"I hate it. However, I recognise that there are times that I have to."

Exploring the Use of Physical Restraint in Schools in Wales:

Staff Experiences, Evaluating Approaches,

and Informing Future Practice

Natalie Jane Phillips

A thesis submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Educational Psychology (DEdPsy)

Cardiff University

May 2025

Contents

I. List of Figures and Tables

II. List of Abbreviations

AEP	Association of Educational Psychologists
ALN	Additional Learning Needs
ALNCo	Additional Learning Needs Coordinator
BILD	British Institute of Learning Disabilities
BPS	British Psychological Society
CASP	Critical Appraisal Skills Programme
CBF	Challenging Behaviour Foundation
COMOIRA	Constructionist Model of Informed Research Action
CYP	Children and Young People
EP(s)	Educational Psychologist(s)
EST	Ecological Systems Theory
LA	Local Authority
LRQ	Literature Review Question
NHS	National Health Service
PABSS	Positive and Active Behaviour Support Scotland
PBS	Positive Behaviour Support
PR	Physical Restraint
PRISMA	Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
PTMF	Power Threat Meaning Framework
RRN	Restraint Reduction Network
RRPF	Reducing Restrictive Practices Framework
RTA	Reflexive Thematic Analysis
SDT	Self-Determination Theory
SEMH	Social, Emotional, and Mental Health
SET	Self-Efficacy Theory
SREC	School of Research Ethics Committee
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UK	United Kingdom
WG	Welsh Government

III.   Summary of Thesis

This thesis is presented in three main sections. Firstly, a major literature review; secondly, an empirical paper; thirdly, a major research reflective account. Below is a summary of the content for each of these sections.

III.I.   Part 1: Major Research Literature Review

This section is divided into two parts. Part A is a narrative review which aims to provide an overview of the contextual and theoretical literature relevant to the research. Part B is a scoping review using a systematic approach on the use of, and staff and children and young people's experiences and views of, physical restraint in schools. The literature is critically discussed to provide rationale for the current research.

III.II.   Part 2: Empirical Paper

This section comprises a detailed account of the current research. Part 2 provides a brief overview of the existing literature, and references the research paradigm and the assumptions underpinning the current research. It details the method of participant recruitment, data collection and analysis, and how ethical considerations were addressed. The data gathered is presented with consideration to the two research questions, where direct quotations from participants provide illustration of the themes. Themes identified from the analysis are discussed in relation to the current literature, as well as proposed implications for Educational Psychology practice. Finally, strengths and limitations of the research are outlined before providing suggestions for future research.

III.III.   Part 3: Major Research Reflective Account

This section comprises a reflective account of the research process and the researcher's own professional development. It will be presented in two parts. The first part will provide a critical account of the development of the research and researcher. The second part will outline the research's contribution to knowledge and dissemination strategy.

IV.   Acknowledgments

"I hate it. However, I recognise that there are times that I have to."

Exploring the Use of Physical Restraint in Schools in Wales:

Staff Experiences, Evaluating Approaches,

and Informing Future Practice

Part 1: Major Research Literature Review

Part A: Narrative Review Providing Context and Theory

Part B: Scoping Review Using a Systematic Approach

Natalie Jane Phillips

Word count: 15,685

1. Part 1: Major Research Literature Review

1.1. Purpose

The purpose of this literature review is to analyse the available literature relating to the use of physical restraint (PR) in school settings; it gathers an understanding of the themes driven from research journals regarding school staff and children and young people's (CYP) views and experiences of the use of PR in schools.

1.2. Structure of the Literature Review

This literature review is divided into two sections. Part A presents a narrative review, providing theoretical and contextual information, and includes a discussion of pertinent government publications and grey literature, followed by the implications of the Educational Psychologist (EP) role. Emphasis is placed on Welsh Government (WG) policies and publications, considering the Welsh context of the study, though references to broader United Kingdom (UK) policies are included to provide a comparative analysis of different approaches. This is followed by a discussion of key psychological underpinnings exploring their links to the use of PR in schools, with a particular focus on attachment theory (Bowlby, 1979), self-efficacy theory (SET) (Bandura, 1977), self-determination theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2000), trauma-informed (TI) approaches, and belongingness.

The second section, Part B of this literature review, comprises a scoping review which adopts a systematic approach of research on the use of, and staff and CYP's experiences and views of, PR in schools. A critical review of the literature will be provided and the details of the themes identified will inform considerations and implications for EP practice, offering insights into best practices and potential areas for intervention. This section will conclude with the specific research questions the current research aims to address. Both reviews have been used together to provide a comprehensive understanding of a topic and to provide the foundations for a compelling methodology (Boland et al., 2017; Greenhalgh et al., 2018; Turnbull et al., 2023).

1.3. Positioning of the Researcher – Ontological and Epistemological Stance

Literature reviews are fundamentally shaped by the researcher's ontological and epistemological perspectives; the main influence for the researcher's philosophical stance is the individual and personal interpretation of the relationship between information and the process by which it is established (Saunders et al., 2009). As the researcher, it is important to identify the philosophical stance to which the reading, assembling, and evaluating of information used within this paper is viewed. The researcher's ontological stance is that of Critical Realism (Bhaskar, 2013). Critical Realism combines a realist ontology with a constructivist epistemology, (Maxwell, 2012) offering a balance between a realist positioning of reality existing independently of our constructions, and the knowledge of our world is our own construction. The researcher's epistemological stance is that of Contextualism (McKenna, 2015); Contextualism takes the view that "meaning is related to the context in which it is produced" (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 328). The researcher's philosophical positioning has informed all aspects of methodology, including the process and organisation of the literature review. A more in-depth discussion of the underlying epistemological stance and reflexive practices can be found in Part 2 and Part 3.

1.4. Literature Sources Used

Multiple search strategies were employed to gather literature pertinent to the research topic. These strategies included accessing various databases and books through the Cardiff University library website, as well as consulting government, charity, and institutional websites, all of which were considered to contain relevant publications and grey literature. The researcher was aware of the caveats associated with using grey literature, including concerns around quality, transparency, and bias. As Adams et al. (2017) caution, "grey literature sources may not meet the standards of traditional academic publishing and should be treated with appropriate critical scrutiny" (p. 437). Nonetheless, the inclusion of such sources was considered relevant to the review, particularly given the importance of contextualism in line with the researcher's epistemological stance. Government publications and third sector documentation provided essential context and practice-based insights. To uphold research integrity, all grey literature was carefully appraised for relevance, credibility, and alignment with the review's objectives.

For Part A, the narrative review draws on a diverse range of sources including Government policy documents, third-sector guidance, peer-reviewed research, key academic texts, psychological theory, and grey literature. This approach ensured a comprehensive collection of sources, encompassing a wide range of perspectives and findings. The selected methodology and diverse sources of evidence were intended to develop a conceptual framework, establish theoretical underpinnings, and explore practical applications related to psychologically informed approaches (Adams et al., 2017; Greenhalgh & Peacock, 2005; Sukhera, 2022). Literature was identified through search engines such as Elicit and Google Scholar, as well as the Cardiff University Library. Elicit is an article discovery tool endorsed by Cardiff University Libraries, designed to streamline the research process to identify relevant academic literature, offering a more efficient and transparent alternative to traditional search engines like Google Scholar (Ouyang et al., 2022; Nye et al., 2021; Cardiff University Libraries, 2024). The researcher used Elicit in line with ethical research practice and academic integrity, ensuring that all sources were critically appraised, appropriately cited, and integrated responsibly into the review process. Reflexivity was maintained throughout by regularly questioning assumptions, remaining aware of potential biases introduced through searching, and engaging in critical reflection on how the tool influenced the direction and scope of the literature synthesis.

Searches were conducting using a combination of keywords including 'physical restraint', 'positive handling', 'physical intervention', 'school', and 'educational psychology'. Additional sources were identified using a snowballing technique through the scanning of reference lists (Creswell & Creswell, 2017) to achieve a broader scope of literature. Inclusion decisions were based on relevance to the literature review aims and contribution to knowledge, frameworks or practices related to the use of PR in schools. Throughout the review, a reflective approach was adopted, with careful consideration given to the interpretive nature of the process and the researcher's positionality within the discipline of educational psychology (Sukhera, 2022) (see Part Three for the critical appraisal of researcher positionality).

The systematic search methodology used for Part B's scoping review is detailed in the corresponding section, outlining the specific criteria and procedures followed to ensure the rigor and relevance of the literature review. Although systematic approaches are commonly associated with positivist paradigms (Bryman, 1984), they are also valuable within qualitative and interpretive research frameworks, where they enhance the transparency, reflexivity, and rigor of knowledge synthesis (Gough et al., 2017; Hannes & Lockwood, 2011). The researcher employed a systematic approach to the scoping review in Part B; elements of systematic methods used are outlined further within Part B. This thorough approach aimed to provide a robust foundation for the research, highlighting critical insights and gaps in the existing knowledge base.

2. Part A: Narrative Review - Setting the Scene

2.1. Rationale

This section of the review aims to provide background context for the use of PR in schools by exploring some concepts and contexts that it may be used. Narrative reviews synthesise findings from a diverse range of sources to present a cohesive account of the relevant history, theories, and research related to a topic (Siddaway et al., 2019). This approach helps to create a thorough understanding of the subject matter, highlighting key developments and insights from various perspectives.

The review will begin by defining the terminology used within the literature search, before outlining the legislative context in both Wales and the wider UK. The review then highlights information provided by the third sector, before summarising some ethical considerations. This is followed by an analysis of relevant psychological underpinnings that may provide valuable insights into understanding the use of PR in schools, before ending with a summary.

2.2. Research Terminology

Several terms are used to describe the use of PR in schools. For this thesis, the term 'physical restraint' is used to describe the prevention, restriction, or subdued movement of the body, or part of the body, of a CYP by using direct physical contact by a member of school staff intentionally (Care Quality Commission, 2018). For this research, the use of PR to avoid imminent danger (e.g., stopping a child from running into a busy road) is not considered 'physical restraint'; purposeful, or planned actions rather than unconscious, automatic reflexive, or accidental actions are considered as PR in this research. Within educational settings, other terms can be used to describe PR, such as 'positive handling', and 'team teach', and though staff may use these interchangeably, the terms used will denote the same descriptor. This is consistent with relevant literature that specifically uses the term 'physical restraint', not only in schools but in wider areas of work and society such as healthcare, social services, and third sector organisations.

The term 'staff' will be used as a broad term that encompasses a wide range of working roles within school settings, regardless of their formal title/position, such as: teachers, Additional Learning Needs Coordinators (ALNCos), teaching assistants, key workers, and all levels of school senior management.

The term CYP in relation to the current research study is used to describe CYP who are aged between ten to eighteen years old. In relation to other research discussed within this literature review, the term's use will change in line with the age of participants used within that corresponding paper. In Wales, the definitions of 'children' and 'young people' can vary depending on the context and specific legislation. For instance, under the Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales (Welsh Government, 2021), 'children' are defined as individuals up to sixteen years of age, while 'young people' are those aged sixteen to twenty five; the general understanding of the term CYP encompasses those who are aged between zero and twenty five years old (Wales National Assembly, 2014, 2018) and this term will be used within this research.

2.3. Use of Physical Restraint in Schools

PR of CYP in schools remains a controversial practice, with concerns about potential physical and psychological harm (Ryan & Peterson, 2004; Steckley, 2017). In the UK, PR in schools is used under specific circumstances to ensure the safety of CYP and staff; PR is used when a CYP poses an immediate threat of serious physical harm to themselves or others (Department for Education, 2013), it may be part of a behavioural intervention plan for CYP (BILD Centre for the Advancement of Positive Behaviour Support, 2015), or used during a crisis to prevent significant property damage or disruption to the learning environment (Department for Education, 2024b).

PR may be employed as a means for staff to manage CYP's aggression, but it carries significant risks, including trauma, distress, fear, and a profound sense of powerlessness (Cusack et al., 2018). While some suggest that PR can have therapeutic benefits when applied appropriately (Bath, 1994; Rich, 1997), others emphasise its potential to cause harm and re-traumatisation (Smith & Bowman, 2009). Its use raises critical ethical concerns and has prompted calls for re-

evaluation (Nunn, 2019). Some argue that PR is sometimes necessary to address dangerous behaviours, particularly in cases involving CYP with disabilities, whereby the safety of the CYP, their peers, or staff may be at immediate risk, and other de-escalation strategies have been exhausted or deemed ineffective (Ryan & Peterson, 2004). Ryan and Peterson (2004) highlight that in such situations, PR is often viewed by staff as a last-resort intervention aimed at preventing harm, rather than as a disciplinary measure. Importantly, their position does not imply that CYP with disabilities are inherently more likely to cause harm; rather, they acknowledge that certain behaviours, often linked to communication difficulties, sensory processing issues, or emotional dysregulation may unintentionally place CYP or others at risk (Ryan & Peterson, 2004). However, critics advocate for minimising its use, citing risks of physical injury and even death (Bath, 1994; Ryan & Peterson, 2004). Research highlights considerable variation in the use of PR across schools, influenced by factors such as school size, socioeconomic status, and Local Authority (LA) policies influencing its prevalence (Barnard-Brak et al., 2014; Fogt et al., 2008).

Policy recommendations consistently highlight the importance of comprehensive training, the implementation of positive behavioural interventions, and the establishment of clear guidelines to ensure safe and ethical practices (Peterson et al., 2009; McAfee et al., 2006). Efforts to reduce the use of PR in educational settings have shown promise, with many interventions leading to significant reductions (Hodgkiss & Harding, 2024). However, further research is needed to refine best practices and inform policy development.

The Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP) passed a motion to promote the reduction of PR in schools (2018), and shortly after, a study by the Challenging Behaviour Foundation (CBF) and Positive and Active Behaviour Support Scotland (PABSS) revealed alarming statistics: 88% of families in the UK reported their CYP had experienced PR, with 35% of these indicating it occurred regularly (Challenging Behaviour Foundation, 2019). These findings underscore the urgent need for targeted policy changes that prioritise robust training, proactive behavioural strategies, and clear guidelines to safeguard both CYP and staff (Peterson et al., 2009; Ryan & Peterson, 2004). One notable limitation of this research pertains to the data collection methodology, which was predominantly reliant on self-reported

information obtained through participant-completed surveys and accompanying case studies submitted by families. Although this approach yields rich, experiential data that enhances understanding of family perspectives, it inherently carries the risk of self-selection and reporting bias. Specifically, families who have encountered particularly negative experiences with PR may have been more inclined to engage with the study, thereby introducing the possibility of an overrepresentation of adverse accounts and limiting the generalisability of the findings.

2.4. Legislative Context Relevant to the Use of Physical Restraint in Schools: Wales and the Wider UK

The use of physical force, though not for the purposes of punishment, remains in use to this day; the use of PR is used in schools in the UK to intervene when there is imminent danger, to prevent damage to property, and as a behavioural intervention (Welsh Government, 2013, 2021b) though should be used as a last resort (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2021). The Education and Inspections Act (2006, Section 93) states that staff can use "reasonable force" to prevent CYP from committing any offence, causing injury to any person, damaging the property of any person, self-harming, or distorting "good order and discipline" at school. There is no legal definition of when it is reasonable to use force, or what reasonable force looks like; lawfully the force used would need to be in proportion to the consequences it is intended to prevent (Welsh Government, 2022a).

Current guidance provided by the WG states that PR is used to "prevent pupils committing a criminal offence, injuring themselves or others, or damaging property; and to maintain good order and discipline amongst pupils" (2013, p4), which mirrors other UK legislation and guidance that have already been noted. This guidance for schools on the use of 'reasonable force' has not been updated for over a decade (Welsh Government, 2013). This guidance uses descriptive vocabulary when highlighting reasons for the use of PR such as 'to control or restrain pupils' (2013, p.4) and though there is a focus on the preventative strategies to be used by schools, the outlined aim is to create an 'orderly' environment (2013, p.4).

The WG have since developed a Reducing Restrictive Practices Framework (RRPF) (2022b) which provides an insight into the need for reducing the use of PR

across all sectors that work with CYP including Education, Health Care, and Social Care. The RRPF outlines that PR should only be used to prevent immediate harm to CYP or others (Welsh Government, 2022b); Schools are encouraged to implement de-escalation techniques and positive behavioural interventions before considering PR. The framework also highlights the importance of training for staff in de-escalation and crisis management to reduce the reliance on PR.

However, this framework is an overarching document for multiple organisations and therefore provides no specific and outlined steps for schools to follow to evaluate the use of PR and restrictive practices. The RRPF (2022b) aims to ensure that when restrictive practices such as PR are used, it is informed by person-centred planning to safeguard all that may be involved. Whilst the framework is non-statutory, it sets out the expectations for policy and practice in reducing restrictive practices across childcare, education, health and social care settings. This guidance highlights that all staff need to have "accredited, competence-based training" (Welsh Government, 2022b). However, the document fails to state what the parameters are for this, and therefore questions the consistency of the approaches taken across the country.

The Education Workforce Council has published a Guide to Good Practice when using 'appropriate touch', handling and PR (2018). The intention of this guidance is to increase awareness of PR in school's professional practice. This guidance recognises that there may be differing practices from school to school, due to the context in which the school or LA are situated, and suggests that a uniform approach be taken when considering the use of PR in schools. A consistent approach across school settings and LAs helps to ensure that all CYP are protected by the same safeguarding principles, minimises the risk of harm, and supports staff in exercising their duty of care with confidence and legal clarity (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2019; Department for Education, 2019). Though, the Human Rights Framework on Restraint (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2019) provides specific legal frameworks that govern the use of PR in settings in Wales and England, it is a multi-setting framework not only for the use of education, but social care and health alike. There is a lack of specific guidance outlining an informed procedure when using PR, in schools, in Wales.

Updated guidance on the use of PR in schools is currently being explored by the English Government (Department for Education, 2024b). A call for evidence (Department for Education, 2023) was publicly shared in 2023 and since a research report has outlined their findings (Department for Education, 2024b) which will be drawn on in Part B of this literature review. Since then, the Keeping Children Safe in Education (Department for Education, 2024a) document has been produced, which is statutory guidance that provides comprehensive instructions for schools and colleges in England on safeguarding CYP and promoting their welfare; PR being mentioned twice within this document, requesting that the reader consult two older documents (Department for Education, 2013; HM Government, 2019), the earlier of these documents being the version that a call for evidence was completed for. Therefore it is hoped that an updated document would be outlined in due course.

In Scotland, guidance on the use of PR in schools (Scottish Government, 2024b) has recently been published and is part of the "Included, Engaged, and Involved" (Scottish Government, 2024a) series, specifically focusing on a relationships and rights-based approach to physical intervention. The guidance emphasises addressing the underlying causes of distressed behaviour to prevent the need for PR. The guidance aligns with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), emphasising the protection of CYP's rights and ensuring their best interests are prioritised. It provides strategies for staff to intervene confidently and appropriately when necessary, focusing on relationship-based approaches, and stating that schools should access PR training that is certified as complying with the Restraint Reduction Network (RRN) training standards (The Restraint Reduction Network, 2021), as an exemplar of good practice.

In Northern Ireland, a review of policies concerning the use of restrictive practices and PR in school settings is ongoing. The Department of Education launched a formal review in 2020, resulting in interim guidance and a stakeholder-informed report (Department of Education Northern Ireland, 2022). Draft statutory guidance was released for public consultation (Department of Education Northern Ireland, 2023), aiming to establish a clearer, rights-based framework for the use of restrictive interventions. However, the finalised version of the guidance has not been

published, prompting concern from several stakeholders; The Royal College of Nursing (2025) publicly withdrew from the departmental taskforce, citing a lack of transparency and failure to prioritise CYP's rights (McCormack, 2025). Similarly, the Children's Law Centre (2025) has called for legislative reform, including the prohibition of seclusion, compulsory staff training, and robust reporting requirements. The delay in finalising statutory guidance underscores a significant policy gap in safeguarding and supporting CYP in Northern Ireland's schools.

In Wales, the most specific guidance available regarding the use of PR in schools dates back over a decade, and currently, there is no publicly available evidence to suggest that an update is being actively considered. However, the development of the RRPF by the WG (2022b) represents a step forward in addressing broader issues of restrictive practice across education, health, and social care. While this framework signals progress and an increased awareness of the need for TI approaches, it provides limited practical guidance specific to the day-to-day realities of PR in schools. As such, there remains a gap between policy intention and implementation that warrants further attention.

2.5. Third Sector Guidance

There is considerable information available to the public produced by charity and third sector organisations regarding the use of PR in schools in the UK. The Equality and Human Rights Commission has conducted inquiries and published reports on the use of PR in schools. Their findings highlight inconsistencies in policies and recording practices, and they recommend better support and guidance for schools to protect CYP's rights. This research will be discussed in more detail in Part B of this literature review. Various CYP's rights organisations, such as the Children's Commissioner for England, have raised concerns about the impact of PR on CYP's wellbeing. They advocate for alternative behaviour management strategies and better training for staff. Charities focused on supporting CYP with additional learning needs (ALN), such as the National Autistic Society, provide resources and guidance on managing behaviours that may be deemed challenging without resorting to PR. They emphasise the importance of understanding the individual needs of CYP and using positive behaviour support techniques.

The British Institute of Learning Disabilities (BILD) published a Code of Practice (2014) for minimising the use of PR. It provides guidelines which aim to ensure that any PR is used only as a last resort and in the safest, most respectful manner possible. BILD emphasises the importance of a whole organisation, comprehensive approach involving all levels of an organisation to support CYP with behaviours that could be deemed challenging (2016). The Code is structured to offer practical advice and ensure consistency in training and practice across different organisations. The BILD Accreditation Scheme accredits training organisations that deliver behaviour support and management training in conjunction with the use of physical skills or PR, which stresses the importance of risk assessment and teaching de-escalation techniques to prevent situations from escalating to the point where PR is necessary.

The RRN is an independent organisation in the UK which aims to reduce the use of restrictive practices in education, health, and social care settings (The Restraint Reduction Network, 2024). The RRN aims to make a significant difference in the lives of individuals by reducing reliance on the use of PR and other restrictive practices, promoting safer and more ethical approaches to managing behaviours that could be deemed challenging (British Institute of Learning Disabilities, 2024). The RRN has developed ethical training standards that provide a national and international benchmark for training, which aim to protect human rights and promote person-centred approaches (The Restraint Reduction Network, 2020). The RRN provides resources, guidance, and support to organisations and professionals to help them implement PR reduction strategies effectively.

2.6. Ethical Considerations when using Physical Restraint

The use of PR in schools raises significant ethical considerations that revolve around human rights, the principles of harm reduction, dignity, and the necessity of minimising restrictive practices, to safeguard the emotional and physical wellbeing of CYP. This is closely aligned with the commitment to CYP's rights under the UNCRC (UN General Assembly, 1989). Ethical practice in this context means that PR should only be used as a last resort, in situations of immediate risk, and never as a means of discipline or behaviour management. The Children's Commissioner for Wales (2019) has expressed concerns about the inconsistent use of PR across schools and

the potential for harm, particularly for CYP with ALN. The RRPF (Welsh Government, 2021) calls for practices that are transparent, consistent, and accountable across all settings. As such, the ethical imperative in Welsh schools is not only to reduce reliance on PR but to embed a culture of care and compassion that prioritises CYP's safety, voice, and dignity.

The UNCRC (UN General Assembly, 1989) emphasises CYP's right to protection from harm and to be treated with dignity and respect, even in challenging circumstances, which should never infringe upon CYP's basic human rights and should always be a last resort (Harris, 2008). This requires adherence to the principle of using the least restrictive intervention necessary to ensure safety (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, 2015a). This principle aligns with Positive Behavioural Support (PBS) (The Challenging Behaviour Foundation, 2021), which prioritises proactive and preventative strategies over reactive strategies like PR (Gore et al., 2013). Whilst there are no specific professional teaching standards in Wales around the use of PR, teaching standards in both Wales and the wider UK emphasise ethical teaching principles such as: personal and professional responsibility, integrity, as well as maintaining high standards of conduct (Department for Education, 2021; Education Workforce Council, 2024). They also highlight the importance of acting with honesty and integrity, respecting CYP's rights, and continuously improving knowledge and skills.

CYP may associate PR with fear, anger, and re-traumatisation (Smith & Bowman, 2009), and question its use as punishment (Montreuil et al., 2018). PR should only be used when immediate safety is at risk (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, 2015a; The British Psychological Society, 2017, 2021) and research discussing ethical practice suggests that schools should adopt TI approaches that consider the CYP's past experiences and prioritise their emotional wellbeing (Harris & Fallot, 2001). Explorations into CYP's views on PR emphasise the importance of hearing the voice of CYP and this can inform proactive approaches that reduce the need for PR altogether (Lansdown, 2005; Lundy, 2007; Ryan & Peterson, 2004). Ethical frameworks, such as those outlined by the British Psychological Society (The British Psychological Society, 2017), advocate for involving CYP in decisions about their care and ensuring that interventions respect

their perspectives. This aligns with principles of fairness, respect, and dignity (Welsh Government, 2021).

In addition to advocating for CYP to be involved in the decision making surrounding their care, it is equally important to consider the processes around obtaining parental consent for the use of PR. In Wales, the use of PR in schools is governed by the RRPF (2021), and whilst the framework does not explicitly state that parental consent must be obtained in advance for the use of PR, it does highlight that it should be a last resort and must be informed by person-centred planning. This implies that schools should also involve parents in the planning and decision-making process regarding the use of such practices. In the wider UK, schools are encouraged to have clear policies and procedures in place, which should involve informing parents about the school's approach to managing behaviour and the use of PR (Department for Education, 2013, 2024).

Scheuermann (2016) highlights six key ethical issues related to the use of PR in educational settings. These issues are rooted in the ethical challenges posed by restrictive interventions such as PR and aim to ensure the safety, dignity, and rights of CYP. The six ethical issues highlighted include: potential for death or injury, failure to use the least intrusive intervention, inappropriate restrictions on liberty and removal from access to education, repeated use of a potentially dangerous and ineffective intervention, disproportionate use with certain critical groups, and insufficient professional training, supervision, and monitoring. Scheuermann (2016) gained insights through a comprehensive review of existing literature, professional codes of practice, and ethical guidelines related to the use of PR and seclusion in schools. The methodology included the examination of real-world case examples from media stories and official reports, analysing professional codes of practice and ethics from the education sector to illustrate the ethical issues and challenges associated with this practice. By doing so, Scheuermann (2016) identified six areas of ethical issues that had not been specifically highlighted in previous PR and seclusion policies. The use of real-world case examples from media stories and official reports provided valuable insights, though also introduced potential biases; these examples may not represent the full range of experiences and contexts in which PR is used.

Scheuermann's (2016) six ethical issues stress the importance of limiting the use of PR to situations where it is the only option, and ensuring that practices are grounded in evidence, equity, and respect for the rights and dignity of CYP. Ethical guidelines stress that staff must be fully trained to use PR appropriately and minimise the risk of harm to CYP (The British Psychological Society, 2017); Scheuermann calls for systemic changes, including improved staff training, the adoption of preventative strategies like PBS (The Challenging Behaviour Foundation, 2021), and the establishment of clear guidelines and oversight mechanisms (2016). While the study highlighted ethical issues, it did not delve deeply into the practical implementation of alternatives to the use of PR; further research is needed to explore effective strategies and interventions that can reduce the reliance on PR within school systems.

Ethical frameworks, such as those outlined by the RRN, emphasise the importance of documenting and reviewing every instance of PR to ensure accountability and proportionality (The Restraint Reduction Network, 2021). A Freedom of Information request made by BBC 5 live (2017) to LAs in England, Scotland and Wales discovered that there were 13,000 recorded incidents of PRs in schools between 2014 and 2017, which resulted in 731 injuries. Less than a fifth of the LAs across the UK were able to provide the data to fulfil the request, with most LAs stating that they do not collect this type of information. Ethical practice requires schools and organisations to have robust systems in place for monitoring and evaluating the use of PR. This includes regular staff training, incident reviews, and audits to identify patterns and reduce the reliance on restrictive practices (Harris, 2008; The British Psychological Society, 2017).

2.7. Psychological Underpinnings
2.7.1. Attachment Theory

Attachment theory, primarily associated with and developed by Bowlby (1969), and further expanded by Ainsworth (1978), is particularly helpful for understanding the impact of PR on CYP in schools. Attachment theory emphasises the importance of secure attachments for healthy emotional and social development. When

considering attachment theory in relation to the use of PR, two contrasting perspectives can be considered.

One perspective suggests that a CYP with a secure attachment to a caregiver may be more accepting of being physically held for safety purposes, and may not perceive the experience as particularly traumatic, even if they initially respond with anger. Attachment theory posits that CYP form emotional bonds with caregivers, which provide a sense of security and safety; this secure attachment helps CYP develop emotional regulation skills. Research highlights that secure attachment leads to better emotional regulation and trust, suggesting that CYP with secure bonds with the staff supporting them are more likely to accept interventions like being held for safety without finding them particularly traumatic (Holt, 2021). Research from the Children's Commissioner for England (2011) outlines CYP's views on PR which highlight that secure attachments can mitigate the negative emotional impact of PR, suggesting that CYP with secure bonds may find such interventions less traumatic. This is supported by research indicating that securely attached CYP are better equipped to regulate their emotions and interpret caregivers' actions as protective rather than threatening. For instance, studies have shown that secure attachment fosters resilience and a sense of safety, enabling CYP to cope more effectively with stressful situations (Allen et al., 2018; Cooke et al., 2019).

In contrast, PR implemented by an adult with whom the CYP lacks a close trusting relationship, such as a member of staff, may be experienced as emotionally distressing, potentially threatening, and therefore more likely to be perceived as traumatic. Though secure attachment helps CYP develop emotional regulation skills, some researchers state that PR can undermine these skills by creating a traumatic experience that heightens anxiety and stress (Crouch, 2015). PR can disrupt these secure attachments, leading to feelings of insecurity and fear, which can negatively impact a CYP's ability to form trusting relationships (Stothard, 2022); this can lead to increased behavioural issues, due to the CYP's inability to manage their emotions effectively. CYP without secure attachments may interpret such interventions as threatening, leading to heightened emotional discomfort. Research highlights that PR

can be perceived as violent and retraumatising, especially when the CYP does not have a trusting relationship with the adult involved (Brown et al., 2022).

This theory can be used to further understand the importance of the staff-child relationship. The quality of staff-child relationships can be affected by PR, and negative experiences of PR may damage those relationships (Hodgkiss & Harding, 2024); The time taken to repair relationships after a PR is a novel area of research discussed (Duffy et al., 2024). TI approaches emphasise the importance of understanding CYP's attachment history, whether that the CYP is being restrained or witnessing the event, to prevent traumatisation during interventions (Kelly et al., 2023). Research suggests that CYP who witness PR can be impacted negatively in similar ways to those who directly experience PR (Steckley & Kendrick, 2007). This links to the importance of considering a whole school approach for reducing PR, and the wider school environment.

Research conducted by Ozturk (2023) suggests that staff would benefit in achieving a greater understanding of the relevance of attachment theory and how this links to managing behaviours that may be deemed as challenging. The main finding to emerge from the study is that knowledge of attachment may lead to a better understanding of the underlying reasons for behaviours that may be deemed as challenging in the classroom, and this awareness helps staff to look for alternative ways to support CYP (Ozturk, 2023). By fostering secure relationships and creating supportive environments, educators can address the underlying emotional needs that contribute to behaviours that may be deemed challenging, potentially reducing the need for interventions like PR (Ozturk, 2023).

2.7.2. Self-Determination Theory

SDT, developed by Ryan and Deci (2000), centres on human motivation and suggests that growth and engagement are driven by the fulfilment of three core psychological needs: autonomy, relatedness, and competence. Autonomy refers to the sense of having control over one's actions and decisions, relatedness involves feeling connected and valued by others, and competence reflects confidence in one's ability to achieve mastery.

According to SDT, these three needs are essential for intrinsic motivation and overall psychological wellbeing. PR, however, can severely undermine these needs, particularly autonomy and relatedness, by creating a hostile and controlling environment. When CYP are restrained, they may experience a loss of control and a breakdown in trust and connection with those involved in the PR process (Standage et al., 2005). Such experiences can foster a hostile, controlling atmosphere that diminishes motivation, increases disengagement, and exacerbates behavioural problems (Laymon, 2018).

SDT highlights the importance of creating environments that support these psychological needs. Schools that prioritise positive behaviour support and utilise de-escalation techniques can better nurture CYP's autonomy, relatedness, and competence. By doing so, they reduce the need for PR while fostering a healthier, more supportive environment for learning and growth (Sun & Chen, 2010).

2.7.3. Belongingness / Relationships

Baumeister and Leary (1995) proposed that the need to belong is a fundamental human motivation. They argued that people have a pervasive drive to form and maintain lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships (1995). This theory suggests that belongingness is essential for psychological wellbeing and that a lack of belonging can lead to various negative outcomes. PR can disrupt this sense of belonging and interpersonal relationships, leading to feelings of isolation and rejection. This can have long-term negative effects on a CYP's psychological wellbeing (Council for Children with Behavioural Disorders, 2021; Nielson et al., 2020). Research indicates that the use of PR can cause significant emotional trauma, leading to anxiety, depression, and a decreased sense of self-worth (Hodgkiss, 2024). This trauma can undermine a CYP's sense of belonging and safety in the school environment.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943) highlights belongingness as a fundamental human requirement, following the fulfilment of physiological and safety needs. This stage emphasises the importance of love, relationships, friendships, and social connections. When CYP experience PR, their sense of safety and belonging can be significantly compromised. Such experiences may hinder their ability to build

positive relationships with peers and teachers, which are essential for fostering emotional wellbeing and healthy social development (Platt, 2024).

Relationships between CYP and staff is a common theme in research surrounding the use of PR and restrictive practices, with consistency throughout the school system and interactions CYP have with staff being highlighted as important in fostering feelings of belonging (Gelbar et al., 2015; George et al., 2013; Wolfel, 2018). Willis et al. (2021) conducted research to explore the impact that PR had on CYP's relationships with staff members, and found that some of the CYP showed an understanding as to why staff used PR, but not all did. Steckley and Kendrick's (2008) research highlighted that CYP having trust in the staff member is a key factor to support CYP during unsafe situations.

Effectively addressing the use of PR in schools requires a thoughtful approach that balances the need to maintain safety with the responsibility to protect CYP's psychological wellbeing. Existing research highlights the importance of exploring alternative behaviour management strategies that prioritise CYP's emotional security and sense of belonging. Approaches such as PBS (The Challenging Behaviour Foundation, 2021) and TI practices have been shown to reduce the reliance on PR while fostering a supportive school environment (Ryan et al., 2007; Skiba et al., 2016). These strategies not only address behaviours that can be deemed as challenging, but also promote psychological resilience and long-term wellbeing (Brendtro & Brokenleg, 2009).

2.7.4. Self-Efficacy Theory

SET, introduced by Bandura (1977), offers valuable insights into the implications of using PR in schools. SET refers to an individual's belief in their ability to effectively handle specific situations. SET posits that the belief in one's capabilities stems from factors related to cognition, motivation, mood or affect, and perceived level of efficacy.

The Challenging Behaviour Foundation's (2019) study found that parents and carers reported some CYP were 'unable to communicate,' had 'reduced trust in adults,' 'low self-esteem,' and 'anger towards staff,' as a result of being physically

restrained. Restraining CYP can undermine their self-efficacy by fostering feelings of powerlessness and diminishing their capacity to regulate their own behaviour (Dishman et al., 2004). This can reduce their confidence and motivation to adopt positive behaviours. When subjected to PR, CYP may develop a sense of learned helplessness, believing they lack control over their actions or environment. This sense of futility can exacerbate behavioural issues, as CYP may perceive efforts to behave appropriately as pointless (Laymon, 2018).

The concept of SET also extends to staff, influencing their behaviour management strategies. Staff with strong self-efficacy are more likely to implement constructive, positive behaviour interventions and less likely to rely on PR (Constantine et al., 2019). Providing staff with training and support can enhance their self-efficacy, equipping them with effective tools to address behaviours that may be deemed as challenging without resorting to PR. Viewing PR through the lens of SET highlights the importance of fostering autonomy, confidence, and competence in both CYP and staff. By prioritising these elements, schools can create a safer and more empowering environment for all.

2.7.5. Trauma-Informed Approaches

Although not explicitly described as a theory, a TI approach acknowledges that many CYP may have experienced trauma, and this can impact their behaviour and response to interventions, including PR. TI approaches in schools aim to address the impact of trauma on CYP's cognitive functioning, behaviour, and academic performance (Maynard et al., 2019). These approaches typically involve workforce development, trauma-focused services, and organisational changes (Kelly et al., 2023; Maynard et al., 2019). Studies have shown that implementing TI approaches can reduce the use of restrictive measures like PR in child and adolescent settings (Kelly et al., 2023). Key elements of TI approaches include ensuring safety, fostering positive relationships, promoting empowerment, and addressing cultural issues (Kroshus-Havril et al., 2024). While research in this field is still emerging, early evidence suggests that school-wide TI approaches can lead to improved educational outcomes for CYP (Avery et al., 2020).

TI training helps staff develop the skills and confidence to handle difficult situations without using PR (Webb & Cary, 2025), which includes understanding the signs of trauma, using calming techniques, and knowing how to provide emotional support. This mirrors the understanding brought about by SET (Bandura, 1977); the more confident staff feel in these situations, the less likely they may use PR. By integrating TI practices, schools can better meet the needs of all CYP, particularly those who have experienced trauma, and minimise the use of PR (Maynard et al., 2019).

2.7.6. Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (EST) (1979) provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how various environmental systems influence human development. It posits that CYP's development is influenced by multiple interacting systems, such as family, school, and community. This framework is used to analyse the multiple factors at different levels (individual, class, family, organisational, and national) that influence the implementation of PR practices (Mullowney, 2024).
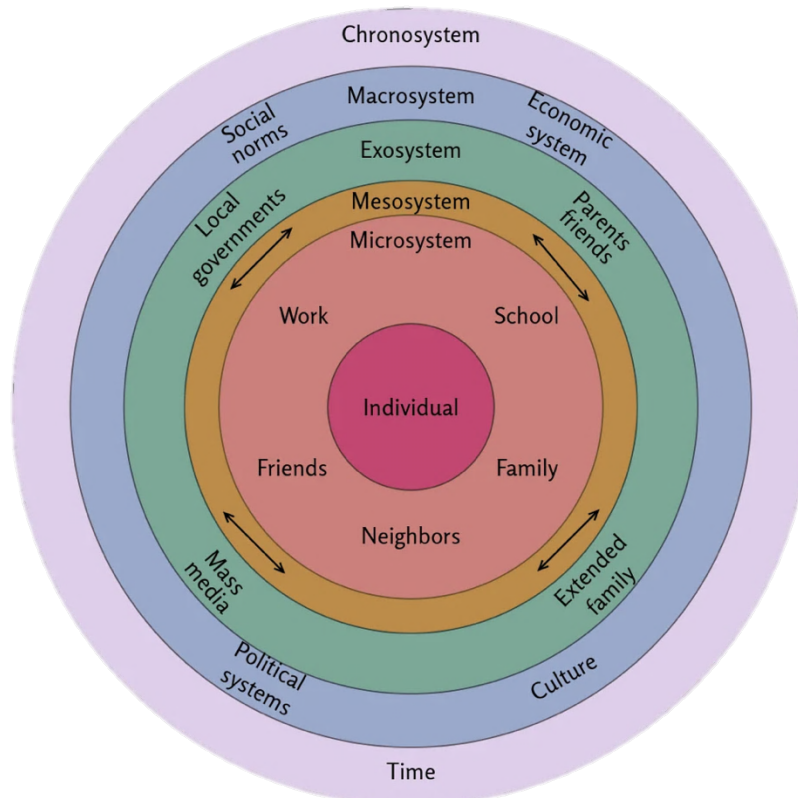
Figure 1: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) diagram.

