Children's Services
Executive Director: Jo Fisher

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Dear Hertfordshire School Heads

Re: Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force

The Department for Education (DfE) has recently updated its guidance around restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force in schools. This guidance for schools in England has been published for implementation from 1st April 2026.

Use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions guidance

The document has been published and includes changes to definitions and expectations around restrictive intervention, restraint and particularly seclusion. Schools both locally and nationally have expressed concern to the lack of clarity in the document, including the statutory section regarding recording and reporting.

Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), along with several other local authorities and Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) have commissioned a training provider to review the document and provide clarity. From this work, we will be able to provide some clarity, and information to help with policy review and importantly a training option suitable for mainstream schools as well as aligning our current offering to special schools and services.

The updated Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) Policy for Hertfordshire will be available on the Grid from the 1st April 2026.

HCC is asking schools to adopt a measured approach and avoid potential over reaction to this guidance that leads to seeking training from the many commercial providers in the RPI/restraint marketplace. The training is often very expensive and may appear to a lack of regard for the vulnerability of services if this guidance is not fully analysed and understood.

If your school does not use restraint or seclusion, please avoid training that means restrictive intervention may be introduced. The best defence at this time is to have no

use or only extremely limited use of restrictive intervention. If you rely on restrictive intervention or seclusion and use for example, Therapeutic Thinking or other RPI techniques remain appropriate. However, from 1st April 2026 it would be essential to record, at minimum, the basic information contained outlined in the guidance and to provide written report to parents (or safeguarding teams) every time a restrictive intervention is used, including anything that may be considered seclusion under the guidance.

Yours sincerely



Tony Fitzpatrick
Director of Education