



Use of Reasonable Force Policy

Reconnect Learning · Version 1.0 · Final Compliance Amendment August 2026 · Policy Owner: Ellen Kerr

EFFECTIVE: SEPTEMBER 2026

REVIEW: SEPTEMBER 2027

1. Policy Statement

Our Commitment

Reconnect Learning is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all learners. We aim to create a safe, supportive and respectful environment where behaviour is managed through positive relationships, de-escalation and restorative approaches.

When Force May Be Considered

There may be exceptional circumstances where staff are required to use reasonable force to prevent injury, serious damage to property, criminal offences, or serious disruption to learning. Any use of force will always be:

- Lawful
- Proportionate
- Necessary
- Used only as a last resort

 Reconnect Learning does not support the routine use of physical intervention and is committed to reducing the need for restrictive practices wherever possible.

2. Purpose

This policy exists to provide clear guidance and protection for both learners and staff across all settings.



Safety & Welfare

Protect the safety and welfare of learners and staff.



Lawful Guidance

Provide guidance on the lawful use of reasonable force.



Staff Responsibilities

Ensure staff understand their responsibilities clearly.



Positive Behaviour

Promote positive behaviour management strategies.



Reduce Restrictions

Reduce the use of restrictive interventions wherever possible.



Record & Review

Ensure incidents are recorded and reviewed appropriately.

3. Scope

Who This Policy Applies To

- Employees
- Tutors
- Volunteers
- Agency Staff
- Contractors working with learners

Settings Covered

Alternative
Provision

Home Tuition

Community-
Based Learning

Outreach Services

Educational Visits

Off-Site Activities

Online Learning



Note: Physical force cannot be used during remote or online delivery. However, all associated safeguarding and behaviour management responsibilities continue to apply in full during online learning sessions.

4. Legal Framework

This policy is informed by a robust body of legislation and statutory guidance. The legal basis for any physical intervention will depend upon the setting, the staff member's role, the circumstances, and applicable law. Staff working in different settings may have different legal powers and responsibilities.

Education & Inspections Act 2006

Section 93 confers a power to use reasonable force on staff in schools and certain other settings. This statutory power applies to authorised staff working within a school setting on behalf of a school. It does not automatically extend to all Reconnect Learning staff working in homes, community venues or other non-school environments.

Children Acts 1989 & 2004

Establishes the duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in all settings.

Human Rights Act 1998

Ensures all interventions respect the fundamental rights and dignity of every individual.

Equality Act 2010

Requires reasonable adjustments and prohibits discrimination in all practices.

Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974

Imposes duties on employers and employees to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of staff and others. Relevant to lone-working arrangements, risk assessment and emergency procedures.

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026

Statutory safeguarding guidance applicable where Reconnect Learning staff work within or on behalf of schools. The safeguarding principles within KCSIE inform Reconnect Learning's approach across all settings.

DfE: Use of Reasonable Force – Advice for Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies

This DfE guidance provides a useful operational framework and informs this policy. Where Reconnect Learning staff are not working within a school setting, the legal basis for any intervention will depend on the circumstances, including the common law duty to prevent harm and the immediate risk presented.

 The legal basis and permitted response for any physical intervention may depend upon: the setting; the staff member's role and authorisation; the circumstances; whether they are acting on behalf of a school; safeguarding responsibilities; the immediacy and seriousness of risk; and applicable law and organisational procedures. Where the legal position is uncertain, staff should seek guidance from the DSL or Managing Director. The overarching principle in all settings is that physical intervention is a last resort and must be reasonable, necessary, proportionate and for the minimum time necessary.

This policy should be read alongside Reconnect Learning's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, which is the organisation's overarching safeguarding policy.

5. Definition of Reasonable Force

Reasonable force means: **the minimum force necessary to prevent harm or serious disruption, applied for the shortest possible time.**

The degree of force used must always meet all four criteria below. Any use of force must be capable of being justified as reasonable, necessary and proportionate in the particular circumstances. Any intervention that cannot be justified on this basis may constitute inappropriate or unlawful use of force and will be subject to safeguarding and management review.

1

Reasonable

The force used must be considered reasonable by an objective standard in the circumstances presented.

2

Proportionate

The level of force must be proportionate to the risk or behaviour being addressed — no more than necessary.

