

Mental Health Reform dismayed by increase in physical restraint in in-patient mental health services.

Mental Health Reform, the national coalition on mental health, has today reacted in dismay following a report by the [Mental Health Commission](#) which indicates the widespread use of seclusion and physical restraint in in-patient mental health services across Ireland. The Commission's report found that seclusion was used in 42% of approved centres and physical restraint in 79% of approved centres in 2016. The number of episodes of physical restraint has increased by 16% between 2014 and 2016, to 3,525 episodes, despite publication in 2014 of a Seclusion and Physical Restraint Reduction Strategy by the Mental Health Commission.

Director of Mental Health Reform, Shari McDaid, said, "Locking somebody who is acutely unwell in a room on their own, sometimes for hours, or using physical force to stop someone from being able to move, has absolutely no therapeutic benefit and constitutes a serious violation of their basic human rights. The fact that these practices are so widespread constitutes physical and mental abuse in our mental health services and this must stop."

Dr. McDaid continued, "Advocacy services for people with mental health difficulties, which could support people to speak out against these practices, are very under-resourced, meaning people often do not know who to turn to for help in the face of this treatment. Equally, Ireland's mental health law is now so out of date that it does not offer basic protection of people's rights in these circumstances."

Dr. McDaid concluded, "Mental Health Reform has been recommending for years that individuals in inpatient units have a statutory right to advocacy services and that these services are adequately resourced. We have also highlighted the urgent need to update our mental health laws and for increased investment in staffing and staff training so that these practices can become a thing of the past. The Government has a duty to protect the human rights of individuals in in-patient settings and to ensure they do not experience abuse. We ask the Minister of State for Mental Health and Older People, Jim Daly, TD, to take immediate steps so that people can feel safe and secure accessing the mental health supports that they require."

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About Mental Health Reform

Mental Health Reform is the national coalition promoting improved mental health services and the social inclusion of people with mental health difficulties. The coalition currently has over 70 member organisations. See www.mentalhealthreform.ie for more details. Mental Health Reform acknowledges the support of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government's Scheme to Support National Organisations 2016-2019.

For the editor

The Mental Health Commissions press release is [here](#)

You can find MHRs policies [here](#)

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