



Royal Berkshire
NHS Foundation Trust

Mental Health Units Use of Force Act 2018

Information for patients and carers

The Mental Health Use of Force Act 2018 affects all hospitals that have mental health inpatients. This Act is sometimes known as ‘Seni’s Law’

What is meant by “force”?

Many patients in hospital have consented to admission because of their mental health difficulties. Others are in hospital under a section of the Mental Health Act, which means that they have not consented.

Sometimes, patients in either of these groups, due to their mental health condition, become disturbed and may be a risk to themselves or to other patients and staff.

In these situations, it may become necessary to use methods of management such as:

- Control and restraint, whereby staff (who have had specialist training) use minimal hands-on restraint to prevent a patient being a risk to themselves or others
- Seclusion, whereby a patient is placed in a room away from other patients for a short period of time to prevent risk to others
- Rapid tranquilisation, whereby fast acting medication is given to the patient in order to have a calming effect and reduce risk

The decision to use any of these management methods will be made by the clinical team caring for the patient and will be fully explained to the patient at the time.

About you

The use of force is rare and there are lots of things we can do together to avoid it.

We encourage you to talk to any member of our team about your thoughts, feelings and what is important to you. Team members can talk you through all use of force options that might be used as a last resort so that you understand them.

Tell us:

- What helps you to remain calm?
- Who do you prefer to talk to?

- Do you have any self-soothing techniques that can help you to calm down?
- Is there anybody you would like us to contact?
- Do you have any mobility / joint issues?

What does the Use of Force Act require from hospitals?

The overall purpose of the Act is to reduce any use of force in inpatient services. Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust is committed to working in the spirit of the Act in order to minimise the use of force through the promotion of positive cultures, relationships and approaches that will prevent escalation and any need to use force.

We recognise the potentially traumatising impact the use of force can have and the human rights implications of such interventions. However, we also recognise that this has to be balanced against our duty to protect patients from themselves and provide a safe environment for other patients and our staff.

Concerns, questions and complaints

Please tell a member of staff if you have concerns. We want everyone to get the right care and support and will listen to what you say.

For more information or if you have any concerns, please contact: Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 0118 322 8338 or email PALS@royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Useful support

MIND <https://www.mind.org.uk/>

Rethink <https://www.rethink.org/>

SANE <https://www.sane.org.uk/>

Samaritans <https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/> or ring 116 123

NHS 111 <https://111.nhs.uk/>

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

RBFT Safeguarding Team, December 2023

Next review due: December 2025