

Use of force

Other formats

If you need this leaflet in another format such as audio CD, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service:

- 01392 402093 (for Mid Devon, East Devon and Exeter services)
- 01271 314090 (for North Devon services)
- rduh.pals@nhs.net

This leaflet is about why and when we might use force on an Inpatient Adult ward. This is only ever used as a last resort to protect you or people around you from major harm. This leaflet will tell you what we do to support you after use of force was needed. There is also information on what to do if you think use of force was not done in the right way.

What does 'use of force' mean?

Use of force is when trained staff use certain methods or actions to prevent or restrict you from doing certain things. This might be physical restraint. It might be restraint using medicines such as tablets or an injection.

When and why would use of force be needed?

Our wards and departments should be a safe space to support your recovery but coming into hospital can be a difficult and distressing time. Sometimes people find this emotionally difficult or are confused due their condition. We would like everyone to feel calm and safe in our wards and departments. This includes patients, staff and any visitors to our wards and departments.

If there is a worry that you might hurt yourself or others, use of force may be needed. This is a last resort.

We want to work together and treat each other with respect

Our staff want to help you in the ways you want to be helped. If you can, please tell us how you would want to be cared for if the use of force is needed. Tell us about what is stressful for you, and how you may react and what helps you the most when you are upset. Please share with the staff if you hold a Hospital passport, Autism health passport or This is me.

We can all contribute to a positive and safe ward by treating others around us with kindness and respect.

We want to prevent using force as much as possible. If there are things that keep you calm, let us know and we will support you to continue with these. There are also some activities on the wards such as books, games, TV and radio for you to use to help you to stay calm.

Just like outside the wards, people behaving aggressively towards each other or causing damage to the environment will be dealt with to keep everyone safe. This includes contacting the police for support where appropriate.

Types of force used

Physical restraint

Physical restraint describes any time that a staff member puts their hands on you to take control of your movement. While this is happening staff will be talking to you and supporting you through this difficult time.

There are three different kinds of physical restraint we use:

Standing

Two people, one either side of you, will hold your arms.

Seated

Two people will support you to sit in a safe place holding your arms. This will be one person either side of you, also sitting.

Supine

Laid down on your back, usually three people will hold you on the ground. You will be facing up.

Restraint using medicines

Sometimes medicine is given to help support your emotions. You might not want it and physical restraint might be used at the same time. This is called **rapid tranquilisation** and is a last resort.

If you can take it, we will offer you medicine in tablet form.

If you are unable to accept this in tablet form, an injection of the same medication may be given.

The medicine that is used for tranquilisation can make you feel less worried and sometimes sleepy. This is quite normal.

Mechanical restraint

Mechanical restraint is used to prevent or restrict your movements or body. It involves using an extra device such as mitts or gloves. Sometimes we have to do this without that person's consent or agreement, for example using a slide sheet to move between beds. We will always explain to you what is happening and involve you in these decisions.

We want to make sure you are not hurt in any way and we want to support you.

Safety pod

These are available in some wards and departments.

This is a large specialist bean bag that can be used for you to sit in when you are in distress, or at risk of harming yourself or others around you. It helps you to be in a position that is safer and more comfortable as it is lower to the ground than a chair and allows staff to support you without holding you.

Other restrictions

These can include certain doors being locked, removing specific items, or limiting access to specific items.

They can also be specific to you only and will always be based on safety. This might include personal items like your phone.

After use of force has been used

If you are involved in any use of force, or you see this happen to someone else, a member of your clinical team will speak to you, your family or carers to ensure you are supported as we want to be open and honest and work together. This allows everyone to make sure use of force is less likely to occur in the future.

If you want more support after an incident please talk to any of the staff looking after you.

Our aim is that any use of force is only done to keep you safe and well. If use of force has been necessary we will review what happened and why. Sometimes use of force is needed as part of a care plan to deliver treatment and in this case, it will be discussed with you, your family and carers and regularly reviewed. If at any point you think any decisions are wrong, then you have the right to talk about it.

What to do if something isn't done right

If you think force has been used unfairly, please speak to the clinical team looking after you or the ward manager in the first instance.

If you are unable to resolve your concerns, you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) for advice. Alternatively, you can contact the Devon Advocacy Consortium for further help on 01392 822377 or email devonadvocacy@livingoptions.org.uk

Summary

We understand how difficult things are for you right now and that not all experiences are good. We are here to support you. Any use of force is a last resort and we will do anything we can to avoid it. In the event force is used, we will do everything we can to try and make sure it doesn't happen again.

Use of force should always be fair and only used to protect you or others from harm. It will never be used as a punishment.

Your notes

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern, please contact PALS:

- 01392 402093 (for Mid Devon, East Devon and Exeter services)
- 01271 314090 (for North Devon services)
- rduh.pals@nhs.net

Have your say

Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

You can also share your feedback on the Care Opinion website at www.careopinion.org.uk or freephone 0800 122 3135.



Scan the QR code to visit the Care Opinion website →

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