as part of the Commission for Social Care Inspection, as the Commission's "Children's Auditor". I monitor the work of the Commission in safeguarding and promoting the rights and welfare of children. With my team in the Office of the Children's Rights Director, I directly ask children and their parents for their views about welfare and welfare services, report their views, and give advice to the Commission and to the government in line with their views.

I have these legal functions for:

- children living away from home in children's homes, foster care, residential family centres, boarding schools, residential special schools and further education colleges;
- children looked after by local councils;
- children supported by social services;
- children being adopted, and
- young people leaving care or who have recently left care.

I am required to report children's views to the Commission for Social Care Inspection, which publishes them and sends them to the appropriate government Ministers to be taken into account in making the relevant policies. They are also sent to other organisations working with children and young people. The Commission takes the views of children and young people into account in its work of inspecting and reporting on the services concerned.



Reports such as this one are also written for children and young people themselves to read. Copies are sent to those who took part in the children and young people's workshops. All my reports of children's views (including a list of the top ten messages from children and young people on each subject) are also put on our children's website (www.rights4me.org).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roger M...', written over a dotted line.

Children's Views on Restraint

The survey of the views of children
and young people in residential
homes and residential special schools

Dr Roger Morgan OBE,
Children's Rights Director

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Introduction

How staff restrain children in residential homes and schools concerns people from Government and many other organisations (including the Commission for Social Care Inspection). It was one of the worries children and young people had told me about being kept safe from harm when we asked them what they thought were the main risks that needed to be dealt with.

In my report ***Safe from Harm*** (which you can find through our website www.rights4me.org.uk) I reported that very many children and young people living in children's homes and residential special schools are very concerned that their staff should know how to do restraint properly and without causing pain.

Those children and young people did not say that people who had got dangerously out of control should not be restrained. Their concern was much more clear than that. It was that staff who restrain children should know how to do it properly. How to do restraint properly was one of the things children and young people told me they thought adults working with children should be taught.

Professional adults have been concerned for a long time about how to restrain children and young people properly, when to use and when not to use restraint, and about the risks and results of using restraint. Before now, little has been heard about what the children and young people themselves think. They alone have the experience of being on the receiving end of restraint. They mostly accept that if they become dangerous, staff may have to stop them harming someone or doing really serious damage. But they are as worried as staff and policy deciders should be that restraint can make things worse, can itself hurt or injure, and can leave people resentful and even wanting to get back at people.

This report sets out the views of children and young people themselves. Almost all of the children and young people we spoke to had experienced physical restraint, some often. So they gave their views of restraint from first-hand experience. Worryingly, some of them said that we were the first people to ask them about their experiences of restraint – *"no one talked to me about it before now."*

*"no one talked
to me about it
before now."*

The background to this report

My report *Safe From Harm*, which was published in July 2004, highlighted the concern of many children living in children's homes and residential special schools that staff should know how to restrain properly and without pain. (You can find the *Safe From Harm* report on the children's rights website – www.rights4me.org.uk.) This was one of the main worries children and young people had about being kept safe from harm.

These children and young people did not say that people who had got dangerously out of control should not be restrained. Their concern was much more focused than that. It was that staff who restrain children should know how to do so properly – and that adults working with children should be taught how to do restraint properly.

Workshop consultations

I decided to hold workshops of children and young people from children's homes and residential special schools to ask for more views about restraint. Together with colleagues from the team at the Office of the Children's Rights Director, I met six different groups of children and young people in separate workshops in three different parts of England. We asked about their experiences of being restrained; when they thought restraint should, and should not, be used; how it should, and should not, be done; and what alternatives there might be. Importantly, we also asked – and got a lot of views – about how restraint made you feel if you were being restrained.

As always in our children's rights consultations, we chose the homes and schools we invited children and young people from, entirely at random. This was to make sure that the people attending our workshops were as representative as possible and that we were not just consulting groups that already met and had been consulted about other things. We held some of the workshops in office buildings, but others at interesting places such as a zoo and an aquarium. We wrote down what children and young people told us, and we have put these views into this report.

We spoke to the children and young people ourselves; their staff or parents were not in the workshop with them. I and members of my team were the only people there, other than, for some of the workshops, a research colleague from the National Children's Bureau; she was interested in hearing views about restraint for a report she was writing.

