Guidance for Schools

Assessing and Managing Risks:

Children Who Present Challenging Behaviours

RCT Access and Inclusion Service

January 2012

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Assessing and Managing Risks for Children Who Present Challenging Behaviours

Introduction

The following guidance should be read in conjunction with *Restrictive Physical Intervention: the use of reasonable force to restrain and control children and young people.* (RCT policy www.rctmoodle.org).

The risk assessment and management proforma included in this document have been designed to help teachers, learning support assistants and other adults working in schools and specialist provisions to improve practice in relation to the assessment and management of risk posed by pupils with severely challenging behaviour. The risk may be to the pupils themselves, other pupils, teachers, other adults or property.

1   What is meant by "risk" and "risk assessment"?

"Risk" refers to any circumstances which could lead to adverse outcomes for the child or others. Risks may arise in relation to a number of factors, such as the health care and social support arrangements for the child; interactions between the child and his or her environment; the direct impact of behaviour(s) presented by the child; measures and interventions employed to reduce, limit or manage the risks presented to the child and others. Risk assessment and management is a process that helps staff and others to consider risk issues, to act reasonably, and to learn from what happens in everyday practice. In the main, risk assessment and management involves:

- Using what is known, in the light of experience, to make rational judgements about risk issues.

- Weighing up options and taking reasonable risks.

- Taking action to implement a range of approaches to support and safeguard children. By working in this way it is possible to make decisions and take actions to:

- o Limit the level of inherent risk to which children and others are exposed.

- o Take calculated risks to broaden the child's experience and maximise his or her individual potential

- o Avoid unreasonable risks for this child and others.

- o Ensure that strategies used to respond to challenging behaviour are reasonable, and proportionate to the risks presented by the behaviour.

A clear risk assessment and management strategy will help staff to make decisions about what can reasonably be done to limit risks. At the same time it will help prepare them for times when things go wrong. Challenging behaviours are often foreseeable, even though it may be difficult to predict exactly when they will occur or the degree of challenge they will pose. As a general rule, schools should:

• Explore why children behave in ways that pose a risk.

• Try to understand the factors that influence the behaviour.

• Recognise the early warning signs that indicate that the child's behaviour is beginning to emerge.

• Develop the skills to manage difficult situations competently and sensitively. The measures agreed for managing identified risks should be set out in an agreed behaviour management plan for the individual child. Risk assessment and management can also be used in emergency situations when unforeseen risks occur.

2   Assessing Risk

Risk assessment involves a consideration of potential and actual risk. Key

steps are:

• **Assessing the context for risk** - trying to predict the situations in which risks do/may occur. For example, situations where pupils might feel frustrated, pupils being near open roads, on transport or in crowded places.

• **Assessing probability** - trying to estimate how likely it is that the risk situation will occur and whether any injury or harm is very likely to occur, likely to occur, or unlikely to occur.

• **Assessing seriousness** - trying to gauge the kind of injury and harm that could result. For example: choking, bruises, bleeding, sprains, broken bones, stress, anxiety etc.

It is assumed here that the school will apply the risk assessment and management proforma (see appendix 1)

When assessed, all risks should be recorded in accordance with relevant requirements such as LA or school policies. In the event that risks are thought to be serious for the child or others, the school may need to use formal risk assessment frameworks and tools, such as the Health and Safety Executive's "Five Steps to Risk Assessment" (www.hse.gov.uk/risk/5steps.htm).

3   Risk Reduction

Risk reduction involves an examination of risk management options and consideration of the benefits and drawbacks of each option for the child, staff and others concerned. After weighing up the options available, some may be discarded as unsuitable. This will usually be because they have insufficient impact on the risk or have too many drawbacks. A record should be kept of risk reduction options examined and discounted as well as those adopted for each pupil (see appendix 2). Risk reduction should include:

  o Proactive measures to support the child effectively and prevent difficulties emerging.

o Early interventions to help the child in difficult situations and avert problems.

o Planned measures to manage the child and others safely, when unavoidable difficulties arise.

In circumstances where there are concerns that the risk reduction options being considered may themselves give rise to risk to the pupil or others, it would be prudent for schools to seek advice from other bodies. These may include:

o The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) for concerns in relation to children
o Health and Safety Executive for concerns in relation to school staff and others
o Medical advisers
o Legal advisers
o The LA education and/or social services

4   Risk Management Measures

The measures selected to prevent risks occurring, manage risks that arise and respond to injuries and harm that occur should be based upon a full appraisal of all the risk management options. In agreeing the risk management strategy, it is important to be explicit about inherent risks that

o continue to exist, even when the strategy is fully implemented

o can be reduced by implementing the strategy

o can be prevented by implementing the strategy

o are inherent in the strategy.

