

Family Services

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1. Guidance policy statement

Barnet is committed to ensuring their children's homes are a place of safety for all young people and staff. A critical aspect of this responsibility is to ensure we prevent prohibited weapons from being present in the home to minimise risk to young people, staff and visitors to the home.

Barnet strives to support our young people to build the resilience they need to take positive steps in life and steer clear of criminal activity. We believe that early intervention and prevention is vital to tackling serious violence, we therefore take any concern regarding young people possessing weapons seriously. Supporting young people to live safe and protected lives free from exploitation and knife crime is more important to us than ever.

2. Guiding principles

The presence of prohibited weapons in the home exposes a risk to all present (young people, staff and visitors). It is therefore expected that young people and staff will not bring prohibited weapons into the home at any time.

To minimise the risks to young people and staff, it is critical that all staff and young people are aware of the behavioural guidance in relation to reporting the presence of a prohibited weapon in the home, including reporting to the appropriate authorities.

It is illegal to carry knives or other offensive weapons on and around the premises of the children's home. Barnet Family Services recognises that the presence of weapons, or items which could potentially be offensive weapons, in the children's home would not only create unacceptable risks of bullying, injury or death, but also create a climate that undermines the safeguarding and wellbeing of children and staff at the home.

Looked after children may have experienced or witnessed violence, or may not have the capacity to recognise danger or protect themselves. We have a responsibility to protect young people in our children's home from coming into contact with weapons and help them develop the belief that being in possession of a weapon **is not appropriate** under any circumstances.

For the purpose of this guidance a "weapon" is:

- a firearm of any description, including starting pistols, air guns and any type of replica or toy gun;
- knives, including all variations of bladed objects i.e. pocket knives, craft knives, scissors etc.;
- explosives, including fireworks, aerosol sprays, lighters, matches; and
- laser pens or other objects, even if manufactured for a non-violent purpose but has a potentially violent use i.e. the purpose of keeping or carrying the object is for use, or threat of use, as a weapon.

3. Our approach to prohibited weapons

We will proactively work with young people to teach them the dangers of carrying weapons and/or being associated with others who carry weapons. We will use the expertise of partner agencies i.e. the police, Youth Offending service and Barnet's clinical service, to assist with the learning on the dangers of weapons to all residents of the children's home.

If a young person, member of staff or visitor brings a prohibited weapon to the home the person will be requested to hand over the weapon immediately and the police will be notified.

If a weapon is handed over it will be placed in the home's safe immediately until the police collect it. If the person refuses to relinquish the weapon, police assistance will be requested immediately.

Possession of a prohibited weapon includes having one in a bag or hidden in the bedroom.

It is the duty of staff to ensure that no young person carries a prohibited weapon in or around the home.

It is the responsibility of the staff to cooperate with police in relation to any investigation around possession of prohibited weapons.

4. Risk assessment

We will need to know at the point of referral if the young person is known to have been in possession of weapons recently, has a history of concealing weapons, may be involved in gangs or has an "interest" in weapons. This information and a Pre-placement Risk Assessment needs to be submitted to the home, as part of the referral process, to assist the manager in determining if the referral is an appropriate one for the setting and for the young people already in residence. A pre-admission planning meeting to fully consider the risks will be convened if necessary.

All young people with a history of weapon use or carrying a weapon will need a Risk Assessment completed prior to admission if planned, or on the day of admission if placed in an emergency. All risk assessment documents need to be held on the electronic record for the child and be easily accessible to all staff at the children's home.

Details of any risks associated with weapons and how these will be managed should also be included in the young person's internal care plan and the local authority's placement plan.

The team manager and the home's manager must agree and detail any actions that will be required of the staff if a weapon is found.

The Risk Assessment should detail actions to be taken to minimise risk and safeguard others. This will include the requirement and frequency of searches.

It is the duty of all staff to read the Risk Assessment of any young person moving into the home immediately.