The views in this report are those of the children and young people themselves – not our own. All we have done is to collect them and do some summarising, without changing them at all. Where we quote what someone said to us, we have their permission. We have chosen quotes that summarised what a lot of other people said, or that the other children and young people in that particular workshop agreed were right.

Thanks

I am grateful to all the children and young people who told us about their experiences of restraint; many of them shared very personal things with us. I would also like to thank the staff and parents who brought the children to the workshops.

Roger Morgan

Children's Rights Director for England

December 2004

1 Don't Let Things Build Up to Danger Level

Key points

- Staff need to handle the initial problem well and should only use restraint as a last resort.
- Something quite small – or something seen as unfair – can trigger a build-up that ends in restraint.
- It's vital to avoid problems building up to danger level and restraint wherever possible.
- Staff who try restraint when they don't know how to can make things even more dangerous for everyone.

Many children spoke of how **problems can build up** until you got so angry and out of control you ended up being restrained. Some blamed staff for this – *"staff rile you until you want to hit them, then they restrain you."* One example was when staff shut a young person in an office for shouting at them. That led to the young person 'kicking off' in the office, and then having to be restrained.

Children thought that staff should be better at **heading off this sort of build-up**. They should handle the initial problems better so they did not develop so far that restraint was their only way out. Some described how staff began a shouting match with children, shouting things like 'don't mess with me' if you were not behaving as you should. They said that this did not solve anything and led to more restraint being used than necessary.

A few young people said that they had got angry about something they thought was wrong or unfair – **you could become violent and get in a dangerous build-up of anger over something unfair**, which could end up in threats and restraint. Some said this might be more likely to happen if you thought there was no point complaining about something you thought was unfair, and therefore felt you had to try to force people to do something. One said that nothing happened when he complained about anything – *"may as well lock it in a drawer and forget it"* – so sometimes you just argued and fought for what you thought was fair for you, and sometimes that ended up with

"staff rile you until you want to hit them, then they restrain you."

violence and restraint. But you usually had your reasons for 'kicking off' – **"if kicking off, it's about something"**.

An important skill of well-trained and experienced staff is to **avoid having to use restraint** at all whenever possible. These staff

know how to head problems off before things reach the danger-point of someone getting hurt or property being seriously damaged. One group was clear that the secret of good staff was that whenever they could they avoided getting themselves into a situation likely to end in restraint.

Sometimes this might mean staff withdrawing from something – for instance an argument that was getting into a shouting-match over something that was not very important anyway. Some young people

were critical of **staff who were never prepared to back off** once they had decided or said something, and who wouldn't go away if children or young people asked them to before things got to danger-point. These staff *"keep in your face"* until the danger-point and then violence and restraint are reached.

Some young people used the word 'escalating' to describe how things could build up like this. Others described it as *"like a chain reaction"*; *"a revolving circle"*.

One young person described a situation they had been in that had ended up in restraint. It had started with the young person saying 'I'm not listening to you', and a staff member replying 'I'm not listening either.' Neither did listen, it built up into louder and louder shouting, and ended in restraint. The young person said that **if two people were shouting but not listening, you could expect things to get out of control**.