When we consider the Microsystem, the relationships and interactions within the school environment, including those with staff and peers, play a role in shaping CYP's behaviour. Positive and supportive interactions can reduce the need for PR by fostering a sense of security and belonging. Within the Mesosystem, we can consider the use of effective communication and collaboration between parents and school staff, to work in a holistic way, to consider the needs of CYP and how to identify appropriate next steps in their care.

In the broader social system, the Exosystem, policies and practices regarding behaviour management and PR in schools are considered. Schools with clear, consistent policies and access to resources for training and support are better equipped to manage behaviours that may be deemed as challenging, without using PR. Though it is within the Macrosystem's societal influences, including laws and cultural norms, that social attitudes towards discipline and behaviour management can influence school policies and practices. A cultural shift towards more compassionate and TI approaches could lead to a reduction in the use of PR in schools (Maynard et al., 2019).

Consideration should be given for the dimension of time, including changes over the life course and historical context, the Chronosystem. Changes in policies, societal attitudes, and educational practices can impact the prevalence and acceptance of PR in schools. Ongoing efforts to promote TI and PBS approaches reflect a shift towards more humane and effective methods of managing behaviours that may be deemed as challenging (Centre for Mental Health, 2020; Emerson, 2022). By considering these interconnected systems, staff and policymakers can develop more comprehensive and effective strategies for managing behaviour in schools, ultimately reducing the need for PR.

2.8. Summary

PR in schools is a contentious issue, with concerns about the potential for physical and psychological harm to CYP (Ryan & Peterson, 2004; Steckley, 2017). While it is sometimes used to manage aggression, prevent property damage, or as part of a behavioural plan, the practice carries significant risks such as trauma, distress, fear, and a sense of powerlessness (BILD Centre for the Advancement of

Positive Behaviour Support, 2015; Department for Education, 2024b). There is a lack of specific guidance for schools when using PR, despite its continued use (BBC Radio 5 Investigates, 2017). The practice raises critical ethical concerns, and there are calls for re-evaluation (Nunn, 2019).

Legislative context dictates that staff can use "reasonable force" to prevent harm, maintain good order, or prevent a CYP from committing an offense (Welsh Government, 2022a). The definition of reasonable force is not legally defined, though it must be proportionate to the consequences it aims to prevent (Welsh Government, 2022a). WG guidelines state PR should only be used as a last resort to prevent immediate harm, though the specific school guidance is over a decade old (Welsh Government, 2013). Updated guidance has been developed in England and Scotland, which emphasises de-escalation techniques and positive behavioural interventions(Department for Education, 2023, 2024a, 2024b; Scottish Government, 2024a, 2024b). Third sector organisations, like the EHRC and the RRN, advocate for better training and alternatives to PR, highlighting inconsistent policies and recording practices in schools (British Institute of Learning Disabilities, 2024; The Restraint Reduction Network, 2024).

Ethical considerations are paramount, with emphasis on human rights, minimising restrictive practices, and using the least restrictive intervention necessary (Harris, 2008; National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, 2015a; The Restraint Reduction Network, 2020). The UNCRC emphasises CYP's right to protection from harm and to be treated with dignity (UN General Assembly, 1989). Several psychological theories are relevant to the use of PR, for example, attachment theory, SDT, belongingness, and SET, all which suggest that PR can negatively impact CYP's emotional and social development (Laymon, 2018; Nielson et al., 2020; Ozturk, 2023; Standage et al., 2005). TI approaches in schools are gaining traction, aiming to address the impact of trauma on CYP's behaviours and academic performance, and this may lead to a reduction in restrictive practices like PR (Kelly et al., 2023).

3. Part B: Scoping Review with a Systematic Approach

3.1. Rationale

The primary purpose of conducting a scoping review is to map the extent, range, and nature of existing research literature (Peters et al., 2020; Thomas et al., 2017). Unlike other reviews, scoping reviews are not restricted to peer-reviewed literature and can include various sources such as grey literature (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Peters et al., 2020). A systematic review approach is a respectable strategy to map theoretical approaches, or themes, as well as identifying knowledge gaps within the literature (Snyder, 2019). In some cases, as with this research, full systematic reviews are not always the best strategy as the topic chosen has been conceptualised differently and studied within diverse disciplines, which can hinder a full systematic review process (Snyder, 2019). Therefore, a scoping review that employs a systematic approach to identify and synthesise the existing or emerging body of literature (Thomas et al., 2017) has been chosen as the method to expand further on Part A of this review.

This scoping review seeks to critically analyse emerging evidence on the current practices and evolving use of PR in UK schools, by using some elements of a systematic review such as the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) flow chart (see the Methodology subsection for further information). The aim is to offer a comprehensive perspective that can inform future advancements across psychological, educational, and policy frameworks, contributing to more effective and ethically sound practices.

3.2. Formulation of the Literature Review Question

Formulating the literature review question (LRQ) is a crucial initial step in conducting a scoping literature review (Peters et al., 2020; Thomas et al., 2017). It sets the direction for the entire review, guiding the selection of sources and influencing the scope of the analysis (Levac et al., 2010). A well-defined LRQ is a foundational step essential for establishing a clear and coherent framework for the literature review, helps to clarify the objectives, and ensure that the review remains relevant and targeted. It is also essential to establish the inclusion and exclusion

criteria for the scoping literature search. Collaborating with a Specialist Librarian was an essential part of the process (Mak & Thomas, 2022) that the researcher undertook to incorporate diverse perspectives and ensure that the criteria was closely aligned with the LRQ (Levac et al., 2010; Thomas et al., 2020). This collaborative approach helped to refine the focus and enhance the comprehensiveness of the literature review.

Following the narrative review in Part A, the search was expanded to include broader terminology used to describe PR such as "positive handling" and "restraint procedure" to generate a larger scope (see Table 1 for all included search terms). The LRQ used for this scoping literature review was as follows:

'What are children, young people, and staff experiences of physical restraint in schools in the United Kingdom?'

3.3. Search Strategy

Following a narrative review to isolate key terms, an initial scoping literature search using a systemic approach was carried out in August 2024, again in November 2024, and January 2025. Several databases were accessed based on their relevance to educational psychology and education, these databases were: Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA), Educational Resource Information Centre (ERIC via EBSCO host), PsycInfo®, and SCOPUS. The use of Elicit® through the approved Cardiff University Library system, was used to scope out the research available. Elicit sifts through a vast repository of over 200 million academic papers, delivering a curated list of pertinent articles and a succinct summary of the topic (Cardiff University Library Service, 2024). In this review, the summary functions provided by Elicit were intentionally excluded from the study selection process. Although such AI-generated summaries offer the potential for increased efficiency during screening, their use raises significant concerns regarding reliability, transparency, and the potential misrepresentation of study content. AI tools, while promising, often lack the interpretive depth and contextual awareness required for critical appraisal (Van Dis et al., 2023). Given the early and evolving nature of these technologies, outputs may omit key methodological details or inaccurately characterise findings, posing risks to the validity of systematic review

processes (Fabiano et al., 2024). To preserve the integrity and rigour of the review, each article identified via Elicit was manually downloaded and independently assessed against the pre-established inclusion and exclusion criteria. This ensured consistency with the procedures applied to sources retrieved from traditional academic databases and upheld the methodological standards expected in scholarly research. This software does not include other sources of information other than journals and therefore additional relevant literature, such as government funded studies, unpublished doctoral thesis, and other grey literature was identified using a snowball technique.

This comprehensive approach ensured a wide-ranging collection of sources, enriching the literature review with diverse perspectives and insights. Table 1 shows the search terms below:

Subject mapping terms	Key word search terms	Rationale
1. "physical restraint" AND	"physical restrain*" OR "physical intervention" OR "physical event" OR "restraint procedure*" OR "restraint* OR "positive handl*"	This review intended to search for studies that examined the use of physical restraint. A variety of similar terms were found for physical restraint in the narrative review, and therefore these were included to ensure access to a full scope of articles.
2. "school"	OR "education*" OR "college"	This review is to specifically consider the use of physical restraint in the context of a school environment.

Table 1: Mapping and Search Terms

Each of the subject heading search terms were inputted along with the equivalent key word search terms using OR. The two different subject mapping terms were combined with AND.

3.4. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The collected literature was analysed for relevance to this research and individually reviewed by the researcher. Results from the five databases were

compared to remove duplicates, and the inclusion/exclusion criteria (see Table 2) were applied to the articles.

Inclusion Criteria
Research that is in the context of education / schooling.
Research that is about the use of physical restraint.
Research published in a peer reviewed journal, unpublished doctoral thesis or textbook.
Position papers and reports were included for context and further information on the topic.
Studies conducted in the UK.
Papers written in English.
Published between the years 2000-2024.
Exclusion Criteria
Research that is about other forms of restrictive practice.
Research that is in a context other than education (e.g. health, social care, residential).
Studies conducted outside of the UK.
Papers not written in English
Papers older than 2000.

Table 2: Literature Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

By using the term 'education' and college' alongside 'school' within the search terms, the literature produced was of a focus based on CYP aged between zero-nineteen years old. The articles produced did not relate to the higher education sector; there is a notable paucity of research specifically exploring the use of PR in higher education settings. This absence of data may reflect the infrequency of such practices, along with the understanding that higher education institutions operate under stringent legal and ethical guidelines that emphasise the rights and freedoms of adult learners. The use of PR in such settings could infringe upon these rights and expose institutions to legal liabilities. The research focus for this literature review was about the use of PR in schools specifically, and it was agreed with advice from the Cardiff University Librarian to add the term 'college' to potentially capture research that may have been undertaken in ALN provisions and alternative settings, due to the age range in which they cater for aligning within the zero-nineteen age range.

The researcher elected to exclude literature published prior to the year 2000, a decision informed by significant developments in the governance of education in Wales. Following the affirmative outcome of the 1997 Welsh devolution referendum, the Government of Wales Act 1998 (UK Parliament) established the National Assembly for Wales, transferring a range of powers, including those related to education, to the newly formed Assembly. The Assembly officially commenced operations in 1999, marking the beginning of a distinct Welsh education policy landscape (Welsh Parliament, 2024). This inclusion criterion was selected in alignment with the researcher's epistemological stance of contextualism, which emphasises the importance of understanding knowledge within its social, political, and historical context (Williams, 2001). By focusing on literature published from 2000 onwards, the researcher ensured that the studies reviewed reflect the educational policies and practices shaped by the devolved Welsh education system. This approach acknowledges the evolving nature of educational governance in Wales and seeks to provide insights that are relevant to the current policy environment.

During the literature search, most of the journal articles and studies retrieved were conducted in countries outside of the UK, largely the United States of America. There are very few journal articles and studies that have been conducted within the UK, and none have been conducted solely in Wales. This reiterates the importance of conducting a scoping review, with systemic approach, to incorporate the grey literature and policy documentation to provide important known contextual information about the UK and Wales; soundly informing the current research. It was decided that the review would not include papers that were based outside of Wales or the UK, aligning with the researcher's epistemological stance of Contextualism (McKenna, 2015) that "meaning is related to the context in which it is produced" (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 328). This decision reflects an understanding that education systems are shaped by distinct cultural, political, and organisational frameworks, and that findings from other national contexts may not be directly transferable to the Welsh setting. The governance structures, funding mechanisms, and curricular priorities can vary significantly, making it essential to consider the unique context of each education system when interpreting research findings (Verhoeven, 2011).

While the review excluded studies conducted outside the UK, research originating from other parts of the UK beyond Wales was included. This decision was based on the recognition of shared structural and cultural characteristics across UK education systems, including broadly similar curricular frameworks, school governance models, and expectations regarding behaviour and safeguarding. Although devolved governments influence specific policies and curriculums, the underlying educational philosophies and institutional practices remain sufficiently aligned to allow for meaningful comparison and relevance to the Welsh context. For instance, a comparison of school institutions and policies across the UK highlights these shared features, despite some divergence due to devolution (Sibieta & Jerrim, 2021). As there is so little research in the Welsh context, by focusing on studies within the UK the review ensures that the insights gained are relevant and applicable to the Welsh educational landscape, thereby providing more accurate and meaningful conclusions.

3.5. Methodology

To support the credibility, clarity, and relevance of the literature review the PRISMA guidance (Page et al., 2021) was adopted. Following this criteria and guidelines, five studies were included in the review. In addition to these five found directly from the searches, an additional four were found through the manual searches and scanning reference lists. The complete search strategy, process and results can be found in the PRISMA flow diagram below, which details how the results were generated at each stage and how these were assessed for their inclusion and exclusion. Studies that met the inclusion criteria were scrutinised for quality, gathering both descriptive and evaluative data.

Identification of studies via databases and registers

Records identified from*:
APA Psychinfo (n = 443)
ERIC (n = 150)
Scopus (n = 779)
ASSIA (n = 730)
Proquest Dissertations and Thesis Global (n = 1741)

Records removed *before screening*:
Publication date (automated) (n = 1034)
Not published in English (automated) (n= 236)

Title/Abstract Records screened
APA Psychinfo (n = 322)
ERIC (n = 100)
Scopus (n = 587)
ASSIA (n = 684)
Proquest Dissertations and Thesis Global (n = 903)

Records excluded:
Duplicate records (n = 103)
Exclusion criteria – not education (human) (n= 2353)

Reports sought for retrieval
APA Psychinfo (n = 32)
ERIC (n = 66)
Scopus (n = 23)
ASSIA (n = 18)
Proquest Dissertations and Thesis Global (n = 1)

Reports not retrieved:
(n = 0)

Reports assessed for eligibility (n = 140)

Reports excluded:
Outside of UK (n = 62)
Exclusion criteria – not use of physical restraint (n = 73)

Identification of studies via other methods

Records identified from:
Elicit (n = 222)
Charitable Organisations (n = 1)
Regulatory bodies (n = 1)

Reports sought for retrieval (n = 224)

Reports not retrieved (n = 0)

Reports assessed for eligibility (n = 224)

Reports excluded:
Not educational setting (other setting such as health, social and residential care) (n = 215)
Reviews of training programmes (n = 3)
Published prior to 2000 (n = 2)

Studies included in review (n = 9)

Figure 2: PRISMA diagram

Due to the varied methodologies being analysed, the reliability, relevance, and findings of each study were meticulously evaluated using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklist (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, 2024), as outlined in Appendix A. CASP was used as an aid memoire to facilitate systematic and transparent evaluation. Its structured format provided a consistent framework for critically appraising the studies design, relevance, and identifying strengths and weaknesses in methodological approaches, thereby enhancing the trustworthiness of the literature review.

3.6. Presentation and Discussion of Findings

The provided studies explore the use of PR in UK schools. The review entailed a detailed analysis of each study, allowing for the identification of broad themes related to PR and positive handling in educational settings (see Appendix B for critical analysis table). Table 3 below outlines a short summary of the papers included in this literature review.

Paper	Summary
Challenging Behaviour Foundation (2019)	This study investigated the use of restrictive interventions on disabled children in the UK through an online survey of 204 families and analysis of 566 case studies. The majority of cases involved children aged 5–10 with a range of disabilities, including mental health conditions. Findings showed that 88% of children had experienced PR and 71% had experienced seclusion, with 50% being prescribed medication to manage behaviour. The study raised concerns about documentation, staff training, and long-term segregation practices.
The Department for Education (2024b)	This study conducted qualitative research to understand the use of reasonable force in alternative provision and special schools in England. Through interviews and site visits, researchers found that schools prioritized prevention and de-escalation, using behaviour plans and environmental modifications. However, challenges in school recruitment and self-selection bias limited the representativeness of the findings.
The Equality and Human Rights Commission (2021)	This study examined PR monitoring practices in schools across England and Wales via a large-scale survey of 641 schools and interviews with stakeholders. The report highlighted inconsistent recording and unclear definitions of PR, with a widespread desire among educators for clearer national guidance and training.
Hayden and Pike (2005)	This study evaluated the Team-Teach training program across over 500 courses in mainstream and specialist settings. Using mixed methods, including surveys, observations, and case

	studies, the study found that the program improved staff confidence and preparedness, particularly in special schools and pupil referral units. However, its impact was less evident in mainstream schools, where PR was less frequently used.
Hodgkiss and Harding (2024)	This study explored the views of four primary-aged pupils in a specialist SEMH school on PR. Using child-friendly, semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis, the study found that pupils generally viewed PR negatively but acknowledged it could be appropriate for safety. They also identified alternative strategies that helped them remain calm, although PR often strained staff-student relationships.
Mullowney (2024)	This study carried out a scoping review and qualitative study on the implementation of positive handling practices in two English schools—one specialist and one mainstream. Through interviews and focus groups, the research identified ten key practice areas, including staff training and accountability. It also revealed significant variation in available guidance and a general lack of UK-based academic research on the topic.
Singh and McKie (2021)	This study conducted a retrospective audit of 108 children to assess the use of PR and seclusion. Over half of the children had experienced such interventions, with most having a diagnosis of autism and comorbid conditions. Findings underscored the prevalence of PR both in schools and at home, but were limited by incomplete data and potential recall bias.
Stothard (2022)	This study piloted a method for gathering children's views on PR, applying it with one 12-year-old in an SEMH setting. The child reported both physical and emotional harm from PR but also saw it as a tool to help manage behaviour in some situations. The study emphasized the need for ethical, child-centred research methods in this area.
Willis, Harrison, and Allen (2021)	This study examined how restrictive physical interventions (RPIs) affect teacher-child relationships among pupils with SEMH needs. Using stimuli-informed focus groups with 10 boys in two schools, the study found that both direct experience and witnessing PR led to negative emotional impacts. Pupils with direct experience better understood the process of rebuilding trust with staff following such incidents.

Table 3: Short Summary of Literature Review Papers Included.

The research identified key themes related to the use of PR, such as the emotional and physical impact on CYP, relationships between CYP and staff, and the pressing need for alternative strategies. The subsequent sub-sections of the literature review will delve into these overarching themes presented in the research. The nine selected studies will now be discussed with the aim of answering the LRQ:

'What are children, young peoples, and school staff's experiences of physical restraint in schools in the United Kingdom?'

3.6.1. Emotional and Physical Impact on CYP

The physical and emotional impact of PR on CYP is a major theme throughout the research. Results consistently show that CYP experience physical and emotional harm from being physically restrained. CYP report predominantly negative emotional and physical effects from experiencing PR, which include feelings of anger, fear, frustration, increased stress, and a reduced trust in adults (Hodgkiss & Harding, 2024; Stothard, 2022). Physical impacts include pain, discomfort, and difficulty breathing (Hodgkiss & Harding, 2024). Studies also recognise that CYP who are not directly restrained, but witness it happening within their environment, are also subjected to emotional harm including fear and anger (Stothard, 2022; Willis et al., 2021). It is imperative to note, however, that Stothard's (2022) research is based on a singular case study. Whilst providing valuable insight, the views and experiences of this single individual may not represent those of other CYP with different experiences and need. The research encountered practical challenges in recruiting schools and obtaining consent and assent. Some schools cited a lack of time or an inability to identify potential CYP participants, while others declined without providing specific reasons (Stothard, 2022). This difficulty highlights the sensitivity of the topic area: the use of PR in schools is a contentious issue (Hayden & Pike, 2005), potentially contributing to schools' reluctance to engage in research on this subject.

However, the CYP's experiences within these studies can be viewed as, and offers, a more complex understanding; research does highlight that the impact of PR on CYP is not uniform. Some CYP experience significant emotional and physical harm (Hodgkiss & Harding, 2024; Stothard, 2022), while others report feelings of safety, care, or fairness (Challenging Behaviour Foundation, 2019; Stothard, 2022; Willis et al., 2021). These differing perspectives link closely to those outlined earlier in this review regarding attachment theory; these experiences may be influenced by the quality of the relationship and the degree of emotional connection between the CYP and the person restraining them. This perspective suggests that individual experiences, and the context of the PR, play an important role in shaping a CYP's

response, and therefore the emotional and physical impact that may have on the CYP may differ.

In order to provide some aspect of CYP feeling that they have autonomy and relatedness within their environment, therefore promoting positive psychological wellbeing, it is fundamental to involve CYP in discussions about PR and to elicit their views on their experiences and alternative strategies. Several studies emphasise the importance of accessing and understanding the views of CYP who have been restrained in school (Hodgkiss & Harding, 2024; Stothard, 2022; Willis et al., 2021). They highlight the need for ethical and effective methods for gathering these views, which is considered a sensitive area of research. These criticisms highlight the need for more rigorous, comprehensive research in this area, with a focus on the experiences of CYP, alternative strategies to PR, and utilising an effective dissemination of findings.

3.6.2. Relationships Between CYP and School Staff

The significance of relationships between school staff and CYP is another recurring theme within the studies in this review (Stothard, 2022; Willis et al., 2021). Positive relationships and effective communication are seen as critical for preventing and managing behaviours that may be deemed as challenging, as well as repairing relationships after incidents of PR (Mullowney, 2024; Stothard, 2022). PR can negatively impact the relationships between CYP and staff (Hodgkiss & Harding, 2024; Stothard, 2022), however some studies suggest that relationships are also key to minimising the need for PR. They shed light on the quality of the relationship, which influences the CYP's acceptance of, and recovery from, the incident (Hodgkiss & Harding, 2024).

The quality of relationships between staff and CYP significantly influences CYP's perceptions of physical interventions. Some CYP report understanding the rationale behind the use of PR and perceive staff actions as being in their best interests, thereby maintaining positive relationships (Hodgkiss & Harding, 2024). Conversely, others feel that such interventions damage their relationships with staff (Hodgkiss & Harding, 2024). Hodgkiss and Harding's study (2024) specifically focuses on the perspectives of CYP, providing valuable insights. However, the study

does not incorporate the viewpoints of staff or parents/carers. Including these perspectives could have facilitated a more comparative and comprehensive understanding of the relational dynamics involved. Additionally, the study exhibits participant selection bias; the researchers acknowledge that, due to ethical considerations, school staff identified CYP who they believed would be comfortable sharing their views with the researchers. This approach may have inadvertently excluded participants who were less confident or who might have self-selected to participate under different circumstances. The authors suggest that future research should allow CYP to self-select prior to staff discussing inclusion criteria.

Hodgkiss and Harding's (2024) findings are similar to those outlined by Willis et al. (2021). This research, which summarised how CYP with social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) needs perceived the impact of PR on their relationships with staff, also found varied views regarding the relationships between CYP and staff. The study indicates that depending on context, PR can have a positive, negligible, or negative impact on CYP and staff relationships (Willis et al., 2021). Findings outline a complex range of CYP perspectives, including negative emotions, understanding of safety rationales, and varying timeframes for relationship repair, highlighting the nuanced ways PR can affect the "teacher-child bond" (Willis et all., 2024). The study suggests that while it can cause discomfort, many CYP recognise their necessity for safety, and the quality of the overall relationship influences the perceived impact.

However, upon closer examination, several methodological and theoretical considerations warrant critical reflection. The study relied on self-report data from focus groups of CYP, which may be subject to biases such as social desirability (participants saying what they think the researcher wants to hear) or difficulty in articulating complex emotions and experiences, particularly for CYP with SEMH needs. While the researchers used photographic stimuli aimed to mitigate this limitation, the reliance on verbal reports remains a methodological consideration. Similarly to Hodgkiss and Harding's (2024) research, while the focus of the research was on the CYP perspectives, understanding the staff's experiences and perceptions could provide a more comprehensive picture of the relational dynamics at play. The researchers themselves suggest that future research should investigate the physical and emotional impact of implementing PR on staff (Willis et al., 2021).

A focus on the relational aspect of research is vital; research demonstrates the potential negative impact of PR on staff and CYP relationships. There can be a recommendation that schools foster positive relationships to prevent the need for PR and to facilitate recovery after PR (Willis et al., 2021). The time needed to rebuild a relationship after PR should be factored into school policies and practices; Post-incident support should be provided to both CYP and staff after a PR incident (Department for Education, 2024; Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2021). This provides an opportunity for restorative practice, to discuss the incident and address any feelings of distrust or resentment. EPs could be pivotal in helping inform such approaches, which are discussed in a later section within this review.

3.6.3. *Enabling the Voice of CYP*

The studies in the review emphasise the importance of enabling the voice of CYP in all aspects, from policy development to post-incident reviews (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2021; Hodgkiss & Harding, 2024; Stothard, 2022). This involves actively listening to, valuing, and incorporating the perspectives of CYP who have experienced PR. CYP want to be actively involved in discussions about behavioural plans, which include the use of PR, and alternative strategies (Hodgkiss & Harding, 2024; Stothard, 2022). Including CYP's perspectives can lead to more effective and personalised strategies and a better understanding of the impact of PR (Hodgkiss & Harding, 2024; Stothard, 2022). Their insights can inform the development of policies, use of de-escalation techniques, and post-incident support. By understanding how PR affects CYP, professionals can take steps to minimise the potential for trauma and re-traumatisation (Stothard, 2022).

The report by Equality and Human Rights Commission (2021) highlights that CYP's best interests must be a primary consideration when decisions are made about whether and how to restrain them. This aligns with the principles of the UNCRC (UN General Assembly, 1989), specifically Article 12, which guarantees the right to express views freely in matters affecting the CYP, is explicitly mentioned in the report. It notes that this right includes discussions about behaviour management and that this basic condition needs to be broadly respected and understood (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2021). Furthermore, it recommends that national

minimum standards for recording the use of PR should include the CYP's involvement in any incident review; directly calling for incorporating the CYP's perspective when analysing a PR incident.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission's (2021) research scope was confined to both maintained and academy schools across mainstream and special education sectors. However, the exclusion of Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and Residential Special Schools constitutes as a limitation, as these settings often support CYP with complex behavioural and learning needs, potentially differing in their use and understanding of PR. Consequently, the generalisability of the findings and subsequent recommendations to these excluded contexts is limited. Furthermore, while efforts were made to engage schools in refining definitions of PR, the deliberate choice to employ the term 'restrictive interventions' in the survey, based on perceived familiarity, raises concerns about semantic clarity and interpretive consistency. This may have influenced participant responses, thereby introducing potential bias or variation in the interpretation of key constructs central to the research inquiry.

Giving CYP a voice in this process can empower them and give them some agency over the process. When CYP feel heard and respected, their trust in staff may increase and this can lead to better relationships and improved outcomes (Hodgkiss & Harding, 2024; Willis et al., 2021). CYP's perspectives can challenge assumptions made by staff about the use of PR, ensuring that it is only used as a last resort and not as a form of punishment or classroom management (Stothard, 2022). Upskilling CYP to provide them with greater autonomy in managing their emotions and behaviours, and ultimately reducing the likelihood of escalation is an additional consideration when highlighting the need for hearing CYP voices and increasing agency (Hodgkiss & Harding, 2024). Empowering CYP with self-regulation skills aligns with the concept of fostering their belief in their own ability to manage situations effectively, which is also a key component of SET.

3.6.4. Staff Perspectives

The studies in the review highlight that staff also recognise the importance of relationships, share thoughts around prevention, de-escalation, and the use of good

communication in reducing the need for PR (Mullowney, 2024). Mullowney (2024) conducted a study which aimed to understand staffs' experiences of implementing PR and positive handling practices to identify the strengths and needs of current practice. The methodology used in Mullowney's (2024) research included focus groups with teaching assistants and teachers, as well as interviews with head teachers from a specialist SEMH school and a mainstream primary school. Results found that staff experiences in implementing positive handling practices are inconsistent, with numerous barriers hindering effective implementation (Mullowney, 2024). These barriers might be practical, such as a lack of resources, lack of training, or emotion based relating to staff confidence and views.

Staff consistently highlight the need for sufficient time and resources to support PR practices effectively, and in the absence of these, they report difficulties in enacting meaningful change and improving current practices (Mullowney, 2024). This points to the broader systemic challenges within the education sector and the ways in which structural and organisational frameworks shape the expectations placed on staff. Differing systems, characterised by inconsistent policies (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2021), unclear definitions of PR (Department for Education, 2024), and inequitable access to training and funding (Department for Education, 2024), create a fragmented landscape that complicates implementation. Such disparities may not only lead to confusion and variation in practice but also undermine efforts to establish a unified, ethically sound, and evidence-based approach to the use of PR in schools.

Building on the discussion in Part A, SET (Bandura, 1977) and SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2000) present valuable theoretical lenses through which staff perspectives on the use of PR can be more deeply understood. These theories facilitate a nuanced exploration of the cognitive and motivational factors that may shape staff attitudes, confidence, and autonomy in the application of such practices. SET (Bandura, 1977), emphasises the importance of staffs' self-beliefs in their abilities; research shows that staff have a range of emotional responses to PR practices, including anxiety, guilt, and a sense of inadequacy, and their own self-efficacy in managing behaviours that may be deemed challenging plays a role in how they respond to these situations (Mullowney, 2024). SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2000) can be helpful to unpick the intrinsic

motivation of staff though autonomy, competency, and relatedness. The relationship between job resources and SDT (including competence) within staff professional development can imply that providing adequate job resources can positively influence staffs' sense of competence and overall self-determination in their professional roles (Mullowney, 2024). This may impact on staffs' approach to behaviour management and the use of PR.

3.6.5. Systemic Issues: Policy, Practice, and Data Management

There is a need for clear legal, ethical, and practice-based guidance for PR practices (Department for Education, 2024). Current guidance is considered too broad by some, while others believe that it needs to be broad to accommodate the wide range of school settings. The studies highlight the need for clear, nationally agreed definitions of different types of PR, as well as updated guidance (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2021; Stothard, 2022). Guidance needs to be consistent and consider all education settings; this extends to variations in policies, recording methods, and language used to describe PR. The lack of consistent definitions for terms like "restraint," "restrictive practice," and "positive handling" creates confusion and hinders the ability to compare data, create policy, and improve practice (Department for Education, 2024; Mullowney, 2024). Some schools are trying to find new, more supportive language to use when discussing PR, however there is no consistency in this practice (Department for Education, 2024). The importance of training for staff in de-escalation, diffusion, and distraction strategies, as well as in crisis prevention, is emphasised (Stothard, 2022). There is also a call for national training standards for PR, with a human rights approach (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2021). There is an emphasis on the importance of staff competence, training, and accountability, as well as the ability to conduct dynamic risk assessments and plan for appropriate interventions (Department for Education, 2024; Mullowney, 2024).

The CBF's study (2019) collected the views of parents whose CYP had experienced being physically restrained in school. The findings shine light on an overwhelming call from families (97% of recipients) for better training for staff in areas such as learning disabilities, autism, behaviour, and PBS (Challenging Behaviour Foundation, 2019). A significant majority of families who responded to the

CBF survey believed that better staff training could have prevented restrictive interventions, including PR, being used. Specifically, 62% of respondents thought that if staff had better skills, restrictive interventions could have been avoided (Challenging Behaviour Foundation, 2019). However, it is important to consider the methodology used in data collection for this survey. The report predominantly relied on self-reported data, gathered through surveys completed by families and case studies provided by them. While this approach yields valuable insights into family experiences, it is essential to recognise the potential for reporting bias; families who have encountered negative experiences with PR may be more inclined to participate in the survey and share their narratives.

Studies also show that CYP express the need for alternative strategies to PR; training in de-escalation skills as well as PR, has shown to enhance staff knowledge and confidence (Hayden & Pike, 2005). Though Hayden and Pike's research (2005) highlights an important finding that though staff in their study were appropriately trained, one in five staff still voiced concerns about using PR. These concerns centred on staff's perceived self-efficacy regarding the accurate recall and application of physical intervention techniques, reflecting underlying apprehensions about their competence and reliability in high-stakes situations. This finding indicates that the initial training, while improving confidence and knowledge overall, does not entirely alleviate anxieties related to the practical application of PR for all staff. This could be seen as a limitation of relying solely on the initial training for long-term competence and application of the techniques; refresher sessions fulfilling the need for ongoing training is deemed most appropriate (Hayden & Pike, 2005).

The CBF (2019) report highlights a concerning finding in the PABSS case study data: a higher number of restrictive interventions were reported when staff had received training. This raises questions about the nature of the training, suggesting it might focus on how to implement restrictive interventions rather than on preventative approaches like PBS (The Challenging Behaviour Foundation, 2021). The report emphasises that more research is needed to understand this correlation and the content of the training received by staff. The report notes a correlation was found that families reported that the number of restrictive interventions was higher when staff had received training. However, the researchers are careful to state that more

research is needed to investigate whether there is any causative link between PR training and incidents. This acknowledges that the correlation observed does not necessarily imply that training causes an increase in restrictive interventions; the results may be influenced by uncontrolled contextual variables, thereby undermining causal inferences.

Transparent recording and monitoring are essential for upholding human rights related to PR (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2021). However, the studies note that some schools are concerned about external reporting of this data as it could lead to negative judgements of their school (Department for Education, 2024). The need for consistent and transparent data collection, monitoring, and reporting of PR incidents is a significant theme (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2021). The studies reveal inconsistencies in recording practices across schools; Some schools analyse patterns of use for individual CYP or staff, while others do not analyse this data at all and there is a call for mandatory reporting requirements to help illuminate what is happening in schools (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2021).

Systemic issues such as funding cuts, an increase in the number of CYP with ALN, and a lack of statutory rules and systems are impacting the ability of schools to provide the support needed to reduce PRs (Department for Education, 2024). These issues need to be considered when developing a holistic approach (Mullowney, 2024). Systemic changes are needed to reduce the use of PR and promote positive behaviour support practices, which includes a whole-school approach to wellbeing (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2021; Mullowney, 2024).

3.6.6. Summary of Findings

The research draws attention to the need for a comprehensive approach to addressing PR in schools. This requires a shift in focus from managing behaviour to promoting wellbeing, fostering positive relationships, and ensuring that all stakeholders, particularly CYP, are meaningfully involved in shaping policy and practice. A more consistent, transparent and evidence-based approach, coupled with a commitment to systemic change, is essential for reducing the use of PR and promoting the rights and wellbeing of all CYP.

When viewed through a TI lens, the use of PR must be approached with heightened sensitivity to the CYP's past experiences, recognising that restrictive practices can be re-traumatising and may erode trust and psychological safety (Bath, 2008). Therefore, any use of PR should be part of a carefully considered, person-centred plan that prioritises relational safety, emotional regulation, and should be embedded within a whole-school approach that values dignity, wellbeing, and the reduction of restrictive practices over time (The British Psychological Society, 2020).

3.7. Implications for Educational Psychology Practice

EPs play a multifaceted role in tackling the complex issue of PR and restrictive practices in schools. The findings of the literature highlight the importance of EPs prioritising the collection of CYP perspectives on the use and impact of PR, using these insights to shape and improve practice. A key responsibility of EPs is championing the meaningful inclusion of CYP's voice in schools (Hodgkiss & Harding, 2024). EPs are uniquely positioned to facilitate constructive dialogue between CYP and staff, ensuring that CYP's perspectives are not merely collected as a formality but are genuinely integrated into decisions regarding their support plans (Hodgkiss & Harding, 2024). SET can be considered a helpful theory for EPs to consider in this context. Promoting greater autonomy and equipping CYP with self-regulation skills aligns with the principles of SET (Bandura, 1977), which emphasises the importance of fostering CYP's beliefs in their own capacity to manage and influence challenging situations. In this context, enhancing self-efficacy contributes to a strengthened sense of personal agency and resilience in CYP (Hodgkiss & Harding, 2024). EPs employ diverse strategies to effectively elicit and represent these views (Mullowney, 2024), and working collaboratively with CYP and staff, EPs can help foster mutual understanding of different perspectives, ensuring these insights are reflected in policy and practice to create a more inclusive and supportive environment.

EPs play a vital role in collaborating with schools to develop and implement alternative strategies to support CYP who are subject to PR. By assisting schools in identifying patterns and triggers for behaviour that can be deemed as challenging, EPs can support the development of more proactive and preventative strategies. A

central aspect of their work is actively promoting the reduction of PR (Mullowney, 2024; Stothard, 2022), in alignment with the AEP's commitment to minimising these interventions (2018). This involves collaborating with schools to develop and implement alternative, supportive strategies that prioritise the wellbeing of CYP, shifting the focus away from PR as a primary response. EPs can consider the use of alternative approaches, such as PBS (The Challenging Behaviour Foundation, 2021) and TI approaches, to share insight into preventative and whole school approaches to create a shared understanding of behaviour. EPs can aid staff to work in this way by sharing knowledge around the need for positive relationships (Hodgkiss & Harding, 2024), increased sense of belonging for both the CYP and staff, and how to include the fundamentals of attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) within staff and school practice.

EPs also have a role in improving data collection and analysis related to PR incidents (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2021; Mullowney, 2024). They are well-positioned to facilitate regular monitoring and evaluation of PR practices, ensuring they align with ethical principles and prioritise CYP's rights and wellbeing (The British Psychological Society, 2021). EPs can also be involved in post-incident reviews, assisting schools in analysing the appropriateness of PR use and identifying ways to prevent future occurrences (Smith, 2009). They can play an instrumental role in promoting consistent and accurate data collection and recording practices (Department for Education, 2024), encouraging the use of standardised language to facilitate comparability across settings. Additionally, EPs should ensure that equality data is thoroughly analysed to address disparities and inform equitable practices (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2021). They work to identify and address systemic issues, such as implicit bias or inadequate resources, which may lead to the disproportionate use of PR on certain groups, including CYP with disabilities or those from minority backgrounds (Jones & Stenfert Kroese, 2007; Ryan & Peterson, 2004). By promoting inclusive and equitable practices, EPs help create safer and more supportive school environments (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, 2015b; The British Psychological Society, 2021).

EPs are expected to draw on both evidence-based practice and practice-based evidence to inform their work (Mullowney, 2024; Stothard, 2022). While

evidence-based practice provides a robust foundation of psychological knowledge, EPs must also consider the unique contexts of individual cases, the skills and confidence levels of staff, and the lived experiences and specific needs of the CYP involved. Successful implementation of research findings goes beyond possessing knowledge; it also requires understanding and addressing how confident and capable staff feel in applying these strategies effectively (Mullowney, 2024) as this may impact on staffs' approach and the use of PR. When considering SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2000), EPs can support staff to identify their self-perception of their autonomy, competency, and relatedness. Professional development opportunities using workshops, training, or group reflection or supervision sessions may prove a helpful method in providing spaces for staff to reinforce reflective practice and increase the effective application of alternative strategies (Hodgkiss & Harding, 2024). They can also help staff to explore their own emotional responses to behaviours that can be deemed as challenging, and to identify triggers for their own reactions (Mullowney, 2024). This may aid in positively influencing staffs' sense of competence and overall self-determination in their professional roles (Mullowney, 2024).

EPs must always consider ethical issues when involved in this area of work, both in research and practice (The British Psychological Society, 2021). This includes ensuring the safety and wellbeing of CYP and staff and being aware of the sensitivity of the topic and the vulnerability of participants in studies. As highlighted earlier on in this review, the use of TI approaches stresses the importance of understanding CYP's history, whether that the CYP is being restrained or witnessing the event, to prevent traumatisation during interventions (Kelly et al., 2023). Key elements of TI approaches include ensuring safety, fostering positive relationships underscored in attachment theory (Bowlby, 1979) and belongingness (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), and promoting empowerment (Kroshus-Havril et al., 2024). Collaboration through consultation with all stakeholders, including schools, parents, and other professionals, would be helpful to develop effective and consistent strategies (Willis et al., 2021) encapsulating these psychological theories, encouraging open and transparent discussions to ensure that all voices are heard and valued. EPs are uniquely positioned to identify and ethically navigate potential conflicts of interest and power imbalances, ensuring these dynamics are addressed in a manner consistent with the Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics

(Health and Care Professions Council, 2024) and the Code of Ethics and Conduct (The British Psychological Society, 2021). This includes upholding principles of integrity, respect, and accountability, while actively promoting equitable and inclusive practices that protect the rights and wellbeing of all involved. By recognising the importance of these roles, EPs can play an essential role in ensuring that PR practices in schools are ethical, evidence-based, and focused on the best interests of CYP.

