

## MEDIA STATEMENT FROM ALEXIS QUINN

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### **Restraint Reduction Network responds to degrading human rights abuse allegations at residential special school Ty Coryton**

All children deserve to feel safe, loved and cared for. They should never be restrained, locked up unnecessarily, experience the indignity of needing to beg for food, or be exposed to sexually explicit acts by adults whose care they are in.

Such events would be part of any parent or carers' worst nightmare. Yet an [investigation by BBC Wales](#) today (09.06.21) alleges that staff at an Orbis residential school in Ty Coryton (Cardiff) have subjected young, vulnerable children to the most degrading treatment, utterly breaching their human rights and causing immeasurable trauma.

It has been 10 years since Winterbourne View, yet the parallels between what happened then, and what is alleged to have been happening in Orbis Ty Coryton, are both stark and distressing. Treating young children as sub-human, not entitled or worthy of the same safeguards as everybody else, is a hallmark of closed cultures.

We know that unsuitable environments can cause sensory trauma to autistic people and people with a learning disability. It should be anticipated that children will respond to inappropriate environments with expressions of autistic distress, and we would expect that these expressions of distress, should they arise, be met not only with compassion, but the understanding that they communicate an unmet need.

When vulnerable autistic children or those with learning disabilities rely on behaving in challenging ways to get their needs met, we know that they are not receiving the right support. Their behaviours have been caused as a direct response to inappropriate environments, and difficult – or distressing – experiences. They are signals that an environment or support levels need to change to prevent distress from continuing.

Whistle-blowers have described how children at Orbis Ty Coryton residential school were subjected to restrictions around money, food and sanitary products. They describe how expressions of distress from the children were met with regular restraint, seclusion and other abhorrent human rights violations.

One whistle-blower from the school explained feeling that a child 'was going to die' during one particular restraint. Restraint is a dangerous procedure that can result in injury and even death. This whistle-blower witnessed a child being restrained in the supine position<sup>1</sup> for a 20-minute period, and was right to fear the impact on the child's physical and psychological welfare.

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<sup>1</sup> The supine position means lying horizontally with the face and torso facing up

With the right support and the right environment, we can better meet people's needs and prevent the need for many restrictive practices. Restraint should only be used as a last resort, and in a life-threatening situation. It should not be used routinely to manage cries for help, distress and behaviour that are caused as a direct result of abuse.

At the Restraint Reduction Network, we remain very concerned that similar issues to those described in the BBC Wales report in connection to Ty Coryton are constantly being identified on a day-to-day basis in other schools and services – those concerns are especially acute where children are involved.

The government must act to reduce inequalities, and schools must take seriously their duty of care to provide the right culture and care that every human being deserves. The Restraint Reduction Network remains wholly committed to eliminating the use of unnecessary restrictive practices, and to ensuring the widespread systematic failures that cause toxic cultures are addressed directly.

To find out more about the Restraint Reduction Network, please visit:

[www.restraintreductionnetwork.org](http://www.restraintreductionnetwork.org)

To read Bild charity's response with further reaction to the Ty Coryton scandal, please visit:

<https://www.bild.org.uk/bild-charity-responds-to-bbc-wales-investigation-into-shocking-abuse-and-neglect-allegations-at-residential-special-school-ty-coryton>

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*Alexis Quinn is the Restraint Reduction Network Manager / Coordinator, Autism campaigner, activist and international speaker. She is the author of Unbroken, which tells her story of being detained under the mental health act against her will, and the harmful restrictive practices to which she was subjected. She now writes about her experience and campaigns for systematic change to stop abusive practices, promote neurodiversity and end the stigma surrounding mental health.*

**ENDS**

## **Further Information**

### **Notes to Editors**

- The Restraint Reduction Network has an ambitious vision to eliminate the use of unnecessary restrictive practices and make a real difference in the lives of people. The Network brings together committed organisations providing education, health and social care services.
  - The Network was originally co-founded by the Crisis Prevention Institute. The facilitation and stewardship of the network was taken over by Bild – a charity that exists to champion the rights of autistic people and individuals with learning disabilities – working alongside the Restraint Reduction Steering Group.
  - The Steering Group includes representation from all relevant government departments, professional bodies, regulators, leading academics and wider practitioners in the sector. The group's responsibilities include overseeing the development of new training quality standards and developing organisational and individual self-assessment tools to facilitate reduction in restrictive practices.
  - If you, or someone you know, has been affected by the use of restrictive practices on children and young people, Restraint Reduction Network Steering Group members, the Challenging Behaviour Foundation (CBF) <[www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk/contact-us](http://www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk/contact-us)> and Positive and Active Behaviour Support Scotland <[www.pabss.org/about-us-and-contact](http://www.pabss.org/about-us-and-contact)> can provide further support.
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- The CBF provide further guidance about when things go wrong, which can be accessed at [www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk/information-and-guidance/when-things-go-wrong](http://www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk/information-and-guidance/when-things-go-wrong)
- Find out more about our work by visiting [restraintreductionnetwork.org](http://restraintreductionnetwork.org)
- Join the Restraint Reduction Network for free by submitting your pledge to support the elimination of unnecessary restrictive practices by visiting [www.restraintreductionnetwork.org/become-a-member](http://www.restraintreductionnetwork.org/become-a-member)
- Follow RRN on social media on Twitter @theRRNetwork, Facebook @RestraintReductionNetwork or LinkedIn [@Restraint-Reduction-Network](https://www.linkedin.com/company/restraint-reduction-network)