

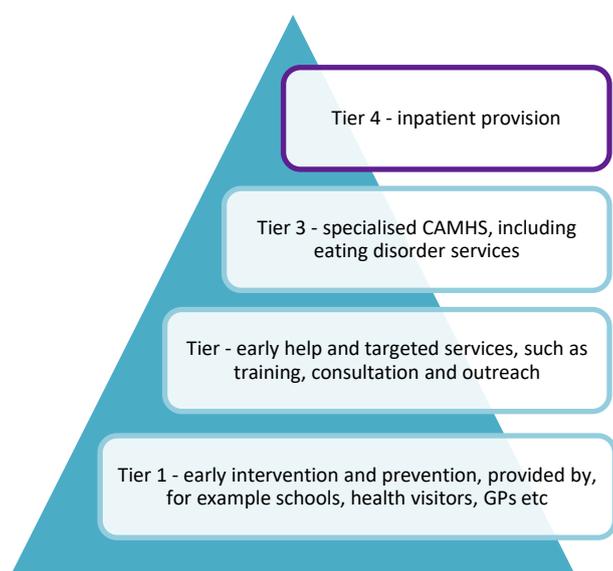
This is the first in Article 39's series of briefings aiming to capture the available statistics on children in institutional settings. It will be reviewed and updated regularly – if anything is incorrect or missing, please contact us at [info@article39.org.uk](mailto:info@article39.org.uk). To read more about children in mental health units, visit [www.article39.org.uk/mentalhealth](http://www.article39.org.uk/mentalhealth).

Please note: throughout this briefing the original wording used in published statistics or Freedom of Information request responses has been retained.

## Contents

Children in Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) tier 4 units.....	1
Children detained under Mental Health Act 1983.....	3
Children admitted as 'informal patients' .....	4
Length of stay in mental health units .....	4
Out of area placements.....	5
Admission to adult psychiatric wards .....	5
Use of restrictive intervention .....	6
Applications to the Mental Health Tribunal.....	7
Looked after children inpatients.....	7
Endnotes .....	8

## Children in Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) tier 4 units:

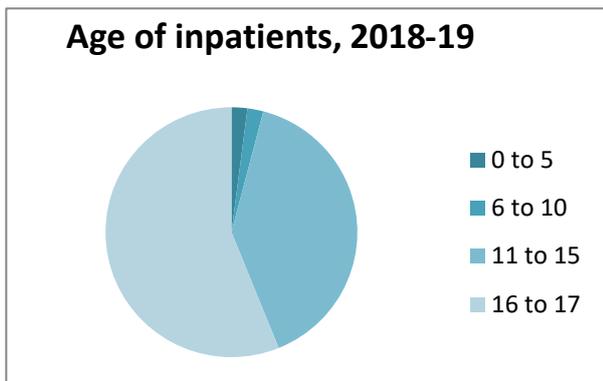


Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in England offer care at four levels to children and young people aged under 18.

'Tier 4' of CAMHS services covers facilities for children and young people with mental health problems who require hospital admission. Children can be placed in a tier 4 unit either as a voluntary ('informal') patient, or as a person who has been detained under the Mental Health Act 1983.

Existing data varies but suggests that **around 4,000 children under 18 are admitted to CAMHS tier 4 wards a year** (with the number of admissions every quarter ranging from just under 1,000 to 1,200).

	Number of admissions of children under 18 in CAMHS tier 4 wards (NHS Mental Health Dashboard) <sup>1</sup>	Number of children admitted to hospital (Mental Health Bulletin 2018-19 Annual report) <sup>2</sup>	Number of children treated in a specialised mental health (SMH) inpatient service commissioned by NHS England (FOI response) <sup>3</sup>
2016/17	Not available	3,182	2,963
2017/18	4,611	3,338	3,588
2018/19	4,614	3,609	3,921
2019/20	4,038	Due 26 November 2020	TBC (FOI response awaited)

