Guidelines and standards for Focused Review

There is evidence to suggest that adopting formalised organisational debriefing following the implementation of a restrictive practice can reduce future use of restrictive practices by up to 75%[[1]](#footnote-1). In addition, it has been suggested that organisational debriefing has the potential to be the single most important factor in restraint reduction models achieving success[[2]](#footnote-2).

In order to ensure the process is productive, objective and reflective, the term ‘Focused Review’ is being applied to this procedure, when in other circumstances the term ‘organisational debrief’ might also be appropriately used. Schools are encouraged to implement the Focused Review approach as part of a proactive, reflective process for improving individual student support.

It is not the aim of the Focused Review to provide psychological debrief. If staff or students require individual psychological support, this should be sought through employee assistance for staff or school guidance officers for students.

Definition

The procedure proposes a model of Focused Review that can be used by school staff. A Focused Review is:

*A formal solution-focused process by which staff involved in the use of a restrictive practice can objectively* ***reflect*** *on and* ***review*** *the incident,* ***with the aim of reducing the risk*** *of such occurrences in the future and/or identifying new strategies or interventions.*

The Focused Review does not seek to apportion blame and is not used to discipline students or staff.

The aim of a Focused Review is to provide an opportunity to objectively reflect on the incident that resulted in the use of a restrictive practice.

Undertaking a Focused Review

A Focused Review should ideally occur between 24 and 72 hours following an incident in which any restrictive practice was used (but could be undertaken up to one week after the event occurred). The process is reflective and solution-focused, and aims to:

* identify what occurred in the period prior to the use of a restrictive practice
* identify potential setting conditions and triggers for the incident
* consider what actions were taken to reduce the risk and whether they were useful
* consider if there were other actions available to reduce the risk that have not been tried
* explore alternative de-escalation strategies
* consider any environmental contributors to the risk, and review any options for reducing such factors
* identify any different behaviour risk reduction strategies that can be implemented, and
* contribute to a review of, or initiate the development of, an Individual Behaviour Support Plan for the student.

The review is a supportive problem solving and reflective process that explores the situation that occurred and the system’s responses, and seeks to support best practice. The Focused Review **does not** seek to review the actions of individual staff or students or apportion blame.

It is important that all the staff who were involved in the incident, whether or not they took part in or observed the use of the restrictive practice, are involved in the Focused Review. If considered appropriate, the parent of the student may be invited by the school leadership team member to participate in the Focused Review.

It is possible that the review can be facilitated by a member of school staff who is not directly affected by or involved in the incident that is the subject of the Focused Review, or alternatively, it may be preferable to seek a skilled external facilitator. In any event the ideal facilitator will be:

* familiar with departmental and school procedure
* familiar with the school, the students and staff
* skilled at providing objective and solution focused facilitation.

The process

The process draws upon the published work of Allen (2011), Goulet (2016) and Huckshorn (2008), for delivering a Focused Review and will follow a reflective, solution focused approach. The facilitator will use a guided process to highlight intervention opportunities that will ensure there is an objective approach to undertaking the Focused Review. The intervention opportunities are described below and will form the framework for delivering the Focused Review:

1. **What has been done within the classroom and school environment to minimise behavioural risk occurring?**

*This asks the facilitator to draw out broad considerations relating to the environment but also consider more general approaches and strategies that are applied across the school (including proactive and preventative behaviour management strategies and solutions). It is an opportunity to consider relationships and how relationships are formed and sustained; to explore both healthy relationships and those that can contribute to risk behaviours. To describe what might be done to manage risk and ensure that support plans are practical and focused on the individual student’s needs.*

1. **Could the trigger for the behaviour have been avoided, or not?**

*The facilitator will draw out whether (or not) everyone who requires it, has the information necessary to respond to the individual student when they are anxious, upset or escalating. This intervention opportunity should consider how information is shared, how plans are developed and whether everyone has the necessary information.*

1. **Was it possible to provide the most effective response to events as they occurred? Were staff present and able to be responsive?**

*This intervention opportunity does not seek to find or apportion blame but rather to look at how resources are being used, and whether it is possible to change the environment or staff responses that might reduce risk. It is an opportunity to explore the various responses of students, staff and others to the escalating situation/student within the incident.*

1. **Were the responses effective?**

*The facilitator should support the team to explore their response and whether their level of knowledge, skills and abilities are helpful to them in identifying and applying the least restrictive or last resort response. It is an intervention opportunity to reflect on practice and identify what, if anything, may need to change, and whether or not staff require additional training or support.*