3

Necessary

Force is only justified when other strategies have failed or are not viable given the immediacy of risk.

4

Appropriate

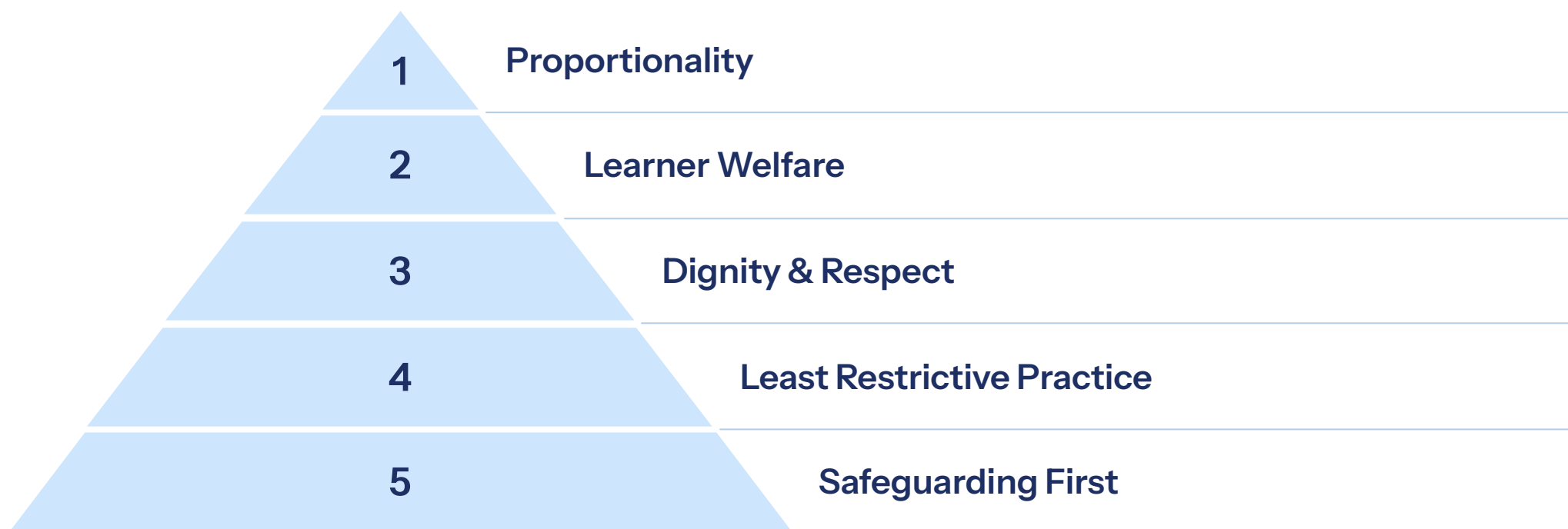
The intervention must be appropriate to the specific circumstances, including the learner's age and needs.



Staff must never use force as a punishment. Any suspected use of force as punishment will be treated as a safeguarding concern and investigated under Reconnect Learning's relevant safeguarding, allegations and disciplinary procedures.

6. Principles

Reconnect Learning's approach to behaviour management is grounded in a clear hierarchy of principles. Physical intervention is always the last resort.



Physical intervention should only be used when other strategies have failed or are inappropriate due to immediate risk. The welfare and dignity of the learner must remain central at all times.

7. Prevention and De-escalation

Before considering physical intervention, staff should exhaust all available de-escalation strategies. **De-escalation should always be the preferred approach.**

01

Remain Calm

Maintain a calm, composed demeanour to avoid escalating the situation further.

02

Use Clear Communication

Speak clearly, calmly and simply. Avoid confrontational language or tone.

03

Offer Choices

Give the learner agency by offering appropriate choices to reduce feelings of powerlessness.

04

Reduce Demands

Where appropriate, temporarily reduce demands to lower the learner's stress and anxiety.

05

Allow Time and Space

Give the learner time and physical space to regulate their emotions without pressure.

06

Remove Triggers

Identify and remove potential environmental or situational triggers where possible.

07

Use Restorative Approaches

Draw on restorative language and techniques to rebuild connection and resolve conflict.

08

Seek Assistance

Call for additional support from colleagues or senior staff wherever possible.