*"if kicking off,
it's about
something"*



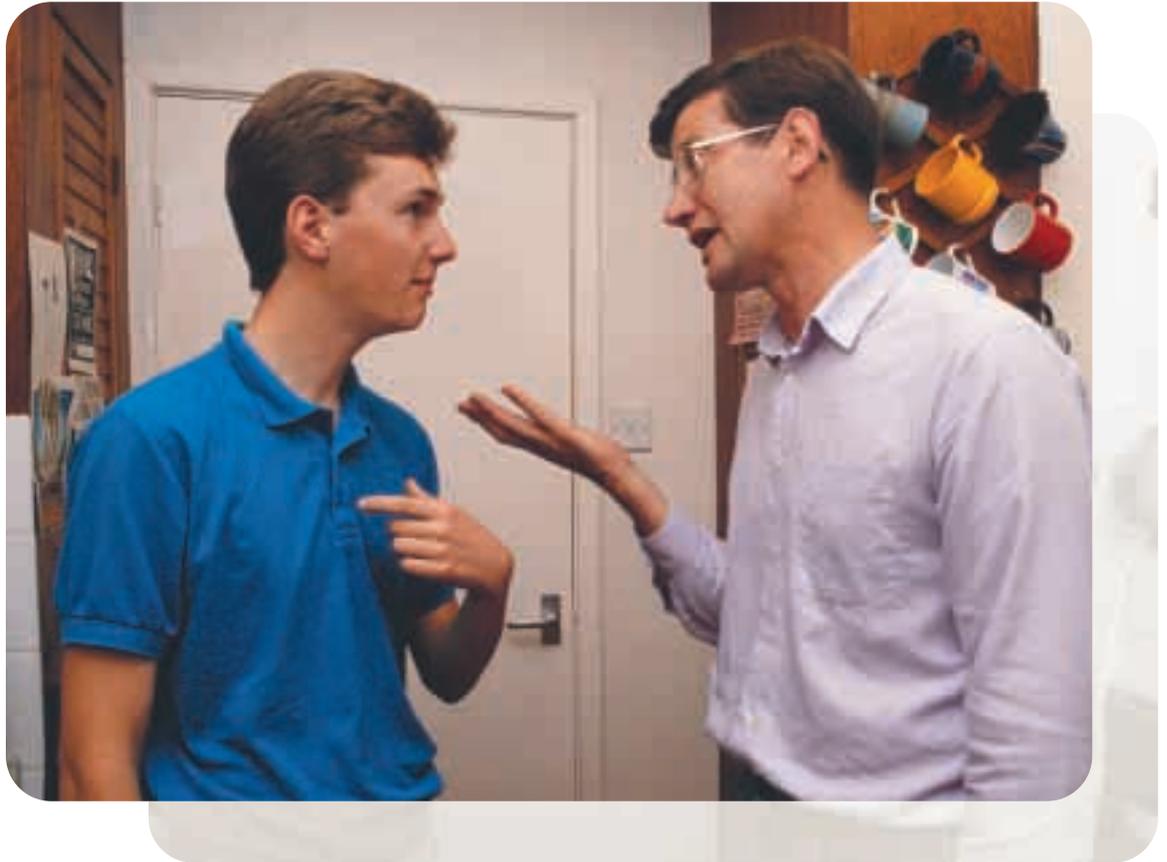
Another young person told me about a major event in his life that involved a build-up from something small into restraint and much worse. He gave me permission to tell the story in this report, and also said that he had not felt able to tell anyone else about his side before coming to our workshop. He did not say that he was right and staff were wrong – it was just a situation where each of them let an argument go round and round until they both suffered from things getting completely out of hand. He had knocked over an empty coffee-pot at the meal table. That led to an argument between himself and a staff member, which escalated into a shouting-match. The result was that the staff member eventually had to use restraint on him, but failed to do so properly because staff had not been trained enough. Things did not end there – the restraint went badly wrong, he lost control completely, the staff member was injured, and the young person got a conviction for grievous bodily harm.

This account of one young person's experience of restraint going wrong contains three important elements that others agreed strongly were quite common.

- First, even if restraint has to be used because otherwise someone might be injured, **the problem that started it off is often something quite small that was not dangerous at all**. Small arguments about nothing much can build up into something dangerous enough for someone to need restraining.
- Second, many said that this build-up often **started with some sort of argument between a member of staff and a young person**, not so often with the young person starting off being violent – that came later as part of the build-up.
- Third, **staff who try restraint when they do not know how to do it safely for both the young person and themselves can make the dangers worse** for everyone involved.

This last point was the main message the young person, and the others in the group, wanted me to report. The recommendations for staff were straightforward:

- You need to be as good as possible at heading off an argument from leading to danger needing restraint.
- If you do have to restrain to protect someone from injury, then you need to be trained in how to do it properly and safely.



2 When to Use Restraint

Key points

- Restraint is sometimes necessary – but only when someone is likely to get hurt or property is likely to get seriously damaged.
- Restraint should not be used when people are ‘just messing’ or shouting and screaming.
- Restraint should not be used as a punishment.
- Calling the police is usually unnecessary.

Some adults might have expected the children and young people who came to our workshops to say that they should never be restrained. Very few said this – most thought that **restraint was sometimes necessary, though less often than it is generally used**. They recognised that sometimes some children and young people do lose control so much that they are likely to injure themselves or someone else, or do serious damage to the building, furniture or someone’s property.

