

## Good Practice: Use of Force

The use of force in places of deprivation of liberty continues to raise profound concerns about safety, dignity and equality among UK NPM bodies. Across all settings, evidence points to systemic issues of disproportionate impacts on certain groups, reliance on inexperienced staff and practices that lack a trauma-informed approach. Recent outputs from the UK NPM central team and NPM bodies have highlighted these trends, from the introduction of tasers and PAVA in prison environments, to routine handcuffing and poor risk assessments in immigration detention.

By highlighting good practice in this area, this paper does not suggest that these challenges have been resolved. Instead, it aims to serve as a practical resource, sharing examples of good practice that can help establishments reduce reliance on use of force and restraint, strengthen oversight, and embed a culture of care and de-escalation.

From the good practice examples uploaded to the Reporting Dashboard in 2025, three clear themes emerge regarding use of force: data recording and analysis, person-centred approaches, and staff training.

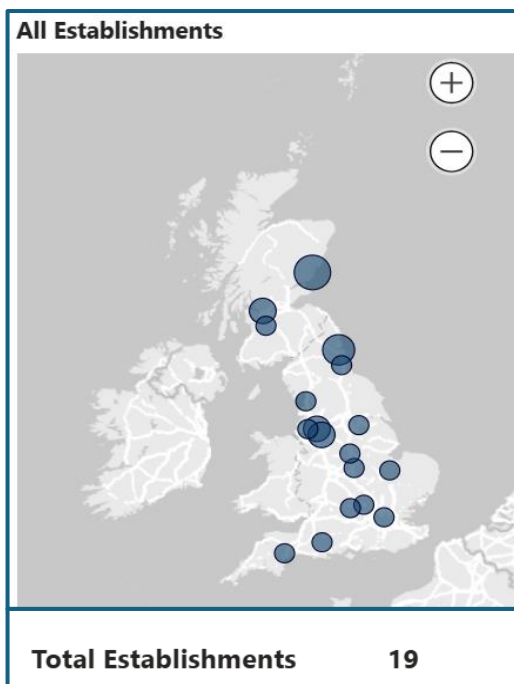
*N.B. The UK NPM Reporting Dashboard defines use of force as “the use of physical control or restraint by staff”.*

### Use of Force and Data:

Many examples of good practice refer to thorough reviews and analysis of use of force events. This was seen at HMP Whitemoor and HMP Styal in particular. Examples of good practice are also shared at these review meetings.

The use of body worn video cameras (BWVCs) is also referenced as good practice in use of force. At HMP Pentonville, HMP Moorland, HMP Leicester and court custody facilities in the Thames Valley, both the use of and data from BWVCs was routinely reviewed in order to drive up standards.

Across many establishments in the secure children’s estate, improved data recording and governance has been reported. At Clayfields House Secure Unit, a new system was introduced for monitoring physical interventions, which allows for the tracking of incidents, the subsequent identification of any issues and assessment of the effectiveness of strategies. At



*Geographic spread of good practice in use of force in 2025. The larger circles represent more examples at that establishment.*

St Mary's Kenmure Secure Accommodation Services, improved governance had resulted in quality assurance systems having a positive impact on the monitoring and management of safeguarding and restrictive practice. These areas were found to be much improved and assured inspectors that young people were being cared for safely.

Rossie Secure Accommodation Services had committed to incorporating "The Promise"<sup>1</sup>, which included a new recording system for incidents that supported insightful analysis and the reduction of restrictive practices.

Robust data recording and analysis, supported by tools like BWVCs and improved governance systems, strengthens oversight and accountability. These practices enable establishments to identify trends, reduce restrictive interventions, and assure safe care.

### Use of Force and Staff Training:

At Rossie Secure Accommodation Services, "aspirational" developments had taken place to support the reduction of restrictive practices. This was achieved not only by data analysis, but also reflection on previous incidents and regular training for staff.

IMB's reported that at HMP Aylesbury, there are monthly use of force meetings that both review data but also identify learning. Prisoner representatives are also invited to these meetings, and their views are actively sought by prison staff.

