

New law to prevent use of force in mental health settings

- A new law will ensure better accountability and transparency over the use of force in mental health units
- New guidance published sets out clear advice to ensure NHS trusts comply with the law
- The Act, known as Seni's Law, is named after Olaseni Lewis who died as a result of being forcibly restrained in 2010

Patients in mental health settings will be better protected from inappropriate use of force following the commencement of landmark regulations and publication of guidance of the Mental Health Units (Use of Force) Act 2018 today (Tuesday 7 December).

The important legislation will protect patients and workforce by providing a much-needed drive for improved record keeping and reporting of data on the use of force, the quality of staff training and the way in which investigations are carried out.

The Act sets out the measures needed to both prevent the inappropriate use of force and ensure accountability and transparency in mental health units, ensuring patients are treated with dignity and respect at all times.

New guidance published today will make sure trusts will have a clearer understanding on how to comply with the duties under the Act.

Minister for Mental health Gillian Keegan said:

It is vital anyone receiving care in a mental health setting – a time which can be incredibly distressing – is treated with dignity and respect.

Today's legislation and guidance is an important step forward to ending the disproportionate and inappropriate use of force – protecting both patients and our fantastic workforce – within our mental health services.

We must ensure what happened to Seni does not happen to anyone else. I want to thank Seni's family, particularly his mother Aji, and Steve Reed MP for driving this work forward.

The Act, which received royal assent in November 2018, is better known as Seni's Law and is named after Olaseni Lewis, who died as a result of being disproportionately restrained while a voluntary inpatient in a mental health unit in South London.

The guidance has been developed following extensive engagement with the

mental health sector and a wide range of stakeholders including those with lived experience, the NHS, regulators and Aji Lewis and Seni's family.

Aji Lewis, Seni's mother said:

It's so good to see the guidance published today and the Act being commenced.

This is my son's legacy, and I hope it will mean what happened to Seni will not happen to anyone else.

I look forward to continuing to work with the government and mental health providers to make sure the act is properly implemented and real change is achieved

Steve Reed MP said:

I'm delighted the guidance for Seni's Law has now been published and a date is in sight for the Act to come into force.

Seni Lewis died in tragic and avoidable circumstances. His legacy is this Act and the changes it makes to ensure people with mental ill health are treated with care, compassion and respect.

Seni's Law forms part of the government's wider commitment to transform mental health services for those with severe mental illness and follows publication of the Mental Health Act White Paper earlier this year which set out proposals for once in a generation reform.