Those who came to the workshops were very honest with us about how **staff are sometimes challenged** by children and young people, and can have problems keeping control of things. One young person said that children and young people often spot a vulnerable and untrained member of staff, and can turn this round and become threatening: *“kids don’t take prisoners.”*

Nearly all the children and young people we met agreed on **what restraint could and should be used for**. They agreed that you should be restrained if you were **likely to hurt yourself or to hurt others**. Staff could reasonably restrain you if you were beating up a member of staff. However, staff did need to make good judgements about whether someone was going to be injured if they did not do something. Raising a hand doesn’t always lead to violent injury.

Most thought that restraint should only ever be used as a last resort to prevent injuries and damage. **You should be restrained only if there was genuinely no other way you were going to stop being dangerous.**

Those we spoke to were very clear that restraint should not be used if you were ‘just messing’, or were shouting or screaming or using abusive language, but there was no



danger to anyone or to property. One group said that restraint should not be used if two young people were just fighting, unless one of them was so much bigger or stronger that there was a serious risk of injury. Even if you were throwing things, **staff still should only**

use restraint if you were damaging something important or were likely to injure someone. As one young person put it, "I got restrained for throwing a newspaper. It would have been OK if it was a brick."

Another situation in which you should not be restrained was when you were extremely upset, but were not being a danger to anyone. One person told us that their

"foster carer restrained me so my Mum could leave. I didn't want to stay – so I ran away."

Many young people thought that staff needed to be very much clearer than many are about when they can and cannot use restraint. Restraint should only be used if you are assaulting someone, if you have a weapon that you were likely to use on someone, or if some damage you were doing (or about to do) to property was really serious. Discussing what 'serious' means (an important question because government guidelines on restraint talk about 'serious' damage to property), this group defined it as '**really permanent costly damage to property**'. For example, damaging the structure of the building would count as serious, but not breaking a plate. However, hitting someone with a plate would justify restraint – because it was likely to cause injury, not because of the damage to the plate.

"I got restrained for throwing a newspaper. It would have been OK if it was a brick."

Others advised that staff should avoid using restraint if the person concerned was not moving around – it was less likely that you were about to attack someone if you were standing still arguing.

Some young people who had lived in secure units told us that they thought that staff there were justified in using careful restraint when things started to escalate towards violence, even if they were still only at the level of verbal abuse. This was because, if you are in a secure unit, you are likely to be at high risk of injuring someone, and as one person put it, *"they know what's coming."* But no one thought this applied outside secure units.

Many in the workshops spoke about **fairness** when it came to someone getting hurt in restraint. They said that, when it came to hurting people, adults generally thought it was more serious if a child or young person ever did anything to hurt a member of staff than if a member of staff hurt a child during restraint. *"We get done more if we hurt staff than if staff push or hurt us."* Some people mentioned another aspect of fairness: that when it came to shouting and people possibly hurting each other, it was very easy for adults looking back at what had happened between staff and children with problems to decide that *"in the end the children are lying."*

There was a clear view that **restraint should not be used as a punishment**, although it often is. Being restrained always seems like a punishment anyway, even if it was to prevent you causing injury or serious damage. Staff need to consider this. *"Being restrained and paying reparation is two punishments in one."*

Some young people said that staff sometimes **call the police** when children start damaging things or being aggressive. They felt that this was not always necessary if the problem was

mainly one of things (rather than people) being damaged in someone's temper. One young person said that on one occasion staff had called the police when this had happened, and now they had a conviction for damaging a door in a temper. They wondered if young people ever damaged doors in ordinary family homes without the police being called and you landing up with a criminal record.

However, young people thought that it might be better if staff who had lost control generally did call the police rather than do restraint wrongly.

"Being restrained and paying reparation is two punishments in one."



3 How Being Restrained Makes You Feel

Key points

- Young people need to know that they can be restrained.
- Staff need to understand that some people do not like an adult touching or holding them because of past abuse.
- Restraint can make you want to get your own back – its better to talk about what happened and why.
- Restraint also affects the people watching it happen.

It was worrying that some children and young people **did not know you could be restrained** until it actually happened to them. This was not only frightening – it did not help staff to control them either, because they did not know what was going on and fought to escape the adult trying to hold them, sometimes in a bear hug. *"First time it happened, I didn't know what was going on."*

They thought that you should always be **pre-warned** that, if you seemed likely to hurt someone or damage things when you lost control, you could be restrained. You should be told how this would be done, and what you could be restrained for. You needed to **know the rules about restraint**.