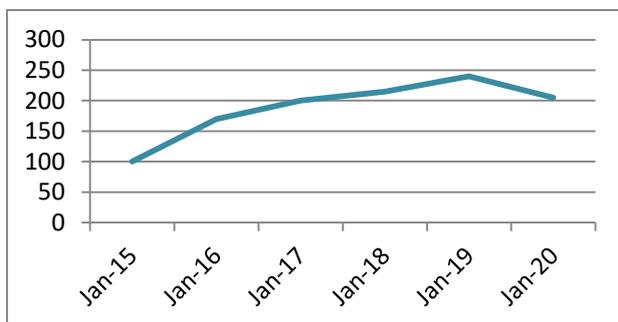


According to the Mental Health Bulletin figures, in 2018-19, 2% of children admitted to CAMHS tier 4 units in 2018/19 were aged 0-5, 4% were aged 6-10, 39% were aged 11-15 and 55% were aged 16 and 17.<sup>4</sup>

The number of children with learning disabilities and/or autism in CAMHS tier 4 units was 205 in March 2020, over double the number in 2015 (100). Data on numbers of autistic people and/or people with learning disabilities in inpatient units is inconsistent.<sup>5</sup>

<b>March 2015</b>	100
<b>March 2016</b>	170
<b>March 2017</b>	200
<b>March 2018</b>	215
<b>March 2019</b>	240
<b>March 2020</b>	205

**Chart: Children with learning disabilities and/or autism in CAMHS tier 4 units<sup>6</sup>**



## Children detained under Mental Health Act 1983

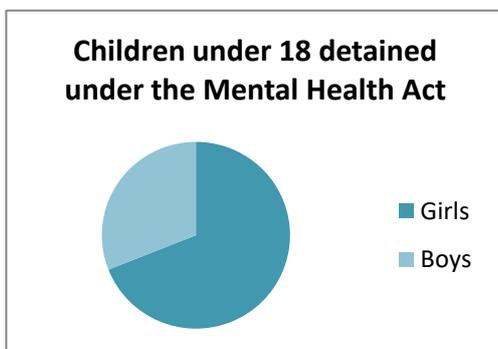
It is only since January 2016 that figures showing the number of children aged under 18 admitted to hospital under the Mental Health Act 1983 have been published. There are around **1 - 1,200 detentions of children under the Mental Health Act each year**<sup>7</sup> but we do not know exactly how many children this corresponds to as it include 'repeat' detentions.<sup>8</sup>

Age	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18 <sup>9</sup>	2016-17 <sup>10</sup>
17 and under	1,172	1,214	1,177	1,044
16-17	754	808	799	722
15 and under	418	433	378	322

Mental Health Monthly Statistics indicate that there are **around 400-450 children detained at any one time.**

	Children subject to detention at the end of reporting period <sup>11</sup>	Children with learning disabilities and/or autism detained under the Mental Health Act <sup>12</sup>
March 2017	300	110
June 2017	301	105
September 2017	297	95
December 2017	488	120
March 2018	505	120
June 2018	502	125
September 2018	419	130
December 2018	440	145
March 2019	467	135
June 2019	465	130
September 2019	415	125
December 2019	427	125
March 2020	414	115
June 2020	409	135

In 2019/20, 64% of the children detained under the Mental Health At 1983 were older teenagers, aged 16 and 17. More than a third (36%) were aged 15 or under.<sup>13</sup> 73% of all detentions were of white children, 6% of mixed ethnicity children, 8% of Asian children and 9% of black children.<sup>14</sup>



Girls are more likely to be detained under the Mental Health Act than boys – in 2019/18, 69% of all detentions of children under 18 were of girls.<sup>15</sup> The previous year, 68% of inpatients detained under the Mental Health Act were female.<sup>16</sup> For under 16s, the difference is even more stark – in 2018/19, 78% of children aged 15 or under who were detained were girls.

## Children admitted as ‘informal patients’

There is no published data available on the total number of children admitted to CAMHS tier 4 units as ‘informal patients’, although it could be assumed that the figure was roughly 3,000 a year (3/4 of the total number of children) based on the overall number of admissions to mental health units and the number of children admitted under the Mental Health Act.

The Care Quality Commission’s (CQC) ‘snapshot data’ in its 2016 Mental Health Act Monitoring report that showed that a third of children and young people inpatients were detained under the MHA, with most of the remainder treated on an informal basis. The CQC noted that *“this suggests a different pattern to adult services, where we have seen that there may now be more inpatients subject to the MHA than informal patients”*.<sup>17</sup>

By comparison, available statistics on the number of children with learning disabilities and/or autism in hospital in inpatient units show that roughly 40% of these children are informal patients:

- March 2020, 80 of the 205 children were formal inpatients.
- March 2019, 95 of the 240 children were informal patients
- March 2018 90 out of the 215 children were informal patients.<sup>18</sup>

The legal basis on which adolescents are receiving informal inpatient psychiatric care (potentially their consent or their parent’s consent or under the Mental Capacity Act 2005) is not published.

