

To whom it may concern,

I'm writing this letter to address some of the gaps in our current mental health legislation. I'm a key stakeholder in the mental health act reform as I live with schizophrenia/schizoaffective disorder.

The Mental Health Act 2001 is outdated as it does not comply with international human rights standards and does not adequately protect people's rights. I believe there should be a greater emphasis on children and adolescents' mental health as there is no specific guiding principles for children; and young people aged 16 and 17 cannot consent or refuse mental health treatment. SMIs onset during late teens and early 20s and it is vital that young adults do not feel disenfranchised by the legislation. Would you trust an establishment that is forcing treatment you do not want, while you are suffering immensely with a debilitating illness which you may or may not understand you have? Trust is key to recovery and as 16- and 17-year-olds have the right to refuse physical treatment, they should too have the right to refuse mental health treatment.

Voluntary patients are generally aware of their condition and should have their basic rights to information and advocacy respected, as these rights aid their recovery and encourage trust in the service. Involuntary patients should have the right to have their advance wishes about treatment respected as it is a basic human right to have autonomy over oneself.

During my final admission, four years ago now, I was fortunate enough to receive a WRAP plan which enabled me to realise my rights and the value of my consent. Although I'm grateful for the WRAP plan, I do not believe it was thorough or detailed enough. More needs to be done around that as vulnerable people cannot be discharged into the world without a recovery plan or be cared for without an individual care plan.

SMI: Serious Mental Illness

WRAP: Wellness Recovery Action Plan

Yours Faithfully,

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