**5. What are the learning points? When exploring the strategies used during the incident, what were the responses of the student and what was effective?**

*The facilitator will endeavour to help the team identify what worked and what didn’t work and why. This is not to attribute or apportion any blame or make statements of failure, but to identify what can change in the future, and how any strategies or intervention will be more effective in the future.*

**6. When the restrictive practice was used, was it implemented as a last resort response to an emergent unforeseeable situation, OR if used as part of a planned response, was it used after the implementation of proactive behaviour support, following the implementation of behavioural and de-escalation strategies?**

*This intervention opportunity allows the team to explore whether (or not) they believe the use of the restrictive practice was appropriate at the point in time when it was used. This element of exploration must be managed with sensitivity by the facilitator, as it is an important aspect of the review process. It is an important intervention opportunity that enables the team to objectively consider whether or not alternative strategies, such as proactive behaviour responses or a non-aversive reactive strategy could have been employed, and what factors contributed to the use of the restrictive practice at the point when a decision was taken to use it.*

**7. Were there any new risks identified and was the use of the restrictive practice safe?**

*The facilitator will explore whether or not there were any safety issues highlighted as a result of the incident being discusse*d. *This will include whether the use of the restrictive practice was in line with procedure, guidelines, training and any written plans. This is an intervention opportunity to ensure the safety of the student and staff in the future and provide opportunity to acknowledge how this can be improved. The questions are not intended to seek to find or apportion blame.*

**8. How was the safety of everyone managed?**

*The facilitator will explore the broad issues related to safety during an incident. It is an intervention opportunity to consider the safety of all students, the student who was subject to the restrictive practice and all staff. It’s an opportunity for considering what went well and what can be improved.*

**9. When was the restrictive practice ceased and how did the incident conclude?**

*The facilitator will support the team to explore their decision making as the risk decreased. This is an intervention opportunity, enabling the team to consider their decision making skills, responses and overall awareness of procedure and best practice. The facilitator should focus on the team response and not individual roles during the incident.*

**10. What happens afterwards?**

*This is an opportunity for the facilitator to assist the team to explore how people were supported; this includes students, staff and other people. It is also an opportunity to ensure that procedural aspects were managed in a timely way, for example reporting and recording of the incident.*

**11. Summary of the intervention opportunity learning points.**

*The facilitator will draw out the learnings from the Focused Review and summarise the key learnings and actions. This enables the team to objectively identify what they can change, how they can improve and highlight their real achievements. This will be used in future planning and supports.*

Facilitator prompt statements for intervention opportunities

The below are some examples of prompts that might be used by the facilitator who is assisting with the Focused Review.

1. **What has been done within the classroom and school environment to minimise behavioural risk occurring?**

* *Is the school environment predictable? Are there identifiable environmental factors or constraints that may increase anxiety for the student?*
* *Who has the student formed relationships with in the school? What are the relationships the student would describe as valued by them?*
* *Are the rules and expectations across the school and between settings clear for everyone?*
* *Is there ambiguity in messages given by staff to students about rules and how they are enforced?*
* *Is there a check-in and check-out system for the student if they are known to experience anxiety and present with risky behaviour?*

1. **Could the trigger for the behaviour have been avoided, or not?**

* *What were the triggers or situational factors that contributed to the incident?*
* *In the previous days did the student exhibit any behaviour that may have indicated they were likely to endanger themselves or others?*
* *Was anyone aware of any external factors that might be impacting on the student that led to the behaviour of harm to self or others?*
* *If this is a new or unexpected behaviour, what might have contributed to the change in behaviour of the student?*
* *If there are any plans in place to support the student, are they adequate and up to date? Do all the staff who need to know about the plans know of them and understand them?*

1. **Was it possible to provide the most effective response to events as they occurred? Were staff present and able to be responsive?**

* *Who responded to the student and at what point in the incident?*
* *Were there any factors that prevented staff responding to the student?*
* *Were there any barriers/factors that prevented staff from providing the most effective or planned response?*
* *How might any barriers be overcome in the future?*

1. **Were the responses effective?**

* *What did staff do in response to escalating risk?*
* *Why were particular strategies or approaches used?*
* *Were there any environmental barriers to managing the situation?*
* *Was there any delay in providing a response to the student or team members who requested assistance?*

1. **What are the learning points? When exploring the strategies used during the incident, what were the responses of the student and what was effective?**

