

OUTCOMES OF 11509 ASSESSMENTS FOR POSSIBLE DETENTION UNDER THE MENTAL HEALTH ACT IN NORFOLK, UNITED KINGDOM 2001 - 2011

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Introduction: Compulsory admission to psychiatric hospital in the United Kingdom (UK) is governed by the Mental Health Act (MHA). There have been concerns that the application of this legislation may be discriminatory, and that there is a trend towards increasing use of coercion.

Aims and objectives: To evaluate data on MHA assessments in order to determine overall outcomes; and whether there is evidence for a difference in outcomes based on variables such as age, gender, or ethnic group.

Methods: A database including around 99% of all such assessments was compiled from information recorded routinely at the time of the assessments by senior social workers who lead the assessments. This was analysed using SPSS statistical software.

Results: There were clear statistical correlations with a number of variables including marital status, living alone and age. There was a slight but significant bias towards using shorter detention periods of up to 28 days for women, rather than longer up to six-month periods. However, despite this there was no overall evidence of gender bias.

Conclusion: This is the largest such study in the published literature and provides clear evidence of outcomes and trends in the use of coercive powers under the Mental Health Act in Norfolk, United Kingdom.