

## **Behaviour management strategies, in-school units and managed moves A response from the National Children's Bureau**

### **About the National Children's Bureau**

The National Children's Bureau (NCB) is a leading charity that champions the rights of children and young people. We bring people and organisations together to drive change in society and deliver a better childhood for the UK. We interrogate policy, uncover evidence and develop better ways of supporting children and families.

Education and Inclusion is one of NCB's key priority areas. The NCB Family includes a range of networks and programmes with specialist knowledge on the behavioural needs of specific groups of children, including the [Council for Disabled Children](#), the [Information Advice and Support Services Network](#), the [Schools' Wellbeing Partnership](#), the [Anti-Bullying Alliance](#), [the Special Educational Consortium](#) and the [Childhood Bereavement Network](#).

The Schools' Wellbeing Partnership, Anti-Bullying Alliance and the Special Educational Consortium have each submitted their own consultation responses, focussing on their specialist areas. NCB supports these submissions and they complement NCB's overarching submission.

The Young NCB Advisory Group is a diverse group of children and young people from across England who advise NCB on strategic direction, policies and project development. The group, who are aged 11-23, come together to discuss a range of issues facing children and young people today such as mental health, child poverty and education. Together they ensure that our work remains meaningful and relevant to all children and young people.

FLARE is the Department for Education's national young Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) advisory group. FLARE, which stands for Friendship, Learning, Achieve, Reach and Empower, is a diverse group of 19 young people between the ages of 14-24 years of age with SEND from across England who work together to share their views and experiences with the Department for Education and other organisations, helping them understand how children and young people with SEND want to receive the support and services they need.

### **1. NCB Narrative on behaviour**

#### **NCB's vision**

NCB's vision is an inclusive education system that recognises the fundamental link between the wellbeing of its children and academic progress.

There is no 'trade-off' between inclusive teaching and learning, valuing children's mental health, and high expectations of children's behaviour in school. Where all

children are engaged in their education and have high levels of emotional wellbeing, behaviour will be 'good'.

### **Mainstream schools are finding it increasingly difficult to be inclusive**

Prior to the pandemic, NCB was deeply concerned by the significant rise in the number of children and young people excluded from school. There were particularly steep rises in exclusions from primary schools and amongst our youngest children. This rise in exclusions was part of a wider challenge in mainstream schools, evidenced by the steep increases in the proportion of children and young people with SEND in special schools and children being educated at home.

### **The underlying causes of behaviour**

Children may be labelled as having behavioural difficulties when in fact the issue lies further back in the system's failure to meet their needs. Emphasis should always be placed on looking at the underlying causes of behaviour, including whether there are unmet special educational needs or social or emotional difficulties.

### **Alternative provision**

NCB believes that the way Pupils Referral Units (PRUs) and alternative provision are used by both local authorities and schools to manage the behaviour of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children is not fit for purpose. There are major flaws in with the way children can be placed in PRUs and alternative provision, the quality of the education they receive there, and the arrangements in place to safeguard them.

### **The impact of the pandemic and 'education recovery'**

Successive lockdowns and the closure of education settings have placed children and young people under immense strain. Lost learning and newly emerging needs are bound to affect the ability of children to positively engage with their education. Children need to be given time and resources to make the transition back to full-time education while not being labelled as disruptive.

On recovery, a narrow view of childhood has led the government to prioritise huge tutoring programmes at the expense of measures that take a more rounded view of children's lives. Children's development cannot be divided into neat boxes called 'education', 'health' or 'social care'. Funding educational catch-up programmes without a clear vision for what a child-led recovery looks like will not deliver value for money or deliver the sustainable improvement in outcomes the government seeks.

## **2. Reflections on the 'Call for Evidence'**

NCB welcomes the Department for Education undertaking a call for evidence on behaviour and is pleased to respond.

NCB has the following reflections on the call for evidence and the questions asked. These are as follows:

- The call for evidence does not include questions about, or calls for examples of, the analysis of behaviour to inform an understanding of the underlying causes of the behaviour and the different approach needed in the light of this.