8. When Force May — and May Not — Be Used

PERMITTED CIRCUMSTANCES

Reasonable force may be used to:

Prevent Injury

Where a learner is attempting to harm themselves, harm another person, or engaging in dangerous behaviour.

Prevent Property Damage

Where significant property damage is likely to occur and cannot be prevented by other means.

Prevent Criminal Behaviour

Where a learner is committing or attempting to commit a criminal offence.

Prevent Serious Disorder

Where behaviour presents a serious risk to safety or significantly disrupts the learning environment.

PROHIBITED CIRCUMSTANCES

Force must never be used:

- ⊗ As a punishment or to secure compliance where there is no risk.
- ⊗ To humiliate or degrade a learner in any way.
- ⊗ To cause pain intentionally.
- ⊗ In anger or frustration.
- ⊗ As a response to verbal abuse alone.

Any use of force that is excessive, inappropriate or unlawful may result in disciplinary action and referral to external agencies.

9. Emergency Situations

Reconnect Learning staff may work 1:1 in homes, community venues and other settings where another member of staff is not immediately available. Where a situation presents an immediate and serious risk that cannot safely be managed through de-escalation, staff should prioritise safety.

Immediate Safety Actions

Depending on the circumstances, staff should consider:

- Moving themselves or others away from danger
- Seeking assistance from another responsible adult present
- Following lone-working procedures
- Contacting the DSL or senior manager
- Contacting 999 where there is an immediate risk to life or serious injury
- Following any individual risk assessment or safety plan

Important Principles

Staff must not attempt to manage a dangerous situation beyond their competence or training. Nothing in this policy requires a member of staff to place themselves at unreasonable personal risk.

- De-escalation and withdrawal are always preferable to physical intervention
- Lone-working procedures must be followed at all times
- Emergency contacts must be established before higher-risk provision begins
- Staff should not remain in a situation that presents an unmanageable risk



Any emergency incident must be reported and reviewed in accordance with Reconnect Learning's safeguarding and incident-reporting procedures. The DSL and Managing Director must be informed as soon as reasonably practicable.

10. Prohibited Practices

The following practices are **strictly prohibited** at Reconnect Learning under all circumstances. These prohibitions are absolute and non-negotiable.

Corporal & Physical Punishment Any form of corporal or physical punishment is unlawful and will never be tolerated.	Pain-Inducing Techniques Deliberate pain-inducing techniques are prohibited in all circumstances.
Restricting Breathing Any intervention that restricts a learner's breathing is absolutely prohibited.	Punitive Restriction of Basic Needs Food, drink, medication, toileting or other basic needs must never be withheld, restricted or used as a punishment, behaviour-management technique or means of coercion. Nothing in this provision prevents reasonable emergency action that is immediately necessary to protect a learner or another person from serious harm.
Unsafe Seclusion Seclusion or isolation that places a learner at risk is prohibited.	Dignity Violations Any intervention that compromises a learner's dignity or safety is strictly forbidden.

 Any suspected breach of these requirements will be treated seriously and considered under Reconnect Learning's safeguarding, allegations, disciplinary and reporting procedures as applicable. Where required, concerns may be referred to relevant external agencies.

11. Individual Risk Assessments & SEND Considerations

Individual Risk Assessments

Where a learner presents an increased risk of violence, aggression, self-harm, absconding, or serious behavioural incidents, an individual risk assessment and behaviour support plan will be completed. Plans will identify:

- Triggers and early warning signs
- De-escalation strategies
- Protective measures
- Emergency procedures
- Lone-working arrangements and emergency contacts
- Whether 1:1 delivery is appropriate or whether two staff members are required

Learners with SEND

Reconnect Learning recognises that learners with Autism, ADHD, SEMH needs, communication difficulties, or learning disabilities may display behaviours linked to unmet needs, distress or anxiety.

Staff must always consider:

- The learner's age and understanding
- Communication needs
- Additional vulnerabilities
- Sensory needs and sensory environment
- Trauma history and trauma responses
- Whether behaviour may represent distress or an unmet need

Staff should consider whether behaviour that appears challenging may represent distress, sensory overload, communication difficulty, anxiety, a trauma response, unmet need, or dysregulation. Physical intervention must never be used simply because a learner is disabled, distressed, refusing an activity, or displaying behaviour associated with their SEND.

Reasonable adjustments will be made wherever possible.