The agreed risk management measures should form the basis of the child's behaviour management plan and the school's risk management strategy. All decisions made about risk management options should be recorded in accordance with school procedures. When selecting risk management procedures for the child's behaviour management plan and the school risk management strategy, schools should involve parents, or those with parental responsibility. Both sides benefit from such an approach; parents can examine measures for supporting their child within a broader context, while schools find out things that might otherwise be overlooked.

Professionals from other agencies should also be consulted in the process of deciding the best options to eliminate, reduce or limit the risk, without placing unreasonable restrictions on the child, children, school staff or others, or putting others at unreasonable risk. Accommodation and resources will influence the strategy employed, however, children, particularly those who are vulnerable, should not be placed away from direct adult supervision as part of any behaviour management strategy.

In the event that there are disputes or concerns about the measures employed, it would be prudent for schools to seek advice from the people or bodies listed in the preceding section. (Refer to appendix 3)

5   An Agreed Approach

Once agreed, the behaviour management plan and risk management strategy should be shared with all those responsible for implementing or monitoring the impact of the plan. This will help to ensure that those concerned know how children are to be supported and why, which behaviours are to be managed and how they are to be managed; and which risk reduction measures are to be employed and when (refer to appendix 4). The risk management strategy can be shared through discussion groups, meetings and circulating information. Those who should be informed include:

- o   the child.

- o   his/her parents or those with parental responsibility.

o members of the teaching team and other school staff.

o other professionals involved with the child, child protection teams and

o other agencies. Schools should keep a record of those informed about the strategy.

6   Staff training

Once the plan and risk management strategy have been shared with those who work with and support the child, consideration should be given to the ability of staff to implement the strategy. It should be determined what training may be required prior to implementation. Successful implementation will be dependent on staff competence and expertise. School records should show training needs identified as a result of the strategy and how training was provided to enable staff to implement it. Where it is apparent that there are staff with significant training needs, implementation of the risk management strategy should be modified until relevant staff training has been provided. In some instances, staff training will be required as a matter of urgency so that implementation can take place without delay (refer to appendix 5)

7   Evaluation

Schools should regularly review risk assessment and management measures. All evaluations of plans and strategies should be reported using school procedures and recorded in school records. These will make an important contribution to informing future planning and improving day-to-day practice. Should the level of risk be such that the use of reasonable force is needed to restrain the pupil then careful consideration will need to be given to RCT policy on **Restrictive Physical Intervention: the use of reasonable force to restrain and control children and young people.**   All incidents of physical intervention will require a detailed incident log to be submitted to the RCT Behaviour Support Service. This proforma is detailed in the RCT policy document referred to above.

Risk Assessment: Children with Challenging Behaviours

School name:		Name of pupil:		Date of birth:	

Identification of Risk	
Is the risk potential or actual? (Has there already been an incident?)	
List who is affected by the risk	
Assessment of Risk	
In which situations does the risk usually occur?	
How likely it is that the risk will arise?	
If the risk arises, who is likely to be injured or hurt?	
What kinds of injuries or harm are likely to occur?	
How serious are the adverse outcomes?	

Assessment completed by:

Name:		Designation:		Signature:		Date:	

Appendix 2

Risk Reduction

School name:		Name of pupil:		Date of birth:	

Risk Reduction Options			
Measures	**Possible options**	**Benefits**	**Drawbacks**
Proactive interventions to prevent risk			
Early interventions to manage risk			
Reactive interventions to respond to adverse outcomes			

Completed by:

Name:		Designation:		Signature:		Date:	

Agreed Behaviour Management Plan and School Risk Management Strategy

School name:		Name of pupil:		Date of birth:	

Focus of measures	Measures to be employed	Level of risk Drawbacks
Proactive interventions to prevent risk inc environmental aspects (noise, people, changes, activity, communication)		
Early interventions to manage risk		
Reactive interventions to respond to adverse outcomes (eg calming, verbal/non-verbal interaction, redirection, relocation)		

Agreed by:

Parent/Carer:		Relationship to child:		Signature:		Date:	
Staff member:		Role:		Signature:		Date:	

Communicating School Risk Management Strategy

School name:		Name of pupil:		Date of birth:	

Plans and strategies shared with	Communication Method	Date Actioned

Completed by:

Name:		Designation:		Signature:		Date:	

Staff Training

School name:		Name of pupil:		Date of birth:	

Identified training needs	Training provided to meet needs	Date training completed

Completed by:

Name:		Designation:		Signature:		Date:	

Appendix 6   **Evaluation of School Risk Management Strategy**

School name:		Name of pupil:		Date of birth:	

Measures set out	Effectiveness in supporting the child	Impact on risk
Proactive interventions to prevent risks		
Early interventions to manage risks		
Reactive interventions to respond to adverse outcomes		
ACTIONS FOR THE FUTURE		

Evaluated by:

Name:		Designation:		Signature:		Date:	