Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Cover Sheet

Trust Management Executive Meeting: Wednesday 21 January 2026

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Title:	**Mental Health Act in OUH Annual Report**

Status:	**For Discussion**
History:	**Annual Report**

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Confidential:	**No**
Strategic Pillar:	**Performance**

Executive Summary

1. This report assesses how well the Trust has met CQC requirements[1] when providing care for patients detained under the Mental Health Act.
2. This report concerns use of the Mental Health Act during the period from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.
3. The Trust is a nationally recognised leader in integrating mental and physical healthcare. Governance of the effective use of the Mental Health Act (MHA) is key to ensure integrated services that are compliant with Care Quality Commission policy. This is the seventh annual review of use of the MHA by the Trust.
4. Annual audit and reporting with contemporaneous monitoring of MHA use are essential components of governance that uphold the Trust's accountability, and drive improvements in the quality of care provided under the MHA by the Trust.
5. For consistency and ease of reading, albeit against grammatical convention, all numbers are written as numerals.
6. Key findings of the 2025 audit are as follows:
    - The MHA was used on 17 occasions during the last year: 2 patients were detained under section 2 (assessment order), 1 of whom was subsequently detained under section 3; 7 patients were detained under section 3 (treatment order). There were 8 uses of section 5(2) (emergency holding order).
    - 2 patients who were detained were under 18 years of age
    - 1 patient under the age of 18 was held under section 5(2).
    - None of the detained patients were transferred to the Trust using section 19.
    - All detained patients were discharged within the statutory timeframe.
    - None of the detained patients appealed their detention.
    - No patients died during their period of detention.
    - 100% of patients entitled to receive their rights (detained under section 2 or 3) had documentation to record the receipt of the relevant information.
    - 2 (22%) detained patients required restraint including 1 aged under 18.
    - Risk assessment was documented for 100%
7. Capacity to consent to treatment under the MHA was documented for 100% of detained patients in this period.
8. Patient and carer involvement in care planning were 100% and 77%, respectively. Carer involvement has improved from 72% of case in the previous audit period.

9. 2 (22%) detained patients had minor errors in documentation or process, a slight decrease from 29% in the previous reporting period, highlighting the importance of the MHA administrator role.
10. Close working with the Oxford Health Mental Health Act office continues through the established meetings with their staff and AMHP leads.

Recommendations

11. The Trust Board is asked to:

- Review the Trust MHA activity data and compliance with standards of practice.
- Consider that delivery of any action plan will be the responsibility of the MHA manager, MHA administrator and MHA lead.
- Be aware of the significant impact on OUH of having to identify psychiatric beds across the county and country.

1. Purpose

1.1. To evaluate the legal compliance and quality of care the Trust is providing to patients requiring compulsory treatment for mental illness.

2. Background

2.1. The Mental Health Act 1983 (amended 2007) authorises compulsory treatment of patient for a mental disorder, enabling the delivery of essential treatment to severely ill patients.

2.2. The Trust is registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to provide assessment or medical treatment for persons detained under the Mental Health Act 1983.

2.3. The majority of patients to whom the MHA applies are admitted to psychiatric hospitals. Some patients may require medical or surgical treatment alongside psychiatric treatment, for which they must be admitted to an acute hospital.

2.4. Whilst such patients constitute a minority of patients admitted to this Trust, it is essential to comply with legislation to ensure patients are protected and provided with their statutory safeguards.

3. Monitoring and Evaluation

3.1. The Trust Psychological Medicine Service maintains a contemporaneous, secure database of patients detained under the Act.

3.2. For each patient on the MHA patient database from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, MHA statutory paperwork and clinical records were audited against the Trust's MHA policy and internally-set standards of practice (in turn based on the MHA Code of Practice).

3.3. These are internally-derived standards as no nationally-set standards for acute trusts are available. Annual surveys of MHA use in England and Wales undertaken by the CQC generally involve mental health trusts, though some comparable standards are considered here. In October 2020, the CQC published a report on how people's mental health needs are met in acute hospitals1, and how can this be improved. This included the use of the MHA in acute hospitals. This may shape future standards and policy2.

3.4. This review distinguishes two types of standards: Some are essential for lawful use of the Act, such that sub-standard care may invalidate the

detention and confer unlawful detention by the Trust, e.g. administration of statutory MHA forms. Other standards are recommended for good practice but failure to meet them does not invalidate the detention.