Questions to consider include:

- Is the child facing learning difficulties?
  - Has teaching been adjusted according to the child's underlying needs? Is learning sequenced appropriately?
  - If the child has a hearing impairment, has teacher behaviour been adjusted so that a pupil who lip reads can 'see' what the teacher is saying?
  - Has the child had a recent bereavement?
- The call for evidence has much focus on pupils' responsibilities for their behaviour e.g. 'pupils to address their persistently disruptive behaviour' without recognition of the interactive nature of many difficulties and the importance of adjustments made by teachers
  - There are no questions in the call for evidence about how staff have been supported to identify adjustments to classroom arrangements to improve engagement in learning. It is important to consider what staff have done differently, or how staff have been managed, or supported, to manage behaviour more effectively
  - There is no articulation in the call for evidence of what success looks like. The focus of the call for evidence is too downstream on 'treatment' rather than 'prevention'. The call for evidence is focussed on all the ways of handling situations when things that have not gone well, rather than looking upstream to a more preventive whole school approach
  - There is no reference in the call for evidence to the legal parameters around the use of 'removal rooms' or 'internal Alternative Provision' particularly in terms of placement for pupils with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
  - There is no reference in the call for evidence to the need to monitor the use any of the forms of provision discussed: which pupils are put in these and for how long
  - There is no reference in the call for evidence to the need to monitor the use any of the forms of provision discussed here by protected characteristics. There is also no reference to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) or to the fact that pupils who share different protected characteristics require different approaches e.g. reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils

- There is no reference in the call for evidence to how pupil voice is sought and heard. Listen to pupils' voice is in DfE guidance and Tribunal judges have criticised schools for having no regard to pupil voice
- There is no reference in the call for evidence to information advice and support services for parents and for pupils themselves.

### **3. Children and young people's views**

Listening to children and young people's views is fundamental to formulating NCB's response to the Behaviour management strategies, in-school units and managed moves consultation. NCB consulted with two NCB advisory groups of young people - Young NCB and FLARE, for their views on the following themes: in-school behavioural units, removal rooms and spaces, managed moves and mobile phones in schools. The views have been summarised below.

#### **In-School Behavioural Units**

Both Young NCB and FLARE discussed In-School behavioural units (ISBUs). Both groups shared that they were familiar with ISBUs but had seen them in different forms and that schools use the same name but will use them differently. Some of the young people expressed that they know them as where some students will go for retreat for anxiety related issues but will also be in the same unit as those with challenging behaviour, where as some said students will be completely removed from everyone else and be in complete isolation, suggesting that schools describe removal rooms as ISBUs.

Young NCB and FLARE identified some positives for ISBUs and said that they could be good for people with anxiety to retreat to. It was also noted that they can be used positively if used to provide specialised and focused support for those who may need it.

A number of negatives were identified, most commonly, the young people felt they can be isolating for pupils. Furthermore, the young people felt it can result in hindering academic learning, as many young people mentioned that pupils are just given textbooks and told to complete a number of pages but that they do not receive any help from relevant teachers if needed.

Another important theme that came through was concern for students with special educational needs and disabilities. It was pointed out that young people with SEND are punished for having different needs. Often young people are not assessed as individuals and are just put in all together, similarly if there is a barrier to taking part in a lesson such as Physical Education (PE), a young person may be placed in a behaviour unit because there is nowhere else to put them.

#### **Alternatives**

Both groups were asked about how to improve the in-school behaviour units or what alternatives they might be able to think of. Across both groups, young people felt that young people should be individually assessed to ensure that a young person is not being isolated because of a special need that is not being addressed, and be able to

differentiate between children who go for behavioural reasons and those who just need a break.

It was concluded by both groups that the current set up of ISBUs leads to creating negative emotions in young people as those who end up in ISBUs feel the impacts negatively and are left feeling powerless, voiceless and not listened to or helped, particularly when individual needs are not assessed.

### **Removal rooms and spaces**

FLARE discussed a case study on removal rooms and the impact on academic progress. Many of the young people reported that removal rooms only acted as a temporary solution in removing a behavioural concern, but has long term impacts on a pupil's education as they will be removed from a classroom, so will not learn and will not have the necessary learning support needed, especially if the disruptive behaviour occurs because a pupil is struggling with tasks set in class. It was noted that a removal room would further delay pupils from getting the support they need, hence not improve their behaviour.

FLARE felt removal rooms are not effective in improving behaviour, but rather as an alternative suggest, meeting with pupils and deciding with them on what further support the school can provide.

### **Managed Moves**

Young NCB discussed managed moves and were provided with a case study of a student who is struggling academically and disrupting lessons for an extended period of time and the head teacher has begun the process of a managed move.

The young people felt that managed moves often have negative impacts on relationship with classmates, wellbeing, concentration and attainment, and it will not improve behaviour. The young people explained that a managed move may result in the pupils losing confidence as a managed move does not teach pupils in how to manage their behaviour, hence resulting in no change or improvement in behaviour.