EPs have a role in promoting systemic changes within schools (The British Psychological Society, 2017). This may include creating a positive ethos and culture, identifying barriers to good practice, and adapting training, systems, and procedures. EPs are instrumental in supporting staff training and development; They can contribute to workshops, emphasising relational approaches, de-escalation techniques, and TI approaches that reduce reliance on physical interventions (Willis et al., 2021). This includes a systemic approach to addressing the use of PR, as well as individual casework (Stothard, 2022). EPs can aid schools to develop and review policies on behaviour management and PR, ensuring these policies comply with ethical and legal standards (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, 2015a; The British Psychological Society, 2021). By working with schools at a whole system level, EPs can help to shift the focus from managing behaviours to supporting wellbeing and preventing crises from occurring (Mullowney, 2024).

Finally, disseminating research findings is another key area of responsibility for EPs. The sharing of research effectively in a way that impacts the practice of educational professionals, tailoring information to target audiences, including communicating the impact of PR on CYP using a range of strategies such as workshops, conferences, and journal articles (Mullowney, 2024).

3.8. Conclusion

This review employs multiple search strategies to gather relevant literature, including accessing academic databases and books, as well as consulting government, and charity websites for grey literature. While acknowledging the potential caveats of grey literature regarding quality and bias, its inclusion is deemed pertinent due to the researcher's epistemological stance of contextualism and its

provision of essential context and practice-based insights. For Part A, a diverse range of sources was used, including policy documents, third-sector guidance, peer-reviewed research, academic texts, psychological theory, and grey literature, aiming for a comprehensive collection of perspectives. Part B of the review, the scoping review, aimed to map the extent and nature of existing research on CYP's and staff's experiences of PR in UK schools. The LRQ focuses on the experiences of CYP and staff. The search strategy involved multiple databases and inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied, with a focus on literature from 2000 onwards to align with the devolved Welsh education policy landscape. Notably, the review excluded literature solely based outside the UK, aligning with the researcher's epistemological stance of contextualism.

The review has shown that PR in UK schools is a contentious issue with the potential for significant physical and psychological harm to CYP (Department for Education, 2013; Ryan & Peterson, 2004; Steckley, 2017). While permitted under specific circumstances for safety and behavioural intervention, it carries risks of trauma, distress, fear, and powerlessness (Cusack et al., 2018). The legislative context in the UK reveals that while physical punishment is outlawed, the use of reasonable force by staff is permitted to prevent offenses, injury, property damage, self-harm, or disruption to good order and discipline (Welsh Government, 2013). However, there is no legal definition of "reasonable force", and the force used must be proportionate (Welsh Government, 2022a). Current WG guidance on this specific topic is over a decade old; the WG has developed the RRPF (Welsh Government, 2022b) which aims to reduce the use of PR, emphasising de-escalation and positive interventions. However, this framework provides no specific steps for schools to evaluate their use of PR and lacks specific parameters for accredited, competence-based training for staff (Welsh Government, 2022b). Findings highlight the emotional and physical impact on CYP, with reports of negative emotions, reduced trust, and physical discomfort (Hodgkiss & Harding, 2024; Stothard, 2022). Witnessing PR may also cause emotional harm (Stothard, 2022; Willis et al., 2021). However, some CYP report feelings of safety or fairness, potentially linked to attachment (Challenging Behaviour Foundation, 2019; Stothard,2022; Willis et al., 2021). The review emphasises the importance of enabling the voice of CYP in discussions about PR and alternative strategies (Hodgkiss & Harding, 2024; Stothard, 2022; Willis et al.,

2021). Relationships between CYP and staff are a recurring theme, and staff perspectives indicate a recognition of the importance of relationships and the need for prevention and de-escalation (Mullowney, 2024), but the review also highlights inconsistencies in practice and a need for more time and resources.

While the Education Workforce Council (2018) provides guidance on appropriate touch and PR, and a Human Rights Framework exists (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2019), there is a lack of specific procedural guidance for using PR in Welsh schools. Updated guidance is being explored in England (Department for Education, 2024b), and Scotland (Scottish Government, 2024b) has recently published rights-based guidance aligning with the UNCRC (UN General Assembly, 1989) and emphasising RRN training standards (The Restraint Reduction Network, 2021). Third sector organisations advocate for better training and alternatives, noting inconsistencies in policies and recording (Challenging Behaviour Foundation, 2019; Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2021). Ethically, PR should be the least restrictive intervention, respecting human rights, harm reduction, and dignity (Harris, 2008; National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, 2015a; The Restraint Reduction Network, 2020). Schools should prioritise preventative strategies, comprehensive training, and a whole school approach that reduces reliance on PR while fostering a supportive and safe environment (Peterson et al., 2009; Ryan & Peterson, 2004; Ryan et al., 2007; Skiba et al., 2016).

The literature review delves into several key psychological underpinnings. Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1979) suggests that secure attachments may influence CYP's experience of being physically held for safety, potentially making it less traumatic (Holt, 2021). However, PR by someone without a trusting relationship can be distressing and potentially traumatic, disrupting secure attachments (Stothard, 2022). The quality of staff and CYP relationships can be negatively affected by PR, and witnessing PR can also have negative impacts on CYP (Steckley & Kendrick, 2007). Understanding attachment theory can help staff find alternative ways to support CYP (Ozturk, 2023). SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2000) posits that autonomy, relatedness, and competence are core psychological needs, which PR can undermine, leading to disengagement and increased behavioural needs (Laymon,

2018; Standage et al., 2005). Environments supporting these needs can reduce the need for PR (Sun & Chen, 2010).

The need to belong is a fundamental human motivation (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), and PR can disrupt relationships, leading to isolation and negative psychological outcomes (Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders, 2021; Nielson et al., 2020). SET (Bandura, 1977) suggests that PR can undermine CYP's beliefs in their ability to handle situations, fostering powerlessness and reducing self-regulation (Dishman et al., 2004). Staff with strong self-efficacy are less likely to rely on PR (Constantine et al., 2019). TI approaches recognise the impact of trauma on behaviour and aim to create safety, foster positive relationships, promote empowerment, and address cultural issues (Kroshus-Havril et al., 2024). TI training can help staff develop the skills to use alternative strategies to support CYP, without using PR (Webb & Cary, 2025). Bronfenbrenner's EST (1979) provides a framework for understanding the multiple interacting environmental influences on the implementation of PR practices at individual, school, family, organisational, and national levels (Mullowney, 2024). The review identifies systemic issues such as the need for clearer guidance, consistent definitions, updated policies, and improved data management (Department for Education, 2024b; Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2021; Stothard, 2022). The importance of comprehensive staff training in areas such as PBS is emphasised, although concerns exist about the focus and impact of current training (Challenging Behaviour Foundation, 2019). Transparent recording and monitoring of PR incidents are essential (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2021), and wider systemic issues like the availability of funding and increasing ALN needs impact schools' ability to reduce PRs (Department for Education, 2024b).

The role of an EP in considering the use of PR in schools involves several key areas aimed at promoting the safety, wellbeing, and upholding the rights of CYP, while minimising the use of restrictive practices. EPs are well placed to work in a holistic way with a strong emphasis on the social and emotional wellbeing of CYP (Atkinson et al., 2022) which can help understand the potential underlying causes of behaviours that may be deemed as challenging (Sugai et al., 2000). This reframing of behaviours helps schools when designing support plans tailored to individual CYP,

with strategies that prioritise positive reinforcement over punitive measures (Gore et al., 2013; Mullowney, 2024). They facilitate reflective discussions with staff, encouraging learning and adaptation to improve future practices (The British Psychological Society, 2017). EPs draw on theory and research to inform their recommendations, ensuring that schools implement strategies proven to reduce PR use (Harris, 2008). The use of the Scientist-Practitioner Model (Belar & Perry, 1992) highlights the importance of EPs using their professional expertise, scientific methods, and understanding of relevant theories to support best practice. EPs are mindful in the alternatives to PR, and can support staff in recognising the potential risks, such as physical harm or psychological trauma, associated with its use (Harris, 2008). EPs have a key role in prioritising the collection of CYP's perspectives, promoting their inclusion in decision-making, and developing alternative strategies to PR. They may also be involved in improving data collection and analysis, considering ethical issues and TI approaches, and promoting systemic changes within schools.

Several outstanding questions and gaps in research remain; there is a paucity of research specifically in the Welsh context. Across the UK, more research is needed on the long-term psychological impact of the use of PR on CYP. Further investigation into CYP's perspectives, especially those with complex needs, is required to gather a holistic picture of need. In addition, the perspectives of parents and carers should be included. The effectiveness and content of staff training need more in-depth study, particularly regarding the questioned correlation between training and PR incidents. Research on the impact of PR on staff is limited, and further exploration of effective alternative strategies is also warranted. Addressing these gaps is important for developing evidence-based policies and practices that prioritise CYP's wellbeing and minimise the use of PR.

3.9. Research Questions

Based on the gaps in the literature within Wales specifically, it was considered important to offer a foundation of research on the topic of the use of PR in schools. Following the literature review it is highlighted that there are two parts to the research: to gather an understanding of staff's experiences of the use of PR in schools throughout Wales, and to gain CYP's voice in their experience of being

physically restrained in schools. Therefore, two exploratory research questions have been generated to guide the research:

Question 1: "What are school staff's views and experiences of using physical restraint in schools in Wales?"

Question 2: "What are CYP's views and experiences of the use of physical restraint in school in Wales?"

The aims of the research are:

- To gather school staff's understanding and experience of the use of PR in schools in Wales.
- To gather CYP voice and in turn, a better understanding of their experiences of PR in schools in Wales.
- To use the information collected to evaluate the current practice in Wales and to inform future practice to meet the needs of CYP in Wales.

3.10. References

Adams, R. J., Smart, P., & Huff, A. S. (2017). Shades of Grey: Guidelines for Working with the Grey Literature in Systematic Reviews for Management and Organizational Studies. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, *19*(4), 432-454. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/ijmr.12102

Ainsworth, M. D. S. (1978). The Bowlby-Ainsworth attachment theory. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, *1*(3), 436-438. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X00075828

Allen, K., Kern, M. L., Vella-Brodrick, D., Hattie, J., & Waters, L. (2018). What schools need to know about fostering school belonging: A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, *30*, 1-34.

Arksey, H., & O'Malley, L. (2005). Scoping studies: towards a methodological framework. *International journal of social research methodology*, *8*(1), 19-32.

Association of Educational Psychologists. (2018). *Motion 5 - call to action to promote the reduction of the use of physical restraint in schools.* (AEP Manchester, Issue.

Atkinson, C., Barrow, J., & Norris, S. (2022). Assessment practices of educational psychologists and other educational professionals. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, *38*(4), 347-363. https://doi.org/10.1080/02667363.2022.2109005

Avery, J. C., Morris, H., Galvin, E., Misso, M. L., Savaglio, M., & Skouteris, H. (2020). Systematic Review of School-Wide Trauma-Informed Approaches. *Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma*, *14*, 381 - 397.

Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, *84*(2), 191-215. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.84.2.191

Barnard-Brak, L., Xiao, F., & Xiaoya, L. (2014). Factors Associated with the Use of Restraints in the Public Schools. *Education and Treatment of Children*, *37*(3), 461-475. https://doi.org/10.1353/etc.2014.0022

Bath, H. (1994). The physical restraint of children: Is it therapeutic? *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, *64*(1), 40-49. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0079497

Bath, H. (2008). The three pillars of trauma-informed care. *Reclaiming children and youth*, *17*(3), 17-21.

Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, *117*(3), 497-529. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.117.3.497

BBC Radio 5 Investigates. (2017). In *Restraint in Special Schools*. Retrieved September 30, 2024, from https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08ljdhy

Belar, C. D., & Perry, N. W. (1992). The National Conference on Scientist-Practitioner Education and Training for the Professional Practice of Psychology. *American Psychologist*, *47*(1), 71.

Bhaskar, R. (2013). *A Realist Theory of Science*. Taylor & Francis. https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=7318AgAAQBAJ

BILD Centre for the Advancement of Positive Behaviour Support. (2015). Questions to ask about the use of physical restraint in schools. Retrieved October 7, 2024, from https://www.england.nhs.uk/6cs/wp-content/uploads/sites/25/2016/07/capbs-questions.pdf

Boland, A., Cherry, G., & Dickson, R. (2017). *Doing a Systematic Review: A Student's Guide*. SAGE Publications. https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=z6wztAEACAAJ

Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and Loss* (Second Edition ed., *1*). Basic Books.

Bowlby, J. (1979). The Bowlby-Ainsworth attachment theory. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, *2*(4), 637-638. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X00064955

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners*. sage.

Brendtro, L., & Brokenleg, M. (2009). *Reclaiming Youth at Risk: Our Hope for the Future*. Solution Tree Press. https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=rGQXBwAAQBAJ

British Institute of Learning Disabilities. (2014). *BILD Code of Practice for Minimising the Use of Restrictive Physical Interventions: Planning, Developing and Delivering Training - A Guide for Purchasers of Training, Training Organisations and Trainers*. British Institute of Learning Disabilities. https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=3qRVrgEACAAJ

British Institute of Learning Disabilities. (2016). BILD Code of Practice for Minimising the Use of Restrictive Physical Interventions: Planning, Developing and Delivering Training. *Tizard Learning Disability Review*, *21*(3), 165-167. https://doi.org/10.1108/TLDR-12-2014-0041

British Institute of Learning Disabilities. (2024). *Restraint Reduction Network; A coalition of the willing*. Retrieved November 3, 2024, from https://www.bild.org.uk/restraint-reduction-network-rrn/

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development : experiments by nature and design*. Harvard University Press.

Brown, W. J., Nedelman, A. J., Phillips, W. G., Stankus, J. S., Amoscato, L. E., & Schwartz, E. (2022). Traumatic stress symptoms predict restraint incidents in children and adolescents in psychiatric residential treatment. *Journal of traumatic stress*, *35*(2), 694-705.

Bryman, A. (1984). The debate about quantitative and qualitative research: A question of method or epistemology? *British Journal of Sociology*, *35*(1), 75-92. https://doi.org/10.2307/590553

Cardiff University Library Service. (2024). What is Elicit.com? Retrieved November 12, 2024, from https://xerte.cardiff.ac.uk/play_22575#page1

Care Quality Commission. (2018). *Brief guide: restraint (physical and mechanical)*. Retrieved January 04, 2025, from https://www.cqc.org.uk/sites/default/files/20180322_900803_briefguide-restraint_physical_mechanical_v1.pdf

Centre for Mental Health. (2020). *Trauma, challenging behaviour, and restrictive interventions in schools*. Retrieved January 03, 2025 from https://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Briefing_54_traumainformed-schools_0.pdf

Challenging Behaviour Foundation. (2019). *Reducing restrictive intervention of children and young people*. Retrieved September 12, 2024, from https://www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/reducingrestrictiveinterventionofchildrenandyoungpeoplereport.pdf

Children's Commissioner for England. (2011). *Young People's Views on Restraint in the Secure Estate*. Retrieved January 04, 2025, from https://assets.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpuploads/2017/07/Young_peoples_views_on_restraint_in_the_secure_estate_.pdf

Children's Commissioner for Wales. (2019). *Don't Hold Back: Achieving the best for young people with learning disabilities*. Retrieved January 12, 2025, from

https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Dont-Hold-Back.pdf

Children's Law Centre. (2025). *Briefing Restrictive Practices In Education Settings*. Retrieved January 10, 2025, from https://childrenslawcentre.org.uk/?mdocs-file=8252

Constantine, J. L., Fernald, J. R., Robinson, J., & Courtney, M. B. (2019). Best Practices Guidebook: Supporting Students' Self-Efficacy.

Cooke, J. E., Kochendorfer, L. B., Stuart-Parrigon, K. L., Koehn, A. J., & Kerns, K. A. (2019). Parent–child attachment and children's experience and regulation of emotion: A meta-analytic review. *Emotion*, *19*(6), 1103.

Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders. (2021). Position Summary on the Use of Physical Restraint Procedures in Educational Settings. *Beyond Behavior*, *30*(1), 51-60. https://doi.org/10.1177/10742956211009648

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. SAGE Publications. https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=335ZDwAAQBAJ

Critical Appraisal Skills Programme. (2024). *CASP Qualitative Studies Checklist*. Retrieved January 04, 2025 from https://casp-uk.net/casp-checklists/CASP-checklist-qualitative-2024.pdf

Crouch, M. (2015). *Attachment: What is it and Why is it so Important?* Retrieved November 12, 2024, from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1240567.pdf

Cusack, P., Cusack, F., McAndrew, S., McKeown, M., & Duxbury, J. (2018). An integrative review exploring the physical and psychological harm in herent in using restraint in mental health inpatient settings. *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing*. https://doi.org/10.1111/inm.12432

Department for Education. (2013). *Use of reasonable force; Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies*. Retrieved September 20, 2024, from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a819959ed915d74e6233224/Use_of_reasonable_force_advice_Reviewed_July_2015.pdf

Department for Education. (2019). *Reducing the need for restraint and restrictive intervention*. Retrieved September 20, 2024, from https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reducing-the-need-for-restraint-and-restrictive-intervention

Department for Education. (2021). *Teachers' Standards: Guidance for School
Leaders, School Staff, and Governing Bodies.* Retrieved September 20,
2024, from
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/61b73d6c8fa8f50384489c9a/Te
achers__Standards_Dec_2021.pdf

Department for Education. (2023). *Call for evidence; Use of reasonable force and
restrictive practices in schools*. Retrieved September 20, 2024, from
https://consult.education.gov.uk/school-absence-and-exclusions-team/use-of-
force-and-restrictive-practices-call-for-
ev/supporting_documents/Call%20for%20evidence%20%20use%20of%20rea
sonable%20force%20and%20restrictive%20practices%20in%20schools%202
023%20PUBLISHED.pdf

Department for Education. (2024a). *Keeping children safe in education; Statutory
guidance for schools and colleges*. Retrieved September 21, 2024, from
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66d7301b9084b18b95709f75/K
eeping_children_safe_in_education_2024.pdf

Department for Education. (2024b). *Reasonable Force, Restraint & Restrictive
Practices in Alternative Provision and Special Schools. Research Report*
[Reports - Research](978-1-83870-537-4). (UK Department for Education,
Issue. Retrieved September 21, 2024, from
https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=ED649946
&site=ehost-live&scope=site

Department of Education Northern Ireland. (2022). *Review of restraint and seclusion
in educational settings*. Retrieved March 11, 2025, from
https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/news/review-restraint-and-seclusion-
educational-settings-published

Department of Education Northern Ireland. (2023). *Statutory Guidance on the
Reduction and Management of Restrictive Practices in Educational Settings in
Northern Ireland*. Retrieved March 11, 2025, https://www.education-
ni.gov.uk/consultations/statutory-guidance-reduction-and-management-
restrictive-practices-educational-settings-northern-ireland

Dishman, R. K., Motl, R. W., Saunders, R., Felton, G., Ward, D. S., Dowda, M., &
Pate, R. R. (2004). Self-efficacy partially mediates the effect of a school-

based physical-activity intervention among adolescent girls. *Prev Med*, *38*(5), 628-636. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2003.12.007

Duffy, M., Lawrence, D., Nicholas, S., Jenkins, R., & Samuel, V. (2024). An interpretative phenomenological analysis of the experience of the therapeutic relationship between service users and staff after physical restraint in a secure mental health service. *International Journal of Forensic Mental Health*, *23*(2), 127-141.

The Education and Inspections Act, (2006). Retrieved October 24, 2024, from https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/section/93

Education Workforce Council. (2018). *Guide to good practice with 'appropriate touch', handling and restraint*. Retrieved October 24, 2024, from https://www.ewc.wales/site/index.php/en/documents-eng/fitness-to-practise/good-practice-guides/44-guide-to-good-practice-with-appropriate-touch-handling-and-restraint/file

Education Workforce Council. (2024). *Code of Professional Conduct and Practice for Registrants*. Retrieved October 24, 2024, from https://www.ewc.wales/site/index.php/en/fitness-to-practise/code-of-professional-conduct-and-practice/the-code

Emerson, A. (2022). The case for trauma-informed behaviour policies. *Pastoral Care in Education*, *40*(3), 352-359. https://doi.org/10.1080/02643944.2022.2093956

Equality and Human Rights Commission. (2019). Human rights framework for restraint: principles for the lawful use of physical, chemical, mechanical and coercive restrictive interventions. Retrieved September 13, 2024, from https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/human-rights-framework-restraint.pdf

Equality and Human Rights Commission. (2021). Restraint in schools inquiry: using meaningful data to protect children's rights. Retrieved September 13, 2024, from https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/inquiry-restraint-in-schools-report.pdf

Fabiano, N., Gupta, A., Bhambra, N., Luu, B., Wong, S., Maaz, M., Fiedorowicz, J. G., Smith, A. L., & Solmi, M. (2024). How to optimize the systematic review process using AI tools. *JCPP advances*, *4*(2), e12234.

Fogt, J. B., George, M. P., Kern, L., White, G. P., & George, N. L. (2008). Physical Restraint of Students with Behavior Disorders in Day Treatmen t and

Residential Settings. *Behavioral Disorders*, *34*(1), 4-13.
https://doi.org/10.1177/019874290803400101

Gelbar, N. W., Jaffery, R., Stein, R., & Cymbala, H. (2015). Case Study on the
Implementation of School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and
Supports in an Alternative Educational Setting. *Journal of Educational and
Psychological Consultation*, *25*(4), 287-313.
https://doi.org/10.1080/10474412.2014.929958

George, M. P., George, N. L., Kern, L., & Fogt, J. B. (2013). Three-Tiered Support for
Students with E/BD: Highlights of the Universal Tier. *Education and Treatment
of Children*, *36*(3), 47-62. http://www.jstor.org/stable/42900211

Gore, N., McGill, P., Toogood, S., Allen, D., Hughes, J. C., Baker, P., Hastings, R.,
Noone, S., & Denne, L. (2013). Definition and scope for positive behaviour
support. *International Journal of Positive Behavioural Support*, *3*.

Gough, D., Thomas, J., & Oliver, S. (2017). An introduction to systematic reviews.

Greenhalgh, T., & Peacock, R. (2005). Effectiveness and efficiency of search
methods in systematic reviews of complex evidence: audit of primary sources.
BMJ, *331*(7524), 1064-1065. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.38636.593461.68

Greenhalgh, T., Thorne, S., & Malterud, K. (2018). Time to challenge the spurious
hierarchy of systematic over narrative reviews? *Eur J Clin Invest*, *48*(6),
e12931. https://doi.org/10.1111/eci.12931

Hannes, K., & Lockwood, C. (2011). Pragmatism as the philosophical foundation for
the Joanna Briggs meta-aggregative approach to qualitative evidence
synthesis. *J Adv Nurs*, *67*(7), 1632-1642. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-
2648.2011.05636.x

Harris, J., Cornick, M., Jefferson, A., & Mills, R. . (2008). *Physical interventions: A
policy framework* (Second edition ed.). BILD.

Harris, M., & Fallot, R. (2001). Using trauma theory to design service systems. New
directions for mental health services.

Hayden, C., & Pike, S. (2005). Including Positive Handling Strategies within Training
in Behaviour Management: The Team-Teach Approach [Journal Articles;
Reports - Evaluative]. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, *10*(3), 173-187.
https://doi.org/10.1177/1363275205056705

Health and Care Professions Council. (2024). *Standards of Conduct, Performance
and Ethics*. Retrieved December 02, 2024, from https://www.hcpc-

uk.org/globalassets/resources/standards/standards-of-conduct-performance-and-ethics-2024.pdf

HM Government. (2019). *Reducing the Need for Restraint and Restrictive Intervention; Children and young people with learning disabilities, autistic spectrum conditions and mental health difficulties in health and social care services and special education settings*. Retrieved August 27, 2024, from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5d1387e240f0b6350e1ab567/reducing-the-need-for-restraint-and-restrictive-intervention.pdf

Hodgkiss, B., & Harding, E. (2024). Exploring views of physical restraint in schools: Pupil experiences, relationships with staff, and alternative strategies. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, *40*(1), 59-73. https://ovidsp.ovid.com/ovidweb.cgi?T=JS&CSC=Y&NEWS=N&PAGE=fulltext&D=psyc22&DO=10.1080%2f02667363.2023.2258788

Holt, P. (2021). *How effective is the Circle of Security intervention in improving caregiver-child relationships?* [Doctorate in Edcuational and Child Psychology]. University College of London.

Jones, P., & Stenfert Kroese, B. (2007). Jones, P. & Stenfert Kroese, B. (2007) Service users' views of physical restraint procedures in secure settings for people with learning disabilities. British Journal of Learning Disabilities, 35, 50-54. *British Journal of Learning Disabilities*, *35*, 50-54.

Kelly, P., Saab, M. M., Hurley, E. J., Heffernan, S., Goodwin, J., Mulud, Z. A., O Malley, M., O Mahony, J., Curtin, M., Groen, G., Ivanova, S., Jörns-Presentati, A., Korhonen, J., Kostadinov, K., Lahti, M., Lalova, V., Petrova, G., & O Donovan, A. (2023). Trauma Informed Interventions to Reduce Seclusion, Restraint and Restrictive Practices Amongst Staff Caring for Children and Adolescents with Challenging Behaviours: A Systematic Review. *Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma*, *16*, 629 - 647.

Kroshus-Havril, E., Hafferty, K. R., Massey, W. V., Whitley, M. A., Darroch, F., Shaikh, M., Ellison, D. W., Moore, A., Garrett, K., & Tandon, P. (2024). Toward a Trauma-Informed Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program: Specifying Feasible Practices Across the School Day. *The Journal of school health*.

Lansdown, G. (2005). Can You Hear Me? The Right of Young Children to Participate in Decisions Affecting Them. Retrieved December 12, 2024, from *http://lst-iiep.iiep-unesco.org/cgi-bin/wwwi32.exe/[in=epidoc1.in]/?t2000=023480/(100*).

Laymon, S. R. (2018). *Experiences of special education teachers performing physical restraints involving students with disabilities: A transcendental phenomenological study*. Liberty University.

Levac, D., Colquhoun, H., & O'brien, K. K. (2010). Scoping studies: advancing the methodology. *Implementation science*, *5*, 1-9.

Lundy, L. (2007). 'Voice' Is Not Enough: Conceptualising Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. *British Educational Research Journal*, *33*(6), 927-942. http://www.jstor.org/stable/30032800

Mak, S., & Thomas, A. (2022). Steps for Conducting a Scoping Review. *J Grad Med Educ*, *14*(5), 565-567. https://doi.org/10.4300/jgme-d-22-00621.1

Maslow, A. H. (1943). A Theory of Human Motivation. *Psychological Review*, *50*(4), 370-396.

Maxwell, J. A. (2012). *A Realist Approach for Qualitative Research*. SAGE Publications. https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=xIs49CdoNp0C

Maynard, B. R., Farina, A. S. J., Dell, N. A., & Kelly, M. S. (2019). Effects of trauma-informed approaches in schools: A systematic review. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, *15*.

McCormack, J. (2025). Nursing body resigns from restraint in schools taskforce. *BBC News*. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cg5d3p44mjpo

McKenna, R. (2015). Contextualism in Epistemology. *Analysis*, *75*(3), 489-503.

Mullowney, K. (2024). Positive handling practice in schools a scoping review of current advice and guidance and a qualitative exploration of it's implementation in English schools. *Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences*, *85*(11-A), No Pagination Specified. https://ovidsp.ovid.com/ovidweb.cgi?T=JS&CSC=Y&NEWS=N&PAGE=fulltext&D=psyc23&AN=2024-95383-279

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. (2015a). *Challenging behaviour and learning disabilities: prevention and interventions for people with learning disabilities whose behaviour challenges*. Retrieved October 30, 2024, from www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng11

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. (2015b). Violence and Aggression: Short-Term Management in Mental Health, Health and Community Settings. In. British Psychological Society.

Nielson, S., Bray, L., Carter, B., & Kiernan, J. (2020). Physical restraint of children and adolescents in mental health inpati ent services: A systematic review and narrative synthesis. *Journal of Child Health Care*, *25*(3), 342-367. https://doi.org/10.1177/1367493520937152

Nunn, K. (2019). Restraint in paediatrics. *Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health*, *56*(1), 171-171. https://doi.org/10.1111/jpc.14603

Ozturk, L. (2023). Exploring the relevance of an attachment theory perspective to the behaviour management of challenging students: perceptions of education professionals advocate an attachment theory perspective. *Pastoral Care in Education*, 1-22. https://doi.org/10.1080/02643944.2024.2371793

Page, M. J., McKenzie, J. E., Bossuyt, P. M., Boutron, I., Hoffmann, T. C., Mulrow, C. D., Shamseer, L., Tetzlaff, J. M., Akl, E. A., Brennan, S. E., Chou, R., Glanville, J., Grimshaw, J. M., Hróbjartsson, A., Lalu, M. M., Li, T., Loder, E. W., Mayo-Wilson, E., McDonald, S., . . . Moher, D. (2021). The PRISMA 2020 statement: an updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *BMJ*, *372*, n71. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n71

Peters, M. D., Marnie, C., Tricco, A. C., Pollock, D., Munn, Z., Alexander, L., McInerney, P., Godfrey, C. M., & Khalil, H. (2020). Updated methodological guidance for the conduct of scoping reviews. *JBI evidence synthesis*, *18*(10), 2119-2126.

Peterson, R., Albrecht, S. F., & Johns, B. (2009). CCBD's Position Summary on the Use of Physical Restraint Procedures in School Settings. *Behavioral Disorders*, *34*(4), 223-234. https://doi.org/10.1177/019874290903400404

Rich, C. R. (1997). The use of physical restraint in residential treatment: An ego psychology perspective. *Residential Treatment for Children & Youth*, *14*(3), 1-12.

Ryan, J. B., & Peterson, R. L. (2004). Physical Restraint in School. *Behavioral Disorders*, *29*(2), 154-168. https://doi.org/10.1177/019874290402900206

Ryan, J. B., Peterson, R. L., & Rozalski, M. (2007). State Policies Concerning the Use of Seclusion Timeout in Schools. *Education and Treatment of Children*, *30*(4), 215-239. http://www.jstor.org/stable/42899953

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, *55*(1), 68-78. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2009). Understanding research philosophies and approaches. *Research Methods for Business Students*, *4*, 106-135.

Scheuermann, B. (2016). *Professional Practice and Ethical Issues Related to Physical Restraint and Seclusion in Schools*. Special Education and Communication Disorders Faculty Publications. Retrieved October 12, 2024, from https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1149&context=specedfacpub

Scottish Government. (2024a). *Included, Engaged and Involved Part 3: A Relationships and Rights-based Approach to Physical Intervention in Schools*. Retrieved September 12, 2024, from https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2024/11/included-engaged-involved-part-3-relationships-rights-based-approach-physical-intervention-schools/documents/included-engaged-involved-part-3-relationships-rights-based-approach-physical-intervention-schools/included-engaged-involved-part-3-relationships-rights-based-approach-physical-intervention-schools/govscot%3Adocument/included-engaged-involved-part-3-relationships-rights-based-approach-physical-intervention-schools.pdf

Scottish Government. (2024b). *Physical Intervention Guidance*. Retrieved September 12, 2024, from https://www.gov.scot/publications/included-engaged-involved-part-3-relationships-rights-based-approach-physical-intervention-schools/

Sibieta, L., & Jerrim, J. (2021). A comparison of school institutions and policies across the UK. *Education Policy Institute. Accessed*, *23*.

Siddaway, A. P., Wood, A. M., & Hedges, L. V. (2019). How to Do a Systematic Review: A Best Practice Guide for Conducting and Reporting Narrative Reviews, Meta-Analyses, and Meta-Syntheses. *Annu Rev Psychol*, *70*, 747-770. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010418-102803

Skiba, R., Arredondo, M., Gray, C., & Rausch, M. (2016). What Do We Know About Discipline Disparities? New and Emerging Research. In (pp. 21-38). https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-51257-4_2

Smith, C. B., R. (2009). Restraint and seclusion: A risk management guide. *Mental Health Practice*, *12*(4), 14-18.

Smith, M., & Bowman, K. (2009). The restraint spiral: emergent themes in the perceptions of the physic al restraint of juveniles. *Child welfare*.

Snyder, H. (2019). Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines. *Journal of Business Research*, *104*, 333-339. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039

Standage, M., Duda, J. L., & Ntoumanis, N. (2005). A test of self-determination theory in school physical education. *Br J Educ Psychol*, *75*(Pt 3), 411-433. https://doi.org/10.1348/000709904x22359

Steckley, L. (2017). Catharsis, Containment and Physical Restraint in Residential Child car e. *The British Journal of Social Work*, *48*(6), 1645-1663. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcx131

Steckley, L., & Kendrick, A. (2007). Hold on: physical restraint in residential child care.

Steckley, L., & Kendrick, A. (2008). Physical restraint in residential childcare: The experiences of young people and residential workers. *Childhood*, *15*(4), 552-569.

Stothard, K. (2022). *Accessing the views of children and young people who have experienced physical restraint in school* [Student thesis: Doctor of Educational and Child Psychology].

Sugai, G., Horner, R. H., Dunlap, G., Hieneman, M., Lewis, T. J., Nelson, C. M., Scott, T., Liaupsin, C., Sailor, W., Turnbull, A. P., Turnbull Iii, H. R., Wickham, D., Wilcox, B., & Ruef, M. (2000). Applying positive behavior support and functional behavioral assessment in schools. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, *2*(3), 131-143. https://doi.org/10.1177/109830070000200302

Sukhera, J. (2022). Narrative Reviews: Flexible, Rigorous, and Practical. *J Grad Med Educ*, *14*(4), 414-417. https://doi.org/10.4300/jgme-d-22-00480.1

Sun, H., & Chen, A. (2010). A Pedagogical Understanding of the Self-Determination Theory in Physical Education. *Quest*, *62*(4), 364-384. https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2010.10483655

The British Psychological Society. (2017). *BPS Practice Guidelines*. Retrieved
    September 24, 2024, from https://explore.bps.org.uk/content/report-
    guideline/bpsrep.2017.inf115

The British Psychological Society. (2020). *Incorporating trauma-informed
    approaches in clinical practice: Guidelines for clinical psychologists*. Retrieved
    September 24, 2024, from
    https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/www.bps.org.uk/files/Policy/Policy%20-
    %20Files/Incorporating%20trauma-
    informed%20approaches%20in%20clinical%20practice.pdf

The British Psychological Society. (2021). *Code of Ethics and Conduct*. Retrieved
    September 24, 2024, from https://explore.bps.org.uk/content/report-
    guideline/bpsrep.2021.inf94

The Challenging Behaviour Foundation. (2021). *Information Sheet; Positive
    Behaviour Support*. Retrieved September 18, 2024, from
    https://www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/003-
    Positive-Behaviour-Support-Planning-Part-3.pdf

The Restraint Reduction Network. (2020). *Restraint Reduction Network (RRN)
    Training Standards*. Retrieved November 02, 2024, from
    https://www.bild.org.uk/wp-
    content/uploads/2020/01/RRN_Standards_1.2_Jan_2020.pdf

The Restraint Reduction Network. (2021). *Restraint Reduction Network (RRN)
    Training Standards*. Retrieved November 02, 2024, from
    https://restraintreductionnetwork.org/wp-
    content/uploads/2023/10/RRN_standards_v9_accessible_PDF_updated.pdf

The Restraint Reduction Network. (2024). *Working to Reduce Restrictive Practices*.
    Retrieved November 02, 2024, from https://restraintreductionnetwork.org

Thomas, A., Lubarsky, S., Durning, S. J., & Young, M. E. (2017). Knowledge
    syntheses in medical education: demystifying scoping reviews. *Academic
    Medicine*, *92*(2), 161-166.

Thomas, A., Lubarsky, S., Varpio, L., Durning, S. J., & Young, M. E. (2020). Scoping
    reviews in health professions education: challenges, considerations and
    lessons learned about epistemology and methodology. *Advances in health
    sciences education*, *25*, 989-1002.

Turnbull, D., Chugh, R., & Luck, J. (2023). Systematic-narrative hybrid literature review: A strategy for integrating a concise methodology into a manuscript. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, *7*(1), 100381. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2022.100381

UK Parliament. (1998). *Government of Wales Act 1998*.

UN General Assembly. (1989). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Retrieved September 04, 2024, from https://downloads.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/UNCRC_united_nations_convention_on_the_rights_of_the_child.pdf

Van Dis, E. A., Bollen, J., Zuidema, W., Van Rooij, R., & Bockting, C. L. (2023). ChatGPT: five priorities for research. *Nature*, *614*(7947), 224-226.

Verhoeven, M. (2011). Multiple embedded inequalities and cultural diversity in educational systems: A theoretical and empirical exploration. *European Educational Research Journal*, *10*(2), 189-203.

Wales National Assembly. (2014). *Social services and well-being (Wales) Act 2014*. National Assembly for Wales. Retrieved September 04, 2024, from http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2014/4/contents

Wales National Assembly. (2018). *Additional Learning Needs and Tribunal Act*. National Assembly for Wales. Retrieved September 04, 2024, from https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2018/2/contents

Webb, L., & Cary, E. (2025). Children's wellbeing in schools.

Welsh Government. (2013). *Safe and effective intervention – use of reasonable force and searching for weapons*. Cardiff: Crown. Retrieved August 04, 2024, from https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/safe-and-effective-intervention-use-of-reasonable-force-and-searching-for-weapons.pdf

Welsh Government. (2021). *The Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales 2021*. Cardiff: Crown. Retrieved August 04, 2024, from https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2024-04/220622-the-additional-learning-needs-code-for-wales-2021%20%282%29.pdf

Welsh Government. (2022a). *Keeping learners safe; The role of local authorities, governing bodies and proprietors of independent schools under the Education Act 2002*. Cardiff: Crown. Retrieved August 04, 2024, from https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2022-04/220401-keeping-learners-safe.pdf

Welsh Government. (2022b). *Reducing restrictive practices framework: children's rights impact assessment*. Cardiff: Welsh Government. Retrieved August 04, 2024, from https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/pdf-versions/2021/10/1/1634560816/reducing-restrictive-practices-framework-childrens-rights-impact-assessment.pdf

Welsh Parliament. (2024). *25 years of Welsh law-making*. Retrieved November 11, 2024, from https://senedd.wales/media/ubydstb5/25-years-of-welsh-web.pdf

Williams, M. (2001). Contextualism, Externalism and Epistemic Standards. *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*, *103*(1), 1-23. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4321121

Willis, J., Harrison, A., & Allen, J. L. (2021). Pupils with social, emotional and mental health special needs: Perceptions of how restrictive physical interventions impact their relationships with teaching staff. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *97*, 103219.

Wolfel, C. S. (2018). *Preparing school professionals to manage high-risk behaviors of students* Delaware Valley University].

"I hate it. However, I recognise that there are times that I have to."