The Risk Assessment should be shared with the young person and their parents, where it does not increase risk.

5. Responsibilities of staff

Staff must not carry prohibited weapons in the home or at any event/activity when working.

Staff must immediately notify the Home's manager or shift leader of the presence (or suspected presence) of prohibited weapons in the home. They must also report any items that may be used as a weapon. The Home's manager will make the decision in relation to police notification and intervention.

Staff must record the event appropriately on the young person's file (ensuring the case note alert is sent to the social worker and the team manager), they must complete an incident report and notify the Head of Service.

The Home must keep a record of domestic sharp knives in the home and report any missing knives immediately to the Home's manager.

6. Procedure for dealing with incidents involving a weapon

If staff suspect that a young person has a weapon they must consider carefully how to deal with the situation. If possible, they should take a few minutes to agree a strategy with the other staff on duty.

Staff must consider:

- their relationship with the young person
- the young person's current mood
- what might have triggered the incident
- the safety of other young people who are present.
- the location and their position – ensuring they have an exit route.

Staff should employ the Team Teach Principles.

Once the area has been made as safe as possible, staff should request for the weapon to be handed over. If the young person agrees it must be placed in an envelope and secured in the safe. The young person must be reminded of the weapons policy. Staff need to establish the origin of the weapon and what this might mean in terms of any wider safeguarding issues for the young person. Work should be carried out in terms of helping the young person to recognise the dangers and help them to develop alternative strategies. This work should be carried out in partnership with the young person's social worker.

In the instance where a young person refuses to hand over a weapon, the young person is threatening staff, another young person or a member of public with the weapon or the young person is new and staff do not know them very well, **staff should call the police for assistance immediately.**

If a young person has a weapon and is making threats, staff need to encourage other young people to remove themselves from the area and return to their rooms or any other safe area immediately. The staff must call the police at the earliest opportunity.

Depending on the incident staff may try and calm the young person using the Team Teach Principles but they need to ensure that they are in safe position with an exit route and at a safe distance.

Situations are less likely to escalate when there are no on-lookers.

Where possible, the young person with a weapon should be encouraged to sit down and talk.

If the young person is very agitated and unresponsive staff must keep safe and remove themselves and call for support.

If staff suspect that a young person is in possession of a weapon their bags and rooms will be searched and the weapon confiscated. Please see the [Searching Children/Rooms](#) policy.

Body searches can only be carried out by police.

7. Procedure for after an incident involving the use of a weapon

The Home's manager and the Head of Service must be notified as soon as possible. If out of hours, EDT need to be notified.

Staff are responsible for recording the incident as outlined above. Staff must also enter a case note on the records of any young person who was present, may have witnessed or been exposed to the incident.

If it is a serious incident Ofsted will need to be notified; the Home's manager or shift leader will undertake this task.

It is vital the social worker for every child present in the home is informed within 24 hours of the event. The social worker will inform parents.

Staff should be mindful that for all the young people in the home this will have been a significant event and they should have an opportunity to be debriefed to support them to understand what has happened at the children's home and process their feelings.

The Home's staff should make themselves available for strategy meetings, police interviews and ongoing child protection actions, as deemed necessary by the Children's team manager and Head of Service.

8. Developing concerns

Concerns regarding weapons that evolve during a young person's placement must be recorded on the young person's records and in all handover records. A revised Risk Assessment must be completed and the Home's care plan for the young person needs to be in place within 24 hours of the concern being raised.

Staff should make sure that all staff are aware of developing concerns through handover meetings, LCS Behavioural Concerns case notes and an email to the Home's staff, the young person's social worker and team manager.

Other professionals who should be updated about concerns include the Heads of Service for placements and the children's teams, the Home manager and Youth Offending team, if involved.

External professionals that work with the young person should also be advised to ensure they can respond to the young person appropriately and safeguard themselves if necessary.

