

Failures in mental health system flagged in new report

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Credit: Lancaster University

Significant numbers of people with learning disabilities, particularly very young adults, remain inappropriately incarcerated in English hospitals, says new research released today.

That is despite Government targets, published in the wake of the Winterbourne View scandal, for everyone with a learning disability in England, who was inappropriately detained in hospital, to be discharged by 1 June, 2014.

A new briefing paper, published today by the Centre for Disability Research (CeDR) at Lancaster University, reports on the experience of the 3,000 people with a learning disability in English hospitals for assessment and treatment.

The paper shows that 83% of people with a learning disability in Assessment and Treatment Units (ATUs) are detained under the Mental Health Act.

The Mental Health Act Code of Practice (s1.2-1.6) states that, where possible, people should be treated safely and lawfully without detaining them and that the least restrictive options should always be considered.

Where the Act is used it should be for the shortest time necessary.

The paper reports that on the date of the 2015 Census:

- 525 people (18%) who were in inpatient units had been subject to the Mental Health Act (1983) for up to a year
- 1,025 people (34%) for up to 5 years
- 500 people (17%) for up to 10 years
- 435 people (15%) for more than 10 years

The Mental Health Act Code of Practice (s1.15-1.17) states that decisions about care and treatment should be appropriate to the person with clear therapeutic aims, promote recovery and should be performed to current national guidelines and/or current, available best practice guidelines.

The paper reports that that on the date of the 2015 Census:

- 85% of people in ATUs did not have a mental health diagnosis "severe enough to require treatment"
- 73% of people did not have a behavioural risk "severe enough to require treatment"

There were 3,000 people with learning [disabilities](#) and/or autistic spectrum disorder who were in hospital for assessment and treatment in England on the date of the latest NHS Digital [learning disability](#) census 30 September 2015.

More information: James, E. Neary, M and Hatton, C. (2016) Report of the First 7 Days of Action CeDR Briefing Paper 2016:1 Lancaster: Centre for Disability Research. [wp.lancs.ac.uk/cedr/files/2016 ... report_digital-1.pdf](http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/cedr/files/2016...report_digital-1.pdf)

Provided by Lancaster University

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