



Weeke Community Centre

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Reasonable Force Policy

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INTRODUCTION

At Weeke community Centre we strive to create an environment in which both children and adults feel happy, safe, secure and valued regardless of their age, sex, sexual orientation, race, political or religious beliefs . We aim to ensure a whole community approach to behaviour known and understood by all staff, children, parents, guardians, hires, users, groups, visitors and outside agencies. The use of force upon any person(s) by a member of staff is a serious matter and should only be considered as a last resort. However, the law is clear, and the Governing management board has a responsibility to all concerned, to support any member of staff who as a last resort uses reasonable force in accordance with the law, and with this policy.

Good personal and professional relationships between staff and all users of the centre and the community are vital to ensure good order in our community centre. It is recognised that the majority of persons in our community centre respond positively to the discipline and control practised by staff. This ensures the well-being and safety of all persons and staff in community centre. It is also acknowledged that in exceptional circumstances, staff may need to take action in situations where the use of reasonable force may be required.

Every effort will be made to ensure that all staff in this community centre:

- clearly understand this policy and their responsibilities in the context of their duty of care in taking appropriate measures where reasonable force is necessary and
- are provided with appropriate training to deal with these difficult situations.

AIMS OF THIS POLICY

- To provide clarification on the use of reasonable force in Weeke Community centre;
- To enable staff to feel more informed and confident about the use of reasonable force when they believe it to be necessary;
- To make clear the responsibilities of the centre manager, Senior staff, staff and Governing management board in respect of this power;

UNDERPINNING VALUES

Everyone attending or working in this Community centre has a right to:

- recognition of their unique identity.
- be treated with respect and dignity.
- Learn, work and undertake recreational activities in a safe environment.
- be protected from harm, violence, assault and acts of verbal abuse.

Persons attending this community centre have a right to:

- individual consideration of needs by the staff who have responsibility for their care and protection;
- expect staff to undertake their duties and responsibilities in accordance with the community centre policies.
- be informed about community centre rules, relevant policies, terms and conditions of hire and the expected conduct of all persons and staff working in community centre.
- be informed about the community centre complaints procedure.

The community centre will ensure that all persons understand the need for and respond to clearly defined limits which govern behaviour in the community centre.

Parents, guardians, users, groups, hirers and visitors should have committed themselves to ensure the good behaviour of their child, pupils, guests and group attendees and that they understand and follow the community centres **Behaviour Policy**.

KEY POINTS REGARDING REASONABLE FORCE

- Community centre staff have a power to use force and lawful use of the power will provide a defence to any related criminal prosecution or other legal action.
- Suspension should not be an automatic response when a member of staff has been accused of using excessive force.
- Senior staff members should support their staff when they use this power.

WHAT IS REASONABLE FORCE?

1. The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions used by most staff at some point in their career that involve a degree of physical contact with another person.
2. Force is usually used either to control or restrain. This can range from guiding a person or persons to safety by the arm through to more extreme circumstances such as breaking up a fight or where a person needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury.
3. 'Reasonable in the circumstances' means using no more force than is needed.
4. As mentioned above, staff can generally use force to control persons and to restrain them. Control means either passive physical contact, such as standing between people or blocking a person's path, or active physical contact such as leading a person by the arm from the room and/or building.
5. Restraint means to hold back physically or to bring a person under control. It is typically used in more extreme circumstances, for example when two persons are fighting and refuse to separate without physical intervention.
6. Staff should always try to avoid acting in a way that might cause injury, but in extreme cases it may not always be possible to avoid injuring the person.

WHO CAN USE REASONABLE FORCE?

- All members of community centre staff have a legal power to use reasonable force.
- This power applies to any member of staff at the centre. It can also apply to people whom the centre manager has temporarily put in charge of persons and or security such as unpaid volunteers or SIA registered security personnel in the direct or sub contract employment with the centre.

WHEN CAN REASONABLE FORCE BE USED?