3.5. This evaluation is based on the Care Quality Commission's (CQC) key lines of enquiry (KLOE) approach to service evaluation: Is the service **safe; effective; caring; responsive; well-led?** (See Appendix 1).

4. Findings

4.1. In the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, 17 OUH patients were detained under the MHA:

- 2 patients were detained under section 2 (assessment order),
- 7 patients were detained under section 3 (treatment order).
- There were 8 uses of section 5(2) (emergency holding order). This is equal to the last report, also 8.

Safe?

4.2. 2 (22%) detained patients required restraint, including 1 aged under 18. The proportion of detained patients where restraint was used has decreased significantly, accepting the sample size is small and significant fluctuation year to year might be expected.

4.3. The documentation of specific risk assessment and plan has remained 100%.

4.4. No deaths occurred under detention during this period.

Effective?

4.5. Documentation of patient capacity has remained 100%.

4.6. The average length of stay of detained patients has increased (32.7 days) however this is likely due to one outlying case with the longest stay of 121 days. There is a national problem with regards to identifying specialist psychiatric beds, which has become increasingly challenging. We continue to work with colleagues in Oxford Health to address this issue.

4.7. The MHA is used in a wide range of speciality wards, reflecting that all OUH divisions treat highly complex patients with combined mental and physical health care needs. This reaffirms the need for a 'trust-wide' approach to the application of the MHA.

Responsive?

4.8. 3 patients with a primary diagnosis of learning disability or autism were detained.

4.9. There were 2 children detained during this period (ages 9 and 15).

4.10. There were no complaints about the care of patients whilst detained.

4.11. There were no reported incidents related to any of the patients detained under the MHA during the reporting period.

Caring?

4.12. The documentation of patients being provided with their rights (section 132) remains at 100%. We have enhanced the OUH process to include documentation of why patients may have not been able to receive their rights, plus a record of further attempts to explain them.

4.13. Patient and carer involvement in care planning under the Act has improved significantly over the last few years. Patient involvement continues at 100% this year. Carer involvement increased slightly this year from 72% to 77%. In the remaining cases there were individual specific reasons why carers were not involved (patients not having family or not wanting family involved).

4.14. No patients were formally referred for advocacy with an IMHA. There is no set referral target however consideration and documentation of advocacy has increased from 88% to 100%.

Well Led?

4.15. We have trained a member of the administrative staff to lead on the administration of the MHA documents, and to take on additional responsibilities. This member of staff has completed a Mental Health Law and Practice Certificate. This investment and training have allowed for contemporaneous monitoring of the quality of our MHA use in OUH, and they have contributed significantly to the enhancement in our MHA process. The operational services manager provides additional administrative oversight of MHA use.

4.16. The correct use and presence of the H3 or H4 form, that registers the patient’s detention to OUH, has remained at 100%. Correct completion, receipt and scrutiny of statutory MHA paperwork are essential for lawful detention of patients. Errors risk invalidating a patient’s detention; unlawful detention for which the Trust would be liable.

4.17. 100% MHA paperwork was scrutinised promptly.

4.18. 100% expected statutory paperwork was identified at audit. This is now predominantly received (and stored) electronically. On one occasion paper documents were completed and left on the ward. This did not invalidate the detention.

4.19. There were two ‘non rectifiable errors’ (incorrect spelling of patient name by AMHP, hospital name incorrectly spelt by the AMHP) detected on document scrutiny. These errors were quickly identified and immediately revised, and did not affect the patient’s detention. There was just one incident of ‘minor error’ on MHA paperwork that was identified when papers were scrutinised. This sort of minor error is rectifiable and does not affect the patient’s detention.

4.20. We continue to report MHA activity monthly in the directorate quality reports. MHA activity and any related incidents or errors are discussed monthly at the Psychological Medicine governance meeting, and with the full psychiatric team at the monthly team meeting.

4.21. We have established a regular internal MHA meeting to review errors and problems with our scrutiny process. The MHA administrator also now meets with the MHA office in Oxford Health, and Oxfordshire AMHP leads monthly.

4.22. No patients appealed their section during the period.

4.23. No international transfers.

4.24. Training is currently up to date for all key staff groups involved in the use of the MHA. All consultant psychiatrists are in date with specialist training to act as RC for detained patients. Diary alerts are now implemented to prompt psychiatrists to make early arrangements to refresh their training as needed.

5. Conclusions

5.1. The Trust’s use of the MHA has remained legally compliant. Where there have been minor errors, these have been identified and rectified appropriately.