## Length of stay in mental health units

There is no publically available data from NHS England about how long children spend in hospital once they have been detained under the Mental Health Act. An NHS census report from 2016 showed that the average length of stay in psychiatric intensive care units was 3.7 months (much longer than the maximum of six weeks recommended in guidance)<sup>19</sup>, and 15 months in medium secure wards.<sup>20</sup>

Data does exist on the number of ‘bed days’ for children and young people. However, this is not broken down by type of unit, meaning it is not possible to draw any conclusions from the figures other than that the average length of stay across all child inpatients is between 90 and 100 days.

	Number of admissions of children under 18 in CAMHS tier 4 wards <sup>21</sup>	Number of bed days for children under 18 in CAMHS tier 4 wards <sup>22</sup>	Average no. of bed days per admission
<b>Q1 &amp; Q2 2017/18</b>	2,334	218,140	94
<b>Q3 2017/18</b>	1,201	119,096	99
<b>Q4 2017/18</b>	1,076	116,790	108
<b>Q1 2018/19</b>	1,181	106,238	90
<b>Q2 2018/19</b>	1,108	101,967	92
<b>Q3 2018/19</b>	1,167	106,845	92
<b>Q4 2018/19</b>	1,158	110,782	96
<b>Q1 2019/20</b>	1,042	104,704	101
<b>Q2 2019/20</b>	987	98,049	99
<b>Q3 2019/20</b>	997	96,137	96
<b>Q4 2019/20</b>	1,012	100,872	100

Data provided to the Children’s Commissioner’s Office by NHS Digital on children with a learning disability or autism in a mental health hospital in England in 2019 showed that they had spent on average, 6 months (184 days) in their current hospital stay, and 8 months (240 days) in inpatient care overall. Around 1 in 7 (35) had been in a mental health hospital for at least a year.<sup>23</sup>

## Children out of their home area

NHS data is available (though not published) on the number of children placed ‘out of area’, defined as being placed ‘outside of their home commissioning hub area’ in which the child lives (this includes all clinical commissioning group areas which make up each hub) – see <https://www.england.nhs.uk/ccgs/>.<sup>24</sup>

	Number of unique patients, under the age of 18, admitted ‘out of area’ <sup>25</sup> to SMH inpatient services <sup>26</sup>	Number of unique patients, under the age of 18, admitted ‘out of area’ to SMH inpatient services under the Mental Health Act <sup>27</sup>
2016/17	1,138	1,016
2017/18	1,140	1,071
2018/19	1,040	1,006

In 2017/18, 518 (41%) of the 1,255 ‘out of area’ admissions were considered to be ‘inappropriate’, based on an assessment of the child’s clinical need, individual preference and any special circumstances.<sup>28</sup> While regular data is available on the ‘Total number of inappropriate out of area bed days’ in the NHS Mental Health Dashboard, this is not disaggregated by age.

Research in 2016 found that 89% of children had been placed out of county and 64% had been placed outside of the UK region in which they lived.<sup>29</sup> Statistics examined by the Children’s Commissioner in 2019 showed nearly a quarter of all children with learning disabilities and autism were in a hospital at least 50km from home for at least 6 months. Around 1 in 10 children (25) stayed for at least a year in wards that were at least 100km from their homes.<sup>30</sup>

## Admission to adult psychiatric wards

**In 2018/19 592 children were admitted to adult mental health in-patient wards** – over three times the number admitted to adult wards the previous year (196).