9. Weapon concealment

Staff may have been passed information by a third party that a resident is carrying/using/threatening and a weapon is involved or they may have noticed damage around the property where they suspect a weapon has been used. In these events staff can take the following action:

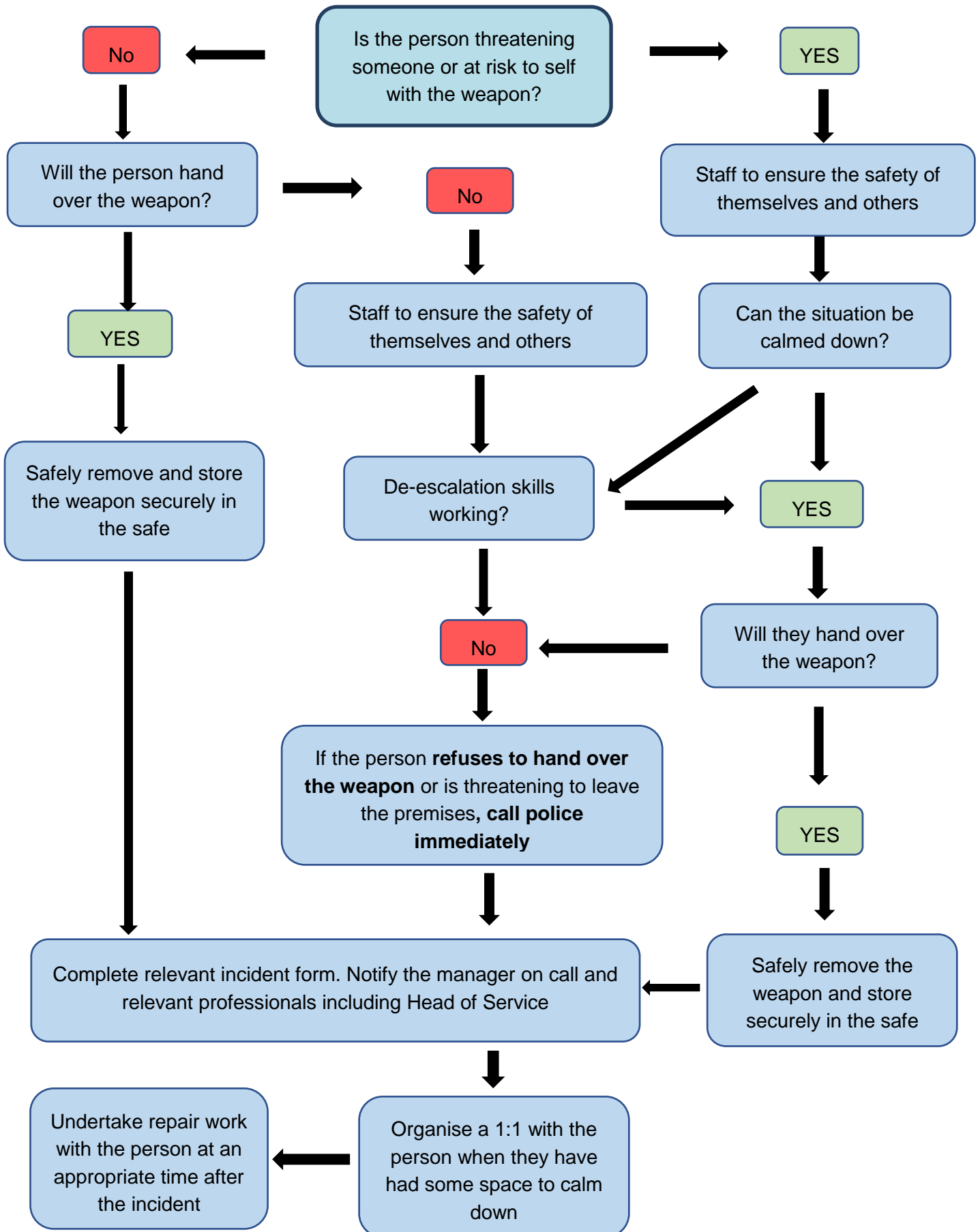
- carry out a room search where there is valid reason to believe a weapon may be present, without the young person being present if this reduces risk to others
- conduct a bag search and outer clothing search such as a jacket that can be removed first
- if a weapon is found, confiscate it if safe to do so and lock in the safe
- follow the procedure for dealing with an incident involving a weapon as set out above.