5.2. The quality of the service provided to detained patients continues to improve. This has been a result of multiple enhancements to the way we administer and monitor MHA use in the trust. The expansion and now contemporaneous use of our data collection process, the introduction of an EPR form that the new MHA administrator ensures has been completed by the patient’s RC, and closer working with Oxford Health and the AMHP service continue.

5.3. Future plans include continuing to build on our attempts to optimise patients safeguards and rights including the provision of IMHA and CQC information at the point of detention.

5.4. The summary of findings (table 1) used to develop an action plan (table 2) are provided in Appendix 2.

6. Recommendations

6.1. The Trust Board is asked to:

- Review the Trust MHA activity and targets for improvement detailed in the action plan provided in Table 2 in one year's time.
- Consider that delivery of actions plans will be the responsibility of the MHA manager, MHA administrator and MHA lead.
- Note the significant impact on OUH of the challenges in identifying psychiatric beds across the county and country.

References

1. CQC Report from the Assessment of mental health services in acute trusts programme: 'How are people's mental health needs met in acute hospitals, and how can this be improved'? October 2020 https://www.cqc.org.uk/publications/themed-work/assessment-mental-health-services-acute-trusts
2. *Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust's Mental Health Act 1983* Policy

Appendix 1

Care Quality Commission's (CQC) key lines of enquiry (KLOE) approach to service evaluation: Is the service safe; effective; caring; responsive; well-led?

Safe?

- Detained patients may require physical or chemical restraint with associated risk of accidental harm. It should therefore only be used if there are no better options.
- Frequency of restraint alone is not an indicator of quality care.
- A death under the MHA is not necessarily a sign of poor practice for a patient who is acutely unwell. Nevertheless, patients who die whilst under the MHA must have their cases referred to the coroner and CQC. This is a statutory safeguard for all patients under the MHA.
- Risk assessment and management are core components of clinical care, especially so for patients whose risks are high enough to warrant compulsory detention management under the MHA.

Effective?

- Capacity to consent to treatment alone is not a criterion for detention under the MHA. However, assessing and monitoring capacity to consent is key to promoting patient autonomy, as emphasised in the 'overarching principles' of the Code of Practice. Its importance is reflected in the priority given to it by the CQC.
- Every patient detained under the Act must have a named clinician allocated to them who is responsible for all care delivered under the Act. Currently in the Trust this is a Consultant Psychiatrist. The responsible clinician (RC) is a statutory role and must be available 24 hours a day. During office hours, the RC role will be allocated to the Trust psychological medicine service consultant psychiatrist with the most appropriate expertise for that patient's needs. Out-of-hours, RC cover is provided by a weekly on-call system of psychological medicine service consultants.
- There is overlap between the MHA and the Mental Capacity Act 2005. To mitigate uncertainty among clinicians, Trust guidance states that where both acts are applicable in the emergency setting, the MCA should be used first. Where the MHA emergency order section 5(2) is used, a psychiatric opinion should be sought to ensure the correct **application and administration of statutory paperwork. Anticipated changes to MHA legislation in the near future may improve this.**

Responsive?

- The Trust must ensure the particular needs of patients are provided for.
- The Code of Practice explicitly focuses on children and young people and people with special needs owing to learning disabilities and autistic spectrum disorders.
- Ensuring the privacy, dignity and safety of patients detained under the MHA is a statutory duty of providers.

Caring?

- One of the core purposes of the MHA is to protect patients from unlawful enforced treatment. The MHA provides safeguards for all detained patients and informing patients of their entitlements is a statutory duty of all providers (section 132 MHA).
- Patient and carer involvement in care planning is an overarching principle of the MHA, with the aim of promoting patient autonomy despite the need for compulsory care. This is an obligation of the RC. This issue is also increasingly focused on within CQC MHA monitoring reports.
- Referral to the independent mental health advocate (IMHA) is a safeguard for patients who do not have advocacy through family, friends or carers. This is an opt-in facility under the Act. OUH policy makes this an opt-out facility, to maximise access to this safeguard for patients detained in a hospital in which the Act is seldom used.

Well Led?