Exploring the Use of Physical Restraint in Schools in Wales:

Staff Experiences, Evaluating Approaches,

and Informing Future Practice

Part 2: Major Empirical Paper

Natalie Jane Phillips

Word count: 16,618

4. Part 2: Major Empirical Paper

4.1. Abstract

Research has shown that physical restraint (PR) practices vary widely across schools, with factors such as school size, socioeconomic status of children and young people (CYP), and policy frameworks influencing its prevalence (Barnard-Brak et al., 2014; Fogt et al., 2008). These inconsistencies highlight the need for clearer regulations and more effective behavioural interventions. There is currently no publicly available data to suggest the prevalence of PR in schools in Wales alone; research conducted by Equality and Human Rights Commission (2021, p.47) has recommended that Welsh Government (WG) prioritise minimising the use of PR in schools by using local data. A literature search has concluded that there are no published studies within this topic area that have been conducted in Wales specifically to inform future practice. In this research, a qualitative Interpretivism research paradigm was informed by critical realism and contextualism, holding the Welsh context at the forefront. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with school staff, located in different provisions and Local Authorities (LA) in Wales, to gather their views and experiences of their use of PR in school settings. These interviews were analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA), whereby four key themes were generated: The Role of PR, Perceptions, and External Influences; Navigating Legal, Ethical, and Individualised Approaches; Quality and Consistency of Training; and Nurturing Connections. Overarching findings include: clarity desired for terminology and definitions used to describe PR, increased informative procedures and policies for schools to implement, regulated staff training and professional development, staff's conflicting thoughts around whether to restrain or not, staff's fear of consequences and judgement for using PR, and the emotional impact on staff in relation to not wanting to physically intervene whilst understanding that they want to ensure CYP safety. Further discussion is presented, including the implications for future practice and the role of the Educational Psychologist (EP). Strengths and limitations of the research are highlighted before concluding with suggestions for future research.

4.2. Introduction

4.2.1. *The Use of Physical Restraint in Schools*

The use of PR in schools remains a highly debated issue due to concerns about its ethical implications and potential psychological harm (Ryan & Peterson, 2004; Steckley, 2017). While some view it as necessary in managing dangerous behaviours, others argue that it can lead to trauma, distress, and a loss of autonomy for the CYP involved (Cusack et al., 2018). In the United Kingdom (UK), PR is legally permitted in specific circumstances, including when a CYP poses an immediate risk to themselves or others, as part of a behavioural intervention plan, or to prevent serious property damage and disruption (Department for Education, 2013, 2024). However, policy recommendations stress the importance of staff training, proactive behavioural strategies, and the implementation of clear guidelines to ensure safe and ethical practices (Mcafee et al., 2006; Peterson et al., 2009).

The Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP) has actively campaigned for PR reduction in schools (2018). Findings from the Challenging Behaviour Foundation (2019) further underscore the urgency of reform, revealing that 88% of families surveyed in the UK reported their CYP had experienced PR, with 35% stating it occurred regularly. These statistics emphasise the need for systemic change, reinforcing the call for improved training, preventative strategies, and stronger safeguards to protect both CYP and staff (Peterson et al., 2009; Ryan & Peterson, 2004). Research has demonstrated that targeted interventions can significantly reduce reliance on PR in educational settings (Hodgkiss & Harding, 2024)

A scoping review of the literature (Part 1) revealed several key findings outlining the experiences of CYP and staff regarding the use of PR in UK schools. A central theme was the emotional and physical impact on CYP, including feelings of anger, fear, frustration, increased stress, reduced trust in staff, pain, discomfort, and breathing difficulties (Hodgkiss & Harding, 2024; Stothard, 2022; Willis et al., 2021). Conversely, some CYP also reported feelings of safety, care, or fairness, potentially linked to attachment (Stothard, 2022; The Challenging Behaviour Foundation, 2019; Willis et al., 2021). The review made evident the significance of relationships between CYP and staff, highlighting that positive relationships and communication

are key components for preventing behaviours that may be deemed challenging and repairing relationships after PR (Mullowney, 2024; Stothard, 2022), although PR can negatively impact these relationships (Hodgkiss & Harding, 2024; Stothard, 2022). Enabling the voice of CYP was identified as essential for policy development and post-incident reviews (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2021), emphasising the need to actively listen to and incorporate CYP perspectives on PR and alternative strategies (Hodgkiss & Harding, 2024; Stothard, 2022). Staff perspectives indicated a recognition of the importance of relationships and the need for prevention and de-escalation (Mullowney, 2024), but also highlighted inconsistencies in practice and a need for more time and resources (Department for Education, 2024). The review outlined systemic needs, including the need for clearer legal, ethical, and practice-based guidance and policies (Department for Education, 2024), and consistent definitions of PR (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2021; Stothard, 2022). Finally, the review highlighted a need for improved data management, and national training standards for the use of PR in schools (Department for Education, 2024; Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2021; Mullowney, 2024).

4.2.2. The Welsh Context

PR is permitted in schools in Wales under specific circumstances, including preventing imminent harm, property damage, or maintaining order, though it should only be used as a last resort (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2021; Welsh Government, 2013, 2022b). The WG's current specific guidance on the use of 'reasonable force' in schools states that PR can be used to "prevent pupils committing a criminal offence, injuring themselves or others, or damaging property" (Welsh Government, 2013, p.4). This guidance for schools on the use of 'reasonable force' has not been updated for over a decade (Welsh Government, 2013). The language used in the guidance focuses on control and maintaining order, with limited emphasis on CYP rights or trauma-informed (TI) approaches. Though there is a focus on the preventative strategies to be used by schools, the outlined aim is to create an "orderly" environment (Welsh Government, 2013, p.10).

In response to concerns regarding PR, the WG introduced the Reducing Restrictive Practices Framework (RRPF) (2022). This framework is not specific to

education alone; it serves multiple sectors such as Health and Social Care, and it stresses that PR should only be used when necessary to prevent harm. It encourages schools to implement de-escalation techniques and Positive Behavioural Support (PBS), while also promoting staff training in crisis management. However, the RRPF is non-statutory and does not provide clear, enforceable steps for schools to govern and evaluate their use of PR. The RRPF states for staff to undertake "accredited, competence-based training" (Welsh Government, 2022) which also lacks clarity, raising concerns about inconsistencies in practice. Unlike England and Scotland whereby policies on PR have been recently updated, there is no publicly available evidence to suggest plans for an update in Wales, leaving the framework vague and lacking specificity in addressing PR within the context of schools.

4.2.3. Rationale for Current Research

There is currently no data to suggest the prevalence of PR in schools in Wales alone; research conducted by Equality and Human Rights Commission (2021, p.47) has recommended that WG prioritise minimising the use of PR in schools, using national data which provides insight into the use of PR in schools in Wales. A literature search has concluded that there are no published studies within this topic area that have been conducted in Wales specifically to inform future practice. Research from across the UK, as outlined in Part 1, shared there is limited information on the impact of PR on staff. Therefore, the current research aimed to gather the views and experiences staff use of PR in schools in Wales. It is hoped that by gathering this information, an informed approach can be taken when considering the relevancy and updating of legislation, frameworks and guidance provided by the WG to support educational settings.

Part 1 also highlighted the importance of gathering CYP's perspectives of PR. It was intended that the research also explore the experiences of CYP (10-18 years old) who had been physically restrained in school, to highlight CYP voice when considering the use of PR in Wales. Unfortunately, though all efforts were made to include this within the study, potential participants withdrew their interest before data collection had begun. Due to time constraints of the research, additional participants were unable to be sourced. Further reflections of this are drawn upon in Part 3.

4.2.4. Research Questions

Given the findings from the literature review (Part 1) there are two areas needing further exploration: to gather an understanding of the use of the PR in schools throughout Wales, and to gain pupil voice in their experience of being physically restrained in schools. The researcher had originally hoped to obtain the views of CYP, but it was not possible to recruit participants (reflections are further explored in Part 3) and therefore the research focused on the views of school staff solely. Two exploratory research questions were generated to guide the research:

RQ1. "What are school staff's views and experiences of using physical restraint?"

RQ2. "How can the data gathered inform future practice to improve practice in relation to the use of physical restrain in schools?"

The story of the use of PR in schools in Wales is currently untold. Therefore, the research aims to reveal a picture of how PR is being used across the country, whilst also exploring in-depth experiential accounts of staff who have used PR in schools.

4.3. Methodology

4.3.1. Ontological and Epistemological Assumptions of the Research

It is important to identify how the researcher's own insights, involvement and engagement with the participants have the possibility of influencing results; the main influence for the researcher's philosophical stance is the individual and personal interpretation of the relationship between information and the process by which it is established (Saunders et al., 2009). As the researcher, it is also important to identify the philosophical stance to which the reading, assembling, and evaluating of information used within this paper is viewed.

The researcher's paradigm is Interpretivism, which focuses on understanding the meanings and experiences of individuals within their social contexts. This paradigm is particularly suited to qualitative research, where the goal is to explore the depth and complexity of human experiences rather than to quantify them. Interpretivism acknowledges that knowledge is subjective and context-dependent,

emphasising the importance of researcher reflexivity and the influence of the researcher's background, assumptions, and interactions with participants (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). By adopting an interpretivist approach, the researcher aimed to gather rich, detailed data through methods such as semi-structured interviews, allowing staff to express their thoughts and feelings in their own words. This flexible and responsive design ensured that the research is grounded in the staffs lived experiences, providing a nuanced and contextualised understanding of the social world (William, 2024).

The researcher's ontological stance is that of Critical Realism (Bhaskar, 2013). Critical Realism combines a realist ontology with a constructivist epistemology (Maxwell, 2012) offering a balance between a realist positioning of reality existing independently of our constructions, and the knowledge of our world is our own construction. It seeks to explain observed phenomena through processes of inference, thus providing the opportunity to make changes for the better in the situation under investigation. The Critical Realist approach recognises that concepts are socially and individually constructed. However, the ways in which these concepts are experienced by individuals are governed by underlying mechanisms.

The researcher's epistemological stance is that of Contextualism (McKenna, 2015); Contextualism takes the view that "meaning is related to the context in which it is produced" (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 328). As the research gained views from school staff across Wales, it is important to recognise that each LA may punctuate the use of restrictive practice, including PR, differently based on their contextualised system's processes. As the researcher specifically focused on PR used in Wales, context was deemed of great importance to consider a deeper understanding of the educational context in which PR is being used, and provide reflections on current Welsh policy and guidance.

4.3.2. Research Design

The philosophical assumptions for the researcher led to the construction of a qualitative research design grounded in critical realism and contextualism. This approach aligns with Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis (2022), which emphasises the importance of understanding patterns within qualitative data. By

adopting the 'Big Q' qualitative research value, the researcher committed to a comprehensive, in-depth exploration of data, ensuring that the analysis was not just about the techniques used but also about the broader qualitative framework applied to the research (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Acknowledging that while an external reality exists, our access to it is always mediated by context, language, and interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2013, 2022). From this perspective, knowledge is seen as situated and partial, shaped by both individual subjectivity and broader social structures. Researcher subjectivity is therefore viewed not as a limitation, but as a valuable lens through which meaning is interpreted and constructed (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Recognising that knowledge production is a complex, interpretive, and inherently human process, the aim is not to attain objective truth, but to explore plausible and contextually grounded understandings of staffs' experiences. (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Staffs' subjective interpretations of their social worlds are treated as meaningful and central to the research endeavour. Within this approach, staff are positioned as active meaning-makers, and the research design remains flexible and responsive to the nuances of lived experience (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

In using the 'making an argument model' (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p.120), the researcher did not aim to provide a comprehensive review of existing evidence to date. Instead, the researcher sought to offer a contextualised understanding of what is known, what has been conducted, and what is considered important or interesting within the framework of the philosophical stance. As Braun and Clarke emphasise, "the goal is not to produce a definitive account, but to tell a story about the data that is coherent and compelling" (2022, p.233). Below outlines the different data gathering approaches to be used for this study.

4.3.2.1. Sampling and Participants. The current research recruited staff using a purposive sample, and the recruitment involved a two-step process to maximise the potential reach of participants. In the first step, a gatekeeper letter (Appendix C) was sent to Additional Learning Needs Coordinators (ALNCo) in LAs in Wales to enable access to participants. In the second step a recruitment poster, which included information of the research study (Appendix D), was circulated via social media (namely, Educational Psychology forums (EPNET), the researcher's Linked In profile shared publicly, and Facebook groups e.g. Teachers in Wales,

Educational Psychology, EP UK Doctoral Applicants, Welsh Primary Teachers, Curriculum for Wales, Teachers in the UK). Participants made contact with the researcher directly via a university email shared on both the information sheet (Appendix E) and the poster, to request information and consent forms (Appendix F), before agreeing to take part in the research. The inclusion and exclusion criteria for participants is outlined in the table below.

Inclusion	Exclusion
• Adults who are currently employed (via permanent, temporary, or agency contracts) to work in a school setting in Wales. • Staff working in both teaching and non-teaching roles within the school setting. • Staff that work in primary or secondary schools. • Staff that work in mainstream or special needs schools, or alternative provisions. • Staff that have used or been part of a physical restraint in a school setting.	• Staff that have not used physical restraint in a school setting. • Adults who do not have a current employment status based in a school setting. • Staff that work in a school that is not located within Wales.

Table 4: Participant Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

4.3.2.2.   Data Gathering. To gain in-depth and relative data needed for this research, the qualitative method of semi-structured interviews was used. Interviews were conducted with the staff that were willing to participate in the study. Semi-structured interviews are viewed as the ideal method for collecting verbatim accounts (Smith, 1995). Semi-structured interviews capture the complexity and depth of participants' subjective experiences, which aligns with Braun and Clarke's "Big Q" qualitative research paradigm (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Semi-structured interviews offer the flexibility to explore staffs' perspectives in detail, allowing the researcher to adapt questions based on the flow of the conversation and the context provided by the staff. This method supports the "making an argument model" (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p.120) by enabling the researcher to gather rich, nuanced data; conducting semi-structured interviews allows the researcher to explore and capture diverse perceptions of the topic area in question (Cridland et al., 2015). Unlike more

structured methods, semi-structured interviews facilitate a deeper understanding of the social world, centring staffs' voices and allowing them to shape the direction of the discussion, which is crucial for producing a contextualized and meaningful analysis. These interviews were conducted either in person or online, to allow equal opportunities for engagement for all potential participants. Semi-structured interviews were conducted once only, using no repetitions, with the individual staff member, and covered a duration between 30-45minutes. The semi-structured interview questions can be found in Appendix G.

4.3.2.3. Data Analysis. RTA in line with Braun and Clark's method (2022), was used to analyse the data gained through semi-structured interviews. This method works especially well for a single researcher and offers the researcher a more active process of developing themes through interaction with the data. (Braun & Clarke, 2023). The researcher believed that this was especially helpful for this study as there is no current research in this area in Wales; it is hoped the themes derived from the data will give a foundational insight into the topic area. RTA was carried out in line with Braun and Clarke's (Braun & Clarke, 2022) six-step process (Figure 3).

Familiarising yourself with the dataset
Coding
Generating initial themes
Developing and reviewing themes
Refining, defining and naming themes
Writing up
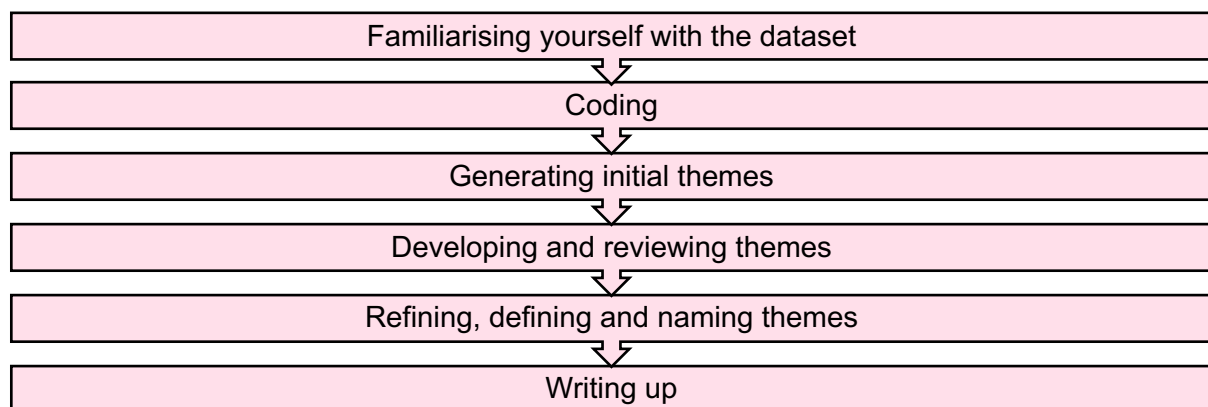
Figure 3: Braun and Clarke's Six-Step Process

RTA was completed by the researcher by hand to reflect the importance of the researcher playing an active role in the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2023). Manually coding the data by hand enabled a flexible and iterative approach throughout the familiarisation stage of analysis. In alignment with the study's epistemological stance, the development of codes and semantic themes ensured an accurate

representation of the key concepts expressed by staff during interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2013) relevant to the context that they experienced it. An example of the analytical process is visually documented in photographs within the Appendix H. While the six-steps follow a sequential order, with each step building upon the previous one, the analytical process is inherently recursive, involving continuous movement between different stages (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

4.3.2.4. Transcription. As interviews were conducted both online and in person, minor differences arose in the transcription process. In-person interviews were recorded and transcribed using the Microsoft Word transcription function. A rigorous approach was applied, with the researcher carefully reviewing and refining the transcriptions to ensure they accurately reflected the interviews. Online interviews were recorded via Microsoft Teams and were automatically transcribed using the platform's transcription feature. The researcher then reviewed these transcriptions in full, ensuring accuracy by listening to the recordings and making necessary amendments before finalising them. The interviews were immediately transcribed using intelligent verbatim transcription (see Appendix I). It allowed the researcher to become familiar with the text, facilitating RTA; involving recurrent engagement with the data, where the researcher interprets and reflects on the data, bringing the researcher closer to their data (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006). As the researcher participated in the interviews, the risk of any potential transcription errors was reduced (McGrath et al., 2019). All staff identifying information, such as names of schools and LAs, were removed to maintain anonymity within the transcripts.

4.3.2.5. Reflexivity. Braun and Clarke (2022) highlight the importance of being a reflexive researcher when adopting the process of RTA. As part of this reflexivity, Braun and Clarke (2022) refer to a fundamental step in the research process; considering what the researcher's identity is, how that might influence the research and its results, and whether the researcher considers themselves as an insider or outsider researcher to the chosen research topic. The researcher was previously a qualified teacher, though did not experience using PR in schools in the manner explored in this research. The researcher was, however, previously a Behaviour Specialist in the National Health Service (NHS) who trained staff

members on de-escalation strategies, PBS, and reviewed restrictive practices in schools including PR.

Therefore, the researcher recognises themselves as an 'in-betweener' researcher (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Milligan, 2016). The concept of the 'in-betweener' aligns with the arguments put forth by Hellawell (2006), Arthur (2010), and Thomson and Gunter (2011), who challenge the rigid dichotomy between insider and outsider researchers in educational research. Unlike frameworks such as liquid identities (Thomson & Gunter, 2011) or the insider-outsider continuum (Arthur, 2010; Hellawell, 2006), which imply a more passive positioning of the researcher, the 'inbetweener' acknowledges the researcher's ability to actively position themselves between these roles (Milligan, 2016). This perspective focuses on the researcher's agency in navigating and shaping their role within the research process. This highlights the researcher's position alongside participants, acknowledging the presence of shared experiences that may create a sense of connection, especially given the researcher's professional background in the subject area. Dwyer and Buckle (2009) suggest that as researchers engage in analysis, they inevitably carry their own experiences with them, and therefore making complete detachment from the process impossible. Braun and Clarke (2022) also speak to the importance of keeping a reflexive journal; the researcher fully adopted this approach and an extract of this journal, and its process is documented in Part C, along with a full reflexive account of this research.

4.3.3. Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for this research was provided by Cardiff University via the School of Psychology's School Research Ethics Committee (SREC). This research was also conducted in alignment with the British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Ethics and Conduct (2021) and The Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics (Health and Care Professions Council, 2024). Ethical considerations of this study have been outlined in the table below.

Ethical Consideration	Application to Research
Ethical Approval	Ethical approval and the necessary risk assessments for this research study was provided by Cardiff University via the School of Psychology's School Research Ethics Committee (SREC). Ethical approval reference number: EC.24.03.12.6978A Risk assessment reference number: 1732230392_4045
Consent and Participant Information Arrangements	School staff were made aware of the research from a poster and information sheet being shared by school Additional Learning Need Coordinators (ALNCos). Consent was obtained at the first point of contact from staff, after an explanation of the research project was provided, explaining the purpose of the study and how the data will be processed and used. Informed written consent was gained from the school staff at the beginning of the interview.
Anonymity	A view of anonymity is that a participant will never be traceable from the data presented about them (Saunders et al., 2009). The staff who choose to engage in the semi-structured interviews were not asked any personal identifiable information; information such as the type of school in which they worked (primary, secondary, or special needs) was required. This information provides context of findings, applied across different school settings, and will allow the research to recognise if responses are representative of the differing educational provisions across Wales. The staff's information will be kept confidential; the name of the participant will be used for recruitment purposes only. To ensure the participants identify remains a confidential piece of information, their data was anonymised and was not identifiable from the transcription process onwards.
Debrief	As the staff have experienced using PR, and have been asked to reflect on this experience during the interview, there is a potential for the staff to become distressed after the interview has concluded. To prioritise the wellbeing of the staff and ensure that the research is conducted with their best interests at the core, a debrief will take place after the interview which last for

	approximately 10 minutes. This debrief will support the staff to identify any areas of concern, or areas of need, that they might have following the interview.
Right to Withdraw	Staffs' right to withdraw from the study was clearly communicated through all written materials and reiterated verbally both prior to and following their participation. In accordance with the approved ethical protocol, a four-week period was provided during which staff could choose to withdraw without consequence. As outlined in the participant information sheet and debriefing materials, withdrawal was no longer possible after this timeframe due to the anonymisation of data and the deletion of audio recordings, rendering individual contributions unidentifiable and therefore non-retractable.
Online Safety	Additional security measures were implemented to safeguard staff during their engagement in online interviews conducted via Microsoft Teams. These included the use of an audio-only recording device (Dictaphone), the exclusion of video recording, and offering staff the option to keep their cameras turned off. All data collection and storage processes were conducted exclusively through university-provided platforms, namely, institutional email, Microsoft Teams, and OneDrive, to ensure end-to-end encryption and enhanced data security throughout the research process.

Table 5: Ethical Considerations

4.4.   Analysis

4.4.1. Overview of Analysis

This analysis will explore themes identified through the RTA process, focusing on how they address the research questions. A thematic map will illustrate the four main themes and their sub-themes. Each theme will be described in detail, followed by an analytical discussion. The analysis will be substantiated with quotes from the data; these quotes will help to illustrate the nuances and complexities of each theme. Each theme is treated as a distinct entity, characterised by a central organising concept, as defined by Braun and Clarke (2022), which will be highlighted at the beginning of each section.

4.4.2. Participant Information

Information about the interviewed participants can be found within Table 6. The staff were employed to a variety of professional posts, including key workers, teaching assistants, teachers, and senior management roles.

Participant Number	Type of provision
1	Pupil Referral Unit
2	Pupil Referral Unit
3	Secondary Special Needs Resource Base
4	Primary Assessment Centre
5	Primary Assessment Centre & Primary Mainstream Provision
6	Pupil Referral Unit

Table 6: Participant Information

To contextualise the educational settings in which the participating school staff are employed, the following section outlines the key types of specialist school provision available in Wales. A Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) in Wales is a form of alternative educational provision operated by local authorities under Section 19 of the UK Education Act (UK Parliament, 1996). PRUs are established to ensure that CYP of compulsory school age who cannot attend mainstream school due to reasons such as exclusion, illness, mental health difficulties, behavioural challenges, or waiting for a mainstream placement still receive suitable education (Welsh Government, 2024). A Special Needs Resource Base in Wales is a structured, specialist unit within a mainstream school designed to support learners with identified Additional Learning Needs (ALN). These bases provide focused support while enabling CYP to remain connected to their mainstream school communities, a model endorsed by Welsh policy as part of the transition to a more inclusive and equitable ALN system (Welsh Government, 2021)**.** A Primary Assessment Centre is a specialist provision designed to support CYP who exhibit behavioural, emotional, and social difficulties. It is a provision to support CYP whose needs prevent them from accessing mainstream classroom environments, and these centres deliver concentrated, short-term education and therapeutic support with the objective of helping CYP return to mainstream schooling (Welsh Government, 2021).

4.4.3. Themes Overview

Themes and subthemes are presented in a thematic map in Figure 4 below. This section will be organised in line with the themes identified following the RTA process of the staff's interviews. Four themes were identified which were: the role of PR, perceptions, and external influences; navigating legal, ethical, and individualised approaches; quality and consistency of training; and nurturing connections.

Figure 4: Thematic Map

4.4.4. Theme 1: The Role of Physical Restraint, Perceptions, and External Influences

This theme encompasses the perceived role of PR in school settings and how it has been used in staffs' experiences. Staff shared how wider staff teams views on behaviour, including whole school approaches and ethos, has an impact on the amount of PR used in schools. Staff also explored how factors such as social media, societal changes, and the impact of COVID-19 may have had on the use of PR. The

subthemes within Theme 1 include: conflicting feelings around the use of PR, views on behaviour, and the impact of external factors.

4.4.4.1.   Subtheme 1.1: Conflicting Feelings Around the Use of Physical Restraint. Staff reflected on their experiences of using PR within their settings. All staff shared the same thought that PR is generally viewed as a last resort, to be used only when there is a risk of significant harm to self or others, disruption of property, or criminal damage.

> *"OK, destruction of property. Think that [those items] can be replaced, but when that destruction then becomes. Violence, as in the property, becomes weapons to hurt others. Then we may physically intervene, but obviously, you know, it is purely around safety, so they don't harm themselves. Of course, and usually with destruction of property, if things get broken then it can be replaced. We can't replace people, can we?" (Participant 4)*

There is a cultural trend and desire to reduce the use of PR. Though staff shared their experiences of some settings implementing a "no hands" policy; this type of policy is viewed as impossible because there are situations where intervention is necessary to ensure safety.

> *"We try to reduce [the use of PR] where possible. We don't have a zero restraint policy because it's impossible to do that. And in our setting there can sometimes be the need to restrain. I think it [the use of PR] falls somewhere in the middle and the approach that I personally like to take is one of compliance." (Participant 3)*

PR should be used in a way that is least restrictive and allows CYP to move with staff in a compliant way. The focus should always be on supporting CYP and keeping them safe. Clear communication with the CYP is essential throughout the PR, with staff explaining why it is being done. The level of PR needed depends on the specific needs of the CYP, especially when they are new to a setting, having transitioned from elsewhere, and may struggle to control their emotions and may act unsafely consequently.

> *"It tends to increase when, umm. Pupils are new to the setting. Because obviously they know it's a new setting [so] no matter what we do, they become dysregulated. And usually that's the whole reason why they're here. Because they're not able to maintain their behaviour" (Participant 4)*

Staff shared that this behaviour may be a result of feeling unsafe in their new environments, needing to build relationships with key staff members, and CYP taking time to become familiar with the expectations and routines of their setting.

Some staff shared how they felt that they have seen a decline in the amount of PR used within their settings over time.

"I think the amount we use physical intervention has dropped dramatically, mostly because [a] lot of the staff here, or the experienced staff anyway, have learned how to de-escalate a situation before they [the CYP] get to that point [of needing PR]." (Participant 2)

Possible reasons as to why this may be the case was shared; There was an emphasis on staff understanding the development of, and utilisation of, de-escalation techniques and strategies before using PR. Staff all shared that a range of de-escalation techniques should be employed before resorting to PR, examples included using designated sensory/calming rooms, outdoor areas, distraction, withdrawal, change of environment, conversation, and tangible items such as food and drink.

"We will do everything and anything we can to not have to physically intervene. So we'll use everything that we can, you know, [offering] food, have a drink, come outside. [The staff] Try not to put that level of shame on the child, because obviously they are at crisis point. And that's absolutely fine. It's about supporting [the CYP] through it and we will do everything and anything rather than put hands on and physically intervene." (Participant 3)

Staff went on to explain how others, outside of their profession, may see this response as reinforcing their behaviour.

"Some of the choices [offered to CYP] will be perceived by outsiders, that [the] child's being rewarded for bad behaviour. It's not about that. It's about regulating the child because when a child is not regulated, as you know, you're not going to be able to do anything with that child. You need to do something to get their brain back online, get them regulated before we can have any sort of authoritative conversation, and figure out what was wrong about [their] behaviour and what led to it in the first place." (Participant 4)

Staff express a dislike for having to physically restrain CYP, but recognise that it is sometimes necessary to keep everyone safe.

> *"None of us like it. Is the worst part about our job having to do it? Yeah. But you've got the other hand of how necessary it can be. Yeah, to protect everybody involved. Noone comes to work to be punched in the head and no child wants to be punished and kicking people." (Participant 5)*

Staff also shared reflections of how parents of these CYP may feel; how it is important to consider what you would want someone else to do in the same situation if it was your own CYP who was being restrained. Staff shared how they would feel disappointed if roles were reversed, and staff failed to keep their CYP safe by choosing not to physically intervene if it was deemed appropriate to the risk.

> *"I wouldn't want anybody else to be putting their hands on my daughter as a parent, however, I know that if [they] was in crisis point and needed to be supported and to be kept safe from hitting herself or hitting somebody else, then I would. I would expect somebody to physically intervene. And the thought of somebody not would probably upset me even more because I send my child to school to be looked after and cared for."*

4.4.4.2. Subtheme 1.2: Views on Behaviour. Staff expressed varied perspectives on CYP's behaviour, ranging from seeing it as a choice, to understanding it as a response to trauma, or a need for skill building for *"regulating" (Participant 2)* emotions. Some staff emphasise understanding the reasons behind behaviour and what the behaviour is communicating, *"we would always work to understand the reasons behind behaviour and look at what the behaviour's communicating to us" (Participant 3).* Some of the staff shared that they are trained in TI approaches to better understand triggers and behaviours, which has helped staff better understand the reasons for behaviours.

Staff suggest that some CYP behave in certain ways because they may not necessarily have learnt the skills to meet their own emotional/physiological needs.

> *"Behaving in the only way they know how, because they don't have the skills to be able to regulate themselves. Many of our teenagers, and even at times [us] adults, we find it difficult, and people forget that. Some of these children, you know, we're talking about 5-6 year olds. They're not going to have these*

skills, but we've got to educate and communicate with them. We've got to let them know that emotions are great, but we've got to manage them and deal with them." (Participant 4)

There was a strong theme developing across multiple interviews that shared how important the role of the adult is in CYP's lives, to support them to develop the skills needed to learn to meet their emotional needs. There was a notion shared that CYP may be behaving in the only way they know how, and being a role model for CYP within the staff's work was of great importance to give the CYP fundamental skills to be able to function in their future adult world.

One staff member shared their thoughts on whether neurological factors, environmental factors, or social factors influence CYP's behaviour. Whilst in a discussion about the problematic nature of the term "chosen behaviour" *(Participant 5)*, it was noted that the labels that are selected to describe, or give reason to, behaviours that may be deemed challenging are something of less importance in comparison to exploring the reasons why:

> *"The crux of it is, whatever you want to call it, whether you call it challenging behaviour or behaviours that challenge, chosen behaviour, naughtiness, you know, that's another debate. Regardless of what people's perceptions of it, the fact is we have a society of children, which is increasing, that are displaying this level of behaviour." (Participant 3)*

Another staff member offered more insight into this thought, by highlighting the way in which behaviour has been framed in their Local Authority (LA); sometimes social, emotional, or mental health (SEMH) needs are often not considered ALN.

> *"I think people need to remember as well that behaviour is one of the four areas, the categories [of need], and you can guarantee if a child hasn't got an IDP, it'll be the behaviour ones [children] because. People still don't see behaviour as an additional learning need and I think that's, that's quite a huge mindset shift that schools need to get."* (Participant 4)

It was highlighted that this mindset shift is a large systemic concept of change, and it was recommended by staff that WG consider bringing more attention to this through policy.

4.4.4.3. Subtheme 1.3: The Impact of External Factors. Staff felt there are several societal and environmental factors that are potentially negatively impacting on CYP's learning, social and emotional development, and feelings of safety. such as social media, societal changes, and the effects of COVID-19. They felt that these factors can contribute to an increase of behaviours that can be deemed challenging. Staff shared that social media and access to unlimited information on the internet (including potentially harmful content) may contribute to behaviours that can be deemed challenging; staff shared how they found that CYP have accessed inappropriate material on a regular basis, even in school settings. Staff further unpicked the link with this concept, and shared that some CYP have explicitly stated that they have watched violent content and attempt to copy it. Though there were reflections on schools' ability to ban websites to prohibit CYP from accessing inappropriate material when in school, staff shared how *"it is physically impossible to lock down the Internet, so what do we do?" (Participant 1).* The fact that we are in a digital age, whereby technology is used for day-to-day life, was discussed as staff shared that education should prepare CYP for the world of work. Therefore, access to technology is fundamental in their education. Staff recognised that they have no ability to control what CYP access outside of the school premises and what they might access online during their out-of-school hours.

Staff highlighted how a lack of available community activities may impact behaviour; this was further explained as reduced access to safe community spaces in their local areas, the reduced amount green spaces, and structured community areas providing support to CYP. The disappearance of outdoor spaces, and community groups and activities, was noted as another potential external factor.

> *"Our children are not encouraged to go out and be independent. We've got to know where they are. Yeah, I understand why, because there's some unkind people out there." (Participant 2)*

This was further explained from a perspective of safety, and staff felt that local concerns around CYP being safe outside of the home minimises the number of opportunities CYP must explore/expand their emotional, social, and behavioural skills. Staff further explored how they felt this has been an increasing factor since the COVID-19 pandemic; the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on CYP

and families, affecting CYP's skill development, and in some cases creating traumatic experiences.

> *"I think COVID has got a lot to answer for. We've got children, going up the age groups [progressing through school year groups, who are] lower than developmental[ly] expected, yeah. I don't think you can say these things aren't all interlinked. And when you look at the children that are being restrained maybe on a regular basis, you know those are the case studies that we need to have a look [at] what is going on for this child. Why are they unable to cope with the demands you know? What is the issue in society?". (Participant 4)*

Staff shared how there are cohorts of CYP who have all been impacted in different ways as an effect of COVID-19 lockdowns and educational changes. Staff explained that they are still seeing the impact of the restrictions that were imposed during the pandemic, in the sense of CYP presenting with different challenges both in their learning needs and SEMH needs. They shared a feeling that this concept is talked about less in present times, even though staff they feel that they are only now feeling the impact of the developmental delays of large cohorts of CYP. Staff shared that they feel that there is a trend that the systems in place to support teachers, CYP, and their families are decreasing as need is increasing.

Another external factor that staff noted was in relation to the home environment and amount of care CYP receive at home. Staff shared that CYP can come into school presenting as tired and sometimes hungry, *"they come in tired, probably haven't eaten, and they need the nurturing aspect of it"* (Participant 1). Attention was drawn to the importance of providing a nurturing environment, particularly as staff talked about some CYP being in unsafe home environments; this can lead CYP to see school as a safe place, even if they do not engage with the academics.

4.4.5. *Theme 2: Navigating Legal, Ethical, and Individualised Approaches*

This theme reflects some of the considerations of legalities, gaining clarity in processes and understanding of terms, and a recognition of the flexibility needed to ensure that approaches are applicable in the context which they are being used. This theme encompasses what staff felt were fundamental areas of change and consideration, and those that hold the most power and potential to influence change.

The subthemes within Theme 2 include: defining PR, legal and ethical considerations, and individualised approaches.

4.4.5.1. *Subtheme 2.1: Defining Restraint.* The staff highlight a lack of clarity and consistency in the definition of "restraint," leading to debate and challenges in comparing and ensuring equitable practices. Different LAs and even different schools within the same LA have varying definitions of what constitutes PR. Some consider any touch, even holding a hand, as PR, while others only classify physically holding someone in one place as PR.

> *"I think the difficulty with the word restraint and these things is the definition of what different people mean by that term can be really challenging. So I've worked with some local authorities where. They would state that holding a hand of a child is restraint. I've worked with other local authorities where they say that, you know, it goes completely the other way that unless you're actually physically holding them in one space still, it's not restraint."*
> *(Participant 3)*

Differing definitions make it difficult to accurately track and compare the use of PR across different settings. Without a standardised definition, it is impossible to determine whether there has been a genuine reduction in PR across the country, nevertheless what even constitutes as PR in practice.

> *"I think it needs to be clear though. The entirety, it needs one definition that is followed by every single place, because otherwise you can't possibly. You can't state whether you're seeing a reduction in physical restraint. If every place, if every setting, is using a different measure of what that [physical restraint] looks like." (Participant 6)*

They spoke of the importance of receiving clarity and reassurance from WG; having clear guidelines that are specifically adapted for education settings, rather than guidelines being generalised and applied across a mixture of sectors such as social care and health care. Staff interchangeably used the terms "positive handling," "physical intervention," and "restraint," and there is a question of whether they all fit within the same umbrella or have different meanings. In discussion, staff shared that this ambiguity adds to the confusion surrounding the definition of PR. There is a call for a single, universally followed definition of PR to ensure consistent recording and

reporting practices. Staff highlighted how they felt this would allow for more accurate comparisons and a more equitable approach across different settings.

4.4.5.2. Subtheme 2.2: Legal and Ethical Considerations. Staff call for more clarity regarding the legal ramifications for staff who physically intervene, to protect them when they use PR to ensure CYP's safety. Staff shared their feelings that WG could provide clear guidance to protect staff while ensuring accountability for those who abuse their power. Staff want to know where they stand legally if they intervene to protect a CYP.

> *"I think from a government perspective. I think we need to have some more clarity from the legal side of things to protect people [staff] to make sure that if it [physical restraint] happens. They're [staff are] going to be protected, and if they [staff] do something wrong and they abuse their power, they're to be dealt with. And rightly so. But for the average teacher who is genuinely [using physical restraint] as a last resort, to keep a child safe. There needs to be some reassurance, actually, that they're going to be supported." (Participant 4)*

There were concerns about the lack of protection for staff facing accusations of improper conduct, even when formal investigations find no grounds for further action. Staff members shared that they may still have to disclose these investigations on future job application forms, potentially harming their careers.

> *"Sometimes I think it can appear that if schools are offered support, it may not be in a supportive way. It might be like, oh, they've had an increase in incidents. Maybe we need to go have a look, see what's going on there." (Participant 3)*

Staff shared that they would prefer support to be offered in a reassuring way, rather than appearing critical or accusatory. Staff need assurance that they will be supported when they act in CYP's best interest. One staff member noted the importance of ensuring that paperwork is not only completed, but the type of data that is reported and the format in which it is reported, along with a clear definition, is of great importance.

> *"I think it needs somebody to say. This is the recording process. This is what you record. This is why you record it. Yeah, just to be able to compare*

[incidents of physical restraint] and be able to have that equitable approach across everybody." (Participant 3)

The staff consistently highlighted the need for more robust monitoring of incidents of the use of PR. Allowances should be given, following an incident, for staff to take time to complete the necessary paperwork and ensure that details are recorded accurately.

4.4.5.3.   *Subtheme 2.3: Individualised Approaches.* The staff emphasise the importance of individualised approaches when considering the use of PR, for behaviours that can be deemed as challenging, and the use of other strategies and interventions such as approaches to de-escalation. Staff also shared how having an understanding of individual CYP's histories is important; CYP can come to school settings with pre-existing experiences and histories of the use of PR.

