

Understanding restraint: A guide for unpaid carers

There are many different definitions for restraint, but a good starting point is to think about restraint as anything which stops a person from doing what they want to do.

It does not always mean there is a physical restraint in place (e.g. holding someone down). A person can also be restrained through use of medication or a locked door.

In some circumstances restraint is the right thing to do. Restraint might be used:

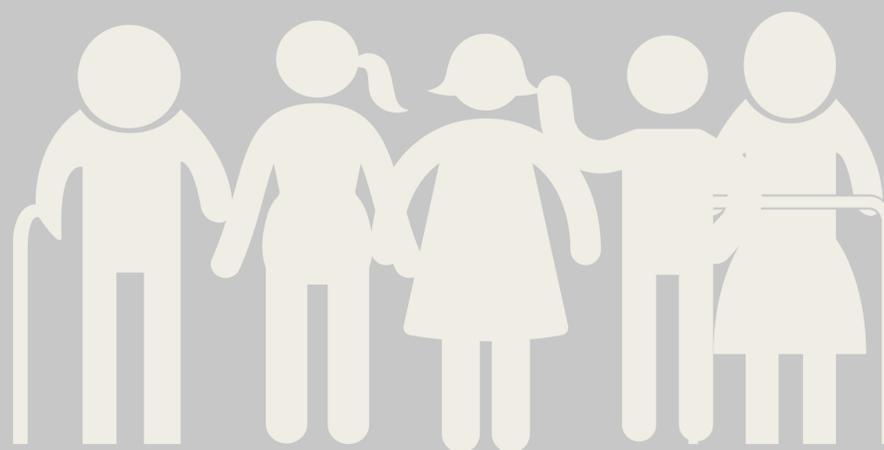
- if it is part of a care plan agreed by everyone
- if the person lacks the capacity to consent, but is acting in a way that may cause harm to themselves or others. In these cases restraint should only be used if it is in the person's best interests and should be the least restrictive option.

To find out more about Mental Capacity and how it is assessed please visit www.lambethsafeguarding.org.uk

Carers play an important role in safeguarding adults, and it is recognised that most carers work hard to do what is best for the person they support. Sometimes however, there is a risk that the carer may harm the person they are caring for.

It is important to note that abuse or neglect does not have to be deliberate, malicious or planned. Sometimes, because of stress, tiredness, or lack of information, skills, or support, carers can unintentionally cause harm.

Despite best intentions to protect a person's safety, the use of restraints can cause harm and negatively impact on a person's independence and self-esteem.



If you are the victim of abuse, or are worried that you may have caused harm to someone you are caring for, you must speak up and ask for help.

It is important to note that the safeguarding adults process is a supportive one which can often involve working with those people thought to be causing harm with the view of achieving a good outcome for everyone. We will not judge you for coming forward and seeking support.

To contact Lambeth Adult Social Care, call 020 7926 5555 or email adultsocialcare@lambeth.gov.uk

You can also access support and advice from local organisations, including:

Carer's Hub
Age UK Lambeth
Alzheimer's Society



For more information, visit www.lambethsafeguarding.org.uk

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Isaiah lives with his family who are his full time carers. Isaiah has a brain injury and has short term memory loss and challenging behaviour. He is not able to recognise the impact of his condition and thinks he can manage to go out on his own – he has regularly been found wandering by police. He also occasionally has aggressive outbursts and lashes out physically to family members.

His family explain that when they have left him on his own and just locked the front door, he attempts to cook and has burnt himself badly on several occasions. Also when he lashes out, he can really hurt them. So now when the family go out, they tie him to his bed to keep him safe. This stops him from wandering out the house and also from using the gas stove. Also, when he becomes aggressive, they strap Isaiah down on his bed for a few hours until he calms down.

Although the family have Isaiah's best interests at heart, this is a type of restraint which could cause harm and affect Isaiah's wellbeing. A health or social care professional could help to explore other safer options with the family in this situation.



Physical restraint

Minimal/appropriate use of restraint

Use of a safety belt worn to help a person sit up and participate in an activity.

Inappropriate use of restraint

Not charging an electric wheelchair to stop the person from being able to use it.



Chemical restraint

Use of medication to stop challenging behaviour and allow the person to participate fully in daily life. The medication plan has short-term goals, and the person is monitored closely and re-assessed regularly to ensure that the medication continues to allow participation in daily activities.

Use of medication to stop behaviour that is an inconvenience to carers/professionals, without conducting a proper assessment of the benefits and side-effects.



Environmental restraint

A protected garden with free access to the inside of a building.

Locking the person inside the house or a room so they are unable to leave.