When asked on who should be involved in the process when a managed move is decided, the young people felt that it was very important that the pupil under a managed move is involved and consulted in the whole process. As well as the pupil's parents the young people stressed staff from the pupil's new education setting should also as the key players and be involved in managed moves, such as 'wellbeing teams' and a potential 'buddy' system in the new settings.

### **Alternatives**

The young people came up with a few alternatives that could be put into place to address the behavioural concerns and even avoid managed moves. Most of the suggestions for assisting pupils being considered for managed moves revolved around providing help with academic work such as extra classes or a study support assistant. It was also suggested by the young people that it would be beneficial for pupils with behavioural concerns to be able to have a safe space within schools where they could calm down or work quietly if needed.

### **Mobile Phones in Schools**

FLARE was also consulted on the usage of mobile phones in schools. Over 77% felt that mobile phones should be allowed in schools and felt that the usage of mobile phones did not contribute towards challenging behaviour in schools. One of the consistent themes on being allowed to use mobile phones in schools was that many young people felt it was particularly useful for young people with mental health concerns, as well as those with disabilities as it acts as a tool to keep in touch with trusted individuals when having a particularly difficult day. Many even reported that often, they use their mobile phones to study from during exam periods and they are particularly useful for those who do not have access to computers or laptops during the day.

FLARE identified multiple positives on being allowed to use mobile phones in schools. Whilst a few members acknowledged that mobile phones should be put away when in lessons, many mentioned that sometimes, in classroom settings, teachers sometimes allow students to use their phones for things like quizzes or TEAMS chat for people isolating at home. Consistently, many of the members also mentioned how certain applications that are built in mobile phones, such as 'voice to note' and other voice recording tools can be beneficial to some students with hidden disabilities, acting as extra academic support during lessons.

Many felt that they are also good for wellbeing and maintaining relationships with peers in classrooms as they allow them to stay in touch outside of classroom settings, but also felt that it made them feel safer as they knew in cases of emergencies, they have easy access to be able to contact families. It also allows student easy internet access for studying during breaks, particularly when studying for upcoming exams, thus positive on attainment.

When asked to discuss the negative impact the use of mobile phones in schools have on education, three main concerns were identified. Many of the young people felt that the usage of mobile phones in schools sometimes led to bullying. Some felt that students sometimes can use it for social media rather than studying in schools and the overall consensus was, if not used correctly, mobile phones can be a distraction for students in classrooms.

Overall, FLARE felt that mobile phones should be allowed in schools, and whilst recognising some negatives of using mobile phones, they did however, identify more benefits in how mobile phones can be useful tools in supporting students academically, but also for general wellbeing and forming positive relationships overall, and also mentioned how teachers are already using them as tools for additional learning, particularly during the course of the pandemic.

#### **4. Case studies**

NCB received case studies examples of best practice on behaviour from the NCB family.

The [Information Advice and Support Services Network](#) (IASSN) carried out a call out for examples on behavioural management strategies. A number of different case studies came in from five different local areas within the network, these local areas were: Somerset, Sussex, Tees Valley, Cambridgeshire and Devon.

We have summarised the key features of good practice identified by the case studies below.

- Schools listen objectively to parents' concerns when they are first mentioned
- The SEND team and the pastoral team work closely together
- SEND support staff work closely with families and ensure schools provide the right support for children with special education needs and disabilities
- Schools hold a full investigation of an incident rather than rely on prejudice based on pupils' personal circumstances
- Schools listen to children and young people about the type of support they require and involve them in all aspects of planning this and making reasonable adjustments
- Schools use Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) resources to enable early diagnosis.

The [Childhood Bereavement Network](#) (CBN) were also sent some positive examples in response to their call out. These case studies were provided by various stakeholders, including schools, practitioners and experienced bereavement service leads. We have summarised the key features of good practice identified by the case studies below.

- Schools to communicate with families at home and talk to the adults about their experience and involve them in decisions
- Allocating a staff member to be the key trusted person for the child or young person
- Schools to support young people through the process of referral to external services such as counselling
- School staff to be given appropriate bereavement training, so staff can pick up on changes in behaviour so that schools are able to provide appropriate support.

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**For more information about this response, please contact:**

Alia Khan, Public Affairs and Policy Officer: [alia.khan@ncb.org.uk](mailto:alia.khan@ncb.org.uk)