Some children said that, because they had been sexually or physically abused in the past, they **did not like an adult touching or holding** them. Yet they felt this was not taken into account in whether and how they got

restrained. Some said that an adult touching them really riled them. They lashed out and ended up being physically restrained by an adult holding them tightly. This made them lose control more, and didn't calm them down at all – which was what they thought staff wanted them to do.

One child told us that *"some are in a children's home because of abuse and force, and getting restrained is the same."* Even if it didn't remind you of past abuse, **restraint almost always made you more worked up than you were before** – one young person asked how any of us would feel if we were already worked up and angry, and then someone grabbed us and held us.

"some are in a children's home because of abuse and force, and getting restrained is the same."

"I still bear a grudge against the way I was restrained."

We asked everyone in each of our groups how being restrained made you feel. Some said that it made you feel depressed, others that it made you more stressed. One, with the agreement of the rest of their workshop group, described it like this:

"It makes you feel like you're nothing. People holding you down brings bad memories. It's horrible. Makes you want to head butt them." Feelings about bad restraint could run deep. One person told us: *"I still bear a grudge against the way I was restrained."*

Some young people told us that some ways of restraining make you feel **claustrophobic and panicky**, leading you to struggle more so that staff hold you tighter. Staff should realise this.

Some told us that, in their experience, **being restrained usually hurt you**, and often leaves you with hand marks or bruises for a while.

When we asked how you felt after the restraint was over, we were told that often it made you want to **get staff back** and get your revenge later, or that sometimes it simply made you want to be completely alone. Sometimes you wanted to **talk about the restraint with staff**. However, the most important thing was what had led to you getting restrained – you might want to talk about that and also about how you had been restrained, with the person who had restrained you.

Some children and young people told us how they felt when seeing someone else being restrained. **Restraint affects the children seeing it happen as well as the person being restrained.** One group said that seeing someone else being restrained made you feel 'snide', and you tended to laugh at the person being restrained.

They also told us that, if others watching you being restrained did laugh, that made you want to get to them and hit them. This did not help to calm things down when you were already out of control: *"Others stress you."*



4 How to Do Restraint

Key points

- Restraint should never involve pain.
- Staff need to be trained in how to restrain without hurting and without making you get even more out of control.
- Restraint should calm you down – not make you angrier.

The children and young people who came to our workshops were clear about the **things that should and should not happen in restraint**. Some of these were about the sorts of restraint that should or should not be used. As well as this, many young people gave examples of things that had happened to them while they were being restrained by staff who were not trained to restrain properly and safely.

Everyone agreed on one essential: **restraint should not hurt**. The **ways staff use to restrain children and young people should not involve pain**. Everyone also agreed that **it is never right for staff to kick children**, either instead of restraining them or as part of restraint. One group was very clear that **using pain in restraining you is the same as physical abuse**.

Untrained and inexperienced staff tended to hurt you if they tried to restrain you. It was **important that staff are trained properly in how to get restraint right without hurting you and without making you get even more out of**

control and making things worse. Staff should be trained before they had to use any restraint on anyone. Only staff with proper training can use restraint to do its proper job – to make things safer for the children and young people, for the staff, and for anyone else around at the time. Staff need to know how to hold you without damaging you, while stopping you damaging yourself or anyone else. The children and young people were crystal clear that **restraint shouldn't hurt**.

All staff should be trained to do restraint right – not just some of them. Anyone might have to use restraint to prevent injury or serious damage, and in these situations staff can't just say, "*pause while I get the right person*."

Another reason for staff to be properly trained is that **most young people soon learn how to get out of restraint**. This reduces its usefulness and also makes it more dangerous for everyone involved.

Children and young people pointed out other dangers of restraint being done badly.

Restraint should not stop you breathing. One young person said that restraint should never involve **positional asphyxia**. One person told us that they were asthmatic, and felt that being held tightly around the chest when they were in a panic was likely to cause breathing problems. People restraining you should only hold you in safe and comfortable positions – not in painful ones.

Restraint should **never break anyone's bones**. Adults should **never sit on your head**, as some said had happened to them. You should not have your arms pushed painfully up your back. You should not be grabbed around the neck. One young person described what they thought was the wrong sort of restraint – *"slinging someone down and sit on them"*. Staff should take account of how strong they

are when restraining someone: *"some of our staff don't know their own strength."*

We were told that there are **issues of age, size and gender** in restraint. Some male staff tended to use far more force than others because they were stronger than female staff or other men. Often there was a worrying difference in size and weight between a small child and larger staff members, which mattered when they used their strength to overpower you.