- Reasonable force can be used to prevent persons from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing disorder. Within any part of the centre and surrounding areas within but not necessarily confined to the immediate boundary of the centre.
- In the community centre, force is used for two main purposes – to control persons or to restrain them.
- The decision on whether to physically intervene is down to the professional judgement of the staff member concerned and should always depend on the individual circumstances.
- The following list is not exhaustive but provides some examples of situations where reasonable force can be used.

EXAMPLES WHERE REASONABLE FORCE MIGHT BE USED

- to remove disruptive persons from the centre where they have refused to follow an instruction to do so;
- to prevent a person behaving in a way that disrupts an event or other users of the centre;
- to prevent a person leaving any room or hall where allowing the person to leave would risk their safety or lead to behaviour that disrupts the behaviour of others;
- to prevent a person from attacking a member of staff or another person, or to stop a fight; and
- to restrain a person at risk of harming themselves or others through physical outbursts.

POWER TO SEARCH PERSONS WITHOUT CONSENT

- In addition to the general power to use reasonable force described above, the centre manager and authorised staff can use such force as is reasonable given the circumstances to conduct a search for the following “prohibited items”:
 - knives and weapons
 - alcohol
 - illegal drugs
 - pornographic images

- any article that has been or is likely to be used to commit an offence, cause personal injury or damage to property.

WHAT ABOUT OTHER PHYSICAL CONTACT WITH PEOPLE?

It is not illegal to touch a person. There are occasions when physical contact, other than reasonable force, with a person is proper and necessary. Examples of where touching a person might be proper or necessary:

- When comforting a distressed person;
- When a person is being congratulated or praised;
- To give first aid.

BEFORE USING FORCE

Before using force, staff should - where practicable - tell the person to stop what they are doing. Care should be taken to avoid giving the impression that the member of staff is angry or frustrated. It should be made clear with calm language that as soon as the need for force ceases, it will stop.

Appropriate use of force will range from physical passive presence in between people, to blocking a person's path, ushering them by placing a hand in the centre of the back, leading them by the hand or arm, to in more extreme circumstances using appropriate restraining holds. Particular attention will be given to individuals' needs and/or disability.

Whilst it is highly desirable that staff should avoid acting in any way which might reasonably be expected to cause an injury, in truly exceptional circumstances it is recognised that it may not always be possible to avoid. Any such injury caused will be properly investigated by the community centre and will require justification.

TRAINING FOR STAFF

Physical restraint is an available option, only to be used when other means of dealing with the situation have failed. Staff are made aware of this policy and have training on Child Protection and other training that will ensure they are aware of their duties and the law. Where possible there will be staff on the premises that have specific training in physical restraint.

RECORDING INCIDENTS

A record will be kept of each significant incident of the use of force to control and restrain using the community centre incident report form IR1.

The purpose of recording is to ensure that policy guidelines are followed, to inform staff and the persons involved, to inform future planning as part of community centre improvement processes, to prevent misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the incident and to provide a record for any future inquiry.

COMPLAINTS AND ALLEGATIONS

If a complaint is made against a member of staff about the use of force the community centre will follow the guidance set out in this policy and conduct a full enquiry, this does not mean that any immediate suspension from duty will occur.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: I'm worried that if I use force a person or persons could make a complaint against me. Am I protected?

Yes, if you have acted lawfully. If the force used is reasonable all staff will have a robust defence against any accusations.

Q: How do I know whether using a physical intervention is 'reasonable'?

A: The decision on whether to physically intervene is down to the professional judgement of the staff member concerned. Whether the force used is reasonable will always depend on the particular circumstances of the case. The use of force is reasonable if it is proportionate to the consequences it is intended to prevent. This means the degree of force used should be no more than is needed to achieve the desired result. Community centre staff should expect the full backing of their manager and the governing management board (CIO) when they have used force.

Q: Can force be used on persons with disabilities?

Yes, but the judgement on whether to use force should not only depend on the circumstances of the case but also on information and understanding of the needs of the person concerned.