- This criterion refers to oversight of the MHA, to ensure accountability and quality of the care delivered under the Act. It includes correct administration of statutory paperwork, provision of statutory rights to patients (especially appealing against one's detention) and staff training.
- The H3 or H4 form is a statutory form which records the detention of the patient in hospital and is signed by the ward's nursing coordinator or Mental Health Act administrator on behalf of the hospital managers. Its importance in ensuring lawful detention of a patient is reflected in correct completion being evaluated here.
- Aftercare planning with local authorities is a statutory duty for trusts to provide for patients detained under section 3 and who are soon to be discharged from hospital (section 117 MHA).
- Use of the MHA in the emergency department (ED; including patients in the emergency assessment unit under the care of an ED consultant) requires particular attention. Patients in ED who require psychiatric

attention are under the care of the Emergency Department Psychiatric Service, a service provided by Oxford Health NHSFT. The Trust's MHA policy 2 remains applicable. The Trust's Standard Operating Procedure remains applicable. The MHA paperwork for patients assessed in the ED but subsequently detained to Oxford Health is scrutinised by the Mental Health Act Office for Oxford Health NHSFT.

- Sections 2, 3 and 5(2) are not applicable in ED (though this may change in the future); a patient must be admitted to an inpatient ward to be detained under the MHA. It is common, however, for patients in ED to be assessed to determine whether they require compulsory hospital admission under the MHA.
- When a person in a public place is behaving in such a way to cause concern that he or she is suffering from an acute mental illness, the police are able to detain them to bring them to a 'place of safety' for psychiatric assessment to determine if the patient needs to be compulsorily admitted into hospital. This police power is provided by section 136 of the MHA. In Oxfordshire, the majority of such patients are brought to Littlemore (psychiatric) Hospital. If a patient under section 136 is also suspected of having an urgent physical health problem, the police may bring them to ED. In this case, the patient may be assessed under the MHA in ED or the police may take them to Littlemore once they have been treated by an ED physician.
- Oversight of use of section 136 in ED in OUH is through the Oxfordshire Partnership in Practice meeting (not OUH psychological medicine governance). This is a multi-agency forum involving ED leads, Thames Valley Police, South Central Ambulance Service and Oxford Health NHSFT (OH). Psychological Medicine governance and MHA leads meet with the OH clinicians working in ED and managers of the Approved Mental Health Practitioners (AMHP) Service, to oversee this interface.
- The Coronavirus Act 2020 was passed in March 2020. It made possible temporary changes to the way clinicians could use the MHA, in an emergency. It did not prove necessary to use these changes and the Act was withdrawn in October 2023.

Appendix 2

Table 1: Summary of Findings

Quality	Practice 2015-17	Practice 2017-18	Practice 2018-20	Practice 2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
SAFE								
Deaths	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Restraint	26%	63%	4%	27%	37%	63%	29%	22%
Risk Documentation	not audited	38%	77%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
EFFECTIVE								
Capacity documentation	68%	63%	70%	100%	95%	100%	100%	100%
Compulsory assessment (Sec 2) & treatment orders (Sec 3)	Sec 2 12 Sec 3 6	Sec 2 6 Sec 3 1	Sec 2 14 Sec 3 13	Sec 2 19 Sec 3 2	Sec 2 10 Sec 3 9	Sec 2 10 Sec 3 6	Sec 2 5 Sec 3 2	Sec 2 2 Sec 3 7
Sec 2 & Sec 3 By Directorate	AGM 10 Surg 3 Gastro 1 Traum 1 Renal 1 Neuro 2	AGM 3 OCE 3 Neuro 3	AGM 7 Gastro 5 Paeds 3 Trauma 1 Renal 2 Neuro 7 Sp Surg 2	AGM 7 Gastro 2 CHOX 5 OCE 1 Neuro 4 Surg 1	AGM 11 Gastro 3 CHOX 2 Trauma 2 Surg 1	AGM 9 CHOX 1 Trauma 3 ICU 1 Surg 1 Neuro 1	AGM 4 ENT 1 Trauma 1 Paeds 1	AGM 5 Trauma 2 Paeds 2
Mean Average Length of stay (in days) under MHA	7	10	16	10	20	19	5	32.7
Named Consultant as RC	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Discharged in statutory time limit	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Section 5.2 Emergency Holding Order	3	2	15	9	6	14	8	8
Section 5.2 used in 'working hours'	30%	50%	73%	66%	50%	43%	50%	25%

