



The Institute of Integrated Systemic Therapy
Research Paper Summary

Author name and Job Role:

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Paper title:

An Investigation into the Use of Restrictive Physical Intervention with Children Living in a Therapeutic Community.

General area/topic:

The use of restrictive physical intervention within 'Spirit House' and the impact of this on staff, children and the Community as a whole.

Main research questions/ aims:

The children at Spirit house arrive from backgrounds of severe abuse and neglect and often present difficult behaviours as an unconscious communication as a result of their trauma. The aim of this study was to critically examine the use of RPI with the children in residence at Spirit House. This included, but was not limited to, considering the impact it has on staff and children, and factors that can influence a staff member's practice of RPI.

The objectives of this research were as follows –

- To critically evaluate existing literature relating to the use of RPI in Therapeutic Communities

- To interview a small sample of staff regarding their use and experience of RPI within Spirit House
- To conduct thematic data analysis to ascertain key themes in the use RPI within Spirit House
- To make work-based recommendations as to how to improve whole Community practice around the use of RPI

Why this topic was explored/ what is the intended impact:

It was intended that this research would facilitate the development of a more thorough and robust understanding of the use of RPI within our Therapeutic Communities. We are constantly striving to keep the use of RPI to a minimum, recognising how high levels of unsafe and harmful behaviour within a therapeutic would be damaging to the culture of the Community. Promoting and safeguarding the physical and emotional wellbeing of the children and staff within our Community is our highest priority, and this study was intended to contribute to the effectiveness with which we are able to achieve this.

Methods:

A qualitative approach was used within the study and semi structured interviews were used for data collection. Thematic analysis was used to interpret the data.

Main findings:

The themes identified through my thematic analysis offer different perspectives on the complexities and intricacies of the use of RPI within the Therapeutic Community. These themes were;

- Living the Restraining Dilemma – *this theme related to the challenging nature of decision making for staff around the use of RPI and the different factors that can affect this*
- Through the Eyes of the Child – *this theme considered the impact of the use of RPI on the child, both positive and negative*
- The Voice of Management; Real or Perceived – *this theme explored how staff's decision making in the use of RPI and their experience*

before, during and after RPI, is impacted by the voiced and perceived opinions of senior staff

- *The Normalisation of Violence – this theme related to the potential for violence within a Therapeutic Community to become normalised and potentially unintentionally permitted through an unhealthy culture*
- *Change Throughout the Therapeutic Community – this theme explored the journeys that individual members of staff had been on in relation to their own use of RPI and also the journeys that they perceived the Community to have been on during their time with us*

The study was noted to positively impact on Spirit House, preceding a significant reduction in the levels of unsafe and harmful behaviours amongst the children's group and thus in the use of RPI. The study also recommended the implementation of some changes in how we monitor and review the use of RPI on an individual and group level, and ensured that the topic was given more focus and thought at a senior management level within the Community.