One young person thought there were **real risks in being restrained by someone strong and heavy**. They said that they were not allowed to carry more than a certain weight of newspapers on their paper round for fear of injury – yet they often had a far greater weight of people on top of them when they were being restrained. This did not make much sense.





People in our groups had many different experiences of restraint. Besides the common one of someone putting their arms around you to hold you, there were some **more worrying examples of restraint**: being put down on the floor, sometimes with someone sitting on you; having your arms held up behind your back; being pushed face down on to the floor; and being held back against someone's knee. Young people said all these involved **risk of pain and injury**.

Putting you on the floor could also result in **accidental injury** – some floors are made of concrete, or have very thin carpets. Struggling with staff while you were being held on the floor could lead to **carpet burns**.

However, some people thought that putting you down on the floor was acceptable, provided you weren't hurt in any way or sat upon. Holds such as a 'basket hold', or

someone strong holding you tightly under your arms, could easily damage or break your ribs. Also, if you were not held properly, you could still kick people while you were struggling and end up with a conviction for assault. But even on the floor you would still struggle, especially if being held down made you remember past experiences of abuse so you felt you had to defend yourself against the staff holding you down.

Others disagreed: people restraining you should not put you on the floor, as that was too risky. They should keep you on your feet, and concentrate on stopping you damaging anyone with your arms or legs. They should be trying to calm you down as well, and not do anything likely to make you worse rather than calmer.

Don't restrain a person holding a weapon – take the weapon."

Restraining you while you were holding a weapon was particularly dangerous. One young person said that they had been injured when they were restrained while holding a pair of scissors, which had ended up being dug into their arm. *"Don't restrain a person holding a weapon – take the weapon."* Some thought that staff should know more about disarming people than restraining them – but without hurting them in the process. Both the person holding the weapon and anyone they might

use it to attack are *"more likely to be hurt by an implement than a human"*.

"therapeutic physical intervention, not old-fashioned kicking"

Many young people wanted to be clear about another issue. **Proper restraint should not mean lots of people holding you or piling on top of you.**

One group gave an example of four members of staff restraining a fairly small girl in her nightdress. They

thought that, with proper training, even an adult smaller than you could probably use restraint well. But it could be dangerous if staff who did not really know how to do restraint made up for this by lots of them joining together to hold you down. Some thought that restraint should normally be one on one, not by a group of staff.

All agreed that **properly used restraint should calm you down, not make you angrier.** Most thought that, if someone had to hold you, they should also **talk calmly to you to calm you down** while they were holding you. That did not always work, of course, but it would often help. If staff did have to hold you, then they should also try to get back to support and calm and then try to sort out the problem that had led you to 'kick off' in the first place.

Some pointed out that one reason for being restrained was to stop you harming yourself. If this was why you were being restrained, adults needed to comfort you as well as physically protecting you.

One young person said that staff should also know how to do other sorts of physical intervention in order to protect you. The main one was **how to intervene to stop you hurting yourself in an epileptic fit.**

One young person summed up good restraint as **"therapeutic physical intervention, not old-fashioned kicking"** – the aim is to calm you, not hurt you or just turn into fighting between staff and young people.

5 Avoiding Restraint

Key points

- It's important to try to calm someone down before restraint becomes necessary – and even when it does.
- Each individual's Placement Plan should describe how to deal with the person if they lose control.
- It's important to think of alternative ways to take the heat out of a situation.

Many young people said that often **restraint often doesn't work very well because it works you up rather than calms you down**. Some said that there were better ways of calming people down – of course, these did not always work, but then neither did restraint always end up with calmer, safer people.

We asked people at our workshops if they thought that there were **alternative ways of calming someone down** and stopping them damaging someone or something. Most thought that **talking you down calmly** should be tried before things went too far – but this means staff avoiding getting themselves into a shouting match, and instead talking calmly as staff members, even if you were shouting.

Another alternative to restraint suggested by a lot of people was taking you to a **safe room to calm down**, away from the others for a while. While this might not always work, it would be good practice to **give someone a chance to calm down before warning that restraint would have to be used**. Any room used for this

should not be unpleasant or claustrophobic and should not be one where you were likely to hurt yourself.