> *"A lot of young people come to us with, you know, quite big histories of exclusion, physical handling, you know, they've been restrained in primary, in secondary. Some of our looked after children are in residential premises. So, you know, they've experienced these things as they've been growing up. And it's important that you know when they come here, we do talk about the fact that, you know, we will do this [use physical restraint] if we need to."*
> *(Participant 6).*

Staff particularly acknowledged their approaches for CYP with diverse communication needs. For non-verbal CYP, the inclusion of non-verbal methods of reassurance and relationship rebuilding was of vast importance to staff. They reflected that the most appropriate member of staff should be identified to intervene with the particular CYP. This ensures that having a pre-existing relationship and a joint understanding of each other's needs has a positive impact.

It is important to recognise that some CYP may crave physical contact and that a supportive touch can be part of their daily movement around the school. Staff also shared a need to consider what is going on in a CYP's life and whether environmental factors are influencing their behaviour.

> *"I'm very aware all the time that pupils can become quite dependent. They become very reliant on being held. So that's certainly something that we work to avoid at all costs. So some pupils, in order to manage their own emotions,*

they may have got to a position where they're used to being restrained. So therefore to manage their emotions, they're always restrained. If you don't stop feeding into that cycle, you're you never stop restraining." (Participant 2)

It was suggested that there should be flexibility to adapt practices based on the specific provision and the needs of the individual CYP.

4.4.6. Theme 3: Quality and Consistency of Training

The staff revealed mixed perspectives on the availability of training and support for staff regarding PR in schools. While some staff felt adequately supported, others expressed concerns about funding cuts, inconsistent training, and the need for more relevant and updated resources. The subthemes within this theme include: availability of training and support, consistency of training across localities, and commercialisation of training.

4.4.6.1. Subtheme 3.1: Availability of Training and Support. A strong emphasis was placed on the training being inconsistent, and at times inadequate. Staff shared that in their experiences, some staff members may not have received any training in the use of PR or de-escalation strategies, due to high staff turnover and infrequent availability of courses. This was also true for agency workers, who staff felt were able to work at their setting without having had any level of training in relation to PR. The staff spoke to a growing recognition of the need for more bespoke training that is tailored to the specific needs of the school and the CYP that it serves. An example was of advanced training around the use of defence against the use of weapons.

"the training just hasn't moved on since I done it and I've been doing it 10-11 years. That's what we're taught. And that is what it is. But like I say, if there's anything more serious happens then. We'd be winging it." (Participant 1)

However, staff also recognised that there are ethical concerns about training staff in advanced techniques like weapon retrieval, as from a staff's perspective, they felt that it may create a sense of responsibility for staff to intervene and therefore increase the risk to staff.

There is a move toward training being appropriate to its use; one staff member suggested that training can normalise the use of PR.

> *"training needs to be appropriate to its use. I think there is a slight risk that if you train everybody. You can almost build a culture where you're developing a culture of holding almost." (Participant 3)*

This staff member shared a reflection that consideration should be given to what is an appropriate level of training for all staff across different settings. The staff highlight the critical role of comprehensive training in equipping staff with the necessary skills to manage challenging situations effectively. One staff member underscored the importance of formal training*, "these things should be trained properly, and they should be trained as part of a BUILD accredited, like properly designed course" (Participant 5).*They expressed concern that partial or informal knowledge can lead to unintended risks, potentially escalating situations rather than resolving them safely. This suggests that, in the absence of structured guidance, staff rely on instinct and a general duty of care, which may not always align with best practices. In addition, the use of external support from trainers or other specialists was brought to light by some staff, who felt that their schools feel *"out on a limb" (Participant 6)* if there are not any opportunities for follow-ups or post-incident support for them from training providers as an opportunity for reflection and continued professional development.

4.4.6.2. Subtheme 3.2: Consistency of Training Across Localities.

The data suggests there are inconsistencies in training across different localities. These inconsistencies relate to the types of training packages used, the content of the training, and the delivery methods. The staff shared how there are a variety of training packages available for LAs to buy into, all who offer different training packages. Inconsistencies in the content and approaches to delivery was recognised as an area of difference.

> *"even if you have Team Teach for instance, you can see it delivered so many different ways. Some of it depends on the trainers who have delivered it in the first place. You get different trainers who emphasise different things. Some of it depends on then the staff who are using it and how they've deciphered the training." (Participant 3).*

Even within the same training programme, some staff shared that the content and delivery of training packages can vary depending on the trainers undertaking the training, and any modifications needed for the specific needs of the setting. Attention

was drawn to the development of a commonly used training package having been developed in England and used in Wales.

> *"a lot of the stuff that we do in Wales is different to what happens in England. And we nearly always go and train in England. Team Teach is primarily developed for England in England, but there are lots of different, you know, the policies are very, very different to what they are in here in Wales."*
> *(Participant 6)*

This staff member, who shared that they have undertaken the train-the-trainer course, explained that this course, and the re-fresher courses, are undertaken in England. There were further discussions about the difference in policies between England and Wales, as well as differences in the education system, which is interesting to consider.

4.4.6.3. Subtheme 3.3: Commercialisation of Training.

The staff expressed concerns that the commercialisation of training programs impact the quality, accessibility, and consistency of training. As training systems become more commercial, the training becomes more difficult to access. It was highlighted how the increasing commercialisation of training programs has made it more difficult for schools to meet the cost of that training, making it more difficult for staff to receive consistent regular training across different areas.

> *"it's gone very corporate, but it's also become quite a bit of a money making machine. A lot of schools are going to struggle to meet the cost of training. You know, the time commitment has changed, whereas like if you did a six hour course, before it was a three hour, yeah, a three-year cycle. Now it's a two year cycle, if you do 12 hours you are supposed to refresh annually. So it all costs more."* *(Participant 6)*

Staff felt that commercial training companies may be more focused on selling a package than on providing the best training for the specific needs of the school. Staff made reference to the process of requesting training from well established companies; staff indicated that it is easy to contact a trainer, to undertake an audit to see what the provision needs, and deliver the training. However, one staff member explained how their LA was taking a different approach to meeting the training needs of staff.

"We're taking far more of a probing kind of conversation. So myself or one of the other trainers will go to a school. We'll sit down with the team there and we'll talk to them about exactly what they need. The situations [they find themselves in], talk about the strategies that they're currently using to try to de-escalate behaviours before we even decide whether team teach is appropriate. If team teach isn't appropriate at that point, we begin to develop and design a package that's more based around the theories of PBS, making sense of all the language that we're using in schools, creating a system where staff can understand behaviours." (Participant 2)

There is a theme relating to the flexibility of being able to adapt, and potentially amalgamate, different perspectives of behaviour management and the use of PR into a different package. Commercial training systems may restrict what can be taught or discussed, such as mandatory units of training, for that school to be trained by that specific company.

4.4.7. Theme 4: Nurturing Connections

The staff emphasised the crucial role of relationships and restorative approaches in managing CYP's behaviour and reducing the need for PR, as well as highlighting the emotional impact that using PR can have on the wellbeing of staff. The subthemes within this theme are: relationships between staff and CYP, restorative approaches, and emotional impact on staff and their practice.

4.4.7.1. Subtheme 4.1: Relationships Between Staff and CYP. The staff highlighted the importance of positive relationships between staff and CYP in managing behaviour, creating safe environments, and minimising the need for PR. Staff shared that relationships are key to de-escalation, believing that a strong, trusting relationship forms the foundation for effective engagement and support. They shared that establishing positive relationships with CYP can help to reduce triggers and, therefore, the need for PR.

"If you haven't got that relationship [with the child] because it's about that trust. If they don't trust you, they won't open up with you and they won't engage with you. And if you can't get them to engage, then you're not going to be able to support them in anything that they do. Learning, socialisation, regulation, well-

being, having their needs met, their ability to communicate. If they don't trust

you and you can't engage them. (Participant 4)

When staff members have a good rapport with CYP, they are better equipped to understand their individual triggers, needs, and communication styles. This understanding enables them to tailor their approach and provide appropriate support to meet those needs. Additionally, staff shared that a strong relationship could help CYP feel validated and heard, encouraging emotional resilience over time.

Staff also shared that a change of face, particularly with agency staff, can be helpful to de-escalate situations and reduce the need for PR. Though in contradiction to the reflection above, they state that this strategy allows for a fresh approach, minimising the likelihood of further distress or escalation.

> *"Change of face does work OK. Your face is going to trigger them more until*
> *they've had that moment, they've come back down and [are] more regulated.*
> *So that change of face is like the law." (Participant 5).*

However, it was also highlighted that consistent staffing and familiar faces are particularly important for CYP who struggle to adapt to, and receive support from, new people or changes in routine. Establishing strong, trusting relationships with key staff members can provide a sense of security and stability, which is essential for those who find transitions challenging.

> *"there are some pupils in the [setting name] who can take to new staff better*
> *than others. If it's a child that can't, I would always change around [the staff]*
> *and switch and swap and make sure that the pupils who need to know the*
> *people they're working with have familiar faces in front of them all the time."*
> *(Participant 3)*

The data suggests that this balance between introducing new staff when necessary and maintaining consistency highlights the importance of adopting individualised approaches to support each child's unique needs.

4.4.7.2. Subtheme 4.2: Restorative Approaches. The staff highlighted that restorative approaches are essential for managing CYP's behaviour and repairing relationships after incidents involving PR, and that post-incident support should be tailored to the individual CYP. Reasons for the use of restorative approaches was shared, which included: to provide closure and resolution after an incident; to help

CYP understand why the PR occurred; to reassure CYP that their behaviour, and not them as a person, is the concern; to equip CYP with strategies for managing future situations; and to reintegrate the CYP back into the classroom.

Following an incident, the data suggests that it is important for staff to reassure the CYP that the relationship is still there. The timing of the restorative conversations is important and should be flexible, based on the CYP's readiness to engage in a conversation. It was shared that sometimes this means that the conversation might not happen on the same day as the incident.

> *"I think what can break relationships even further is if you have to physically intervene and you don't address it in a restorative conversation. The conversation may not always happen that same day, because they need to go home, and it's about having that closure, and actually that reassurance that, I understand why you've done it, and I'm really sorry I've had to do this, but this is the reason why I've had to do that. And all this is just a blip, but maybe next time we can have a look at what we can do so we don't have this [happen again]. You don't like it, I don't like it, but I have to keep you safe." (Participant 4)*

Staff shared examples of how they have supported CYP with this, such as to engage in conversations or activities unrelated to the incident to rebuild trust and rapport, talking about something unrelated to the incident, such as a TV show or computer game, to reconnect with the CYP. Staff explained that conversations can be formal or informal, ranging from structured discussions to casual chats. Elements of conversations used by the staff within this research include: reflecting on the incident, discussing alternative actions for the future; managing emotions appropriately; and reinforcing the value of the relationship between CYP and staff. It was explained that a simple apology can reinforce the relationship and de-escalate potential issues.

Some caution was shared by staff, who outlined actions that can impact the effectiveness of the restorative approach. While restorative conversations are essential, they must be handled with sensitivity to avoid reinforcing feelings of guilt or punishment, which could hinder the CYP's ability to engage in meaningful reflection and learning. Striking the right balance between holding CYP *"accountable"*

(Participant 2) and offering them *"a fresh start" (Participant 2)* was considered crucial for ensuring that they feel supported rather than shamed.

> *"Sometimes it's a danger if you push too much and if they think they're still in trouble. You'll lose it again. So it's getting the fine balance and like calming them down. And you know, them knowing what they have done is unacceptable. And then the fresh start to follow." (Participant 1).*

Staff also highlighted the importance of validating emotions while guiding CYP towards *"appropriate behaviour" (Participant 3).* They shared that they feel CYP need to understand that feelings such as anger or frustration are natural, but their responses to these emotions must be managed in a way that does not cause harm themselves or others.

> *"Supporting that restorative conversation and without putting another element of shame on it, and that reassurance of actually, do you know what, it's OK to feel angry. It's OK to be mad. It's OK to want to scream because we all feel like that. What's not OK is to put your hands on somebody else." (Participant 4)*

The staff also shared caution that schools can sometimes miss out on restorative conversations, which are vital for helping CYP develop coping strategies. Without these discussions, CYP may repeatedly find themselves in similar situations without the necessary tools to navigate them effectively.

> *"I think this is where schools miss out. They do everything they do, they switch out faces through crisis points, but they never have that restorative conversation of what we could do next time. Because actually the child will find themselves in that situation. Again and again and again. But they never get given the strategies and what they can do and when and if it does happen, [or] it's [given to them] at point when they're not calm." (Participant 4)*

They emphasised that these conversations should occur when the CYP is calm and receptive, rather than during a period of dysregulation. Having these discussions at the right moment allows CYP to engage in problem-solving and reflection more effectively. Furthermore, the data suggests that effective restorative practice involves creating an environment where CYP feel safe, supported, and understood.

4.4.7.3. Subtheme 4.3: Emotional Impact on Staff and their Practice. The data brings to light how use of PR can significantly impact staff emotionally. The emotional toll on staff is evident before, during, and after these incidents. Staff recognise that physical intervention is the worst part of the job and hate having to do it, often questioning whether they could have taken alternative approaches to prevent the need for PR. This self-reflection can lead to feelings of guilt, doubt, and distress, further compounding the emotional burden they carry. Some share that they feel that by physically restraining, they *"put that level of shame on the child" (Participant 6).* There is a common theme of shame throughout this subtheme, with it being applied across different levels: shame experienced by the child; shame carried by the staff; and systemic shame reinforced by external pressures.

> *"there's a lot of shame, isn't it? Even around behaviour like, you know, the fact that we don't want our children to feel ashamed that we've had to restrain them and we don't want them to feel that it's something, you know, it's a response to something they've done negatively. And then us as practitioners are having the local authority shame us into some of our practises, and then there's this whole even idea around people shaming the fact that behaviour being an ALN, you know this is a lot of shame." (Participant 4).*

This data highlights the complexity of the issue, where staff must navigate ethical, professional, and emotional dilemmas while trying to uphold the wellbeing of the CYP in their care.

Staff can feel torn between polarised views on PR. Some may feel a strong sense of duty to intervene, particularly if they have received training, while others may struggle with the ethical and emotional implications of stepping in. There is a tension between feeling responsible for ensuring safety and the fear of making the wrong decision or being held accountable for their actions.

> *"If you train them in it. Do they feel then almost responsible in having to do it? Whether they're confident, competent, or whatever, they feel a level of responsibility to do that [physical restraint]. And then I suppose, you know, if they don't do that, what does that mean for them? You know, does that mean an investigation on, you know, on their part? And there's lots of different ethical things to think about?" (Participant 6)*

Some staff share they can experience anxiety and concern about potential legal repercussions, fearing that their actions could be misinterpreted or scrutinised in ways that place them at risk professionally. They want to ensure that safeguards are in place and that their actions align with best practices, yet the pressure to make the right call in high-stakes situations can be overwhelming. Furthermore, the reality of PR means that some staff are frequently subjected to aggressive behaviours, including being hit. There is an important recognition of the emotional toll that this has on staff members, as highlighted by the acknowledgment that *"sometimes it can be hard because obviously our emotions are running high as well" (Participant 2).* In high-stress moments, staff must regulate their own emotions while managing the behaviour of distressed CYP a challenge that requires immense patience, resilience, and emotional intelligence.

4.5.   Discussion

This research examined the use of PR in schools in Wales. The aim was to gather staff's understanding and experience of the use of PR in schools, and to use the information collected to evaluate the current practice in Wales and to develop positive approaches moving forward. This discussion will identify how the data gathered has answered the research questions posed.

4.5.1. R1. "What Are School Staff's Views and Experiences of Using Physical Restraint?"

Staff perspectives on PR vary, but common themes and concerns emerge. Staff regard PR as an absolute last resort, prioritising de-escalation techniques, fostering a safe and supportive environment, and building strong, trusting relationships with CYP to prevent crises from escalating. They emphasise that PR is something they actively try to avoid, viewing it as a challenging and distressing aspect of their role.

4.5.1.1. Emotional Impact. The data indicate that staff experience a complex, multifaceted emotional trajectory in the context of PR (see Figure 5), encompassing anticipatory cognitive appraisal prior to the event, heightened emotional arousal and active regulatory efforts during the incident, and post-incident meaning-making processes. This progression aligns with established models of

stress appraisal (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), emotion regulation (Gross, 2002), and meaning making in response to stressful experiences (Park, 2010).

Before
- Choosing whether to use physical restraint or not.
- Feeling a sense of overhelmed responsibility.
- Feelings of judgement of others by making the 'wrong choice'.

During
- Feelings of shame for both staff and the CYP involved.
- Helping CYP to feel safe and supported during the restraint.
- Managing staff's own feelings and emotional responses.
- Concern for the relationship between staff and CYP.

After
- Deep reflection and self questioning whether it was the 'right thing' to do.
- Anxiety for what others might think about their choice for using restraint.
- Fear of judgement/punishment from the system.

Figure 5: Staff Emotional Process

Staff described the professional dilemma they face when determining whether to use PR, highlighting a persistent tension between the perceived necessity of PR and the fear of subsequent scrutiny and sanction. Their accounts reflect a broader anxiety that decisions, whether to act or withdraw, may be subject to retrospective judgment, potentially unsupported by organisational structures and vulnerable to allegations concerning the legitimacy and intent of any physical contact with CYP; these findings align with those of Hayden and Pike (2005). WG guidance for schools and LAs emphasises the importance of having a witness present during any PR to ensure transparency and accountability, to counteract any of these possibilities (2013). Lawrence et al. (2010, p.386) highlight the vulnerability of staff when engaging in heightened exchanges, such as PR, stating that "the way in which their actions are perceived and evaluated by relevant stakeholders can have important legal, professional and safety implications." The necessity of balancing the competing rights and needs demands high-stakes decision-making, often under conditions of heightened fear and anxiety. This environment of cognitive and emotional strain may impair the ability to engage in open communication and transparency between staff, parents, and senior leadership (Mullowney, 2024). Such

dynamics can be understood through the lens of cognitive load theory (Sweller, 2011), which posits that decision-making capacity is constrained under stress, and moral distress theory (Jameton, 1993; McCarthy & Monteverde, 2018), which suggests that professionals may experience internal conflict when they perceive their actions as being morally compromised. These factors contribute to a breakdown in collaborative dialogue and transparency.

Staff in this research report feelings of shame and guilt when using PR, often engaging in deep reflection and self-questioning about whether alternative actions could have been taken. These findings align with research conducted by Mullowney (2024), where staff reflected on a sense of guilt. Furthermore in the current research, staff identified that shame is felt across three different levels: shame experienced by the CYP; shame experienced by the staff; and systemic shame reinforced by external pressures. Shame experienced by CYP and staff is described as the personal feeling of shame. It can impact self-esteem and self-worth, and when considering Self-Efficacy Theory (SET) and Self-Determination Theory (SDT), the emotional experience of shame can undermine perceived competence and autonomy. According to SET, individuals who experience shame may have reduced self-efficacy, as they begin to doubt their abilities to successfully navigate future challenges (Bandura, 1977). Similarly, from the perspective of SDT, shame can diminish intrinsic motivation by weakening the sense of autonomy and competence, potentially leading to disengagement and decreased overall wellbeing (Ryan & Deci, 2000). These findings align with those of Mullowney (2024) who suggests that staff's own self-efficacy plays a role in how they respond to these situations. Hayden and Pike's (2005) research also support the data, stating that implementation is not just about knowledge but also about how prepared and confident staff feel. The ethical and emotional weight of PR can be significant, leaving staff with lingering doubts and concerns. Research indicates that staff often experience emotional and moral conflict following the use of PR. Ethical dilemmas arise when staff perceive PR as conflicting with their professional values and the best interests of the CYP (Laymon, 2018).

Systemic shame refers to the broader context, where external pressures and societal expectations contribute to the feeling of shame. This deep-rooted sense of

shame can be exacerbated by broader societal and policy maker responses, making staff feel scrutinised or judged for their actions, even when they are acting in what they believe to be the best interests of the CYP. When considering psychological theory, concepts like social norms and conformity (Cialdini & Trost, 1998) highlight how individuals often adjust their behaviours to align with perceived societal expectations, even when these norms conflict with their personal values or professional judgment. This is something that staff spoke strongly of in the current research, recognising that there is sometimes a disparity between their values and expectations. Additionally, theories of moral development (Kohlberg, 1981) and ethical decision-making (Rest, 1994) suggest that individuals may experience moral distress and internal conflict when their actions, such as PR, are perceived as being at odds with their ethical beliefs.

Reflecting on the ethical dilemma of whether to intervene with PR, many staff members in the research expressed a poignant sentiment: "If it was my child and someone failed to intervene to keep them safe, I would be disappointed" (Participant 5). This statement highlights the complex interplay of moral reasoning and emotional responsibility in the decision to use PR. Consistent with Kohlberg's stages of moral development (1981), this reflection may indicate a higher stage of moral reasoning, where staff consider the ethical implications of their actions in a broader, more universal context. The staff members seem to weigh the importance of ensuring safety, not only for the CYP but also in terms of meeting the expectations that would be placed on them as parents or guardians. This sentiment ties directly to moral distress theory (Jameton, 1993). The decision to use PR, therefore, is not only a professional judgment but is also influenced by personal values and a profound sense of responsibility to protect. This tension between personal ethical beliefs and the constraints of professional expectations contributes to the complex emotional responses experienced by staff.

The data from the current research suggests that staff's repeated exposure of using PR can take a cumulative toll on their emotional wellbeing, leading to: stress, burnout, and feelings of helplessness. Staff are not only responsible for supporting CYP through moments of crisis but must also manage their own emotions in high-stress situations. Given these emotional challenges, staff highlight that they need

support after incidents to process their experiences and maintain their wellbeing. Without debriefing, peer support, or access to supervisory resources, staff risk carrying unresolved stress that can negatively impact their ability to perform their roles effectively. These findings align with those of Martin (2020) who suggests school leaders create psychological safety for their staff by: placing value on feedback, reflection and acknowledgement of mistakes; modelling the act of receiving, accepting and responding to feedback; assigning a 'devil's advocate' role in reflective meetings, by repeatedly seeking their views and encouraging them to show their human side. The need for post-incident reflection and emotional processing is of vital importance, yet often overlooked. Recognising the psychological impact of PR on staff highlights the importance of providing adequate emotional support, professional debriefing opportunities, and ongoing relevant training to ensure they feel equipped, protected, and emotionally resilient in their roles.

4.5.1.2. Relationships Between Staff and CYP. The current research suggests that investing in building strong, positive relationships between staff and CYP is essential for creating a supportive and effective learning environment; placing importance on getting the know the CYP and building positive relationships, can minimises the use of PR by understanding and better meeting the CYP's needs. Considering attachment theory (Ainsworth, 1978; Bowlby, 1979), we can make sense of this by recognising that secure attachments foster trust and emotional security. When staff build strong, positive relationships with CYP, they create a foundation of trust and safety. This secure attachment helps CYP feel understood and supported, reducing SEMH needs that might otherwise lead to PR. By prioritising these relationships, staff can better anticipate and meet the needs of CYP, promoting a more harmonious and effective learning environment. When PR becomes necessary, the quality of the existing relationship can significantly influence the outcome; a strong, positive relationship can help to mitigate potential harm and reassure the CYP that the intervention is for their safety and wellbeing, prioritising their sense of belonging (Allen et al., 2018; Cooke et al., 2019).

However, a lack of, or negative, relationship can worsen the situation, leading to increased distress and potential long-term damage to the CYP's sense of trust (K.

Stothard, 2022). These thoughts are mirrored in Hodgkiss and Harding (2024) research, which strengthens the argument that CYP having negative experiences of PR may damage the quality of the relationship with the staff member involved. Staff in the current research highlight that consistency and familiarity are also important for CYP as they reduce triggers and promote stability. The data suggests that staff who know CYP well can recognise potential triggers and use proactive strategies to support the CYP through difficult emotions or situations, minimising escalation and promoting safety. Therefore, changes in staff or the use of unfamiliar agency staff can disrupt this sense of security; this may lead to increased anxiety or behaviours that may be deemed challenging, and create a traumatising experience for CYP (Brown et al., 2022). On the contrary, staff in the current research also share that a change of face is sometimes a helpful strategy to de-escalate situations and therefore minimise the use of PR. The data suggests that the most appropriate member of staff should be identified to intervene with a particular CYP depending on the CYP's needs; this can mean that sometimes CYP require "breaks" (Participant 6) from a familiar staff member, especially if staff feel that this is escalating the CYP's behaviour. This balance between introducing new staff when necessary and maintaining consistency highlights the importance of adopting individualised approaches to support each CYP's unique needs.

The current study data highlights the Importance of working In partnership with CYP before, during and after PR. There were additional reflections made by staff in the current research relating to CYP who are non-verbal, stating the importance of ensuring that staff are actively paying attention to both verbal and non-verbal cues. Building a foundation of trust is needed for CYP to communicate their needs; trust enables CYP to seek support, creating opportunities for early intervention and de-escalation. Current study findings are also consistent with Hattie's (2009) and Raider-Roth (2005) that state trust between staff and CYP is central to CYP success at school. CYP who are securely attached tend to have overall positive expectations of adult caregivers' actions, rather than feelings of hostility and distrust (Fearon et al., 2010). This secure attachment also enhances their ability to manage intense negative emotions effectively. Secure attachments form when caregivers are consistently responsive and sensitive to a CYP's needs (Bowlby, 1969), and this helps CYP develop trust and a sense of security, which in

turn supports better emotional regulation (Ainsworth, 1978). Staff shared that providing a safe space is necessary for CYP to express emotions and needs, reduce anxiety, and encourage open communication; staff felt restorative conversations after PR allow CYP to express feelings, ask questions, and understand why the intervention occurred; the goal is to facilitate learning, repair harm, and strengthen relationships with staff.

     4.5.1.3. Navigating Transitions and Restraint Use. The data in the current research suggests the implication that CYP who are new to a setting may be more likely to exhibit unsafe behaviour, and therefore potentially require increased levels of PR to be kept safe. This finding is in line with Demkowicz et al.'s research (2023) which highlights that transitions into new settings can be challenging, especially those with ALN. This research echoes that of the current research, that CYP experience heightened anxiety, feelings of unsafety during these transitions, which can escalate into behaviours perceived as unsafe. This is particularly evident when staff possess limited knowledge of a new CYP's individual needs, resulting in the potential misinterpretation of behaviour and an increased likelihood of escalation that might otherwise have been preventable through informed, proactive support. The research suggests that a lack of understanding and preparedness for the unique needs of these CYP can contribute to situations where PR is used.

     The findings of this research emphasise the importance of implementing TI and individualised support strategies during school transitions. TI practice stresses the importance of creating safe, predictable, and supportive environments that recognise the impact of past experiences on current behaviour (Perry & Szalavitz, 2008). Key strategies outlined by staff in the research align with those from other studies, including establishing consistent routines, building trusting relationships between staff and CYP, and providing clear communication to reduce anxiety associated with change (Brunzell et al., 2016). By proactively addressing the unique needs of CYP, schools can reduce the likelihood of behavioural escalations that may lead to the use of PR. Staff in the current research share that having flexibility is key, prioritising the CYP's sense of belonging when transitioning to a new setting, and allowing the CYP time to feel safe in their new environment, rather than prioritising their academic engagement.

When considering proactive attempts to better understand and reduce the likelihood of increased PR at points of transition, staff in the current research shared that understanding the 'why' behind behaviour is key. This links with research in attachment theory (Ainsworth, 1978; Bowlby, 1969), which suggests that staff having an awareness of underlying reasons for CYP's behaviour presentation can increase staff's abilities to consider alternative ways to support CYP, potentially reducing the need for the use of PR (Ozturk, 2023). As Participant 1 notes, some CYP behave in particular ways because they are yet to learn the skills needed to "regulate" themselves. From an EP perspective, unpicking and understanding what staff mean by this term is of interest; it invites critical reflection on how concepts of emotional regulation are understood, the developmental expectations placed upon CYP, and the extent to which regulation is viewed as an individual skill versus a relational and contextually supported process. Consideration of Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social development and Perry's (2006) emphasis on relational regulation, which suggest that self-regulation emerges through co-regulatory experiences within supportive environments, rather than being an innate skill that CYP acquire in isolation. The data suggests that staff place significant value on co-regulation and view the modelling of regulatory strategies to CYP as an effective approach for reducing the use of PR over time.

4.5.1.4. De-escalation and Restorative Approaches. In the current research, staff reflect how they felt that an increased awareness of de-escalation techniques, including the use of sensory rooms, distraction, and withdrawal, are important to enable staff to respond with targeted support rather than immediate PR. This is in line with research which states that attempting to understand the history and context of CYP behaviour, along with the potential triggers, is an effective method of prevention to minimise the use of PR (Department for Education, 2024; Hodgkiss & Harding, 2024; Mullowney, 2024). The staff in the study share that individual plans for each CYP need to be put in place to ensure that the staff that support them can follow outlined strategies that they know will be helpful. Individualised plans that are co-produced with the CYP and their family can help to anticipate potential stressors and proactively address needs, thus reducing the risk of behavioural escalation and the subsequent use of PR (The British Psychological

Society, 2020; Trauma Informed Schools UK, 2025). By using tailored strategies and proactive support, staff can aim to reduce distress and avoid the need for PR altogether. However, staff shared that despite their best efforts, situations sometimes reach a point where PR is unavoidable, leading staff to grapple with complex emotions in the aftermath.

The data suggests an intriguing paradox, where de-escalation techniques are occasionally perceived, by both external professionals and those within the education sector, as inadvertently rewarding such behaviours. This misinterpretation highlights a critical gap in understanding the psychological mechanisms behind de-escalation. The challenge in interpreting de-escalation practices may lie in a lack of familiarity with the theoretical foundations that inform these approaches. Sociocultural theory (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978) offers a useful framework here, emphasising that learning and behaviour are deeply contextual and shaped by social interactions. According to Vygotsky, the effectiveness of de-escalation strategies depends not only on the technique itself but also on the social and professional context in which it is applied. Furthermore, the concept of co-regulation (Perry & Szalavitz, 2008) provides further insight by emphasising the role of relational support in helping CYP regulate their emotions. This understanding challenges the notion that de-escalation might reinforce behaviours, suggesting that it is a vital tool for fostering emotional resilience in the context of TI practice. These frameworks suggest that the effectiveness of de-escalation strategies may be misunderstood if professionals are unfamiliar with the relational, context-dependent nature of emotional regulation.

Critically, this issue points to a wider challenge in educational settings: the tendency to view behaviour management through a deficit lens, where the focus is on correcting or controlling behaviour rather than understanding and addressing the emotional needs of the CYP (Challenging Behaviour Foundation, 2019). Staff training is essential to enhance skills in de-escalation, emotional regulation support, and relational approaches. Embedding these practices within school policy and culture fosters resilience, promotes psychological safety, and aligns with broader frameworks of inclusive education. Doing so can guide more precise support strategies, ensuring that interventions focus not only on teaching regulation skills but

also on modifying the environment, strengthening relationships, and creating conditions that promote co-regulation and emotional safety.

The data suggests that embedding restorative conversations into practice can help CYP develop greater self-awareness, emotional regulation, and conflict-resolution skills. This approach not only reduces the likelihood of repeated incidents of PR but also contributes to a more positive and supportive school culture, where CYP feel valued and empowered to learn from their experiences. Staff recognise that following any incident of PR, restorative conversations are essential for helping the CYP understand what happened, to develop coping strategies, and maintain a positive connection with staff. They provide an opportunity for the CYP to express their feelings, ask questions, and rebuild trust. These restorative conversations can also aid staff's understanding of the reasons behind the behaviour, which can in-turn strengthen any individualised support plans in place.

4.5.2. R2. "How Can The Data Gathered Inform Future Practice Applied Through Multiple Systems?"

4.5.2.1.   Definitions and Terminology. The staff in the current research share concerns over the lack of a clear and consistent definition and terminology of PR in schools from WG. Standardised definitions are essential to ensure consistent interpretation and data collection across all educational settings. This standardisation is useful for accurately assessing the use of PR, evaluating practice, and clarifying outcomes from further research. The data of this research highlight that staff have experienced inconsistencies over both the terminology used, and the descriptive parameters surrounding the words 'physical restraint'. This is in line with findings from the Department of Education, who also recognise that there are inconsistencies (2024). The absence of clear and consistent definitions for PR creates ambiguity that can compromise both practice and oversight. Establishing shared terminology is critical, not only for safeguarding the rights and dignity of CYP, but also for supporting staff to act confidently and appropriately. Consistency in language strengthens the ethical foundations of practice and ensures interventions are transparent, accountable, and subject to meaningful scrutiny.

4.5.2.2. Policy and Practice. The current research suggests that developing effective policies on the use of PR, in schools specifically, is of importance. Staff share that they feel policies should emphasise the need for a holistic, collaborative, and legally sound framework that prioritises the safety and wellbeing of both CYP and staff. The data from the current research suggests that a 'no hands on' policy is not a viable option for schools to adopt; there were concerns raised regarding the potential implications of implementing such a policy, including an increased risk of injury to both CYP and staff due to the inability to intervene physically in critical situations. This finding aligns with the work of Mullowney (2024), whose participants expressed comparable concerns. WG guidance further supports this position, advising that schools must not inhibit the appropriate use of physical intervention where necessary to prevent harm (2013). Considering TI approaches, this can be understood through the recognition that safety constitutes a fundamental cornerstone of effective support for CYP who have experienced trauma. TI practice emphasises the need for predictability, relational security, and the assurance that adults can and will act decisively to maintain safety when required (Bath, 2008). An exclusion of all PR risks undermining the perceived and actual safety of the environment for both CYP and staff, thereby weakening the relational trust essential for emotional regulation and recovery.

Legal compliance and the protection of staff are also critical considerations in this research. The present data reveal that staff often experience considerable anxiety when determining whether the use of PR constitutes an appropriate course of action. Staff expressed concerns about the potential for retrospective judgment of their professional decisions and the possibility of legal ramifications, particularly where their actions may be perceived as misaligned with broader systemic expectations. This perceived vulnerability underscores a need for robust support structures that validate and defend staff who act in good faith and in accordance with professional guidelines. Consistent with the findings of McDonnell (2010), who also highlights the emotional and professional strain staff face when navigating PR, the current study suggests that explicit policy guidance, clearly delineating when and how PR is permissible, is essential. Such guidance should balance the necessity of protecting staff from undue blame, with the imperative of safeguarding CYP from potential misuse of power. Providing clear, defensible protocols alongside ongoing

professional development would help to reinforce both ethical accountability and practitioner confidence.

The data illuminated a significant tension in practice, as some staff reflected on the challenges of recognising and supporting CYP with SEMH needs within their settings. Staff expressed concern that SEMH needs are often marginalised, with behaviour-related difficulties not consistently acknowledged as constituting an ALN, despite clear WG guidance (Welsh Government, 2021) stating that difficulties with concentration, instruction-following, and social interaction may qualify as ALN where they substantially impede learning. Particularly striking was staff members' description of feeling 'shamed' (Participant 3) by other professionals for categorising behavioural needs as an ALN. This suggests that professional attitudes, and potentially entrenched stigma, continue to act as significant barriers to the equitable application of policy (Gronholm 2018, Mowat 2014). The findings indicate that the interpretation and implementation of statutory frameworks are mediated not only by individual understanding but also by the broader socio-professional culture shaped by LAs and policymakers. Without systemic efforts to challenge deficit-based perceptions of behavioural needs, there remains a risk that the full inclusive ambitions of ALN legislation will not be realised in practice.

4.5.2.3. Recording and Evaluating. The recording of PR incidents is a critical component not only for tracking frequency but, more importantly, for facilitating reflective evaluation and promoting the continuous development of practice. While incident data can provide useful information regarding patterns and prevalence, recording should not be perceived as an end. Rather, the data suggests that the primary purpose of post-incident evaluation should be to support a 'lessons learned' approach, fostering a reflective culture where incidents are analysed to inform future practice and enhance the safety and wellbeing of both staff and CYP. Ongoing monitoring and staff support require the establishment of robust systems that not only track the use of PR but also offer appropriate professional development and emotional support, particularly in settings where such interventions are more frequent. A culture of continuous improvement should be prioritised, where organisational policies and practices are subject to regular review and refinement based on empirical data and staff feedback.

A culturally responsive approach to the use of PR must also consider the broader systemic implications of data collection and monitoring. Specifically, policies should include the collation and analysis of demographic data such as ethnicity, gender, disability, and ALN status to ensure that the use of PR is equitable and does not disproportionately impact certain groups of CYP (Children's Commissioner for England, 2020; Welsh Government, 2021). This data-driven approach should be underpinned by an intersectional lens, recognising that CYP with multiple marginalised identities (e.g. neurodivergent CYP from ethnic minority backgrounds) may experience PR differently or more frequently than their peers (Gillborn, 2015). Embedding such monitoring into policy frameworks enables schools and LAs to identify patterns of disproportionality, evaluate cultural sensitivity in practice, and implement more inclusive, informed interventions. Therefore, culturally responsive practice in the context of PR is not limited to the immediate moment of intervention, but must involve ongoing critical reflection, structural accountability, and a commitment to equity and social justice (Welsh Government, 2022).

Although not legally binding, the WG's RRPF (2022) sets a clear expectation that schools should maintain comprehensive records of all incidents involving PR, as a means of ensuring transparency, accountability, and the safeguarding of CYP. However, findings from the current research suggest that systemic challenges remain: staff expressed concerns regarding the consistency and coherence of recording practices, specifically in relation to the type of information captured and the thresholds for what constitutes reportable PR. These concerns reflect the broader issue of the absence of clear, universally understood definitions of PR within educational settings. Without clear terminology and expectations, efforts to monitor, evaluate, and ultimately reduce the use of PR risk being undermined, highlighting the need for systemic reform in how schools implement and operationalise such frameworks.

4.5.2.4. Staff Training and Development. The research concluded that training programs vary, with the emphasis on de-escalation techniques prior to the use of PR. Other valuable preventative training types include TI approaches and PBS. WG RRPF (2022) stipulates that staff should receive training in preventative

approaches and de-escalation before they receive training in the use of PR. The current study highlighted that training should encompass de-escalation techniques, understanding triggers, and restorative practices; this finding aligns with that of Stothard (2022) where training in de-escalation, diffusion, and distraction strategies, as well as in crisis prevention, is recognised as best practice. It is helpful to consider how this applies to SDT; schools that focus on PBS and employ de-escalation methods are better equipped to enhance CYP's autonomy, relatedness, and competence. Prioritising these approaches, schools can significantly reduce the necessity for PR while fostering a more inclusive and supportive learning environment (Sun & Chen, 2010).

The data from the current research recognises that regular refresher courses and annual training are essential for retaining information and building staff competence. This finding aligns with the Department for Education's emphasis on the importance of staff competence, training, and accountability (Department for Education, 2024), as well as the ability to plan for appropriate interventions (Department for Education, 2024; Mullowney, 2024). Training should build staffs' confidence in their techniques and address ethical dilemmas, echoing calls for national training standards in PR practices, grounded in a human rights approach (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2021). Viewed through the lens of self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977), the current findings are further supported by Constantine et al. (2019), who report that teachers with higher self-efficacy are more likely to implement preventative strategies and less likely to resort to PR. Strengthening staff training, therefore, not only enhances technical competence but also plays a role in promoting ethical, preventative practices and supporting a school culture oriented towards positive behaviour management.

