

Components of interventions to reduce restrictive practices with children and young people in institutional settings: the Contrast systematic mapping review

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Plain English summary

Contrast systematic mapping review

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Plain English summary

Children and young people in institutions can become upset and aggressive. Staff may respond by holding them or putting them in a room on their own, which is called 'restrictive practice' and can be harmful for service users and staff. Many interventions exist for reducing the use of restrictive practices, but we do not know which ones work or why. Staff training could reduce the use of restrictive practices by encouraging staff to behave differently, for example by learning better ways of talking to somebody who has become upset or aggressive.

We knew about a list of 93 techniques for changing behaviour. This list is used like a dictionary to look up terms that best describe parts of an intervention to make it easier to describe and compare them. We wanted to see how many different interventions we could find and to describe these interventions using this list.

We identified all the interventions that we could find across institutional settings for children and young people, and recorded information such as participants, location and how success was measured. We looked in detail at the interventions and described the techniques using the list. We also assessed the quality of research about the interventions.

We found 82 different interventions, mostly in mental health settings. Techniques involving staff training; changing the environment to prevent incidents; setting goals for staff to work towards, such as reducing how often they use a restrictive practice; and giving staff feedback about incidents were commonly found as part of the most successful interventions and may be worth investigating further.

This study is, to our knowledge, the first to describe these interventions in a standard way. It may help researchers, policy-makers and clinicians describe and understand interventions to reduce restrictive practices in children and young people's institutional settings.

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