At HMP Styal, staff worked with the Women's Estate Psychology Services team to identify incidents where good de-escalation techniques had avoided the need to use physical force. This information was then shared with staff, culminating in an overall reduction in the amount of times force was used.

The Use of Force Coordinator at HMP Liverpool focused on ensuring that BWVCs were activated during incidents. Footage was RAG-rated, and any staff whose footage did not receive a green rating were provided with guidance on how to improve. As a result, leaders had good evidence to judge whether force was necessary and justified

Regular review meetings, reflective practice, and targeted training empower staff to manage conflict constructively. Sharing learning and involving those in custody fosters transparency and reduces reliance on physical force.

### Use of Force and Person-Centred Approaches:

At Broadmoor Hospital, staff worked with people to understand and manage risks by "thinking holistically", and followed best practice in anticipating, de-escalating and managing

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<sup>1</sup> The promise is "that all Scotland's children and young people will grow up loved, safe and respected so they can realise their full potential." To keep this promise, all the conclusions of the Independent Care Review (est. 2017) must be implemented, in full, by 2030.

challenging behaviour. Staff also used restraint and seclusion only after attempts at de-escalation had failed and participated in the restrictive interventions reduction programme.

At Barton Moss Secure Care Centre, the minimal amount of physical intervention was the result of staff knowing the children in their care well. This allowed them to mitigate escalations in unwanted behaviours through verbal redirection. Staff promoted mediation with the children, and also supported them to reflect on their behaviours. Similarly, at Marydale Lodge, staff used relationship-based care to overcome challenging situations and reduce the time children spent away from their peers following an incident.

Across many secure children's homes, including Barton Moss Secure Care Centre, the Atkinson Unit and Kyloe House, healthcare professionals also review incidents and see children after any use of force. This ensures children both are and feel supported on these occasions.

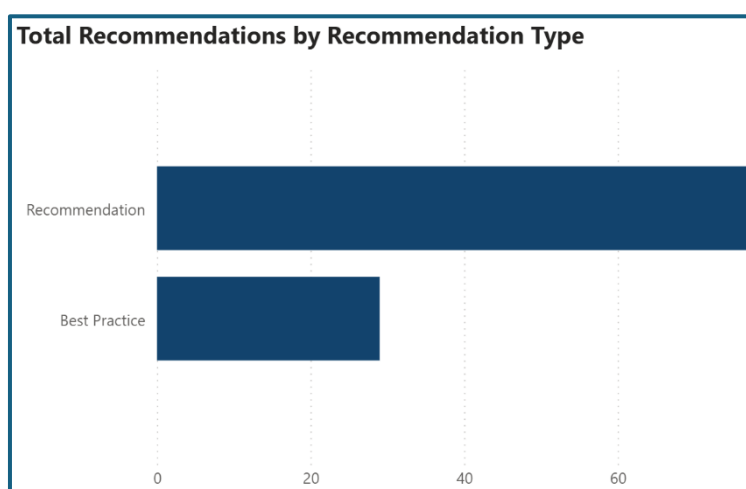
Also at Kyloe House, discussions with children (and staff) after any event of use of force offers children the opportunity to reflect and provide feedback. Adjustments are made to practice based on this feedback, which has led to individualised and child-centred approaches.

At HMP Lancaster Farms, it was reported that effective communication often de-escalates incidents without the need for further action.

Building strong relationships and prioritising individual needs significantly mitigates escalation. Post-incident reviews and feedback loops ensure care remains trauma-informed and person-centred, making force a true last resort.

### Concluding remarks:

The examples highlighted across many settings demonstrate that reducing reliance on and use of force is achievable when establishments prioritise data analysis, invest in staff training and adopt person-centred approaches. While systemic challenges remain, these initiatives show that meaningful change is possible. By sharing these practices, the UK NPM aims to support establishments in strengthening oversight and safeguarding dignity, ensuring that the use of force is always a measure of last resort.



*Number of recommendations (77) and good practices (29) made on use of force in 2025.*