12. 1:1, Home and Community Delivery

Physical intervention during 1:1 provision requires particularly careful consideration because another member of staff may not be immediately available. This applies to all Reconnect Learning delivery in homes, community venues, outreach settings and other agreed environments.

Pre-Provision Risk Considerations

Before higher-risk 1:1 provision begins, consideration should be given to:

- Known behaviours, triggers and history of aggression or significant dysregulation
- SEND and communication needs
- Environmental risks at the delivery venue
- Lone-working arrangements and emergency contacts
- Safe exit arrangements
- Whether 1:1 delivery is appropriate or whether two staff members are required
- Whether a different venue would reduce risk
- Whether an individual risk assessment or safety plan is required

Delivery Arrangement Review

Where risks cannot be safely managed through reasonable controls, the delivery arrangement should be reviewed before provision continues. This may include:

- Changing the delivery venue
- Adjusting the session structure or duration
- Deploying an additional member of staff
- Pausing provision pending a full risk assessment
- Consulting with the commissioning school or local authority
- Seeking specialist advice

 Individual risk assessments and safety plans for 1:1 and community-based provision must be reviewed regularly and updated following any significant incident, change in behaviour, or change in delivery arrangements.

13. Recording and Reporting

Any use of reasonable force must be recorded as soon as possible after the incident. Accurate and timely recording is essential for safeguarding, accountability and review.



Thorough documentation ensures transparency, supports post-incident review, and protects both learners and staff.

Records Must Include:

Basic Details Date, time, location, and names of all individuals involved including witnesses present.	Incident Description Full description of the incident, the reason force was used, and de-escalation strategies attempted beforehand.
Intervention Details Nature of the physical intervention used, its duration, and the outcome of the incident.	Injuries & Outcome Any injuries sustained by any party, and the immediate outcome and emotional state of those involved.

 The Managing Director must be informed on the same day as any incident involving the use of reasonable force.

 Records relating to the use of reasonable force, incident reports, behaviour support plans, individual risk assessments and post-incident reviews will be retained in accordance with Reconnect Learning's Records Retention Schedule, the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

Post-Incident: Multi-Procedure Consideration

Following any incident involving physical intervention, management must consider whether the incident also requires action under another Reconnect Learning procedure. This includes consideration of:

- Safeguarding concern reporting
- Allegations against staff procedures
- Low-level concerns procedures
- Accident or injury reporting
- Health and safety reporting
- Behaviour support plan and risk assessment review
- Lone-working review where applicable
- Notification to commissioning schools or local authorities where applicable
- Parent/carers communication where appropriate
- Any other statutory or contractual reporting requirement

 Physical intervention records must not replace safeguarding reporting where safeguarding concerns exist. If an incident raises a safeguarding concern, this must be reported to the DSL immediately and in accordance with Reconnect Learning's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

14. Communication and Post-Incident Support

Communication with Parents and Carers

Parents and carers will normally be informed as soon as reasonably practicable following any incident involving the use of reasonable force. Communication will include:

- **What happened**
- **Why intervention was necessary**
- **Actions taken**
- **Any follow-up arrangements**

Post-Incident Support

Following any incident, Reconnect Learning will ensure that all parties receive appropriate support and that learning is captured to prevent recurrence.

- The learner will be offered support
- Staff involved will receive support
- The incident will be reviewed
- Lessons learned will be identified
- Risk assessments may be updated
- Behaviour support plans may be amended

- ✓ Where appropriate, restorative discussions will take place to repair relationships and prevent future incidents.

15. Training and Safeguarding

Staff Training Requirements

Reconnect Learning will ensure all staff receive appropriate training. Staff should only use techniques they have been trained to use.

- ☐ Behaviour Management
- ☐ De-escalation Techniques
- ☐ Safeguarding
- ☐ Positive Handling Awareness
- ☐ Trauma-Informed Practice
- ☐ SEND Awareness

Safeguarding Considerations

Any use of reasonable force must be viewed through a safeguarding lens. The organisation will consider:

- Whether force was necessary
- Whether force was proportionate
- Whether additional support is required
- Whether safeguarding concerns exist

Any allegation against staff will be managed in accordance with:

**Safeguarding and
Child Protection
Policy**

**Allegations
Against Staff
Procedures**

Low-Level Concerns Procedures

Reconnect Learning does not expect tutors or mentors who have not received appropriate physical intervention training to undertake planned restrictive physical interventions. Their primary responsibilities are prevention, de-escalation, maintaining a safe distance where appropriate, removing themselves or others from immediate danger where reasonably possible, seeking assistance, following individual risk assessments and safety plans, following safeguarding procedures, and contacting emergency services where necessary.