	Number of children under 18 admitted to adult in-patient wards <sup>31</sup>	Bed days of children under 18 in adult in-patient wards <sup>32</sup>
Q4 2019/20	205	2,111
Q3 2019/20	182	411
Q2 2019/20	133	1,122
Q1 2019/20	72	426
Q4 2018/19	74	505
Q3 2018/19	37	282
Q2 2018/19	37	388
Q1 2018/19	48	364
Q4 2017/18	53	485
Q3 2017/18	58	767
Q2 2017/18	Not available	Not available
Q1 2017/18	57	428

However, this does not match data published by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). Regulations require hospital managers to notify the CQC if a child is placed in a ward or unit intended for adults and they are there for longer than 48 hours (whether or not they are detained under the Mental Health Act 1983).<sup>33</sup>

**Notifications to Care Quality Commission of child admissions to adult psychiatric wards (over 48 hours):<sup>34</sup>**

Financial year	Number of child admissions to adult psychiatric wards (notifications received)
2014/15	233
2015/16	241
2016/17	260
2017/18	200
2018/19	152

**Use of restrictive intervention**

The statistics on use of restraint (‘restrictive interventions’) underestimate the true picture, because many services do not report into the Mental Health Services Data Set where restraints are recorded. It is also unclear why data is not disaggregated further to provide figures for the use of restraint on children, as it is in statistics on children with learning disabilities and/or autism (see below).<sup>35</sup>

	Number of people under 20 subject to restrictive intervention 2018/19 <sup>36</sup>	Number of restrictive interventions on people under 20, 2018/19	Number of people under 20 subject to restrictive intervention, 2017/18 <sup>37</sup>	Number of restrictive interventions on people under 20, 2017/18	Number of people under 20 subject to restrictive intervention, 2016/17 <sup>38</sup>	Number of restrictive interventions on people under 20, 2016/17
Total	1,049	32,221	1,047	26,826	1,013	25,094
Physical restraint – prone	369	3,069	399	2,994	423	3,405
Physical restraint – excluding prone	821	22,621	818	17,476	775	15,673
Chemical restraint	330	2,528	271	1,820	278	2,786
Mechanical restraint	29	131	37	98	43	410
Seclusion	382	1,982	366	1,544	357	1,699
Segregation	15	33	14	23	12	12

**In May 2020, 55 children with learning disabilities and/or autism were subject to 845 (recorded) instances of restraint. This included 85 instances of prone restraint used on 20 children.**<sup>39</sup> In May 2019, 55 children with learning disabilities and/or autism were subject to 1,015 (recorded) instances of restraint.

After concerns raised on social media about the use of a restraint chair in one independently run CAMHS tier 4 unit, NHS England confirmed that:

*“NHS England would under no circumstance support the use of restraint chairs and we can confirm we have no record or knowledge of the use of any in Tier 4 Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services we commission.”<sup>40</sup>*

## Applications to the Mental Health Tribunal

There are no published statistics on the number of children who apply to a First-Tier Tribunal (Mental Health) ('Mental Health Tribunal') each year, and the outcome of those appeals, although the Ministry of justice does have that data.

	Number of children (aged under 18) who applied to a Mental Health Tribunal to appeal their detention under the Mental Health Act 1983 <sup>41</sup>
2017/18	1,305
2018/19	1,293
2019/20	1,223

Outcomes of the appeals:

	Absolute Discharge	Delayed Discharge	No Discharge	No Discharge – recommendations	RC Discharge	Appeal withdrawn	Total
2017/18	41	34	541	8	355	233	1,212
2018/19	32	30	561	10	359	244	1,236
2019/20	25	29	557	6	331	250	1,198

## Looked after children who are inpatients

	Number of patients, under the age of 18, admitted to specialised mental health inpatient services as looked after children <sup>42</sup>	Number of patients, under the age of 18, admitted under Mental Health Act to specialised mental health inpatient services as looked after children <sup>43</sup>
2016/17	283	222
2017/18	279	258
2018/19	301	293

**Last updated: 3 November 2020**

## Sources

### NHS Digital Mental Health Services Monthly Statistics -

This publication provides the most timely picture available of people using NHS funded secondary mental health, learning disabilities and autism services in England: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-services-monthly-statistics>

### NHS Digital Mental Health Bulletin Annual Reports –

This publication provides the most detailed picture available of people who used NHS funded secondary mental health, learning disabilities and autism services in England by financial year: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-bulletin>

### NHS Mental Health Dashboard -

This dashboard, formerly called the Five Year Forward View for Mental Health Dashboard, is intended to help monitor progress against the delivery of the Five year Forward View for Mental Health and now the NHS Long Term Plan and is published on a quarterly basis: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/nhs-mental-health-dashboard/>