* *What else could have been tried?*
* *Was there anything that was tried by a staff member that seemed to make the situation worse?*
* *Was there anything that was tried by a staff member that appeared to improve the situation, even if the student’s behaviour escalated in the period following?*
* *When the restrictive practice was implemented was it effective? If it was not, why was this case?*
* *Are there other responses that might be considered in the future?*

1. **When the restrictive practice was used, was it implemented as a last resort response to an emergent unforeseeable situation, or was it used as part of a planned response? Was it used after the implementation of proactive behaviour support, following the implementation of behavioural and de-escalation strategies?**

* *Were all possible proactive and preventative measures used so far as was possible at the time of the incident? If not, what were the barriers?*
* *What was happening immediately prior to making the decision to apply a restrictive practice? Describe the student’s behaviour immediately before the decision was taken to implement a restrictive practice.*
* *On reflection, do you think that the restrictive practice was used as a last resort response in that no other alternative course of action was likely to reduce the imminent risk at that moment in time?*
* *How was the decision taken to implement the restrictive practice?*
* *Does the recent use of a restrictive practice indicate that there is a need to develop/review the students’ behaviour plans?*

1. **Were there any new risks identified and was the use of the restrictive practice safe?**

* *If this is not a new behaviour, do the staff team or individual staff members believe that the risk of the behaviour has increased?*
* *Are there any environmental factors that increase physical risk to staff or students?*
* *If individual people are at risk and that risk has changed, who are those people? What can be done to mitigate the risk?*
* *Did the number of people involved in the incident increase risk? Were there too many people involved?*
* *How were bystanders managed? This includes other students, staff or others who were present.*
* *Was the use and application of the restrictive practice as safe as it could be?*
* *Who was managing or leading the incident from a staff perspective? Who had oversight of the situation?*
* *Was anyone injured throughout the incident?*

1. **How was the safety of everyone managed?**

* *When the restrictive practice was implemented, how was the student monitored and by whom?*
* *Did the restrictive practice deviate from anything that had been taught as a technique by a training provider? If it did, why was this the case and what might be done to reduce the risk of such changes in future?*
* *Was the use of restrictive practice in line with procedural guidance?*
* *Did the use of the restrictive practice reduce risk and enable the staff to support the student safely?*
* *Were students in the vicinity managed in a safe way?*

1. **When was the restrictive practice ceased and how did the incident conclude?**

* *How long had the restrictive practice lasted when it was ceased?*
* *Who made the decision to cease the restrictive practice?*
* *Were there opportunities to cease the restrictive practice sooner?*
* *Was the decision to cease the restrictive practice taken at the right time?*
* *Describe the behaviour of the student when the restrictive practice was ceased?*
* *Was control returned to the student as soon as possible?*

1. **What happened afterwards?**

* *Who was present when the restrictive practice ceased and what was their role in the incident?*
* *Were staff not directly involved in the incident aware of what was happening?*
* *As a result of the incident, was there a need to contact external agencies for additional support such as Queensland Police Service or Queensland Ambulance Service?*
* *When was the restrictive practice ceased and how did the incident conclude?*
* *Who was present throughout the whole period of the incident and what was their role in the situation?*
* *Did the student or their parent/s have a view that needs to be considered/discussed?*

1. **Summary and intervention learning points.**

* *What were the main learning points?*
* *Are there any things that could change as a result of the Focused Review of the incident?*
* *What were the positive learning points and what was done well by the team?*
* *What are the things we need to do next as a team to improve our supports for students?*

**Focused Review facilitator checklist and report record**

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| **School name** |  |
| **Principal name** |  |
| **Facilitator name** |  |
| **Date review was undertaken** |  |
| **Names of all participants present** |  |
| **Student name that was subject of the review** |  |
| **Date and time of the incident that was subject of the review** |  |

**Describe the incident as it was explained to you.**

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Use *the above Facilitator prompt statements for intervention opportunities* to guide the Focused Review and provide feedback in bullet points for the school to action.

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| 1. **The primary learning points and intervention opportunities for the staff team are:** |
| 1. **The Focused Review highlighted that the team did a number of things well, these are:** |
| 1. **There are a few things that will benefit from review or change as a result of the reflective thinking undertaken during the Focused Review, these are:** |
| 1. **Immediate action that will help improve safety and practice is (*including who will action and timelines*):** |
| 1. **There are procedures or guidelines which require some review, they are (*including by whom and when this will be done by*):** |
| **Facilitator name, signature and date** |
| **Principal name, signature and date** |

1. Goulet et al 2016, Lewis et al 2009, NCMHR, 2014 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Huckshorn 2004 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)