Quality	Practice 2015-17	Practice 2017-18	Practice 2018-20	Practice 2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Target
EFFECTIVE									
Section 5.2 use by Directorate	AGM 1 Resp 1 ID 1	Surg 1 Neuro 1	AGM 7 Neuro 1 CSS 1 Womens 2 Paeds 1 Surgery 2 ID 1	AGM 4 Gynae 1 AICU 2 Trauma 1 Onc 1	AGM 5 ICU 1	AGM 5 ENT 1 Gastro 1 ICU 2 Neuro 1 Plastics 1 Surgery 1 Trauma 2	AGM 3 ICU 1 Paeds 1 Neuro 1 Trauma 1 Pall Care 1	AGM 5 Neuro 1 Paeds 1 Neuro 1	N/A
Psychiatry Involvement	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	93%	88%	89%	
RESPONSIVE									
Gender Equality	Male 6 Female 15	Male 4 Female 5	Male 13 Female 14	Male 6 Female 14	Male 7 Female 12	Male 4 Female 10 Non-Binary 2	Male 5 Female 10	Male 3 Female 14	
Ethnicity	W-B 14 W-O 2 W-I 1 B-B 1 Asian 1 N-S/K 2	W-B 6 Asian 1 N-S/K 2	W-B 32 BB 1 B 1 Mixed 1 Other 5 Not stated 2	W-B 11 W-O 3 O 2 Mx 4	WB -18 WO -1	WB- 14 B-O- 1	WB – 14 W-O – 1	WB – 14 Mixed African - 1 Other - 2	N/A
Children	0	2	5	5	3	1	2	3	N/A
LD, ASD	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	N/A
CARING									
Patient Rights	76%	100%	74%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Patient involvement in care planning	79%	40%	74%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Consideration of carer involvement in care planning	N/A	38%	81%	95%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Referral to IMHA documented	58%	20%	17%	100%	100%	88%	100%	100%	100%
DOLS considered	N/A	N/A	N/A	35%	37%	31%	57%	86%	N/A

Quality	Practice 2015-17	Practice 2017-18	Practice 2018-20	Practice 2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Target
WELL LED									
117 After care plans	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Appeals	0	0	1	2	5	0	0	0	N/A
Staff training	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	Annual for: Duty& Ops Managers Psych Med admin Cons. Psychs
H3 or H4 form	89%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Documents scrutinised on time	90%	89%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
All paperwork present	90%	89%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
No 'non rectifiable' Errors on Forms	86%	87%	98%	100%	95%	100%	72%	78%	100%
Monthly activity reporting	100%	89%	35%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 2: Action Plan

Objective	Recommendation	Action	Date for completion	Notes
SAFETY				
Maintain the detail and clinical relevance of risk assessments completed for detained patients	Ensure use of EPR proforma remains at 100%	Feedback to all psychiatrists who may act as RC at consultant meeting	Immediately	
EFFECTIVENESS				
Ensure SOP followed re. informing psychological medicine of 5(2) detentions	Alert junior doctors in induction	Liaise with educational lead in psychological medicine reincorporating this to psychological medicine induction	Ongoing	
CARE				
Maintain inclusion of carers in care planning	Reiterate importance of IMHA referral to clinicians using MHA with CQC recommendations	Annual review of MHA policy with all Section 12 doctors in PMS Specific teaching for new PMS clinicians about MHA use in OUH	May 2026 Within the initial 'shadowing' phase of induction	Present this report at next internal consultant meeting

Objective	Recommendation	Action	Date for completion	Notes
WELL LED				
To identify 100% of errors on MHA documentation and correct within one working day	The timely scrutiny of MHA paperwork has led to improvements and should be enhanced further to minimise risk to the trust of illegal detentions	Contemporaneous feedback to colleagues of any errors To be completed by MHA administrator and MHA lead	Immediate effect	The AMHP and the independent doctors will not be OUH employees, and assessments frequently take place out of hours
To maintain annual teaching for relevant clinicians	Clinicians will need to be updated regarding policy, audit standards and audit results to understand expectations To ensure ward guidance and SOP are familiar to relevant staff groups	Annual MHA teaching with Psychiatrists and Section 12 approved trainees. To be done by MHA lead Duty manager training to be updated by MHA administrator (RL)	August 2026	
To identify future key indicators of good practice in line with CQC guidance, and ensure policy and SOPs are aligned to this	Consideration should be made of likely future measures of quality and good integrated working. These may include demonstrating least restrictive practice and the use of advanced directives	To be done by MHA lead and Administrator	August 2026	
Consider including information about section 17 leave related MHA work (i.e. patients transferred for acute care) and also about use of the MHA in the ED in future reports	Further discussion within psychiatry team management and clinical governance. Potential administrative implications		Dec 2026	