### Learning Disability Services Statistics -

Monthly statistics on Learning Disabilities and Autism (LDA) from the Assuring Transformation collection and Mental Health Services Data Set (MHSDS):

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/learning-disability-services-statistics>

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> 'CYP(iii.b): Number of admissions of CYP under 18 in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services tier 4 wards' in NHS Mental Health Dashboard, at <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/nhs-mental-health-dashboard/>

<sup>2</sup> Mental Health Bulletin 2018-19 Reference Tables, Table 1.1 at <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-bulletin/2018-19-annual-report>

<sup>3</sup> Figures provided by NHS England in response to Freedom of Information request, 3 September 2020, Ref: FOI-2003-1157432

<sup>4</sup> Mental Health Bulletin 2018-19 Reference Tables, Table 1.2 at <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-bulletin/2018-19-annual-report>

<sup>5</sup> The MHSDS reports vastly higher numbers of autistic people and/or people with learning disabilities in inpatient units than the Assuring Transformation data. However, many independent sector organisations recorded by Assuring Transformation as having people in inpatient units do not appear in the MHSDS dataset at all. See [https://chrishatton.blogspot.com/2020/07/blogpost-what-do-statistics-tell-us\\_9.html](https://chrishatton.blogspot.com/2020/07/blogpost-what-do-statistics-tell-us_9.html)

<sup>6</sup> Learning disability services monthly statistics, Data from the Assuring Transformation collection, Reference Data Tables, Table 2, at <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/learning-disability-services-statistics/provisional-statistics-at-june-2020-mhsds-april-2020-final>

<sup>7</sup> Mental Health Act Statistics, Annual Figures 2018-19: Data Tables, Table 1b at <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-act-statistics-annual-figures/2018-19-annual-figures>

<sup>8</sup> For example, in 2018-19, 136 children were detained twice, 19 were detained three times, one was detained four times and one was detained five times. Based on those figures the total number of separate children detained in that year was 1,003 but the figures for repeat detention do not exactly match the total figures provided for children detained under the MHA. See table 1b and table 6 of Mental Health Act Statistics, Annual Figures 2018-19: Data Tables, at <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-act-statistics-annual-figures/2018-19-annual-figures>

<sup>9</sup> Mental Health Act Statistics, Annual Figures 2017-18: Data Tables, Table 1b at <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-act-statistics-annual-figures/2017-18-annual-figures>

<sup>10</sup> Mental Health Act Statistics, Annual Figures 2016-17: Data Tables, Table 1b at <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-act-statistics-annual-figures/mental-health-act-statistics-annual-figures-2016-17-experimental-statistics>

<sup>11</sup> Figures found in MHSDS Monthly Data File in columns headed 'MH09a - People in contact with mental health services subject to detention at the end of RP, aged 0-17' at <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-services-monthly-statistics>

---

<sup>12</sup> Learning disability services monthly statistics, Data from the Assuring Transformation collection, Reference Data Tables, Table 16, at <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/learning-disability-services-statistics>

<sup>13</sup> Data further disaggregated by age is not available.

<sup>14</sup> From Mental Health Act Statistics, Annual Figures 2019-20, 28 October 2020 - Mental Health Act Statistics, Annual Figures 2018-19: Data Tables, Table 1e at <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-act-statistics-annual-figures/2019-20-annual-figures>

<sup>15</sup> From Mental Health Act Statistics, Annual Figures 2019-20, 28 October 2020 - Mental Health Act Statistics, Annual Figures 2018-19: Data Tables, Table 1e at <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-act-statistics-annual-figures/2019-20-annual-figures>

<sup>16</sup> From Mental Health Act Statistics, Annual Figures 2018-19, 29 October 2019 - Mental Health Act Statistics, Annual Figures 2018-19: Data Tables, Table 1e at <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-act-statistics-annual-figures/2018-19-annual-figures>

<sup>17</sup> Care Quality Commission (2016) *Monitoring the Mental Health Act in 2015/16*, p 29

<sup>18</sup> Learning disability services monthly statistics, Data from the Assuring Transformation collection, Reference Data Tables, Table 16, <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/learning-disability-services-statistics>

<sup>19</sup> NAPICU (2015), *National Minimum Standards for Psychiatric Intensive Care Units for Young People*

