



PRESS RELEASE: EMBARGOED UNTIL 6AM THURSDAY 31ST JANUARY

Vulnerable, disabled children are being restrained and secluded in schools

Challenging Behaviour Foundation report published today suggests restrictive intervention of children with learning disabilities may be widespread across the UK

The restrictive intervention of vulnerable children is a hidden issue. The Government does not collect figures on how many disabled children across the UK are restrained, secluded, or subject to other restrictive physical interventions while at school.

The Challenging Behaviour Foundation (CBF) and Positive and Active Behaviour Support Scotland (PABSS) both support families of children who have experienced restrictive intervention. We took forward this piece of work, driven and supported by family-carers, to gather data to better understand the nature and scale of this practice. Our small-scale piece of work (with 204 survey respondents and 566 case studies) found that many families believe restrictive practices are the main method for managing behaviour in some schools. That approach is not consistent with NICE recommendations and suggests a need for much greater investigation of this issue.

The survey reported significant harm to children and families

88% of our survey respondents reported that their disabled child had experienced restraint – a third of those saying it happens regularly. 71% had children who had experienced seclusion, 21% of those on a daily basis. Most of these experiences were reported to happen in school. The physical and emotional impacts were reported as significant, with 58% of families reporting that their child sustained injuries and 91% reporting a negative emotional impact. Most families said that recording of incidents was rare, with families reporting that just 19% of the incidents leading to an injury were recorded.

Vivien Cooper, Chief Executive of the Challenging Behaviour Foundation said: “It is unacceptable that children are being physically injured and traumatised and this needs to stop. The information shared by families in our survey and the case studies is shocking. There has been an increased awareness of restrictive interventions in Assessment and Treatment Units, but poor practice is not confined to health settings. Vulnerable children across the UK are regularly experiencing restraint, seclusion and other restrictions in the very places they are supposed to be safe and well cared for, including schools.

The Department for Education in England has been promising long-overdue guidance for schools on this issue for four years now. The Government must take this issue seriously across the whole of the UK, and take steps to understand the scale of the problem, invest in Positive Behaviour Support training for staff and trauma support for families and improve accountability at all levels”

Beth Morrison, Founder and CEO of PABSS said “ I am determined to make sure that what happened to my son, Calum, never happens to another child. The report “No Safe Place” by the

Scottish Children’s Commissioner shone a light on the issues we families have been calling for action about for many years and the Scottish Government must implement the recommendations. The report we are publishing today adds to the evidence about the experiences disabled children suffer at the hands of those paid to care for them and it should be the start of real action to end this appalling treatment of vulnerable children. Our children have the same rights as all children to be safe, happy and supported by people with the skills and values to help them thrive.”

Notes to Editors

The CBF and PABSS

The Challenging Behaviour Foundation (CBF) is the only UK independent registered charity for children and adults with severe learning disabilities whose behaviour challenges. We provide information and support; run workshops; share evidence and best practice and speak up for families on a national level.

Positive and Active Behaviour Support Scotland (PABSS) is an independent charitable organisation that aims to provide awareness, training, support, campaigning and advocacy in Positive Behaviour Support to those families and professionals involved in the care and education of children and adults with learning disabilities and/or support needs.

The report

Both charities have been contacted by family carers telling us about restrictive interventions used on their disabled children, particularly within school settings but also in the wider community. This has been an area of growing concern, particularly as there is no formal requirement for local authorities or the Government to collect national data about the extent or frequency of this practice and the resulting impact on children and families.

The report ***Reducing Restrictive Intervention of Children and Young People: Case study and survey results, CBF (2019)*** shares information gathered regarding children and young people aged 0-25. The report contains data collected from 566 PABSS case studies and results from a CBF survey completed by 204 families. This research was conducted within a short time frame as we had no funding to take the work forward. Despite this limitation, the high number of responses within the short time period suggests restrictive intervention is an issue of concern to many families who engage with our charities and we are clear this issue merits much greater investigation.

Background

There is no current guidance on the use of restraint on disabled children in schools in England; the Government has been promising imminent guidance since 2014. Guidanceⁱ was published in Scotland in June 2017 and is due to be reviewed in April 2019 but, despite this, families tell us that the use of restraint in Scottish schools remains too high and an investigation by the Scottish Children’s Commissioner in December 2018 found a significant number of restrictive interventions reported by local authorities which had no restrictive intervention policies in placeⁱⁱ.

NICEⁱⁱⁱ guidelines and Department of Health and Social Care guidance^{iv} are clear that restrictive interventions should only ever be used as a last resort. They recommend Positive Behaviour Support- an evidence-based approach which aims to understand the reasons for a behaviour (or its function) - for example addressing the reason behind a child running away, rather than simply restraining them when they try to leave.

Contact details:

- The Challenging Behaviour Foundation, email: info@thecbf.org.uk Telephone: 01634 838739 or 07436 102778
- Positive and Active Behaviour Support Scotland, email: calumsmummy@yahoo.com, Telephone: 01382 863309

ⁱ *Included, Engaged and Involved: preventing and managing school exclusions.* Scottish Government, (June 2017.)

ⁱⁱ *No safe place: restraint and seclusion in Scotland's schools,* Children and Young People's Commissioner, Scotland (Dec 2018)

ⁱⁱⁱ *Challenging behaviour and learning disabilities: prevention and interventions for people with learning disabilities whose behaviour challenges,* NICE guideline [NG11] (May 2015)

^{iv} *Positive and Proactive Care: Reducing the need for restrictive interventions,* Department of Health, (2014)