10. Managing a live incident

At any point staff must not put themselves at risk of harm. They must consider throughout, if it is necessary to call the police on 999 to protect themselves, residents and visitors.

Staff should **follow the flow chart** below to help assess if police intervention is required.

Managing a live incident involving a weapon - Flow Chart



11. Following a live incident

Medical assistance - any injured persons should be offered medical assistance without delay.

Who to inform - the Home's manager, Social Worker/s, if out of hours EDT and Duty Head of Service should be informed by phone in the first instance. Ofsted online reporting should be used to inform them of any incident where a weapon was used to threaten or injure another.

Debrief - all persons involved should be given the opportunity for a 1:1 debrief at the earliest opportunity. Ideally, this will be with a manager but can be by any member of staff where this is not possible.

Storage of weapons - where a weapon has been retrieved it should be placed in the office safe, ideally in a sealed envelope stating the date, incident number and staff legible signature.

Recordings of searches - searches of any type should be recorded briefly in the daily log book and should include: Time, Date, who was present, brief reason and any findings. In addition, staff should record it on case notes under the heading 'Behavioural Concerns' even where a weapon is not found as this may be useful in understanding patterns. An Incident Form should also be completed on all occasions that a weapon has been found.

Recordings of Incident – an Incident Form must be completed when an actual weapon is involved or retrieved, before staff go off shift. In the circumstances that the member of staff was injured and requires medical attention and no other staff can complete the form, the manager will be informed immediately.

Accident Incident report – the online Health and Safety form should be completed where an incident involving a weapon has taken place.

CHECK LIST

Search	Incident	CHECK LIST
	Yes	Ensure any persons hurt are offered and receive medical intervention
Yes		Record of search in daily log book, including time, staff searching, items if any found
	Yes	Inform Heads of Service
Yes	Yes	Place weapons found in safe or if too large a secure lockable cupboard where young people do not have access.
Yes	Yes	Put on handover sheet
Yes	Yes	Complete Incident Form
Yes	Yes	Inform all social workers of young people involved
	Yes	Consider the need to inform Ofsted
Yes	Yes	Request Strategy Meeting or Serious Incident Review Meeting

	Yes	Debrief other young people where necessary and record this on Incident Form
Yes	Yes	Update Weapons Risk Assessment to reflect new findings or incident
	Yes	Inform Health and Safety

12. Making a professional judgement

This policy cannot provide a complete checklist of what is, or is not appropriate behaviour for staff in all circumstances. There may be occasions and circumstances in which staff have to make decisions or act in the best interests of the child or young person which could contravene this policy or where no guidance exists. Individuals are expected to make judgements about their behaviour in order to secure the best interests and welfare of the children in their charge. Such judgements, in these circumstances, should always be recorded and shared with a senior manager. In undertaking these actions, individuals will need to evidence that they acted reasonably.

Adults should always consider whether their actions are warranted, proportionate and safe and applied equitably.

This means that where no specific guidance exists adults should:

- discuss the circumstances that informed their action, or their proposed action, with a senior manager;
- report any actions which could be misinterpreted to their senior manager;
- always discuss any misunderstanding, accidents or threats with a senior manager;
- always record discussions and reasons why actions were taken; and
- record any areas of disagreement about course of action taken and if necessary refer to a higher authority.

For Barnet's Policy please see Barnet's Children's Homes Manual

<http://www.proceduresonline.com/barnet/rh/>