The current research highlights gaps in the regulation of private training providers, drawing attention to the need for standardised, evidence-based programs to ensure consistent and safe intervention practices within schools. Staff noted significant inconsistencies in training quality and access, undermining ethical and effective practice. This finding can be further considered with the findings of Part 1, which outline that the use of British Institute of Learning Disabilities (BILD) accreditation (2014) and the Restraint Reduction Network (RRN) (2020) training

standards are considered best practices for monitoring the regulation of training methods (Scottish Government, 2024). From a systems perspective, these inconsistencies can be understood as failures across interconnected ecological levels (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), where policy, institutional, and individual practices interact to shape outcomes. A lack of shared definitions and coherent regulated training frameworks compromises staff preparedness, reinforcing systemic inequities in CYP care. The commercialisation of training further exacerbates disparities, placing financial strain on schools and limiting equitable access. In addition, variation in the application of standardised programs suggests a breakdown in systemic feedback processes essential for adaptive learning environments (Senge, 1990). Although WG's RRPF (2022) recommends accredited, competence-based training, it offers limited operational detail. The RRPF specifies that restrictive practice training must be based on a training needs analysis, tailored to individual support plans, and regularly reviewed following incidents of concern (2022). While these principles align with systemic and person-centred approaches, the absence of explicit accountability mechanisms raises pressing questions about where responsibility lies for ensuring quality, accessibility, and responsiveness within the wider educational system.

4.6.   Implications for Educational Psychology Practice

EPs play an important role in supporting schools through their core functions: assessment, intervention, training, research, and policy development (Welsh Government, 2016). Their work spans individual, group, and systemic levels, making them well-positioned to influence school practices regarding PR. Given the systemic nature of PR use, EPs can facilitate meaningful change by working collaboratively with schools across these five domains. EPs can support schools in assessing behavioural needs, identifying triggers, and implementing evidence-based interventions that reduce reliance on PR. By developing tailored strategies, they can help staff better understand and respond to behaviours that may be deemed challenging using preventative and de-escalation techniques.

EPs also play a key role in training and capacity-building. They can provide schools with informed training on TI approaches, conflict de-escalation, and PBS. Beyond direct training, EPs can offer supervision and reflective spaces for staff, allowing them to process difficult incidents, develop resilience, and refine their

approaches to behaviour management. This is especially pertinent given the findings of this research which highlight the complex emotional processes that staff experience when using PR, underlining the need for greater psychological support within educational settings. Park's (2010) meaning-making model (visually represented in Figure 6 below) provides a valuable framework to facilitate deeper reflection among staff following distressing incidents.
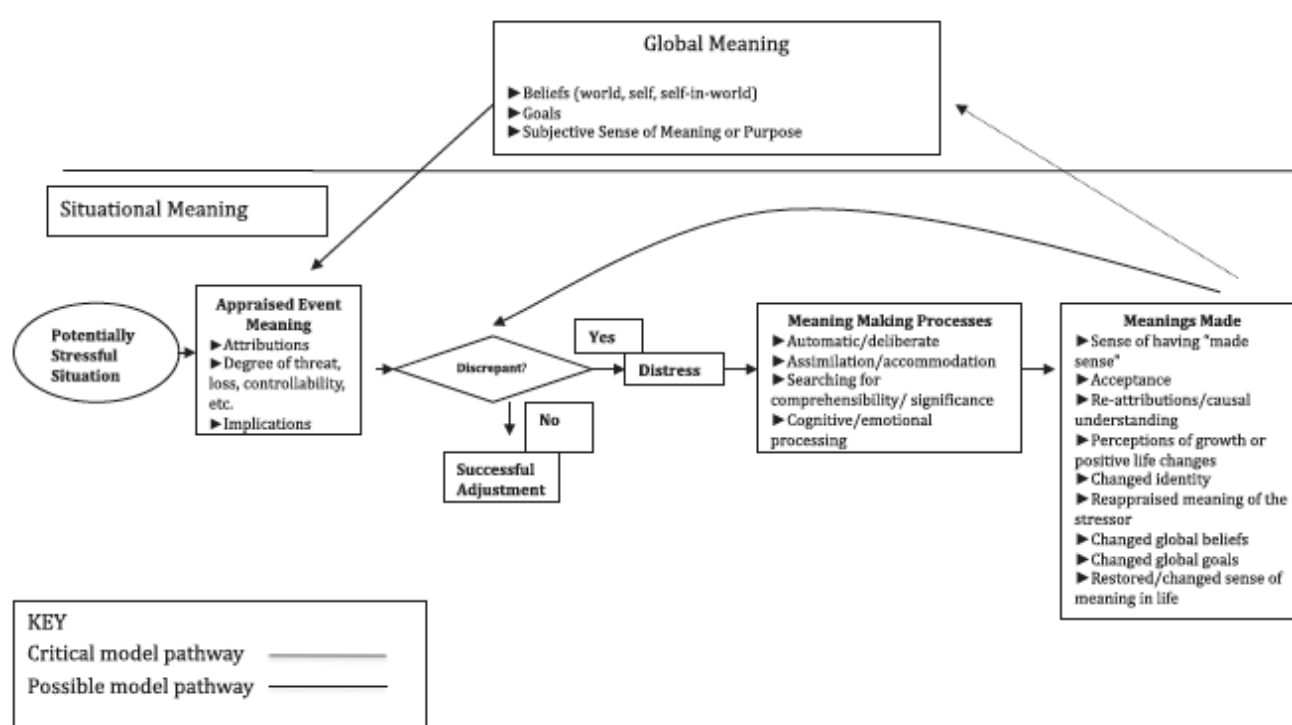

Global Meaning
▶ Beliefs (world, self, self-in-world)
▶ Goals
▶ Subjective Sense of Meaning or Purpose

Situational Meaning

Potentially Stressful Situation

Appraised Event Meaning
▶ Attributions
▶ Degree of threat, loss, controllability, etc.
▶ Implications

Discrepant? — Yes — Distress

No

Successful Adjustment

Meaning Making Processes
▶ Automatic/deliberate
▶ Assimilation/accommodation
▶ Searching for comprehensibility/ significance
▶ Cognitive/emotional processing

Meanings Made
▶ Sense of having "made sense"
▶ Acceptance
▶ Re-attributions/causal understanding
▶ Perceptions of growth or positive life changes
▶ Changed identity
▶ Reappraised meaning of the stressor
▶ Changed global beliefs
▶ Changed global goals
▶ Restored/changed sense of meaning in life

KEY
Critical model pathway ———
Possible model pathway ———

Figure 6: Park's (2010) The Meaning-Making Model

In practice, EPs could develop and deliver structured reflective spaces, such as reflecting teams (Andersen, 1987), restorative debrief sessions, facilitated group supervision, or narrative-based reflection workshops. These can encourage staff to explore the emotional impact of PR use, reconstruct personal meaning, and build adaptive coping strategies. Supporting staff in making sense of these experiences may mitigate the risks of compassion fatigue, moral injury, and emotional disengagement, all of which can negatively affect professional practice and CYP wellbeing. Embedding reflective practices as a core component of post-incident support aligns with TI and relational approaches. Furthermore, by promoting

emotional resilience and ethical self-awareness, EPs can contribute to creating safer, more reflective school cultures where preventative strategies are prioritised over PR.

The emotional toll associated with the use of PR was a prominent theme in this research, with staff members frequently reporting feelings of shame, guilt, and self-doubt. These responses were often accompanied by internal questioning about whether less invasive actions could have been taken, reflecting a deep moral and emotional engagement with their professional responsibilities. The Power Threat Meaning Framework (PTMF) (Johnstone & Boyle) offers a valuable lens through which EPs can support staff in making sense of these complex emotional reactions. Rather than pathologising responses such as shame or anxiety, PTMF encourages a shift toward understanding how these emotions emerge in response to perceived threats within wider systems of power and meaning.

In practical terms, EPs can incorporate the PTMF into supervision, consultation, and reflective practice by helping staff explore the questions outlined in Table 7 below.

Question	Extension
What has happened to you?	How is Power operating in your life
How did it affect you?	What kind of Threats does this pose?
What sense did you make of it?	What is the Meaning of these situations and experiences to you?
What did you have to do to survive?	What kinds of Threat Response are you using?

Table 7: Power Threat Meaning Framework Questions

Translated into practice with an individual, family or group, two additional questions need to be asked, as outlined in Table 8 below.

Question	Extension
What are your strengths	What access to Power resources do you have?
And to integrate all the above: what is your story?	

Table 8: Extended Power Threat Meaning Framework Questions

This structured exploration allows staff to contextualise their responses to challenging incidents, reducing feelings of isolation or personal failure. Importantly, it also opens space for staff to examine how organisational culture, training, policy, and support structures contribute to their decision-making in high-pressure situations. By adopting the PTMF, EPs can foster more compassionate, system-aware dialogues that not only aid in emotional recovery but also promote critical reflection on practice. This approach supports professional resilience, encourages systemic learning, and contributes to the development of psychologically informed, relationally attuned school environments where the use of PR is continually questioned and refined.

The findings also suggest the importance of recognising that some CYP may seek physical contact as a form of emotional regulation or connection, highlighting the complexity of interpreting behaviours that precede or follow PR (McDonnell & Ridout, 2019). EPs have a role in supporting staff to distinguish between behaviour that challenges and behaviour that communicates unmet emotional or sensory needs (Bombèr, 2007; Greene, 2008). For some CYP, especially those with attachment difficulties or trauma histories, safe and attuned physical proximity can play a regulatory role and should not be automatically conflated with boundary-testing or defiance (Geddes, 2006; Siegel & Bryson, 2013). Understanding the environmental and relational factors influencing behaviour is essential for developing nuanced, individualised approaches that move beyond a 'one size fits all' model (Cooper & Jacobs, 2011). EPs can guide staff through formulation-led approaches to identify underlying needs, sensory sensitivities, attachment patterns, and past experiences that may shape a CYP's presentation (Johnstone & Dallos, 2013).

By promoting this depth of understanding, EPs can help reduce reliance on PR and support more preventative, relationship-based interventions. This work must be embedded across multiple levels of the system, from direct consultation with staff and CYP, to influencing whole-school policies and informing local and national guidance. Future EP research and practice can play a pivotal role in co-producing guidance with stakeholders, advocating for TI frameworks, and evaluating alternatives to PR that uphold CYP's rights and dignity (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2021). In doing so, EPs are uniquely positioned to lead a cultural shift

toward safer, more ethical and relationally attuned practices within educational settings.

4.7.   Strengths and Limitations

Strengths and limitations of the current research are outlined in Table 9 below.

Strengths	Limitations
The research's successful engagement with staff, a group that is often difficult to reach due to time constraints, gatekeeping, and the sensitive nature of topics like PR. By capturing the perspectives of staff directly involved in the day-to-day life of schools, the study provides valuable, experience-based insights that enhance the ecological validity of the findings. This access to staff adds depth to the research, offering a richer understanding of practices and challenges that might otherwise be overlooked.	The absence of CYP's voices, despite the initial intention to include them during the planning stages. The decision to exclude CYP from direct participation was not due to methodological oversight but rather to the reluctance of parents to provide consent for their CYP's involvement in the study. This limitation is significant, as it results in an incomplete representation of the experiences surrounding the use of PR in schools.
The researcher's ability to engage staff during the interview process, creating an environment of trust and openness. By effectively putting staff at ease, the researcher encouraged candid and thoughtful responses, which in turn enhanced the validity of the data gathered. This rapport-building ensured that staff felt comfortable sharing their experiences and perspectives, thereby providing more in-depth insights into the practices and challenges faced in schools.	By relying solely on the perspectives of staff, the findings present a one-sided account of the issue, capturing only the professional and procedural aspects while lacking direct insight into how CYP perceive and experience PR. Without the voices of the CYP's themselves, or views of their parents/carers, this research is unable to fully explore the emotional, psychological, and relational impacts from their standpoint. While staff reflections may offer valuable interpretations of how PR affects CYP, these remain indirect assessments rather than firsthand accounts.
Its unique contribution as the first study to examine the use of PR exclusively within the Welsh educational context. By addressing a previously underexplored area, the study fills an important gap in the existing literature and provides a foundation for more contextually relevant discussions around practice, policy, and ethics in Wales. While pioneering research inevitably carries	The reliance on a singular qualitative approach, which, while valuable for capturing in-depth perspectives and lived experiences, limits the generalisability of the findings. Incorporating a mixed-methods approach could have significantly strengthened the study by allowing for a broader and more comprehensive exploration of school staff perspectives

limitations, it also plays a critical role in opening space for further dialogue, reflection, and the development of more informed, evidence-based approaches tailored to the specific needs of Welsh schools.	on the use of PR in Welsh schools. Though, reflecting on the findings of both existing and the current research, suggesting that there is no agreed definition of PR and consequently a lack of a robust recording system, it is uncertain whether gathering reliable quantitative data would have been possible.

Table 9: Strengths and Limitations of the Research

4.8. Suggestions for Future Research

It is hoped that this research can be shared widely, by means of publication, to inform larger audiences of its findings. This will support further research within this topic area, and there is a hope that this research may support the development of policies and guidance documents to re-evaluate the use of PR within schools in Wales, and across the UK.

The current research highlights the imperative need for the development and widespread dissemination of a universal definition, consistent terminology, and a standardised system for recording incidents of PR in schools, particularly from a WG perspective. Establishing a common understanding would promote greater consistency in practice and enhance the comparability of data across settings and LAs. To achieve this, preliminary surveys could be conducted to establish consensus around preferred terminology and definitions. In parallel, action research could usefully support the development, piloting, and evaluation of a system for recording, monitoring, and reviewing PR practices. Additionally, the examination of case studies from schools that report either frequent or minimal use of PR could offer valuable insights into contextual processes and decision-making practices. Without the establishment of standardised definitions and recording procedures, future research in Wales, such as efforts to capture a broader range of staff perspectives or to generate statistical data on the prevalence, frequency, and situational factors associated with PR, will face significant limitations in terms of generalisability and validity. Further investigation in this area is essential to support a more nuanced understanding of the complex interactions between policy, practice, and individual experience. Future research could then expand to the inclusion of CYP's voices, of those who have experienced PR in schools across Wales. Capturing their

perspectives is essential for gaining a more comprehensive and balanced understanding of the emotional, psychological, and social impacts of PR practices. Ethical considerations and safeguarding protocols must be carefully managed to ensure that CYP can safely and meaningfully contribute to research without distress or harm.

4.9.   References

Ainsworth, M. D. S. (1978). The Bowlby-Ainsworth attachment theory. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, *1*(3), 436-438.
https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X00075828

Allen, K., Kern, M. L., Vella-Brodrick, D., Hattie, J., & Waters, L. (2018). What schools need to know about fostering school belonging: A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, *30*, 1-34.

Andersen, T. (1987). The reflecting team: Dialogue and meta-dialogue in clinical work. *Family process*, *26*(4), 415-428.

Arthur, L. (2010). Insider-outsider perspectives in comparative education. Seminar Presentation at the Research Centre for International and Comparative Studies,

Association of Educational Psychologists. (2018). *Motion 5 - call to action to promote the reduction of the use of physical restraint in schools.* (AEP Manchester, Issue.

Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, *84*(2), 191-215. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.84.2.191

Barnard-Brak, L., Xiao, F., & Xiaoya, L. (2014). Factors Associated with the Use of Restraints in the Public Schools. *Education and Treatment of Children*, *37*(3), 461-475. https://doi.org/10.1353/etc.2014.0022

Bath, H. (2008). The three pillars of trauma-informed care. *Reclaiming children and youth*, *17*(3), 17-21.

Bhaskar, R. (2013). *A realist theory of science*. Routledge.

Bombèr, L. M. (2007). *Inside I'm hurting: practical strategies for supporting children with attachment difficulties in schools*. Worth.

Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and Loss* (Second Edition ed., *1*). Basic Books.

Bowlby, J. (1979). The Bowlby-Ainsworth attachment theory. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, *2*(4), 637-638. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X00064955

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners*. sage.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative research in sport, exercise and health*, *11*(4), 589-597.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022). *Thematic analysis: a practical guide*. sage.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2023). Toward good practice in thematic analysis: Avoiding
common problems and be(com)ing a knowing researcher. *International
Journal of Transgender Health*, *24*(1), 1-6.
https://doi.org/10.1080/26895269.2022.2129597

British Institute of Learning Disabilities. (2014). *BILD Code of Practice for Minimising
the Use of Restrictive Physical Interventions: Planning, Developing and
Delivering Training - A Guide for Purchasers of Training, Training
Organisations and Trainers*. British Institute of Learning Disabilities.
https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=3qRVrgEACAAJ

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development : experiments by
nature and design*. Harvard University Press.

Brown, W. J., Nedelman, A. J., Phillips, W. G., Stankus, J. S., Amoscato, L. E., &
Schwartz, E. (2022). Traumatic stress symptoms predict restraint incidents in
children and adolescents in psychiatric residential treatment. *Journal of
traumatic stress*, *35*(2), 694-705.

Brunzell, T., Stokes, H., & Waters, L. (2016). Trauma-Informed Positive Education:
Using Positive Psychology to Strengthen Vulnerable Students. *Contemporary
School Psychology*, *20*(1), 63-83. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40688-015-0070-x

Challenging Behaviour Foundation. (2019). *Reducing restrictive intervention of
children and young people*. Retrieved September 12, 2024, from
https://www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk/wp-
content/uploads/2021/03/reducingrestrictiveinterventionofchildrenandyoungpe
oplereport.pdf

Children's Commissioner for England. (2020). *The children who no-one knows what to do
with*. Retrieved July, 25 from
https://assets.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpuploads/2020/11/cco-the-children-
who-no-one-knows-what-to-do-with.pdf

Cialdini, R. B., & Trost, M. R. (1998). Social influence: Social norms, conformity and
compliance. In *The handbook of social psychology, 1-2, 4th ed.* (pp. 151-192).
McGraw-Hill.

Constantine, J. L., Fernald, J. R., Robinson, J., & Courtney, M. B. (2019). Best
Practices Guidebook: Supporting Students' Self-Efficacy.

Cooke, J. E., Kochendorfer, L. B., Stuart-Parrigon, K. L., Koehn, A. J., & Kerns, K. A. (2019). Parent–child attachment and children's experience and regulation of emotion: A meta-analytic review. *Emotion*, *19*(6), 1103.

Cooper, P., & Jacobs, B. (2011). *From inclusion to engagement: Helping students engage with schooling through policy and practice*. John Wiley & Sons.

Cridland, E. K., Jones, S. C., Caputi, P., & Magee, C. A. (2015). Qualitative research with families living with autism spectrum disorder: Recommendations for conducting semistructured interviews. *Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disability*, *40*(1), 78-91.

Cusack, P., Cusack, F., McAndrew, S., McKeown, M., & Duxbury, J. (2018). An integrative review exploring the physical and psychological harm in herent in using restraint in mental health inpatient settings. *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing*. https://doi.org/10.1111/inm.12432

Demkowicz, O., Bagnall, C., Hennessey, A., Pert, K., Bray, L., Ashworth, E., & Mason, C. (2023). 'It's scary starting a new school': Children and young people's perspectives on wellbeing support during educational transitions. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, *93*(4), 1017-1033. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12617

Department for Education. (2013). *Use of reasonable force; Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies*. Retrieved September 20, 2024, from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a819959ed915d74e6233224/Use_of_reasonable_force_advice_Reviewed_July_2015.pdf

Department for Education. (2024). *Reasonable Force, Restraint & Restrictive Practices in Alternative Provision and Special Schools. Research Report* [Reports - Research](978-1-83870-537-4). (UK Department for Education, Issue. Retrieved September 21, 2024, from https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=ED649946&site=ehost-live&scope=site

Dwyer, S., & Buckle, J. (2009). The Space Between: On Being an Insider-Outsider in Qualitative Research. *Int J Qual Meth*, *8*. https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690900800105

Equality and Human Rights Commission. (2021). Restraint in schools inquiry: using meaningful data to protect children's rights. Retrieved September 13, 2024,

from https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/inquiry-restraint-in-schools-report.pdf

Fearon, R. P., Bakermans-Kranenburg, M. J., Van IJzendoorn, M. H., Lapsley, A. M., & Roisman, G. I. (2010). The significance of insecure attachment and disorganization in the development of children's externalizing behavior: a meta-analytic study. *Child development*, *81*(2), 435-456.

Fogt, J. B., George, M. P., Kern, L., White, G. P., & George, N. L. (2008). Physical Restraint of Students with Behavior Disorders in Day Treatmen t and Residential Settings. *Behavioral Disorders*, *34*(1), 4-13. https://doi.org/10.1177/019874290803400101

Geddes, H. (2006). Attachment in the classroom: The links between children's early experience, emotional well-being and performance in school.

Gillborn, D. (2015). Intersectionality, critical race theory, and the primacy of racism: Race, class, gender, and disability in education. *Qualitative inquiry*, *21*(3), 277-287.

Greene, R. W. (2008). *Lost at school: Why our kids with behavioral challenges are falling through the cracks and how we can help them*. Simon and Schuster.

Gross, J. J. (2002). Emotion regulation: affective, cognitive, and social consequences. *Psychophysiology*, *39*(3), 281-291. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0048577201393198

Halcomb, E. J., & Davidson, P. M. (2006). Is verbatim transcription of interview data always necessary? *Appl Nurs Res*, *19*(1), 38-42. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apnr.2005.06.001

Hattie, J. (2008). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. routledge.

Hayden, C., & Pike, S. (2005). Including Positive Handling Strategies within Training in Behaviour Management: The Team-Teach Approach [Journal Articles; Reports - Evaluative]. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, *10*(3), 173-187. https://doi.org/10.1177/1363275205056705

Health and Care Professions Council. (2024). *Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics*. Retrieved December 02, 2024, from https://www.hcpc-uk.org/globalassets/resources/standards/standards-of-conduct-performance-and-ethics-2024.pdf

Hellawell, D. (2006). Inside–out: analysis of the insider–outsider concept as a heuristic device to develop reflexivity in students doing qualitative research. *Teaching in higher education*, *11*(4), 483-494.

Hodgkiss, B., & Harding, E. (2024). Exploring views of physical restraint in schools: Pupil experiences, relationships with staff, and alternative strategies. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, *40*(1), 59-73. https://ovidsp.ovid.com/ovidweb.cgi?T=JS&CSC=Y&NEWS=N&PAGE=fulltext&D=psyc22&DO=10.1080%2f02667363.2023.2258788

Jameton, A. (1993). Dilemmas of moral distress: moral responsibility and nursing practice. *AWHONNS Clin Issues Perinat Womens Health Nurs*, *4*(4), 542-551.

Johnstone, L., & Boyle, M. The Power Threat Meaning Framework: An Alternative Nondiagnostic Conceptual System. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, *0*(0), 0022167818793289. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022167818793289

Johnstone, L., & Dallos, R. (2013). *Formulation in Psychology and Psychotherapy: Making Sense of People's Problems*. Routledge. https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=ogKfuAAACAAJ

Kohlberg, L. (1981). *The Philosophy of Moral Development: Moral Stages and the Idea of Justice.* Harper & Row.

Lawrence, C., Rees, J., & Ferguson, E. (2010). Group-based evaluations for pupil-on-teacher violence: The impact of teacher intervention strategy. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, *20*(5), 377-389.

Laymon, S. R. (2018). *Experiences of special education teachers performing physical restraints involving students with disabilities: A transcendental phenomenological study*. Liberty University.

Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, Appraisal, and Coping*. Springer Publishing Company. https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=i-ySQQuUpr8C

Martin, J. G. (2020). TEACHING WITHOUT FEAR. *The Learning Professional*, *41*(2), 36-38.

Maxwell, J. A. (2012). *A realist approach for qualitative research*. Sage.

Mcafee, J., Schwilk, C., & Mitruski, M. (2006). Public Policy on Physical Restraint of Children with Disabilities in P ublic Schools.

McCarthy, J., & Monteverde, S. (2018). The standard account of moral distress and why we should keep it. Hec Forum,

McDonnell, A., & Ridout, S. (2019). *Reflective Journey: A Practitioners Guide to the Low Arousal Approach*. Studio 3, Alcester, UK.

McDonnell, A. A. (2010). *Managing aggressive behaviour in care settings: Understanding and applying low arousal approaches*. Wiley Blackwell.

McGrath, C., Palmgren, P. J., & Liljedahl, M. (2019). Twelve tips for conducting qualitative research interviews. *Medical Teacher*, *41*(9), 1002-1006. https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2018.1497149

McKenna, R. (2015). Contextualism in Epistemology. *Analysis*, *75*(3), 489-503.

Milligan, L. (2016). Insider-outsider-inbetweener? Researcher positioning, participative methods and cross-cultural educational research. *Compare*, *46*(2), 235-250. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2014.928510

Mullowney, K. (2024). Positive handling practice in schools a scoping review of current advice and guidance and a qualitative exploration of it's implementation in English schools. *Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences*, *85*(11-A), No Pagination Specified. https://ovidsp.ovid.com/ovidweb.cgi?T=JS&CSC=Y&NEWS=N&PAGE=fulltext&D=psyc23&AN=2024-95383-279

Ozturk, L. (2023). Exploring the relevance of an attachment theory perspective to the behaviour management of challenging students: perceptions of education professionals advocate an attachment theory perspective. *Pastoral Care in Education*, 1-22. https://doi.org/10.1080/02643944.2024.2371793

Park, C. L. (2010). Making sense of the meaning literature: An integrative review of meaning making and its effects on adjustment to stressful life events. *Psychological Bulletin*, *136*(2), 257-301. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0018301

Perry, B. D. (2006). Applying principles of neurodevelopment to clinical work with maltreated and traumatized children: The neurosequential model of therapeutics.

Perry, B. D., & Szalavitz, M. (2008). *The Boy who was Raised as a Dog: And Other Stories from a Child Psychiatrist's Notebook : what Traumatized Children Can Teach Us about Life, Loss and Healing*. Basic Books. https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=ARcRwgEACAAJ

Pervin, N., & Mokhtar, M. (2022). The Interpretivist Research Paradigm: A Subjective Notion of a Social Context. *International Journal of Academic Research in*

Progressive Education and Development, *11*.
https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v11-i2/12938

Peterson, R., Albrecht, S. F., & Johns, B. (2009). CCBD's Position Summary on the Use of Physical Restraint Procedures in School Settings. *Behavioral Disorders*, *34*(4), 223-234. https://doi.org/10.1177/019874290903400404

Raider-Roth, M. B. (2005). *Trusting what you know: The high stakes of classroom relationships*. Jossey-Bass.

Rest, J. R., & Narvez, D. (1994). *Moral Development in the Professions: Psychology and Applied Ethics* (1st ed.).
https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410601162

Ryan, J. B., & Peterson, R. L. (2004). Physical Restraint in School. *Behavioral Disorders*, *29*(2), 154-168. https://doi.org/10.1177/019874290402900206

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, *55*(1), 68-78. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2009). Understanding research philosophies and approaches. *Research Methods for Business Students*, *4*, 106-135.

Scottish Government. (2024). *Physical Intervention Guidance*. Retrieved September 12, 2024, from https://www.gov.scot/publications/included-engaged-involved-part-3-relationships-rights-based-approach-physical-intervention-schools/

Senge, P. M. (1990). *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. Doubleday/Currency.
https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=I9G3AAAAIAAJ

Siegel, D., & Bryson, T. (2013). The Whole-Brain Child: 12 Revolutionary Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind.

Smith, J. A. (1995). Semi structured interviewing and qualitative analysis.

Steckley, L. (2017). Catharsis, Containment and Physical Restraint in Residential Child car e. *The British Journal of Social Work*, *48*(6), 1645-1663.
https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcx131

Stothard, K. (2022). *Accessing the views of children and young people who have experienced physical restraint in school* [Student thesis: Doctor of Educational and Child Psychology].

Sun, H., & Chen, A. (2010). A Pedagogical Understanding of the Self-Determination Theory in Physical Education. *Quest*, *62*(4), 364-384. https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2010.10483655

Sweller, J. (2011). Cognitive load theory. In *Psychology of learning and motivation* (*55*, pp. 37-76). Elsevier.

The British Psychological Society. (2020). *Incorporating trauma-informed approaches in clinical practice: Guidelines for clinical psychologists*. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/www.bps.org.uk/files/Policy/Policy%20-%20Files/Incorporating%20trauma-informed%20approaches%20in%20clinical%20practice.pdf

The British Psychological Society. (2021). *Code of Ethics and Conduct*. Retrieved September 24, 2024, from https://cms.bps.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-06/BPS%20Code%20of%20Ethics%20and%20Conduct.pdf

The Challenging Behaviour Foundation. (2019). *Reducing Restrictive Intervention of Children and Young People; Case study and survey results*. Retrieved September 18, 2024, from https://www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/reducingrestrictiveinterventionofchildrenandyoungpeoplereport.pdf

The Restraint Reduction Network. (2020). *Restraint Reduction Network (RRN) Training Standards*. Retrieved November 02, 2024, from https://www.bild.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/RRN_Standards_1.2_Jan_2020.pdf

Thomson, P., & Gunter, H. (2011). Inside, outside, upside down: The fluidity of academic researcher 'identity'in working with/in school. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, *34*(1), 17-30.

Trauma Informed Schools UK. (2025). *Our Mission*. Retrieved January 03, 2025 from https://www.traumainformedschools.co.uk/home/our-mission

UK Parliament. (1996). *UK Education Act*. London: HMSO

Vygotsky, L. S., & Cole, M. (1978). *Mind in society: Development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard university press.

Welsh Government. (2013). *Safe and effective intervention – use of reasonable force and searching for weapons*. Cardiff: Crown. Retrieved August 04, 2024, from

https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/safe-and-effective-intervention-use-of-reasonable-force-and-searching-for-weapons.pdf

Welsh Government. (2016). *Educational Psychologists in Wales*. Retrieved Feburary 07, 2024, from https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/educational-psychologists-in-wales.pdf

Welsh Government. (2021). *The Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales 2021*. Cardiff: Crown. Retrieved August 04, 2024, from https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2024-04/220622-the-additional-learning-needs-code-for-wales-2021%20%282%29.pdf

Welsh Government. (2022). *Reducing restrictive practices framework: children's rights impact assessment*. Cardiff: Welsh Government. Retrieved August 04, 2024, from https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/pdf-versions/2021/10/1/1634560816/reducing-restrictive-practices-framework-childrens-rights-impact-assessment.pdf

Welsh Government. (2024). *Pupils educated other than at school: September 2023 to August 2024 (revised)*. Retrieved July 02, 2025 from https://www.gov.wales/pupils-educated-other-school-september-2023-august-2024-revised-html

William, F. K. A. (2024). Interpretivism or constructivism: Navigating research paradigms in social science research. *International Journal of Research Publications*, *143*(1), 134-138.

Willis, J., Harrison, A., & Allen, J. L. (2021). Pupils with social, emotional and mental health special needs: Perceptions of how restrictive physical interventions impact their relationships with teaching staff. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *97*, 103219.

"I hate it. However, I recognise that there are times that I have to."

Exploring the Use of Physical Restraint in Schools in Wales:

Staff Experiences, Evaluating Approaches,

and Informing Future Practice

Part 3: Major Research Reflective Account

Natalie Jane Phillips

Word count: 8,509

5. Part 3: Major Research Reflective Account

5.1. Introduction

Part 3 presents a reflective and reflexive account of my research process. This appraisal offers the opportunity to critically analyse the research process undertaken, with a focus on particular stages of the research and the decision-making processes. It will consider two main elements: the development of the research and researcher, and the contribution of knowledge and dissemination. Part 3 is written in the first person to convey a reminder of how scientist researchers have emotions about the chosen topic of study, which in turn have caused me to reflect more deeply on the emotive, individual and subjective aspects of my research experiences (Davies, 2012). This appraisal will consider how my own values, beliefs, experiences, and views influenced the research project from the early stages through to the write up. I will also reflect on how the research has impacted on my professional practice and what I consider to be important implications for practice. In doing so, it is hoped that this will provide the reader with transparency of the research process and what I believe to be a unique contribution to the topic area.

5.2. Critical Account of The Development of the Research and Researcher

5.2.1. *Development of the Research Topic*

This thesis was completed as part of the Doctoral Training in Wales to become an Educational Psychologist (EP), and aimed to explore staff's experiences of the use of physical restraint (PR) in schools in Wales. To explain the development of my thesis, it is important to outline my background and positionality which encompasses my prior knowledge of the topic area and its application in my personal and professional experiences.

Prior to accepting a position on the Doctoral Training, my professional career has spanned many different sectors that worked with, and supported the development of, children and young people (CYP); as described in Part 2, I recognise myself as an 'in-betweener' researcher (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Milligan, 2016). I initially trained as a primary school teacher, and though I worked with CYP who displayed behaviours that some people may deem challenging, I did not

personally experience using PR in my practice. Much of my career between being a teacher and my final profession before securing a position on the Doctorate, involved working with CYP and their families. For many different reasons, they felt unsupported, unheard, and had expressed traumatic experiences due to their economic status, availability of resources (including access to appropriate education), disability, or their sexual identity.

Prior to securing a position on the Doctorate, I worked for the National Health Service (NHS) as a Behaviour Specialist for adolescents and adults with learning disabilities who presented with behaviours that may be deemed challenging. Much of my role involved conducting psychological assessments to consider the needs of these individuals, creating bespoke support plans, training staff members (or people who cared for them) on the use of primary and secondary de-escalation strategies, as well as re-active (restrictive) interventions in line with the Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) model (The Challenging Behaviour Foundation, 2021). This was ultimately the experience that opened my eyes to the use of restrictive practices and PR, and the uncertainty around the policies that protected CYP and adults came to light.

A significant shift in my professional thinking regarding the use of PR occurred during my involvement with an adolescent who appeared to be subject to an inappropriate and potentially abusive cycle of PR practices at a systemic level. In working with this individual, their family, and the educational setting supporting them, I began to observe inconsistencies in the data provided, particularly in relation to the frequency and nature of PR. These discrepancies often contrasted with the qualitative accounts shared in conversation with staff, and when queried, further clarification was not forthcoming. This experience prompted a deeper professional commitment to examining and questioning the use of restrictive practices. It also marked the beginning of a more proactive stance in my work, as I sought to engage stakeholders in reflective dialogue and encouraged greater scrutiny and transparency in settings where restrictive practices appeared to be routinely implemented.

To support my initial thoughts and ideas about my potential thesis topic, the Constructionist Model of Informed Reasoned Action (COMOIRA) framework (Gameson et al., 2003) was used to guide my thoughts, consider areas of importance, and engage in reflective and reflexive self-questions. The model also helped me to outline next steps, once the topic was decided, and guided me through my research process. Though I did have multiple ideas of areas of research which I find interesting, I considered the use of PR in schools an important and under-researched topic. I realised that I would have to be mindful of my own potential biases in wanting to advocate for CYP who have experienced PR. As a trainee EP, I had already encountered instances whereby schools were sharing with me that they were using PR with their CYP, and it appeared that there was no prior conversation about why they were choosing to use PR, alternative strategies, or avenues of support for schools. It was during these moments that my professional interest in this topic was reignited, reinforcing a strong commitment in exploring this area further and initiating meaningful dialogue within the Welsh education system. This has enabled me to be determined and focused, despite the difficulties that came my way requiring problem solving.

I wanted to ensure that my approach to this research provided some deeper understanding of the use of PR in schools in Wales, whilst acknowledging the systemic and psychological considerations. This thesis demonstrates my passion for this topic and examines how educational psychology can contribute to fostering positive change. I felt that my in-betweener research position was well placed for this topic, fostering the co-creation of knowledge with staff and facilitating more authentic and contextually grounded understanding. As both a practitioner within the Welsh education system and a researcher, I occupied a dual role that allowed me to engage with staff from a position of shared professional language and experience, while also maintaining the necessary critical distance to question practices and challenge assumptions. This "in-betweenness" positioned me as neither a complete insider nor outsider, what Dwyer and Buckle (2009) refer to as the "space between", enabling deeper rapport and more open dialogue, but also requiring careful reflexivity to ensure that prior knowledge did not cloud interpretation.

Reflexivity was central throughout the research process, and I remained attentive to the ways in which my own values, experiences, and emotional responses shaped the questions I asked, the interactions I had, and the meaning I made from the data (Appendix J demonstrates an extract from my research diary). Consistent with Braun and Clarke's (2022) argument that researcher subjectivity is not a limitation but a vital component of qualitative inquiry, I viewed my positionality as a resource for generating insight rather than a source of bias to be eliminated. This stance allowed for a more transparent, ethical, and collaborative approach to knowledge production, and aligned with the values of educational psychology, which emphasise relational practice and contextual sensitivity.

5.2.2. Philosophical Assumptions

Given that ontology considers the theory of the nature of reality, and epistemology concerns our knowledge/what it is possible to know and find out about 'reality' (Braun & Clarke, 2013), our commitment to these concepts is vital for deeply exploring how we interpret the world and its phenomena.

As I explored different epistemological and ontological perspectives, the chosen research paradigm of Interpretivism, and the philosophical approaches of Critical Realism and Contextualism, helped to further articulate, expand my thinking, and refine my existing beliefs on the topic. While alternative paradigms such as positivism and post-positivism were considered, their emphasis on objectivity, measurement, and generalisability rendered them unsuitable for capturing the relational, emotionally nuanced, and context-specific nature of staff experiences (Cohen et al., 2002). Constructivism and social constructionism were also explored. Although these perspectives acknowledge the importance of meaning-making, constructivism's focus on individual sense-making processes was considered less attuned to broader systemic and structural influences (Packer, 2017). Social constructionism, while focused on the co-construction of knowledge through discourse and social interaction (Burr, 2015), seemed to underemphasise that reality is seen as socially constructed through language, communication, and shared meanings that influence material and institutional structures.

In contrast, Critical Realism offered a valuable middle ground, sitting between the realist and relativist stance on reality; critical realists recognise that there is an objective reality, though our knowledge of this reality can be subjective, evolving, and contextual (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Bryman, 2016; Haig & Evers, 2015). It acknowledges that real mechanisms, such as policy, power relations, and institutional norms, shape lived experience, while also recognising the value of subjective meaning-making (Bhaskar, 2013). Contextualism highlights that the truth-conditions of knowledge varies depending on the contexts in which the claims are made (Pynn, 2014) and further supported the examination of how knowledge and understanding are situated within specific socio-cultural environments, enabling a richer interpretation of professional experiences. This philosophical combination, situated within an Interpretivist paradigm, aligned well with the applied and relational nature of the research. It also reflected my own positionality as a practitioner-researcher, supporting a critically reflective and ethically attuned approach to understanding complex educational practices. With this understanding, my philosophical assumptions underpinned every decision that I made during my research journey from the conception of my ideas, the literature review (Teherani et al., 2015), analysis of the findings, right through to the plan of the dissemination of the findings. As a result, I dedicated significant time to conducting research, seeking input from colleagues, and engaging in supervision to critically examine my philosophical stance and thoughtfully assess its influence (McSweeney, 2021). Reflecting on my research journey, I recognise that I had developed a clear sense of how I wanted to approach the study.

5.2.3. Exploration of the Current Literature

5.2.3.1. Challenges in Refining the Literature Search. When planning to conduct my literature search, I spent a lot of time considering the search terms that I should use. As explained within both Part 1 and Part 2, there is no universal term used for PR; there are multiple definitions and different terminology used that encompasses a multitude of practices concerning the use of PR within schools. I recognised the difficulties that this was going to cause at the beginning of my research journey, and I sought advice and consultation with a University Specialist Librarian, with whom I explored this concept further. I conducted a narrative search of the literature to explore the differing terminology used in practice (Siddaway et al.,

2019) prior to meeting with the Librarian, so that informed decisions on what to include could be made. This process helped identify the most frequently used terms and phrases, which were then used to create a more focused and detailed search strategy, allowing for a more refined search.

