

South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust

Transfers to Health Based Place of Safety: Service user Experience

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Background to the Pilot:

This project was concerned with better understanding the experiences of individuals placed under section 136 of the Mental Health Act, from their initial detention by police to their arrival at the Health Based Place of Safety (HBPoS). The idea of this evaluation project stemmed from concerns raised from the Psychological Medicine Service User and Carer Advisory Group about patient experience when detained under s136. The project was devised through a collaborative process between a group of carers and service users, the audit committee and street triage teams within the South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust.

Methodology:

The study took place over a 9 month period commencing in September 2014. Data was collected using self-report questionnaires handed personally to the participants by a group of carers and service users. The questionnaire included both open and closed style questions allowing for the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data. A total of 93 questionnaires were completed

Findings:

Demographics:

- 44% of respondents were female; 56% of respondents were male.
- The largest ethnic group were those who classified themselves as being of British or UK background (46%)
- The largest age group included people aged between 25 and 34.

Transport:

- More than half of participants (57%) reported being brought to the HBPoS in a police van or car.
- Just over a quarter (27%) arrived via ambulance.



Restraint:

- Restraint by police was reported in over half of cases (55%)
- The use of force was mentioned in 12 of the responses.
- Handcuffs were commonly referred to with some respondents complaining of them being too tight or being kept on for too long.

Communication

- 52% of participants reported that they had been given an explanation as to why they were taken to the 136 suite, while 21% could not remember.
- 51% reported a carer, friend or relative had been informed about the fact they were taken to a 136 suite, 33% stated that they had not.

Experience:

- 31% were made aware of the complaint process if they felt their experience could have been better.
- On review of the qualitative data from the questionnaires, the following themes were identified: *Attitude of staff, Quality of care, Use of force, Environment, Emotional impact of the section 136 process*
- A little over half of the respondents were positive about their experience with the police.

Conclusions:

- The findings indicate a mixture of both positive and negative individual experiences of the section 136 process.
- What came out clearly was the emotional impact of being detained under section 136. The traumatic nature of the experience was highlighted by several of the respondents.
- In other cases, there is an appreciation of incidents of positive and support attitude from police and mental health staff.
- As this is the first service s136 evaluation project in the Trust areas of improvement have been identified, the methodology is one area which could be improved in future evaluations.

How did you feel you were treated when you were being taken into the 136 suite?

"There were 3 police officers. They were all kind and respectful towards me."

"I was not that scared because I was in an ambulance. There was a female police officer in the ambulance as well."

"I felt like a caged animal."

"Very humiliating and frustrating"

"I was treated reasonably well but the restraint of the handcuffs were too much"

"It was very physical at the start, maybe because I was no co-operative. But not later on it was less physical. Things could have been explained more clearly."

How did you feel when you arrived at the 136 suite? Do you think you experience could have been better?

"I was treated as per the circumstances. At that point since I was non-cooperative so they had to persuade me. Otherwise it was pretty ok."

"I was treated well by staff. They welcomed me and asked if I needed anything extra like snacks and drinks and were pleasant to me. I did not have a bad experience from the staff."

"I felt a sense of confusion as a number of people were dealing with me. I felt like nobody was on my side."

"My experience could have been better if I was treated with dignity and respect."