Planned restrictive physical intervention should only be undertaken where appropriately authorised, risk assessed and supported by suitable training. Nothing in this policy requires a member of staff to place themselves at unreasonable personal risk.

16. Monitoring, Review and Related Policies

Monitoring and Review

The Managing Director will monitor the following on an ongoing basis, with incident trends reviewed termly:

Behaviour Incidents

Use of Force Incidents

Safeguarding Concerns

Complaints

Training Records

Risk Assessments

This policy will be reviewed annually and without unnecessary delay following changes to legislation, statutory guidance, safeguarding practice, behaviour management guidance, organisational arrangements or learning identified through incidents, complaints, audits, inspections, monitoring or service reviews.

Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside the following:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Relationships and Behaviour Policy
- Risk Assessment Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- First Aid Policy
- SEND Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Educational Visits Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Managing Allegations Against Staff Policy
- Low-Level Concerns Policy

17. Commitment to Least Restrictive Practice

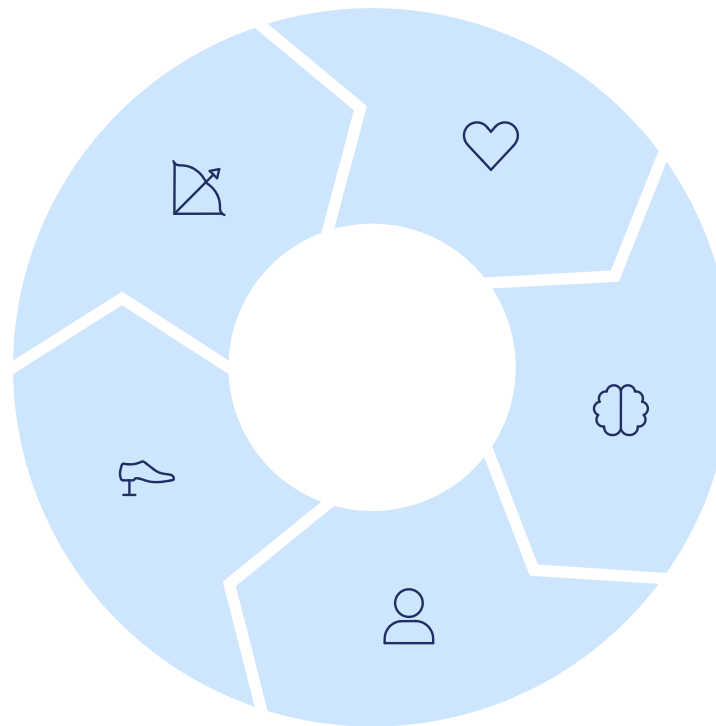
Reconnect Learning's commitment to least restrictive practice is not merely a policy requirement — it is a fundamental expression of our values and our duty of care to every learner.

Reduce Restrictive Practices

Continuously work to minimise and eliminate restrictive interventions across all settings.

Last Resort Only

Ensure physical intervention is always and only ever a last resort.



Positive Behaviour Support

Promote proactive, strengths-based approaches to behaviour management.

Trauma-Informed Approaches

Understand and respond to the impact of trauma on behaviour and learning.

Dignity and Rights

Protect the dignity, rights and wellbeing of every learner at all times.

The welfare and safety of learners will remain central to all decision-making at Reconnect Learning.

Compliance Status & Version Control

Compliance Statement

This policy has been developed with regard to the relevant legislation, statutory guidance and governance expectations applicable at the date of approval and will be reviewed following significant legislative or regulatory changes. It has been prepared with reference to: the Education and Inspections Act 2006; the Children Acts 1989 and 2004; the Human Rights Act 1998; the Equality Act 2010; the Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974; the Data Protection Act 2018; UK GDPR; Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026; Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026; and DfE: Use of Reasonable Force – Advice for Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies.

Approved By

Ellen Kerr

Position

Managing Director & DSL,
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Date Approved

August 2026

Review Date

September 2027

Version

1.0