During this process, I gained valuable insights into the importance of precision in selecting key terms, which helped maintain a balance between specificity and sensitivity (Siddaway et al., 2019), especially considering the differing contexts that PR is researched. Due to the different contexts, sectors and areas of work that PR is used, I found that there were a significant number of papers from healthcare perspectives, psychiatry in-patient facilities, and social care settings. This was the case, even with 'school' (and similar alternative phrases) included within the search terms. I came to the conclusion to use all the most common terms used, which ensured that I could capture as much relevant literature as possible, though it did mean that there were a significant number of papers that I had to work through and manually review. Though this was time consuming, I still feel that this method has ensured that I captured as much relative literature that I could have at that time.

5.2.3.2. Geographical Location of the Chosen Literature. I spent considerable time reflecting on my decision to focus exclusively on literature and research conducted within the United Kingdom (UK). I grappled with conflicting thoughts about whether this was the right approach, but I consistently returned to my belief in the importance of context, guided by my epistemological stance. Given the lack of research specifically exploring the use of PR within the context of education in Wales, I felt that by considering research from the wider UK, I was already losing some of the specific context I sought. As a researcher, I recognise that cultural differences profoundly impact educational practices; cultural contexts shape teaching approaches, influences behaviour, and affects policy implementation in various ways (Dulfer et al., 2017; Harris & Jones, 2018; Markey et al., 2023; Parpala et al., 2013) and these cultural nuances leads to different approaches in classroom management, curriculum design, and assessment methods. Understanding these differences is crucial for myself and other researchers and educators, as it allows us to develop more effective and culturally responsive approaches.

To further clarify, my intention was never to dismiss the valuable research conducted globally. In fact, I initially conducted a comprehensive literature search without restricting the location. However, upon reviewing the literature, I made the decision to indefinitely exclude literature from outside of the UK. Whilst international papers provide valuable insights into the use of PR in educational settings, I felt it was crucial to remain true to my research principles and the contextual framework I had established. This decision was influenced by my intuition, research philosophy, and commitment to staying true to myself as a researcher.

5.2.3.3. Appraisal Method. Drawing on insights from my doctoral studies, as I conducted my research, I relied on certain tools to enhance transparency and rigour in the literature review process. One such tool was the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP

), widely used for promoting a systematic and consistent approach to evaluating literature (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, 2024). Given its reputation for simplifying complex tasks and ensuring accountability, I chose CASP to support my quality appraisal process. In applying the CASP framework, particular attention was paid to whose voices were centred or marginalised in the studies reviewed. The CASP tool was helpful in highlighting key methodological and ethical features of each study, but I found it less well equipped to prompt deeper reflection on power, voice, and inclusivity, particularly in relation to CYP rights/voices and participation. While CASP provided a helpful structure for assessing rigour, I believe that further critical engagement is needed alongside such tools to fully interrogate whose perspectives are included or excluded, and the implications of that for knowledge production. My familiarity with CASP, from using the tools during other research projects, made it a go-to choice; in my view, CASP effectively balances structure with flexibility in its review criteria. While I appreciated its role in maintaining a structured approach and identifying quality studies, I found that the provided 'hints' did not always align with my interpretation of the questions' intent, a critique supported by Petticrew and Roberts (2006) who emphasise the importance of aligning appraisal tools with the specific context of the research. While I recognise its value in offering consistency, I remain open, and hope to, explore alternative appraisal tools in my future research.

While none of the included papers in the literature review are explicitly position papers, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (2021) and the Challenging Behaviour Foundation (2019) report serve this function by articulating an organisational stance, presenting supporting evidence, and making direct recommendations for policy and practice change. Additionally, Mullowney's (2024) research commissioned by the AEP is a direct response to their stated "motion" to reduce PR in schools, aligning with the purpose of a position statement even if the output is a research paper. I elected to include these papers within the literature review to address the notable lack of empirical research on the use of PR in UK schools. While the inclusion of such papers presents certain limitations namely, their tendency to reflect subjective viewpoints and their lack of empirical data, they offer valuable insights into prevailing professional discourses, policy orientations, and ethical considerations. In the context of this research, these papers contribute to a broader understanding of the topic by articulating stakeholder concerns and highlighting areas of tension and ambiguity within current practice. Nonetheless, the interpretive weight afforded to these papers has been moderated, and their content critically appraised, to ensure that conclusions drawn remain grounded in a balanced and rigorous analysis of the available evidence.

5.2.4. Reflections on the Methodology and Research Design

5.2.4.1. Ethics. A table outlining ethical considerations is detailed in Part 2. During my research, I encountered various ethical challenges and obstacles along the way, which played a significant role in shaping the journey and outcome. The ethical challenges and barriers in conducting research in this topic area, with a hard-to-reach participant group, were key moments which punctuate how I view my research journey. Due to this, further reflections regarding the ethical considerations taken are discussed throughout the remaining sub-sections of this section.

5.2.4.2. Participant Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria. Though I was unsuccessful in recruiting CYP participants in this research, it is important to reflect on this process that was undertaken to try and recruit CYP. I felt it was important to ensure that the CYP's experience of PR be recent (within a 12month period). This, I felt, was in line with my epistemology stance of contextualism; I felt that for the context to be truly considered as important in this research, the timeframe in which

the experience was gained was a factor that needed to be outlined. I wanted to ensure that the CYP's experience was sat within the education system as we currently see it, understand it, and frameworks and policies are practised. This was not to dismiss of any historical experiences, which are of course in their own right important to consider how we can/may have learnt from them, but to shed light on what is happening now, in this context and time as we experience it.

There were two CYP who were very close to engaging in the research study, though due to last minute changes, were unable and unwilling to engage in the interview. This highlighted for me the inherent unpredictability and vulnerability of working with CYP in emotionally charged contexts, and reinforced the importance of building flexibility, sensitivity, and ethical responsiveness into the research design. During the recruitment of these two CYP participants, the parent who had the most frequent links with, or most contact with the school setting, were extremely excited to have their CYP be involved in research such as this, and very much wanted their CYP's voice to be heard and understood. Interestingly, the parent that was in communication with me about the research shared that the other parental figure involved in their care (who were less actively present in the CYP's education setting etc.) were on occasions, less wanting for their CYP to be involved and dismissed the research, even with their partner's excitement and willingness for the CYP to engage. This in itself, is an interesting concept to consider; I wondered whether there was something underlying here about the taboo nature of PR (White, 2016), being un-wanting/unwilling to learn more about it for fear of what they might find out, and a reflection of what parents have been exposed to in the news such as CYP who have been abused by staff using PR practices (BBC Radio 5 Investigates, 2017; Hall, 2024; Weale, 2022, 2024). Staff shared with me their thoughts around this, and we reflected on whether there were concerns around what engaging with such research might find, and how this might affect the CYP's current schooling/support/availability of future education placements.

Initially, I felt excited about the prospect of including CYP's voices, recognising the richness and authenticity this could bring to the research. When these interviews did not go ahead, I experienced frustration and disappointment, questioning whether the research would feel complete without direct input from the CYP. Upon reflection, I

came to recognise that my desire to include CYP may have also been influenced by my professional identity and values as an Educational Psychologist (EP) in training, where we consider CYP voice as central to our practice. Acknowledging this, I was able to shift my perspective and appreciate the depth and significance of the staff accounts that were gathered. Their narratives offered important insights into systemic issues, and I came to value the integrity of the research as it stood, understanding that meaningful and ethical research does not always follow the idealised plan, but evolves through responsiveness and reflexivity.

5.2.4.3. The Concept of 'Hard-To-Reach' Participants. CYP who have experienced PR in schools can be considered as a 'hard-to-reach' participant group (Sydor, 2013). This factor is one that I have considered since the start of this research journey, and I have used my experience of past research with 'hard-to-reach' participant groups to guide me through this barrier. I also turned to the literature that I consider helpful to guide being flexible and creative in my approach, such as potentially using snowball sampling, where existing staff participants recruit future participants from among their acquaintances (Freeman et al., 2021). Additionally, I ensured that I offered various modes of participation (e.g., in-person that was in a location of their choice or online via an accessible video call platform) so that I could accommodate different needs and preferences, and reduce this being a barrier to access. I was very aware that ethical challenges are often more pronounced with hard-to-reach groups (Tezcan-Güntekin et al., 2022); ensuring informed consent, protecting participant confidentiality, and being sensitive to the potential risks and benefits of participation. I was particularly vigilant about ensuring that it did not seem that I was exploiting vulnerable populations (Bekteshi et al., 2024).

I fully understand that CYP who have been physically restrained in schools represent a 'hard-to-reach' group. However, this understanding does not entirely mitigate my disappointment; I had hoped to shine a light on the voices of these CYP, to share their experiences and perspectives, and to ensure that their stories were heard and considered in the broader discourse on this topic. Moving forward, I am committed to finding ways to overcome these challenges in future research; I will continue to seek methods and strategies to engage 'hard-to-reach' groups, ensuring

that their voices are included, and their experiences are acknowledged. In future research, I recognise the value of working more collaboratively and consistently with key gatekeepers, such as trusted staff and pastoral teams, to sensitively support the involvement of CYP. Building in time for relational development prior to data collection could be particularly important when engaging with CYP who may have experienced trauma or systemic disempowerment. Becoming a qualified EP, I believe that I may have the advantage of established relationships with schools, which could be harnessed to foster familiarity and trust. For example, holding informal information sessions, offering joint meetings with parents and CYP, and gradually introducing myself within the school environment could all help to reduce barriers to participation. These approaches would allow CYP to better understand both me and the research aims, increasing the likelihood of authentic engagement. I acknowledge that such relationship-building requires time and continuity, factors that were constrained during this research, but will be prioritised in future work to promote more inclusive research practice. This reflection serves as a reminder of the importance of perseverance and the need for innovative approaches in research, particularly when dealing with vulnerable and 'hard-to-reach' populations, to enable future practice, decision making, and policy making to holistically include the voices of those that the practice/policy will affect.

5.2.4.4. When to "Call it Quits." One of the major factors I found challenging in this research process was timing, bearing in mind both the timing of completion of the overall project and each step within this. Considering the reflections in the previous sub-section, it would come as no surprise that figuring out the right time to "call it quits", accepting that I need to move on from attempting to recruit CYP participants; when it was the right time to draw the line, admit that I needed to stop and re-frame my thinking that I had given it my all to try and recruit CYP participants for the research. This was, undoubtedly, the hardest part of my research journey. It was my initial strive in this process, wanting to provide a platform for CYP's voices to be heard and collectively analyse what this might mean, and how we can learn from their experiences. I spent some time feeling a sense of shame, that I was unable to fulfil that part of the research, as well as feeling a sense of anxiety around how by moving forward without that participant group might impact on the purpose of the research, the literature review, and overall recommendations following the research.

I sat with the feeling of disappointment for a while, and I still do hold that feeling slightly. However, the ever ticking concept of time and the impending deadlines that come in the final year of training, allowed me to re-consider and re-evaluate my personal expectations. Naturally, I reflected on this part of the research journey during supervision sessions; the notion of being 'persistent' 'determined' and 'doing everything that I can' were phrases that were spoken to me quite frequently by supervisors, colleagues, and fellow trainee EPs. Supervision provided an opportunity for reflection and sharing collective thoughts on the research aim, as well as considering when it may be helpful to change course (Ali et al., 2016); these conversations were aided by a good working trainee-supervisor relationship which I am thankful for (Gill & Burnard, 2008; Hemer, 2012). Having these discussions, opportunities to reflect, and hear others' perceptions and reflections during my research shaped my thinking and offered me the space to step back and consider an alternative view.

5.2.4.5. Sample Size. Braun and Clarke (2023) share that there is no one-size-fits-all answer to the question of sample size in qualitative research, including the use of semi-structured interviews; they emphasise that the intricacies involved in determining the appropriate dataset size and advise against relying too heavily on the concept of 'sample size,' as it aligns more with positivist values and assumptions (Braun & Clarke, 2023, p.28). They argue that the appropriate sample size depends on several factors, including the research question, the scope of the study, and the richness of the data collected. Braun and Clarke suggest that researchers should focus on achieving data saturation, where no new themes or insights are emerging from the data (2021), as the goal is depth and richness of data rather than generalisability. They also highlight the importance of transparency in justifying the chosen sample size and ensuring that it is sufficient to address the research questions adequately (Braun et al., 2016).

The dataset or 'sample size' for the current research included six participants. I felt that I had reached a position of data saturation, following the fifth interview as no new insights were emerging from the data. However, the sixth interview was already planned, and the participant was very eager to engage with the study, and I

therefore felt it was important to include them. Braun and Clarke (2022) also emphasise the importance of being reflexive during the data collection and analysis process to assess data quality and richness, and to determine the appropriate dataset composition. Throughout the data collection process, I engaged in ongoing review and reflection, and consistently found the data to be rich in both depth and relevance to the research's aims and research questions. This richness was likely enhanced by the purposive sampling strategy, which involved participants with direct, in-depth experience of the phenomenon under investigation. The specificity of the sample, staff with nuanced, lived knowledge of PR in educational settings, enabled the generation of detailed, contextually grounded accounts. Staff often provided layered reflections that captured emotional, ethical, and systemic dimensions of the topic, contributing to a holistic understanding that aligned closely with the Interpretivist and critically reflective stance of the research.

5.2.4.6. The Journey of Change. The transformation of the research that I experienced throughout this thesis journey was unexpected at first, but upon reflection, I realise it has been instrumental in shaping the research into what it is today. As Pultz explains, these "unexpected turns of events" can become important aspects in the research process, and ultimately can improve findings (2018). Failure can allow us to locate unfound possibilities in research (Wood et al., 2014) and can uncover new opportunities, new ways of thinking, and increased understanding (Mitchell et al., 2008; Mueller & Shepherd, 2012). There were some difficulties in the preliminary stages of the research planning, which included waiting times for ethical approval, which ultimately took more time than anticipated and I had to re-evaluate whether it was achievable for me to conduct a mix-methods approach (that was originally planned) for this research. I had hoped to conduct a Wales wide survey for school staff to share an insight into how PR is used in their practice (such as the frequency, reasons for use, and training received). I was acutely aware that when the preliminary stage issues were resolved, we were approaching a long school break (summer break) and I held concerns around the accessibility of participants during this time, and what impact this would have on the study.

I did not want to sacrifice the quality and quantity of information that could have been gathered due to the time that a survey would be published, and therefore

decided that I would rather have no quantitive data than a poorly representable sample of Wales. Therefore, I made the decision to change the data gathering method for staff to semi-structured interviews instead; this was at a point when I was still trying to recruit CYP to engage in their semi-structured interviews. This meant that by the time that staff were recruited for the research, the data gathering method had been changed twice (from a mixed methods with a survey, and the loss of CYP participants for qualitative data). Therefore there has been a change of the data gathering methods and participants that were outlined in the initial research proposal. McArdle argues that flexibility can promote the researcher's understanding of changes and developments in research as a positive, and potentially necessary shift in the research (2022). Although I feel a small sense of failure from the initial proposal, and still have a passion to explore CYP's perceptions, I believe that this shift provided me with more time. With this extra time, I have been able to reflect more deeply on the data, recruit staff participants more flexibly, and offer more dates for interviews, rather than being constrained by a rigid timeline. However, although these changes afforded additional time to focus on the revised methodological approach, the time already invested in implementing these changes inevitably reduced the period available for data collection. This constrained the amount of time that I had available to conduct the interviews, as I prioritised ensuring sufficient time remained for a rigorous and comprehensive data analysis process. While I believe data saturation was achieved organically through the interview process (as discussed in Part 2), the reduced timeframe for data collection remains a noteworthy limitation. On reflection of my research findings and recommendations for future research, I realise that maybe conducting the quantitive method may not have been as informative as I assumed it may. This is due to what we have learnt from the current research about differences in terminology and definitions.

5.2.4.7. "Qualitative Queen." During a university session in the second year of my doctoral training, I vividly remember discussing some of my previous research with fellow trainees. We were having an in-depth conversation about qualitative methods, particularly different approaches to thematic analysis. One of my peers jokingly called me a 'qualitative queen', which made me laugh at the time, but it has stuck with me. This comment has made me reflect on how passionately I must verbalise my preference for qualitative methods (and perhaps my aversion to

quantitative methods as mere tick-box exercises). Throughout my academic journey, from undergraduate to master's and now at doctoral level, I have consistently gravitated towards qualitative methods. This preference extends to my professional work, where I often rely on qualitative data collection and analysis. Reflecting on this, I wonder why I am so drawn to these methods; I truly believe in the power of words and linguistics, and I wholeheartedly think that sometimes the most important data is not numerical, but verbal. Considering the contexts in which words are spoken and examining the impact of change, particularly as an EP, I find that qualitative methods offer a depth of understanding that numbers alone cannot provide.

I also recall an early supervision session during my initial thesis proposal process, where I discussed with my supervisor my decision to approach the research topic using a mixed-methods approach and how I felt it was the 'right thing to do'. I expressed this choice with little enthusiasm, driven by the fact that there was no specific data for Wales in this research area. I felt for a moment that for this research to be taken seriously, I needed to include some statistics to support the literature review and anticipate what participants might say in the interviews; almost a need to 'back-up' the qualitative element of the research. Deep down however, I was not passionate about this approach but almost saw it as a necessary step. Reflecting on this, I realise that it highlights the bias narrative that quantitative methods often hold in social sciences, and the perceived power and influence that they can wield. This is a topic that has been debated for quite some time (Gelo et al., 2008; Rabinowitz & Weseen, 2001; Vromen, 2010). My initial reluctance illustrates the pressure to conform to these expectations, even when my true interest lies in qualitative methods. Having completed the research, I acknowledge that while I still largely hold my original views, some of the literature reviewed did make effective use of statistical data to illustrate patterns in the application of PR in schools. I can appreciate how such data can offer a broad overview and inform policy-level understanding. However, I continue to maintain that the depth, nuance, and contextual insight afforded by qualitative methods represent a significant strength, particularly when seeking to explore the lived experiences, emotional impacts, and complex dynamics surrounding ethically complex educational practices.

5.2.4.8. Why Semi-Structured Interviews*?* Semi-structured interviews were chosen for data collection as they aligned well with the philosophical stance and research objectives of this study. Whilst positivist perspectives might criticise semi-structured interviews for their lack of exact replicability (Diefenbach, 2009), due to the flexibility researchers have in adapting questions based on the responses, this was not a concern for this research. Given the Interpretivist approach adopted in this research, the adaptability of semi-structured interviews was seen as an advantage, allowing for a more nuanced and responsive exploration of the topic. I was acutely aware of the ethical constraints surrounding this sensitive topic, I wanted to ensure that staff felt comfortable and not pressured to answer a series of specific questions, which would have been the case with structured interviews. The flexibility of semi-structured interviews allowed staff to share their experiences and perspectives more freely, fostering a more open and honest dialogue (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019).

One of the reasons for using semi-structured interviews was driven by being able to create a respectful and supportive environment; it allowed me to be responsive to staffs' emotional states and adjust the interview flow accordingly, ensuring their comfort and wellbeing throughout the process (Dolczewski, 2022). I also considered other methods, such as focus groups, but ultimately decided against them. I recognised that discussing such a challenging and emotive topic in a group setting might deter staff from wanting to take part in the research; some individuals might feel uncomfortable sharing their experiences with colleagues, whether known or unknown, due to fear of judgment (Sim & Waterfield, 2019). Although other data collection methods could of course provide valuable insights, semi-structured interviews were deemed the most appropriate. This approach provided the depth and delicacy needed to thoroughly explore the topic. The one-on-one nature of semi-structured interviews provided a safer and more private environment for staff to express their thoughts and reflections without the added pressure of a group dynamic (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). I felt that semi-structured interviews offered the flexibility to explore unexpected themes and insights that emerged during the conversations. It allowed me to delve deeper into staffs' experiences and understand the broader context of their perspectives (Ruslin et al., 2022). This process also enabled me to build rapport with staff, which is essential for discussing sensitive, emotionally driven topics (Dempsey et al., 2016).

Interviews were mostly conducted in person, with one interview being conducted online to allow flexibility to the staff in their working day. This other element of being a flexible research project was important to ensure that staff were able to engage in the research and have the control in how the interview was undertaken. Research has shown that online modalities for conducting qualitative research do not result in significantly different thematic findings than in-person data collection (Guest et al., 2020), and therefore allowing the staff this choice was of more importance. However, given the emotionally complex nature of the topic, it was essential to ensure that robust ethical protocols were in place, such as clear information about the right to withdraw, opportunities for pre-interview check-ins, and structured debriefs following participation. These measures are especially important when discussing this topic, which may evoke feelings of guilt, shame, or distress (Dickson-Swift et al., 2007; Mullowney, 2024). Offering follow-up contact or signposting to support services, as recommended in trauma-informed (TI) research frameworks (Dempsey et al., 2016), also formed part of the ethical considerations. Such reflective and responsive practices aim not only to safeguard staff wellbeing, but also to enhance the trustworthiness and integrity of the data collected.

5.2.5. Data Analysis

I considered other data analysis methods whilst constructing my research design, however, I chose to use Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) (Braun & Clarke, 2022, 2023) to analyse the data. I chose this method primarily for its flexibility and ability to facilitate exploration, particularly in relation to formulating research questions and conducting analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022). With my research being the first of its kind in the Welsh context specifically, I felt that RTA allowed for both the breadth and depth that was needed to explore the topic, without being too refined. As the nature of RTA is to be reflexive in your research approach, I ensured that I kept a research diary where I wrote reflections of not only the data collection (reflections and thoughts following each interview) but also to be reflexive in all stages of the research process. I was then able to discuss these thoughts in supervision.

During our Doctoral university sessions, coincidentally just as I was about to begin my data analysis, we had the opportunity to attend two lectures by Victoria

Clarke. These sessions focused on the use of RTA and emphasised the crucial role of reflexivity throughout the research process. Along with both Braun and Clarke's Thematic Analysis Book (2022), I found it interesting how frequently, during these sessions, others discussed the use of technological software for data coding. This was something that I had not considered; I always wanted to physically sit within the data set, and I was worried about some of the nuances that may be missed by computer software, especially given the context of the dataset. I am confident in my decision to have completed this step by hand; I feel that the data analysis process, whilst time consuming and at points mentally taxing, provided me with such an emotional response to feeling that I was genuinely making sense of the data. Though there were moments where things felt blurred, and I wondered how I would convey the results in a succinct but impactful way within Part 2 of this thesis.

It took me a great deal of time to feel comfortable with the process of analysis; I have held a stance since the beginning of this research around how much I wanted this research to be reflective of the staff ensuring that their voice is not changed in any way, and that the research is completely accessible, regardless of the background, profession, or experience of the individual reading it. This is no small task in any means and there were moments where I had to take a step back and re-frame my thinking to help me come to a place where I was happy with how the information was presented. I would have easily spent so much longer, even months more, developing the themes and reflecting on how it was being outlined in the write up. I still do not know if I feel that it is conclusive, or even if it can ever feel finished, but I am confident I applied myself to each stage of the analysis as outlined by Braun and Clark (2022) carefully balancing the time available with the need for analytical depth. Nonetheless, I recognise that Reflexive Thematic Analysis is an iterative and interpretive process that could, in theory, continue indefinitely, as meanings and interpretations evolve with each new reading and reflection. I still feel honoured to have held such an amount of in-depth and complex information in my mind (though it was exhausting at times!) but it remains a privilege to have shared this information on the staffs' behalf. I was aware of the trust placed in me by the staff who courageously shared personal views, emotions, and experiences. Holding space for these discussions demanded both emotional labour and critical self-awareness, and

reinforced my role not simply as a researcher, but as a channel for authentic representation and meaning making.

5.2.6. Emotional Impact of Research

A key aspect of this research is recognising the emotional influence one brings to the process, as well as the emotional effect the research itself can have over time. I accepted that this meant I could not entirely detach myself from the research; my perspectives, experiences, thoughts, and emotions were inevitably intertwined with the research process. Conducting research on the use of PR in schools has been a deeply emotional and impactful journey for me. While I have been able to gather valuable insights from staff who have implemented PR practices, I am left with a sense of disheartenment due to my inability to include the voices of the CYP who have experienced these interventions firsthand. Despite this setback, I am immensely grateful for the participation of the staff. Their willingness to share their experiences and insights has provided a clear view of the practices and challenges associated with PR in educational settings in Wales. Their contributions are invaluable, and I deeply appreciate their openness and honesty. It is important to me that my reflection does not diminish the significance of their input. The staff's perspectives have offered critical reflections on current practices and thoughtful suggestions for future improvements, which are essential for informing policy and practice and will in turn improve the wellbeing of both staff and CYP.

I have so much empathy and understanding for the staffs' experiences with the system that supports them. Their experiences highlight the need to consider the issues from a wider systemic perspective. This perspective enables me to approach every interaction within my future role as an EP, with school staff, from a place of curiosity and empathy, focusing on understanding what is happening rather than feeling a sense frustration for the system. It also allows me to consider systemic factors, exploring constructive ways to drive meaningful change in school practices. Moving forward, I will apply these insights into my professional practice, using the skills I have developed to support schools in reducing the use of PR and implementing more positive, proactive strategies.

5.3. Contribution to Knowledge

5.3.1. Contributions of the Research

This research provides some initial insight into the Welsh context of the use of PR in schools and the perceptions of staff who have experienced using it. This is felt to be a unique and novel contribution to the literature, as this is something which has not yet been explored before, in this specific context. It also highlights the absence of prior studies in Wales specifically addressing this issue. Key contributions of the research include:

- Providing insight into school staff's views and experiences regarding the use of PR.

- Identifying key themes related to PR in schools, including the role of PR, perceptions, external influences, legal and ethical considerations, training, and nurturing connections.

- Highlighting the need for standardised definitions of terms like "restraint" to ensure consistent interpretation and data collection across educational settings.

- Emphasising the significance of relationships between staff and children in managing behaviour and minimising the use of unnecessary PR.

- Stating the importance of restorative approaches to repair relationships after incidents involving PR.

- Recognising the emotional impact on staff when using PR.

- Providing suggestions for future research, including the inclusion of children's voices and calling for universal definitions and terminology use.

- Informing policy development by emphasising the need for a holistic, collaborative, and legally sound framework.

5.3.2. Considerations for Future Research

As discussed within Part 2 of this thesis, this research focussed solely on staff's experiences of the use of PR in schools within Wales and therefore, it would perhaps be of great benefit to expand the understanding of the perceptions of CYP who have experienced being physically restrained in Wales. It might also be interesting to consider exploring the interventions and training packages that are

being delivered and used within Wales, considering some of the dataset identifying concerns around the commercialisation of training and funding challenges.

Addressing the root causes of the challenges raised within Part 1 and 2 requires a comprehensive approach that involves policy changes, changes to training, and support for staff. Nevertheless, the absence of the CYP's voices is an area that requires further study. These are the individuals directly affected by PR, and their experiences are crucial for a holistic understanding of the issue. I feel a profound sense of responsibility to represent their perspectives, and not being able to do so feels like a missed opportunity to advocate for their needs and rights. While I am grateful for the insights gained from staff, I remain determined to find ways to include the perspectives of CYP in future studies. Their voices are essential for a complete understanding of the use of PR in schools, and I am dedicated to ensuring that they are heard. CYP's direct experiences and perceptions could offer valuable insights into the impact of PR on their sense of safety, agency, and emotional wellbeing. CYP may also be able to speak to the subtleties of power dynamics within the school environment, including how they perceive the motivations behind PR and the relational consequences it has on their interactions with staff.

Reflexively, I recognise that being unable to gather CYP's views from this research limits the scope of the analysis and overlooks an important dimension of the lived experience. This absence, while necessary due to practical constraints, is a reminder of the complexities and ethical considerations inherent in researching vulnerable populations. Future studies could aim to integrate child-centred methodologies, such as participatory action research, to empower CYP in sharing their voices and fostering a more inclusive dialogue about PR practices in schools. However, as raised in Part 2, it seems imperative that future research first focus on gathering an understanding of terminology and definitions used by schools across Wales, to promote a universal term and definition. This would provide clarity to schools, and aid in consistent approaches and reporting systems, as well as provide clarity for future research.

5.3.3. Dissemination

Dissemination of this research will be in the form of my submission of the thesis for examination, as per the requirements of the Doctorate in Educational Psychology. I have also considered how I aim to share this research more broadly, and to ensure accessibility of the findings to others who would benefit from this in the near future.

I plan to discuss my research in general conversations with colleagues, educational psychology services, schools, and other relevant services, with the hope of facilitating thought-provoking discussions around the use of PR in schools in my future practice as an EP. I have considered the possibility of disseminating this paper in other forms, such as publication in a peer-reviewed journal, to make the information accessible to wider audiences. An important implication of this research lies in its potential to inform both school-based training and wider policy development. For EPs and school staff, the findings can be used to shape reflective training sessions that focus on TI care, de-escalation techniques, and the emotional impact of PR on both staff and CYP. This can help foster ethically sound and relationship-focused approaches within school communities. In parallel, sharing the findings with Local Authorities (LA) and the Welsh Government (WG), such as through an accessible executive summary, offers an opportunity to influence policy development and strategic planning. Doing so could support the creation of more consistent, evidence-informed frameworks across Wales, while amplifying staff voices and contributing to a more equitable and transparent system of practice.

The thesis research may provide a timely identification of the needs of those who use PR in their school practice; It remains a prominent subject of discussion and debate, not only within the field of educational psychology but also across the broader education sector, considerations such as policy decisions, professional practices, and the development of supportive frameworks for both CYP and staff. Though WG guidance around reducing the use of restrictive practices has been shared (2022), reflective conversations held with staff during the interview process, as well as being highlighted in Part 1 and Part 2, recognised that the specific guidelines for the use of PR is over a decade old (Welsh Government, 2013), with

staff still sharing that they need more specific outlined procedures that they feel the reducing restrictive practices document (2022) does not provide.

Many of the participants shared their reflections and hopes from being part of this research, and raised their own concerns around not being heard nor the topic being taken seriously and 'glazed over' by governing bodies. The true significance of this research will be evident only if it drives meaningful change and fosters real improvements in practice for school staff. Therefore, I see the concept of dissemination as an important issue which I endeavour to see through. Due to the systemic nature of the study, a multi-level strategy of dissemination is assumed most appropriate using Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and Implementation Science (Kelly & Perkins, 2012) as frameworks. A summary of the dissemination strategy is outlined in Appendix K. I therefore aim to complete these actions that share how the results of the present research may be applicable to these identified systems, following the process outlined.

5.4. References

Ali, P., Watson, P., & Dhingra, K. (2016). Postgraduate research students' and their supervisors' attitudes towards supervision. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, *11*, 227-241.

BBC Radio 5 Investigates. (2017). In *Restraint in Special Schools*. Retrieved September 30, 2024, from https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08ljdhy

Bekteshi, V., Sifat, M., & Kendzor, D. E. (2024). Reaching the unheard: overcoming challenges in health research with hard-to-reach populations. *International Journal for Equity in Health*, *23*(1), 61. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12939-024-02145-z

Bhaskar, R. (2013). *A Realist Theory of Science*. Taylor & Francis. https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=7318AgAAQBAJ

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners*. sage.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). To saturate or not to saturate? Questioning data saturation as a useful concept for thematic analysis and sample-size rationales. *Qualitative research in sport, exercise and health*, *13*(2), 201-216.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022). *Thematic analysis: a practical guide*. sage.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2023). Toward good practice in thematic analysis: Avoiding common problems and be(com)ing a knowing researcher. *International Journal of Transgender Health*, *24*(1), 1-6. https://doi.org/10.1080/26895269.2022.2129597

Braun, V., Clarke, V., & Weate, P. (2016). Using thematic analysis in sport and exercise research. In *Routledge handbook of qualitative research in sport and exercise* (pp. 213-227). Routledge.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development : experiments by nature and design*. Harvard University Press.

Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods*. Oxford university press.

Burr, V. (2015). *Social constructionism*. Routledge.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2002). *Research methods in education*. routledge.

Critical Appraisal Skills Programme. (2024). *CASP Qualitative Studies Checklist*. Retrieved January 04, 2025 from https://casp-uk.net/casp-checklists/CASP-checklist-qualitative-2024.pdf

Davies, P. (2012). 'Me', 'Me', 'Me': The Use of the First Person in Academic Writing and Some Reflections on Subjective Analyses of Personal Experiences. *Sociology*, *46*, 744-752. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038512437897

DeJonckheere, M., & Vaughn, L. M. (2019). Semistructured interviewing in primary care research: a balance of relationship and rigour. *Fam Med Community Health*, *7*(2), e000057. https://doi.org/10.1136/fmch-2018-000057

Dempsey, L., Dowling, M., Larkin, P., & Murphy, K. (2016). Sensitive interviewing in qualitative research. *Research in nursing & health*, *39*(6), 480-490.

Dickson-Swift, V., James, E. L., Kippen, S., & Liamputtong, P. (2007). Doing sensitive research: what challenges do qualitative researchers face? *Qualitative research*, *7*(3), 327-353.

Diefenbach, T. (2009). Are case studies more than sophisticated storytelling?: Methodological problems of qualitative empirical research mainly based on semi-structured interviews. *Quality & Quantity*, *43*, 875-894.

Dolczewski, M. (2022). Semi-structured interview for self-esteem regulation research. *Acta Psychologica*, *228*, 103642. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2022.103642

Dulfer, N., McKernan, A., & Brindle, K. (2017). Different countries, different approaches to teaching and learning. *The University of Melbourne: Parkville, VIC, Australia*.

Dwyer, S., & Buckle, J. (2009). The Space Between: On Being an Insider-Outsider in Qualitative Research. *Int J Qual Meth*, *8*. https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690900800105

Equality and Human Rights Commission. (2021). Restraint in schools inquiry: using meaningful data to protect children's rights. Retrieved September 13, 2024, from https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/inquiry-restraint-in-schools-report.pdf

Freeman, S., Skinner, K., Middleton, L., Xiong, B., & Fang, M. L. (2021). Engaging Hard-to-Reach, Hidden, and Seldom-Heard Populations in Research. In A. Sixsmith, J. Sixsmith, A. Mihailidis, & M. L. Fang (Eds.), *Knowledge, Innovation, and Impact: A Guide for the Engaged Health Researcher: A Guide for the Engaged Health Researcher* (pp. 81-91). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-34390-3_11

Gameson, J., Rhydderch, G., Ellis, D., & Carroll, H. (2003). Constructing a flexible model of integrated professional practice part 1-conceptual and theoretical issues. *Educational and Child Psychology*, *20*(4), 96-115.

Gelo, O., Braakmann, D., & Benetka, G. (2008). Quantitative and qualitative research: Beyond the debate. *Integrative psychological and behavioral science*, *42*, 266-290.

Gill, P., & Burnard, P. (2008). The student-supervisor relationship in the PhD/Doctoral process. *British Journal of Nursing*, *17*(10), 668-671.

Guest, G., Namey, E., O'Regan, A., Godwin, C., & Taylor, J. (2020). Comparing Interview and Focus Group Data Collected in Person and Online. In: Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI), Washington (DC).

Haig, B. D., & Evers, C. (2015). Realist inquiry in social science.

Hall, R. (2024). Ex-pupil wins damages over face-down restraint at Oxfordshire special school. *The Guardian*. Retrieved January 11, 2025, from https://www.theguardian.com/education/2024/dec/20/ex-pupil-wins-damages-over-face-down-restraint-at-oxfordshire-special-school

Harris, A., & Jones, M. (2018). Why context matters: A comparative perspective on education reform and policy implementation. *Educational Research for Policy and Practice*, *17*(3), 195-207.

Hemer, S. R. (2012). Informality, power and relationships in postgraduate supervision: Supervising PhD candidates over coffee. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *31*(6), 827-839.

Kelly, B., & Perkins, D. F. (2012). *Handbook of implementation science for psychology in education*. Cambridge University Press.

Markey, K., Graham, M. M., Tuohy, D., McCarthy, J., O'Donnell, C., Hennessy, T., Fahy, A., & O' Brien, B. (2023). Navigating learning and teaching in expanding culturally diverse higher education settings. *Higher Education Pedagogies*, *8*(1), 2165527. https://doi.org/10.1080/23752696.2023.2165527

McArdle, R. (2022). Flexible Methodologies: A Case for Approaching Research with Fluidity. *The Professional Geographer*, *74*, 1-8. https://doi.org/10.1080/00330124.2021.2023593

McSweeney, B. (2021). Fooling ourselves and others: confirmation bias and the trustworthiness of qualitative research–Part 1 (the threats). *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, *34*(5), 1063-1075.

Milligan, L. (2016). Insider-outsider-inbetweener? Researcher positioning, participative methods and cross-cultural educational research. *Compare*, *46*(2), 235-250. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2014.928510

Mitchell, R. K., Mitchell, J. R., & Smith, J. B. (2008). Inside opportunity formation: Enterprise failure, cognition, and the creation of opportunities. *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, *2*(3), 225-242.

Mueller, B. A., & Shepherd, D. A. (2012). Learning from failure: how entrepreneurial failure aids in the development of opportunity recognition expertise. *Frontiers of Entrepreneurship Research*.

Mullowney, K. (2024). Positive handling practice in schools a scoping review of current advice and guidance and a qualitative exploration of it's implementation in English schools. *Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences*, *85*(11-A), No Pagination Specified. https://ovidsp.ovid.com/ovidweb.cgi?T=JS&CSC=Y&NEWS=N&PAGE=fulltext&D=psyc23&AN=2024-95383-279

Packer, M. J. (2017). *The science of qualitative research*. Cambridge University Press.

Parpala, A., Lindblom-Ylänne, S., Komulainen, E., & Entwistle, N. (2013). Assessing students' experiences of teaching–learning environments and approaches to learning: Validation of a questionnaire in different countries and varying contexts. *Learning Environments Research*, *16*, 201-215.

Petticrew, M., & Roberts, H. (2006). *Systematic reviews in the social sciences: A practical guide* [doi:10.1002/9780470754887]. Blackwell Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470754887

Pultz, S. (2018). *Flexibility in Research Design: How Unexpected Events Can Improve Learning and Research*. SAGE Publications Ltd. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526435217

Pynn, G. (2014). Contextualism in Epistemology. In O. H. E. Board (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Topics in Philosophy* (pp. 0). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935314.013.12

Rabinowitz, V. C., & Weseen, S. (2001). Power, politics, and the qualitative/quantitative debates in psychology. *From subjects to subjectivities: A handbook of interpretive and participatory methods*, 12-28.

Ruslin, R., Mashuri, S., Rasak, M. S. A., Alhabsyi, F., & Syam, H. (2022). Semi-structured Interview: A methodological reflection on the development of a qualitative research instrument in educational studies. *IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education (IOSR-JRME)*, *12*(1), 22-29.

Siddaway, A. P., Wood, A. M., & Hedges, L. V. (2019). How to Do a Systematic Review: A Best Practice Guide for Conducting and Reporting Narrative Reviews, Meta-Analyses, and Meta-Syntheses. *Annu Rev Psychol*, *70*, 747-770. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010418-102803

Sim, J., & Waterfield, J. (2019). Focus group methodology: some ethical challenges. *Quality & Quantity*, *53*(6), 3003-3022. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-019-00914-5

Sydor, A. (2013). Conducting research into hidden or hard-to-reach populations. *Nurse researcher*, *20*(3).

Teherani, A., Martimianakis, T., Stenfors-Hayes, T., Wadhwa, A., & Varpio, L. (2015). Choosing a Qualitative Research Approach. *J Grad Med Educ*, *7*(4), 669-670. https://doi.org/10.4300/jgme-d-15-00414.1

Tezcan-Güntekin, H., Özer-Erdogdu, I., Yilmaz-Aslan, Y., Aksakal, T., & Bird, R. (2022). Ethical and Methodological Challenges in Research With Hard-to-Reach Groups: Examples From Research on Family Caregivers for Migrant Older Adults Living With Dementia. *Gerontologist*, *62*(6), 823-831. https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnab179

The Challenging Behaviour Foundation. (2021). *Information Sheet; Positive Behaviour Support*. Retrieved September 18, 2024, from https://www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/003-Positive-Behaviour-Support-Planning-Part-3.pdf

The Challenging Behaviour Foundation. (2019). *Reducing Restrictive Intervention of Children and Young People; Case study and survey results*. Retrieved September 18, 2024, from https://www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/reducingrestrictiveinterventionofchildrenandyoungpeoplereport.pdf

Vromen, A. (2010). Debating methods: Rediscovering qualitative approaches. *Theory and methods in political science*, *3*, 249-266.