<sup>20</sup> Heidi Hales, Louise Warner, Jared G Smith, Annie Bartlett (2016) *Census of young people in secure settings on 14 September 2016: characteristics, needs and pathways of care*, St Georges, University of London

<sup>21</sup> The number of admissions in Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Wards for patients aged 0-17 in the reporting period

<sup>22</sup> NHS Mental Health Dashboard Quarterly statistics at <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/nhs-mental-health-dashboard/>

<sup>23</sup> Children's Commissioner (2019), *Far less than they deserve: Children with learning disabilities or autism living in mental health hospitals*

<sup>24</sup> A Freedom of Information response received from NHS Digital in 2018 suggests that there is no separate definition for 'out of area' for children. For looked after children, 'out of area' is defined as being placed outside of the local authority in which the child lives. See *The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010*, regulation 11.

<sup>25</sup> Measurement of whether a patient has been admitted to a unit 'out of area' within NHS England Specialist Mental Health commissioned services relates to the hub area in which the patient resides. This includes all the Clinical Commissioning Group areas which make up each hub. A patient admitted to a hospital in hub which is different to their home hub area will be defined as being out of area, even when the hospital they are admitted to is the closest of that type to where the patient resides.

<sup>26</sup> Figures provided by NHS England in response to Freedom of Information request, 3 September 2020, Ref: FOI-2003-1157432

<sup>27</sup> *ibid*

<sup>28</sup> The definition of 'inappropriate' did not just look at distance because 'more specialised in-patient services would normally serve a larger geographical area'. See National Audit Office, *Improving children and young people's mental health services*, October 2018, para 2.10

<sup>29</sup> Heidi Hales, Louise Warner, Jared G Smith, Annie Bartlett (2016) *Census of young people in secure settings on 14 September 2016: characteristics, needs and pathways of care*, St Georges, University of London

<sup>30</sup> Children's Commissioner (2019), *Far less than they deserve: Children with learning disabilities or autism living in mental health hospitals*

<sup>31</sup> The number of children and young people aged 0-17 admitted in adult in-patient wards in the reporting period. This is a count of people, aged 0-17, who were on an adult ward at any point during the quarter. To avoid counting individuals more than once, the CCG is allocated based on the data submitted for the latest month in the quarter that person spent time in an adult ward. See NHS Mental Health Dashboard, at <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/nhs-mental-health-dashboard/>

<sup>32</sup> A count of bed days for people aged 0-17 who were in an adult ward each month. Individuals are allocated to a CCG based on the person's CCG at the end of the month. Three months data is then aggregated to produce the quarterly figure. See NHS Mental Health Dashboard, at <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/nhs-mental-health-dashboard/>

<sup>33</sup> Care Quality Commission (Registration) Regulations 2009 SI No 3112 reg 18(2)(h) (as amended by Care Quality Commission (Registration) and (Additional Functions) and Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 SI No 921 regs 2, 5(b)).

<sup>34</sup> Care Quality Commission, *Monitoring the Mental Health Act in 2018/19*, p 41

<sup>35</sup> Mental Health Bulletin 2018-19 Reference Tables, Table 7.1 at <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-bulletin/2018-19-annual-report>

---

<sup>36</sup> ibid

<sup>37</sup> Mental Health Bulletin 2017-18 Reference Tables, Table 7.1 at <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-bulletin/2017-18-annual-report>

<sup>38</sup> Mental Health Bulletin 2016-18 Reference Tables, Table 7.1 at <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-bulletin/mental-health-bulletin-2016-17-annual-report>

<sup>39</sup> Learning Disability Services Monthly Statistics (AT: July 2020, MHSDS: May 2020 Final), LDA Monthly Statistics from MHSDS - May 2020: Reference Tables, Table 17 and 18 at <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/learning-disability-services-statistics/provisional-statistics-at-july-2020-mhsds-may-2020-final>

<sup>40</sup> NHS England response to Article 39 Freedom of Information request - FOI-2010-1261735, 28 October 2020

<sup>41</sup> Figures provided by Ministry of Justice in response to Article 39 Freedom of Information request – 200921031, 14 October 2020

<sup>42</sup> Figures provided by NHS England in response to Freedom of Information request, FOI-2003-1157432, 3 September 2020

<sup>43</sup> ibid