Something that was often suggested was to **always try to give a child or young person space and help to calm down** before things build up to a crisis. Instead of carrying on arguing about something small, staff should switch to concentrating on calming you down when they could see that things were heading towards danger to someone and restraint for you. Some people said that they could sometimes calm themselves down if given some space and time – like somewhere to go without having to carry on the argument.

One group thought that there were **many ways staff could take the heat out of a situation** that was heading for dangerous anger and restraint. Even offering a young person a cigarette and saying "*here's a fag – go and calm down*" would be better than violence that has to be stopped by restraint, and would sometimes work.

A major problem with restraint is that, while it might stop something dangerous happening, it simply **doesn't solve the problem that had led to you 'kicking off' in the first place:** *"Getting you down doesn't stop it as you're feeling bad at the end."*

"Getting you down doesn't stop it as you're feeling bad at the end."

Some young people thought that there were often **more effective forms of physical intervention** than just holding someone or getting them down on to the floor. For example, staff could stand in front of a smaller child to keep them back from others. When things were beginning to build up to possible violence, staff could see if it was possible to take dangerous objects out of harm's way – such as weapons, scissors or

CDs – before things got wholly out of control and they were used to hurt someone. Because it was not really possible to hold you and take away dangerous things at the same time, staff should try to remove the dangers first, before they were likely to have to hold you down. This might just mean they wouldn't have to, as there would be fewer obvious weapons in reach.

Many thought that, even if things have gone too far for this and a young person is clearly threatening to use something as a weapon to hurt someone, the main thing was to get hold of the weapon, rather than just grab the person holding it. However, this would not always be possible.

Opinions differed on whether staff trying to calm you would work to stop you getting so worked up that you threatened others and





needed restraining. One group decided that it all depended on the individual, and staff needed to make decisions on using restraint according to who could usually be calmed by other ways, and who couldn't. As one person put it; *"I would calm down on my own. Some others wouldn't."*

One group made a very important proposal. Since young people differ in how they can be calmed down, and also in how they react to being restrained (especially since restraint would remind some of them of bad past experiences), children and young people could be asked to **"fill in a form on their preferred way of calming down"**. This could be taken into account when their Placement Plan was written. Each individual's **Placement Plan could tell staff the best way to deal with that person if they lose control** and try to injure someone or do serious damage to property. This proposal certainly needs to be considered seriously.

Although we were asking about restraint, young people in some of our groups also wanted to tell us about **things that staff had tried that didn't work** when children got out of control.

We were told that some staff coped with problems in a home or school by just shutting themselves in the staff room and leaving children to get on with it. *"If staff shut themselves in a room, children just riot."*

Another group talked about **being left or locked in their rooms** if they were getting out of control. They thought this was dangerous for them, and shouldn't be allowed.

One person told us of someone who wanted to leave the room to go to the toilet while this was happening, and another said that they had started to self-harm their body while being made to stay in their room. Most felt that, if they were at this sort of extreme, staff should be talking to them about whatever had led to that point being reached. Another group told us about a further bad idea for dealing with violent behaviour: staff had turned them out of the front door of the children's home and locked them out of the house until they had calmed down.

"If staff shut themselves in a room, children just riot."

What Happens Next?

The views given to me by children and young people, and set out in this report, send clear and very valuable messages to many people:

- to staff who use restraint;
- to people in government who set out the rules about what should and should not happen; and
- to inspectors who check that the safety, rights and welfare of children and young people are not being damaged – whether by restraint or by other things.

In the light of the opinions set out in this report, I believe, as Children's Rights Director, that the government needs to give new and clear guidance to staff working with children in children's homes, residential special schools, and similar settings. This should cover such issues as:

- avoiding pain and injury during restraint
- training staff in how to use restraint safely
- training staff in heading off the need to restrain
- when restraint can be used and when it must not be used
- the outcomes of restraint for children
- wherever necessary, covering in individual children's placement plans the most appropriate ways of acceptably managing loss of control for that particular child, in consultation with the child concerned.

I am therefore sending this report of children's views to the government Ministers who make decisions on issues about restraint, for them to consider for possible future guidance.

If you have any comments regarding this report please send them to:

Dr Roger Morgan OBE

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We particularly welcome feedback from children and young people.

Children's Website www.rights4me.org.uk

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