Weale, S. (2022). Ofsted raises concerns over use of restraints on pupils in special needs school. *The Guardian*. Retrieved August 23, 2024, from

https://www.theguardian.com/education/2022/sep/26/ofsted-concerns-physical-restraints-on-pupils-in-special-needs-school-warren-school-lowestoft-suffolk

Weale, S. (2024). Watchdog 'appalled' by use of restraint on autistic children at London school. *The Guardian*. Retrieved January 11, 2025, from https://www.theguardian.com/education/2024/nov/27/watchdog-appalled-restraint-autistic-children-london-school

Welsh Government. (2013). *Safe and effective intervention – use of reasonable force and searching for weapons*. Cardiff: Crown. Retrieved August 04, 2024, from https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/safe-and-effective-intervention-use-of-reasonable-force-and-searching-for-weapons.pdf

Welsh Government. (2022). *Reducing restrictive practices framework: children's rights impact assessment*. Cardiff: Welsh Government. Retrieved August 04, 2024, from https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/pdf-versions/2021/10/1/1634560816/reducing-restrictive-practices-framework-childrens-rights-impact-assessment.pdf

White, J. (2016). Restraint in schools: the last taboo. *Special Education and Inclusive Learning*. Retrieved November 07, 2024, from https://inclusiveteach.com/2016/09/28/restraint-in-schools/

Wood, M. S., McKelvie, A., & Haynie, J. M. (2014). Making it personal: Opportunity individuation and the shaping of opportunity beliefs. *Journal of Business Venturing*, *29*(2), 252-272.

6. Appendices

6.1. Appendix A - CASP Checklist

Section A Are the results valid?

1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?   ☑Yes ☐No ☐Can't Tell

gather views of CYPs experiences of the use of physical restraint and alternative approaches.

CONSIDER:
- what was the goal of the research?
- why was it thought important?
- its relevance

2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?   ☑Yes ☐No ☐Can't Tell

Lack of research outlining outlining CYP news on PE.- Semi structured interviews allows CYP to express their opinions and have their voices heard.

CONSIDER:
- If the research seeks to interpret or illuminate the actions and/or subjective experiences of research participants
- Is qualitative research the right methodology for addressing the research goal?

3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?   ☐Yes ☐No ☐Can't Tell

seeks to highlight voices of CYP and use this data to suggest alternative approaches for PR. Small sample size, difficulty with → hard-to-reach participant group and consent gathering procedures.

CONSIDER:
- if the researcher has justified the research design (e.g., have they discussed how they decided which method to use)

4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?   ☐Yes ☑No ☐Can't Tell

discussed method used but CYP were identified by staff and wasn't a self-selecting approach - may have limited participants.

CONSIDER:
- If the researcher has explained how the participants were selected
- If they explained why the participants they selected were the most appropriate to provide access to the type of knowledge sought by the study
- If there are any discussions around recruitment (e.g. why some people chose not to take part)

5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	☑ Yes ☐ No ☐ Can't Tell

Clear procedure outlined in the paper - seems appropriate to gather CYP voices, single semi-structured interviews. Number of interviews outlined - small number but helpful to consider thoughts around the topic area.

CONSIDER:

- If the setting for the data collection was justified
- If it is clear how data were collected (e.g. focus group, semi-structured interview etc.)
- If the researcher has justified the methods chosen
- If the researcher has made the methods explicit (e.g. for interview method, is there an indication of how interviews are conducted, or did they use a topic guide)
- If methods were modified during the study. If so, has the researcher explained how and why
- If the form of data is clear (e.g. tape recordings, video material, notes etc.)
- If the researcher has discussed saturation of data

6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☑ Can't Tell

Highlighted it was research undertaken for doctoral thesis and therefore a TEP. Little reflective/reflexive information to gather professional/personal experiences.

CONSIDER:

- If the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during (a) formulation of the research questions (b) data collection, including sample recruitment and choice of location
- How the researcher responded to events during the study and whether they considered the implications of any changes in the research design

Section B: What are the results?

7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	☑ Yes ☐ No ☐ Can't Tell

Full ethical approval gained from university. Considerations outlined clearly and helpful to learn from.

CONSIDER:

- If there are sufficient details of how the research was explained to participants for the reader to assess whether ethical standards were maintained
- If the researcher has discussed issues raised by the study (e.g. issues around informed consent or confidentiality or how they have handled the effects of the study on the participants during and after the study)
- If approval has been sought from the ethics committee

8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	☑Yes ☐No ☐Can't Tell

Described in detail - used TA to analyse interview Scripts. Themes developed which are clearly outlined. Relative quotes outlined to support themes and provide deeper insight into CYP views

CONSIDER:
- If there is an in-depth description of the analysis process
- If thematic analysis is used. If so, is it clear how the categories/themes were derived from the data
- Whether the researcher explains how the data presented were selected from the original sample to demonstrate the analysis process
- If sufficient data are presented to support the findings
- To what extent contradictory data are taken into account
- Whether the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during analysis and selection of data for presentation

9. Is there a clear statement of findings?	☑Yes ☐No ☐Can't Tell

Findings outlined and discussed in relative sections. Explicitly explained drawing on key psych theories and other research papers. Has discussed generalisability of findings due to small sample + sampling methods.

CONSIDER:
- If the findings are explicit
- If there is adequate discussion of the evidence both for and against the researcher's arguments
- If the researcher has discussed the credibility of their findings (e.g. triangulation, respondent validation, more than one analyst)
- If the findings are discussed in relation to the original research question

Section C: Will the results help locally?

10. How valuable is the research?	☑Yes ☐No ☐Can't Tell

Clearly outlined contribution of research - clear views of CYP which help provide an holistic understanding of data + topic area.

CONSIDER:
- If the researcher discusses the contribution the study makes to existing knowledge or understanding (e.g., do they consider the findings in relation to current practice or policy, or relevant research-based literature
- If they identify new areas where research is necessary
- If the researchers have discussed whether or how the findings can be transferred to other populations or considered other ways the research may be used

6.2. Appendix B – Literature Review Critical Analysis Table

Reference	Country	Research Focus	Participants	Design/Method	Analysis Approach	Themes/Findings	Limitations
Challenging Behaviour Foundation. (2019). Reducing restrictive intervention of children and young people.	United Kingdom	The use of restrictive interventions, such as physical restraint, seclusion, and medication, on disabled children in the UK, as evidenced by the survey of 204 families and the collection of 566 case studies on this topic.	- 204 family members/carers of individuals with disabilities responded to the survey - 566 case studies were collected from families of children who experienced restrictive interventions - The majority of cases involved children between the ages of 5-10, with one case involving a 2-year-old child - Many of the children/individuals had a range of disabilities, including mental health conditions, that led to the use of restrictive interventions, with 89% of those experiencing long-	- CBF conducted an online survey of 204 families over a 4-week period - PABSS collected 566 case studies from families over a 12-month period - The PABSS case study data was analysed by a statistician	Combination of survey data collected through an online questionnaire and case study data collected over 12 months.	- 88% of respondents said their disabled child had experienced physical restraint, with 35% reporting it happening regularly. - 71% of families said their child had experienced seclusion, with 21% reporting it happening daily. - 50% of children had been prescribed medication to manage challenging behaviour.	- Small sample size and limited data collection period - Need for further research on the relationship between staff training and use of restrictive interventions - Lack of accountability and documentation around the use of restrictive interventions

			term segregation not being detained under the Mental Health Act				
Department for Education. (2024b). Reasonable Force, Restraint & Restrictive Practices in Alternative Provision and Special Schools. Research Report	England	- Understand the circumstances in which schools use reasonable force, including physical restraint and other restrictive practices - Understand how schools ensure reasonable force, physical restraint and other restrictive practices are used appropriately, safely and proportionately - Understand what interventions are most useful in reducing the need to use reasonable force, physical restraint or other	Primary, Secondary, and Special Needs Schools	- Qualitative interviews with school leaders and staff - Site visits to a subset of schools for observation and additional interviews - Purposive sampling of schools from the GIAS register to obtain a diverse sample	Grid analysis and thematic analysis.	- Schools focused on prevention and de-escalation techniques to minimize the need for using reasonable force, physical restraint or restrictive practices. - Schools used a variety of approaches to understand and address the underlying causes of disruptive behaviour, including individual behaviour plans and environmental modifications. - De-escalation techniques were tailored to the specific	- The recruitment and fieldwork took place during a busy period for schools, which limited some schools' availability to participate - The research team had difficulty recruiting an even split of alternative provision and special schools, with alternative provision settings proving more difficult to recruit - Participation was voluntary, so the sample was self-selecting - The data only represents the views and

		restrictive practices - Understand the recording and reporting of incidents of the use of reasonable force, physical restraint and other restrictive practices				needs of the students and the school setting.	practices of those who agreed to take part, and schools who did not take part may have different approaches
Equality and Human Rights Commission. (2021). Restraint in schools inquiry: using meaningful data to protect children's rights.	The regions covered in this paper are England and Wales.	Examine the recording and monitoring of restraint in schools in England and Wales, with a specific focus on understanding the extent to which primary, secondary, and special needs schools are collecting data on their use of restraint.	Primary, Secondary, and Special Schools in England and Wales. Local Authority Education representatives.	- An online survey of 641 primary, secondary, and special schools in England and Wales to assess their practices around recording and monitoring the use of restraint. - Interviews with a range of stakeholders, including schools, local authorities, and other organizations, to gather additional information and case studies on data-informed	A combination of a large-scale online survey of 641 schools in England and Wales, as well as in-depth interviews with 9 schools and 15 local authorities.	- There is a lack of consistent recording and monitoring of restraint use in schools in England and Wales, making it difficult to understand the scale of the issue and whether proper safeguards are in place. - Schools often lack clear guidance on what constitutes restraint, what should be	- Little information available about evaluating the implementation and effectiveness of the new Reducing Restrictive Practices Framework in Wales - Developing national training standards for restraint in schools, based on a human rights approach

169

				approaches to restraint. - Gathering evidence and views from a variety of sources, including submissions from organisations and individuals.		recorded, and how the data should be analysed, despite dealing with restraint issues frequently. - Teachers want more clear national guidance and training on restraint, including definitions, standards, and strategies to avoid its use, but are uncertain about how to implement these in practice.	
Hayden, C., & Pike, S. (2005). Including Positive Handling Strategies within Training in Behaviour Management:	United Kingdom	An evaluation of the Team-Teach approach, which is a holistic approach to behaviour management in educational and other settings. The key	- Course participants' evaluation of over 500 courses conducted between 2000 and 2003, consisting of teachers from mainstream and	Multi-faceted evaluation of the Team-Teach approach, including participant evaluations, observations, and case studies with pre- and post-	A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. The researchers collected quantitative data through pre- and post-training surveys of staff,	- The Team-Teach approach increased staff confidence, knowledge, and preparedness in relation to	- The impact of the training was more limited in mainstream schools compared to special schools and PRUs, where physical interventions

The Team-Teach Approach		objectives were to assess the impact of the Team-Teach training on teachers' confidence, knowledge, and preparedness in relation to behaviour management, particularly around the use of "positive handling strategies."	specialist education settings. - Observations of courses - Four case studies (three schools and a behaviour support service operating through three pupil referral units). - Representatives of 17 LAs in different areas of the UK. - Children and parents in the case study institutions were also invited to give their perspectives. teachers from the different settings in the case studies.	training data collection and follow-up interviews.	as well as evaluations of over 500 courses. They also collected qualitative data through interviews with staff, head teachers, children, and parents in the case study institutions, as well as follow-up interviews several months after the training.	behaviour management. - The impact of the Team-Teach training was more pronounced in special schools and pupil referral units, where staff reported greater empathy with children and increased use of risk assessment. - Mainstream schools were more hesitant to use the "positive handling strategies" taught in the Team-Teach training, due to their infrequent use.	were more commonly used. - Even after the training, some staff still had concerns about properly implementing the positive handling strategies. - The training may not have been tailored enough to the specific needs of each school or setting, and more customizations could be beneficial.
Hodgkiss, B., & Harding, E. (2024). Exploring views of	England	- CYP's views on their experiences of physical	- 4 primary-aged pupils - Attending a specialist SEMH educational setting	- Use of semi-structured interviews with child-friendly approaches like	- Thematic analysis of the qualitative interview data using an	- Participants had negative experiences with physical restraint, but	- Small sample size from a single specialized

171

physical restraint in schools: Pupil experiences, relationships with staff, and alternative strategies.		restraint in schools - CYP's views on alternatives to physical restraint or de-escalation strategies - How CYP's experiences of physical restraint have influenced their relationships with school staff	- Even gender split (2 male, 2 female) - Referred to as Participants A, B, C, and D to maintain confidentiality	visual timetables and participant-led breaks	inductive approach	understood it should only be used for safety, not minor incidents. - Participants identified useful alternative strategies that helped them feel calmer. - The impact of physical restraint on participants' relationships with staff members varied, with some able to separate the negative emotions while others still felt negatively towards staff even after the restraint.	setting, limiting generalizability - Participant selection process may have excluded certain types of participants - Presence of staff members during interviews may have influenced participant responses - Lack of member-checking feedback from participants
Mullowney, K. (2024). Positive handling practice in	England	Exploring school staff views of the implementation of positive	Two schools agreed to participate in the research. The first school was a	Focus groups with teachers and teaching assistants.	Conventional content analysis and evaluative content analysis	- The paper identified 10 key areas of practice for schools to	- Lack of prior academic research on positive handling

| schools a scoping review of current advice and guidance and a qualitative exploration of its implementation in English schools. | | handling practice in English schools. | Specialist SEMH school in the North-West of England. The second school was a Mainstream Primary in the North-West of England.

- Two head teacher/deputy head teacher interviews.

- Four focus groups were conducted: two teaching assistant and two teacher groups. | Interviews with headteachers. | | consider regarding positive handling, including competence, accountability, risk assessment, staff training, safety, policies, and relationships. - The paper found discrepancies in the guidance available to different types of schools and a lack of UK-based academic research on positive handling practice. - The paper produced a model of positive handling practice in schools based | practices in UK schools, necessitating a scoping review approach rather than a systematic review - Existing literature on restraint and positive handling being largely from outside the UK or in non-school settings, limiting its applicability - Lack of research and national data collection on positive handling practices in UK schools, leading to questions about the evidence base for current guidance and practice |

						on the 10 key areas identified.	
Singh, S., & McKie, J. (2021). A survey of the use of seclusion and physical restraint at school and at home for children under the care of the NHS Lanarkshire CAMHS – learning disability team.	United Kingdom (specifically the Lanarkshire region)	The research focus of this paper is to quantify the use of seclusion and physical restraint for children in schools, those who are under the care of the NHS Lanarkshire CAMHS learning disability team.	- Children aged 5-18 years - 108 total participants - Moderate to severe/profound learning disabilities - Mental disorders and/or severe challenging behaviour - 86.1% had Autism Spectrum Disorder - 55.6% had another comorbidity such as ADHD	- Retrospective audit of patient case notes - Discussions with clinicians about each individual patient - Focusing on children aged 5-18 with moderate to severe learning disabilities, mental disorders, and/or severe challenging behaviour who were patients of the NHS Lanarkshire CAMHS-LD team	A retrospective chart review and discussions with clinicians to determine the prevalence of restraint among the 108 children in the NHS Lanarkshire CAMHS-LD team's caseload.	- Over half (52.8%) of the 108 children in the NHS Lanarkshire CAMHS-LD team's caseload had been either restrained or secluded. - 24.1% of children were both restrained and secluded at school, while 15.8% were restrained and secluded at home. - The majority of the children (86.1%) had Autistic Spectrum Disorder, and over half (55.6%) had an additional comorbidity	- Recall bias due to the retrospective nature of the study. - Need for further discussion and dissemination of the findings with NHS Lanarkshire management. - Incomplete data as no data were submitted to the Scottish Children's Commissioner from Lanarkshire.

						such as ADHD.	
Stothard, K. (2022). Accessing the views of children and young people who have experienced physical restraint in school	England	- To explore the views and experiences of children and young people who have been physically restrained in school. - To develop an appropriate data gathering protocol for accessing the views of children and young people who have experienced restraint in school	- As part of a preliminary research study, three members of staff from two SEMH provisions were interviewed. - 1 child, aged 12 years old	- Development of a data gathering protocol through preliminary work - Empirical study using the data gathering protocol to access the views of one child/young person	Thematic analysis	- Children and young people experienced both physical and emotional harm from being physically restrained, including fear, anger, and physical pain. - Some children reported positive feelings about restraint, seeing it as a way to help them calm down or prepare them for life outside of school. - Children and young people felt restraint should only be used to protect themselves or others from harm, not as a	- Small number of included studies and variable quality of research - Lack of diversity in participants (male, limited age range) - Limited settings represented (mostly SEMH provisions) - Cannot be generalised with only 1 participant/case study.

						punishment or classroom management strategy.	
Willis, J., Harrison, A., & Allen, J. L. (2021). Pupils with social, emotional and mental health special needs: Perceptions of how restrictive physical interventions impact their relationships with teaching staff.	England	The research focus of this study is to investigate the impact of restrictive physical interventions (RPIs) on the teacher-child relationships (TCRs) of students with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) special needs.	- 37 total eligible participants across two schools - 27% of the total sample (10 participants) provided informed consent and assent - All participants were male - Average age of 9.80 years (SD = 0.48) - Participants were categorized into two groups based on their experience with restrictive physical interventions (RPIs): Group A had experienced an average daily RPI rate greater than 0.01, while Group B had only witnessed RPIs or experienced an average daily RPI rate less than 0.01	The study used a qualitative, cross-sectional design with stimuli-informed focus groups (SIFGs) to elicit the perspectives of students with SEMH special needs on the impact of restrictive physical interventions (RPIs) on their teacher-child relationships (TCRs). Participants were divided into two groups based on their experience with RPIs: those who had experienced RPIs frequently (Group A) and those who had primarily witnessed RPIs (Group B). The	Thematic analysis	- Pupils with SEMH special needs reported a range of negative emotional responses, including anger, towards restrictive physical interventions (RPIs) used by teachers. - The teacher-child relationships (TCRs) of pupils who primarily witnessed RPIs were impacted similarly or even more negatively compared to those who frequently experienced RPIs.	- The study only included male participants, and the authors suggest future research should include a mixed-gender sample to examine potential gender differences. - The study did not investigate the physical and emotional impact of implementing RPIs on teaching staff, which the authors suggest could be an important direction for future research.

				SIFGs used social stories and photographs to facilitate discussions about the impact of RPIs on TCRs.		- Pupils with direct experience of RPIs had a better understanding of the time it takes to rebuild positive TCRs after an RPI compared to those who mainly witnessed RPIs.	

6.3. Appendix C – Gate Keeper Letter to ALNCos

FAO: Additional Learning Needs Coordinator

Address: EPS

Date: 10th October 2024

Dear Sir/Madam,

We are seeking to conduct research into exploring the use of physical restraint in schools in Wales: seeking pupil and staff experiences, evaluating approaches, and changing practice.

We are writing to enquire whether you would be willing to give permission to recruit school staff who have experienced using physical restraint in their setting as a restrictive practice. If so, please could you share the attached information (recruitment poster and participant information sheet) with school staff on our behalf. This would mean acting as our gatekeeper for this research project.

All staff identified for the research project must meet the inclusion criteria;
- Adults who are currently employed (via permeant, temporary, or agency contracts) to work in a school setting.
- Staff working in both teaching and non-teaching roles within the school setting.
- Staff that work in primary or secondary schools.
- Staff that work in mainstream or special needs schools, or alternative provisions.
- Staff that have used or been part of a physical restraint in a school setting.

Participation will involve the completion of a short interview. The interview questions will gather an understanding of the views and experiences of staff's use of physical restraint in schools. Research data will be anonymised and therefore the participants will not be able to be identified within the research report. The participants will be asked to identify the Local Authority that they are working within and what type of school they work at (primary, secondary, specialist etc.).

To indicate your consent for acting as a gatekeeper for our research project, or for further information, please reply to this email contacting myself, Natalie Phillips on dayenj@cardiff.ac.uk or to speak with my research supervisor, contact Hayley Jeans on jeansh@cardiff.ac.uk. The school Research Ethics committee has reviewed and provided a favourable opinion for this research.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our request, we would be very grateful for your support.

Kind regards,

Natalie Phillips
Trainee Educational Psychologist
Cardiff University
Tower Building
30 Park Place
CF10 3EU.

The School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee
School of Psychology
Cardiff University
Park Place
Cardiff
CF10 3AT
Tel: 029 2087 0707
Email: psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk.

6.4. Appendix D – Recruitment Poster for Staff

6.5. Appendix E – Staff Information Sheet

School of Psychology
Staff Information Sheet
Version: 2 Date: 10/10/2024

Exploring the use of Physical Restraint in Schools in Wales: Pupil and Staff Experiences, Evaluating Approaches, and Changing Practice.

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide whether or not you give your consent to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being undertaken and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others, if you wish.

Thank you for reading this.

1. What is the purpose of this research project?
This research project is being undertaken by Natalie Phillips, Trainee Educational Psychologist, who is currently completing a thesis as part of the completion of the Doctorate in Educational Psychology. The researcher is interested in gathering the views and experiences school staff's use of physical restraint in schools across Wales using semi-structured interviews. It is hoped that by gathering the information outlined above, an informed approach can be taken when considering the relevancy and updating of legislation, frameworks and guidance provided by the WG to support educational settings.

2. Why have I been invited to take part?
You have been invited because you work in a school in Wales.

3. Do I have to take part?
No, your participation in this research project is entirely voluntary and it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part, the researcher will discuss the research project with you and ask you to sign a consent form. If you decide not to take part, you do not have to explain your reasons and it will not affect your legal rights. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate in the research project at any time, without giving a reason, even after signing the consent form.

4. What will taking part involve?
A short interview (approximately up to one hour) with the researcher, who will ask you some questions about your views and experiences of the use of physical restraint in school. You can cease the interview at any time, and you can choose not to answer any questions that you don't want to, and can withdraw your data up until it is transcribed. This interview will be voice recorded on a secure device for the research to transcribe the conversations shared, and the recording will be deleted after the transcription has been completed (within 4 weeks of conducting the interview). A de-brief will be provided by the researcher after the interview has finished, to allow you to have a conversation about anything that you feel that you would like to discuss more or have further information.

5.   Will I be paid for taking part?

No. You should understand that any information that you share will be as a gift and you will not benefit financially in the future should this research project lead to the development of a new pathway.

6.   What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There will be no direct advantages or benefits to you from taking part, but your contribution will help us inform next steps in the use of physical restraint in schools.

7.   Will my taking part in this research project be kept confidential?

Data that will be used in the research will include what Local Authority your school is in, and whether your school is primary, secondary or specialist. All other personal and confidential information collected from you during the research project will be kept confidential and anonymous and managed in accordance with Data Protection legislation.

8.   What will happen to my Personal Data?

Cardiff University is the Data Controller and is committed to respecting and protecting your personal data in accordance with your expectations and Data Protection legislation. Further information about Data Protection, including:

- your rights
- the legal basis under which Cardiff University processes your personal data for research
- Cardiff University's Data Protection Policy
- how to contact the Cardiff University Data Protection Officer
- how to contact the Information Commissioner's Office

may   be   found   at   https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/public-information/policies-and-procedures/data-protection

Cardiff University will need to share the type of provision (Primary, Secondary, or Specialist) and the Local Authority name and that the school you work in is located in for the purposes of this research project. Personal data will be stored and processed according to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Your data will be received anonymously and collated with other responses through Qualtrics online. All data will be retained for a minimum period of 5 years after the end of the project, or after publication of any findings based upon the data (whichever is later).

9.   What happens to the data at the end of the research project?

Once the data has been collected via the semi-structured interview, it will be transcribed (typed up), anonymised (coded so that you cannot be identified other than the type of school provision you work at, and the local authority which your school resides) and then analysed by the researcher by the researcher. At this point, data may be shared with academic/research supervisors Hayley Jeans for academic supervision. Any other personal data will be removed before any form of sharing takes place.

10.   What will happen to the results of the research project?

The researcher will collate and synthesise all the information and present it in a detailed format (thesis). It is hoped that this research can be shared wider, by means of publication, to inform larger audiences of its findings. This will support further research within this topic area, and there is a hope that this research may support the development of policies and guidance documents to re-evaluate the use of physical restraint within schools in Wales, and across the UK. Depending on the outcome of the research, it may be our intention to publish the results of this research project in academic journals and present findings at conferences. Participants will not be identified in any report, publication, or presentation.

11.   What if there is a problem?

If you wish to complain or have grounds for concerns about any aspect of the manner in which you have been approached or treated during the course of this research, please contact Hayley Jeans, Co-Director of the Doctorate in Educational Psychology (Supervisor) on JeansH@cardiff.ac.uk or the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee, Cardiff University at the address below. If your complaint is not managed to your satisfaction, please contact the Information Commissioner's Office should you wish to complain, can be found at the following: https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/public-information/policies-and-procedures/data-protection. If you are harmed by taking part in this research project, there are no special compensation arrangements. If you are harmed due to someone's negligence, you may have grounds for legal action, but you may have to pay for it.

12.   Who is organising and funding this research project?

The research is organised by Natalie Phillips, Trainee Educational Psychologist in Cardiff University. The academic supervisor is Hayley Jeans, Co-Director of the Doctorate in Educational Psychology. There is no funding being received for this research project.

13.   Who has reviewed this research project?

This research project has been reviewed and given a favourable opinion by the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee, Cardiff University. Secretary of the Ethics Committee, School of Psychology, Cardiff University, Park Place, Cardiff, CF10 3AT. Tel: 029 2087 0707 Email: psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk.

14.   Further information and contact details

Should you have any questions relating to this research project, you may contact us during normal working hours:

Natalie Phillips   Hayley Jeans
Trainee Educational Psychologist   Co-director Doctorate in Educational
Psychology
DayeNJ@cardiff.ac.uk   JeansH@cardiff.ac.uk

Thank you for considering taking part in this research project. If you decide to participate, you will be given a copy of this information sheet and a signed consent form to keep for your records.

6.6. Appendix F – Staff Consent Form

School of Psychology

Parental Consent Form

Version: 1 Date: 10/10/24

School of Psychology

Exploring the use of Physical Restraint in Schools in Wales: Pupil and Staff Experiences, Evaluating Approaches, and Changing Practice.

Name of Chief/Principal Investigator: Natalie Phillips
Type of Consent: Formal Consent

Please initial box

I confirm that I have read the information sheet dated 10/10/24 version 2 for the above research project.	
I confirm that I have understood the information sheet dated 10/10/24 version 2 for the above research project and that I have had the opportunity to ask questions and that these have been answered satisfactorily.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary, and I am free to withdraw my engagement at any time without giving a reason and without any adverse consequences. I understand that if I withdraw, information about me that has already been obtained may be kept by Cardiff University.	
I understand that data collected during the research project will be looked at by the researcher, and may be looked at by individuals from Cardiff University or from regulatory authorities, where it is relevant to my taking part in the research project. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my data.	
I consent to the processing of my personal information including my name for the purposes explained to me. I understand that such information will be held in accordance with all applicable data protection legislation and in strict confidence, unless disclosure is required by law or professional obligation.	

I understand who will have access to my personal information, how the data will be stored and what will happen to the data at the end of the research project.	
I understand that after the research project, anonymised data may be made publicly available and may be used for purposes not related to this research project. I understand that it will not be possible to identify me from this data that is seen and used by other researchers, for ethically approved research projects, on the understanding that confidentiality will be maintained.	
I consent to my voice being audio recorded for the purposes of the research project and I understand how it will be used in the research.	
I understand that anonymised excerpts and/or verbatim quotes from my interview may be used as part of the research publication.	
I understand how the findings and results of the research project will be written up and published.	
I agree to take part in this research project.	

Name   of   participant   (print)
_____

Role (print)_____

Date_____

Signature_____

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN OUR RESEARCH. YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM TO KEEP

6.7. Appendix G – Semi Structured Interview Questions

School of Psychology

School Staff Semi-Structured Interview Questions

**Version: 2 Date: 10/10/24**

Exploring the use of Physical Restraint in Schools in Wales: Pupil and Staff Experiences, Evaluating Approaches, and Changing Practice.

These questions are draft questions and some of the wording may alter. Braun and Clarke 2022 (p,27) state that "the specifics of your research question do not have to be locked in at the start of the project" and that using RTA means that "research questions can evolve, narrow, expand or sharpen as your analysis takes form" (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p.27). The questions will be focused on task and role to ensure participants' safety.

1. Can you tell me about the frequency that you use physical restraint in your setting?

2. For what reasons have physical restraint been used in your setting?

3. Does the child or young people who you have experience of physically restraining have an understanding of who you are prior to the restraint (e.g. a pre-existing relationship)?

4. Do you discuss the use of physical restraint with the child/young person before or after the intervention?

5. Do you feel that you have enough knowledge in how to use physical restraint in schools?

6. Do you have any suggestions for changing practice regarding physical restraint?
   (open text)

7. Is there anything that hasn't been covered that you would like to mention about the use of physical restraint in schools?

6.8. Appendix H – Reflexive Thematic Analysis Process
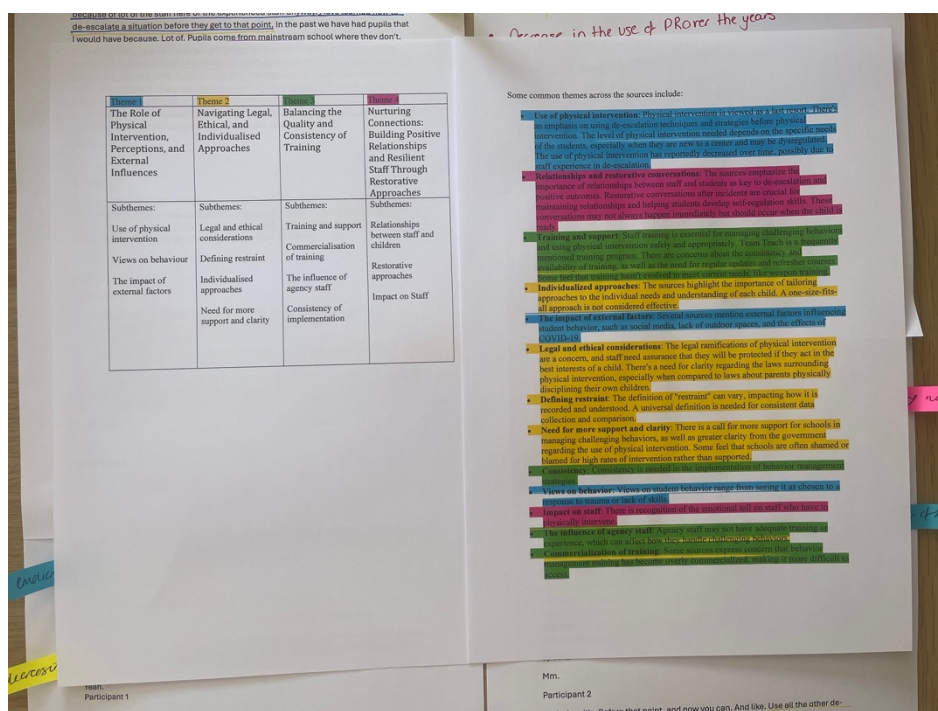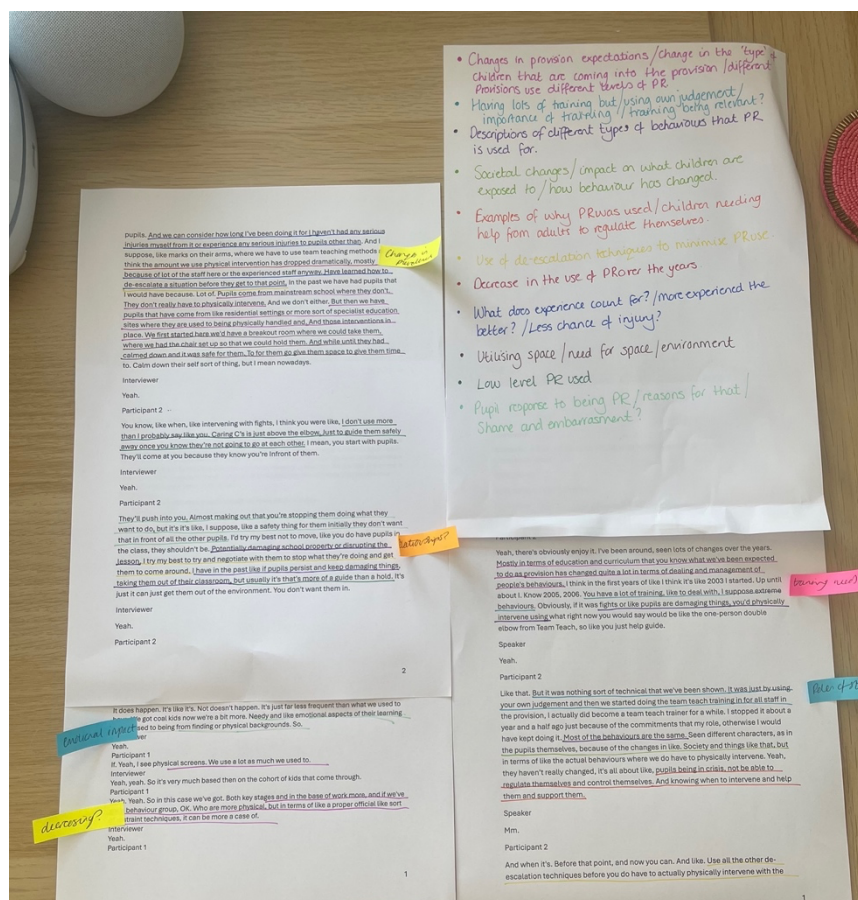
6.9. Appendix I – Transcript Sample

Participant 2
They'll push into you. Almost making out that you're stopping them doing what they want to do, but it's like, I suppose, like a safety thing for them initially they don't want that in front of all the other pupils. I'd try my best not to move, like you do have pupils in the class, they shouldn't be. Potentially damaging school property or disrupting the lesson. I try my best to try and negotiate with them to stop what they're doing and get them to come around. I have in the past like if pupils persist and keep damaging things, taking them out of their classroom, but usually it's that's more of a guide than a hold. It's just it can just get them out of the environment. You don't want them in.

Interviewer
I see.

Participant 2
And then. Obviously. Protect myself and you get into the right stance and make sure I'm able to deflect any sort of blows. Anything coming from them, but, that doesn't really help even now. I think the reward system we've got here seems to help the behaviour problems. [pause]. The pupils we have that do display those sorts of behaviours we're not having as many anymore. If we do. We've tried to arrange alternative provision so they're not in a in a class with the other pupils where they like, they get distracted or be a distraction themselves trying like. Put things in place. Especially. For them and their needs.

Interviewer
And why do you think you're not having as many of the children come through? Then that would need, I suppose that in intense level of management.

Participant 2
I don't know if it's like the local authority realise now at the earlier age, that the specialist provisions those pupils needs so it don't get to the point. They've been sent to us. I. Think a lot of. People's insiders will be missed. You like, say, in primary school at young age. So by the time they get to. Finishing primary school, I think they're already mapping out different provisions.

Interviewer
Yeah.

Participant 2
For them. Yeah. And we still have some that. Particularly if you've got pupils that have been passed around to lots of different alternative provisions and it hasn't worked because it's still attached to Borough, they need to be educated somewhere. I think sometimes they end up coming back to us and then we've got to try, and I suppose pool ideas again. But the end of what we can do to manage their behaviour. And support them until they finish full time education.
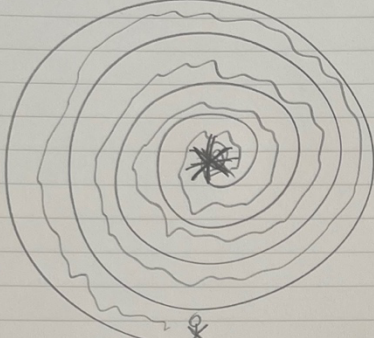
Interviewer
Yeah, OK. Tell me a bit more about that.

6.10. Appendix J – Reflective Journal Sample

date   /   /

Participant 5 Interview reflection

feels very cyclical.
- spiralling can't
- can't stop it
- no control over system / influence
- no one listens
- very negative about processes
- emotion driven.
- wants change but lacks control / outlets / ability for anyone to listen.
- training no good

- felt as though it was inevitable something bad was going to happen and it would be too late.

what does this mean??

- A want to see change and have voices heard
- Concern for both staff + CYP involved.
- Would like to see changes to training, more relative, frequent, consistant.

OK, so what now?

- Validation, acceptance, of feelings
- consider what can be controlled / where responsibility lies.

6.11. Appendix K – Dissemination Strategy

1. Purpose of Dissemination
- To inform and influence practice and policy on the use of physical restraint in educational settings in Wales.
- To promote ethical, trauma-informed, and psychologically grounded approaches.
- To engage stakeholders in ongoing reflection, dialogue, and system-wide improvement.

2. Key Audiences
- Educational Psychologists (EPs)
- School staff and senior leadership teams
- Local authority safeguarding and inclusion teams
- Welsh Government (WG) policymakers and relevant working groups
- Training providers
- Academics and researchers in educational psychology and child protection
- Parents and advocacy groups (where appropriate)
- Modes of Dissemination

3. Written Outputs
- Executive Summary – Succinct, accessible version of findings and implications.
- Full Doctoral Thesis – Available through university repository and shared on request.
- Policy Briefs – One-page summaries for WG and local authorities with key recommendations.
- Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles – Submissions to journals such as Educational Psychology in Practice or British Journal of Educational Psychology.
- Practice-Focused Articles – For newsletters and practitioner networks (e.g., DECP, BPS).

4. Presentations and Training
- Workshops for Schools – Sessions on key findings and practice implications, co-delivered with local EP services.
- EP Team Meetings and CPD – Present findings and discuss how to embed implications into local practice.
- Conferences – Present at relevant events (e.g., DECP Annual Conference)

5. Stakeholder Engagement
- Welsh Government – Submit executive summary and policy recommendations to relevant education and safeguarding leads.
- Local Authority Roundtables – Facilitate reflective discussions with safeguarding leads and service managers.
- Parent and Youth Engagement – Where appropriate, develop child-friendly or parent-accessible summaries.

6. Digital and Creative Media

- Infographics and Visual Summaries – Shareable on social media, internal communications, and school bulletins.
- Podcast or Video Summary – Short, accessible overview of the research for staff and wider audiences.
- University/Professional Website Uploads – Host summaries on professional networks or doctoral webpages.

7. Timeline

Phase	Activities	Timeframe
Phase 1	Develop outputs (exec summary, presentations etc.)	Month 1-2
Phase 2	Internal sharing with EP teams and schools	Month 2-3
Phase 3	Dissemination to LA and WG stakeholders	Month 3-4
Phase 4	Wider academic dissemination	Month 4-12

8. Evaluation of Impact
- Gather feedback via surveys or informal interviews after presentations or training.
- Track interest in further training, support, or policy discussions because of dissemination.
- Document any changes in local policy or practice influenced by findings.