



Bullied  
by a teacher



# NEITHER SEEN NOR HEARD

Rights Based Review on the  
Use of Restraint and Seclusion  
in Educational Settings

December 2021

Easy  
read

## What is this report and who is it for?



This is an Easy Read summary of the NICCY report 'Neither Seen Nor Heard A Rights Based Review on the Use of Restraint and Seclusion in Educational Settings in Northern Ireland'. The report talks about the use of **restraint** and **seclusion** on children and young people in nurseries, schools or colleges in Northern Ireland.



- **Restrictive practices** are ways of stopping people doing what they want to do or controlling children and young people through using **restraint** or **seclusion**.
- **Restraint** is physically holding people or strapping children and young people in a chair. It can also mean giving children and young people drugs to stop them doing something.
- **Seclusion** is keeping a person alone in a place they cannot leave.



This report can help you to understand

- Some of the issues with the use of restraint and seclusion in schools.
- What NICCY says needs to happen to make sure every child in NI has the best possible education.

You can read the full report on NICCY's website

[www.niccy.org/restraintandseclusion](http://www.niccy.org/restraintandseclusion)



## You can also contact NICCY to:



- Ask for a copy of the full report
- Ask any questions you might have after reading this
- Find out more about the work we do to protect the rights of children and young people in Northern Ireland

Our contact information is at the end of this report.

## About this report

This report is by **NICCY**.



**NICCY** is the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People.

It is our job to make sure all children and young people's rights are protected. This includes the right to:



- information that is easy to understand about things that affect them
- services that support their physical and mental health
- social and play activities
- family life
- education
- services that keep them safe from harm
- enough money to pay for food, clothes and somewhere to live

## This report will tell you:



- Why we did this work
- What we found out about the use of restraint and seclusion on children, young people, and their families
- What needs to happen next.

## Why we did this work

The use of restraint and seclusion in schools is very serious.

It can impact on children and young people's human rights.

We wanted to:

- Find out about the impact of restraint and seclusion on children and young people
- Find out what problems there with the use of restraint and seclusion in schools
- Find out how to make things better for everyone.

## What we did



We asked school Principals about the use of restraint and seclusion in all schools



We asked parents/carers about their experiences and views of the use of restraint and seclusion in schools or colleges



We asked health and social care professional, teachers, and academics what they thought about the use of restraint and seclusion in all schools and colleges

# What we found out

## Law and guidance



- There is not enough information on the use of restraint and seclusion.
- Schools do not have to keep a record when they use restraint or seclusion.
- Schools do not have to tell parents/carers when they use restraint or seclusion on a child or young person.

## What needs to happen?

The Department of Education (DE) must make laws that:



- ban of the use of seclusion in schools
- ban any restraint or practices that cause pain
- make sure restrictive practices are only used as a last resort
- make schools record all use of restrictive practices.

The Education Authority (EA) should carry out a review on the use of restrictive practices in all schools every year.

The DE should create **guidance** on restrictive practices in schools.

**Guidance** tells us what to do to make sure we keep the law. We need guidance so:



- everyone involved in education knows what they have to do
- all additional needs are met.



Schools, professionals, parents/carers, children and young people should help develop the guidance.

They should include:

- clear definitions of restrictive practices
- everyone's roles and responsibilities.

## Complaints



It is hard for parents/carers to make a complaint if restraint or seclusion is used on their child or young person.

Some parents do not know that NICCY can support them to make a complaint.

It is hard for staff to raise concerns about the use of restraint or seclusion.

## What needs to happen?



Parents should be informed about complaints procedures and support they can get to make a complaint.

There should be clear guidance for responding to complaints and for staff raising concerns.

## Training

There is not enough training for staff in schools or Boards of Governors about restraint and seclusion on how to reduce restraint.



## What needs to happen?

All staff should have training about restrictive practices. Training should focus on reducing the need for restrictive practices. It should include:

- Disability awareness training
- Mental health and trauma
- Good communication
- Managing distressed behaviours
- Children's rights.



The Education Authority (EA) and Teacher Training Schools should provide training.



### Impact of restrictive practices

Restraint, seclusion or restrictive practices can be very upsetting for children and young people, parents/carers and staff.

They can cause bad memories and distress for a long time.

## What needs to happen?



Social, emotional, and practical support should be offered to children and staff if restrictive practices have been used.

### Information for parents/carers



There is not enough information for parents and carers about restraint or seclusion in schools.

## What needs to happen?

Parents/carers must be informed if restrictive practices have been used with their child or young person.



Information about policy, guidance and law on restrictive practices should be publicly available and easy to understand.

### Additional needs/disabilities



There is not enough information on using restraint and seclusion with children and young people who have additional needs.



Children and young people with additional needs often need extra support in school. This is called **reasonable adjustment**.



When children and young people with additional needs don't have reasonable adjustments, they can get distressed.



Sometimes schools use restraint and seclusion with children and young people with additional needs instead of making reasonable adjustments. This is **disability discrimination**.

**Disability discrimination** is when a person is treated unfairly because they have a disability.

## What needs to happen?



All children and young people who have additional needs should have a learning support plan.



Parents/carers should get support and training on ways to support children or young people with distressed behaviours, as well as on restrictive practices.



The Department of Education (DE) and the Education Authority (EA) should support schools to change attitudes towards children or young people with distressed behaviours. There should be resources, training, and guidance to make sure this happens.



## Keeping people safe

Restraint and seclusion should only be used if there is no other way to keep a child or young person safe.

## What needs to happen?



The DE must make sure that the law only allows schools to use restrictive practices to protect a child/ young person or other people from serious harm.

## What next?



This report told you about the impact of restraint and seclusion on children, young people and their families, and about what the government should do to help make things better.



Remember, you can read the full list of our recommendations in our main report on our website.



We will keep records about what changes are made to try to make things better and whether they make a difference for children and their families.



NICCY will always continue to protect all rights of all children in Northern Ireland.



We have written a longer report about the use of restraint, seclusion and restrictive practices and have lots of other information and resources available.

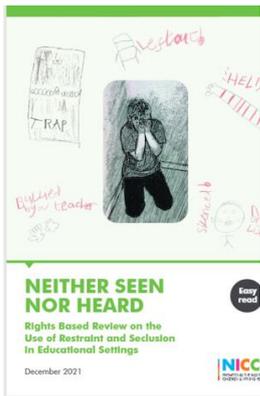
You can find out more about children's rights and keep up to date with the other work we do on our website or by getting in touch with the contact information.

## Artwork

### Front cover image:

The artwork presented on the cover was captured from two collated drawings:

- From a boy aged 11, who experienced seclusion in a mainstream high school, the pictures convey his thoughts and feelings.
- The artist sketch was created for a boy aged 6, who experienced multiple uses of both restraint and seclusion in a mainstream primary school.



This report was published in December 2021

Check our website for the most up to date information: [www.niccy.org](http://www.niccy.org)

## Find out more



Call us on **028 9031 1616**



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