

Change is not as bad as we fear: The impact of reducing Section 136 times on disposal outcomes, with the Police and Crime Act 2017.

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Background:

The introduction of the Police and Crime Act (PACA) in December 2017 meant that Section 136 detention times were reduced from 72 to 24 hours overnight. The impending change raised fears that increased time pressure would push clinicians into making more risk averse decisions, making admission of minors to psychiatric units more likely.

Hypothesis:



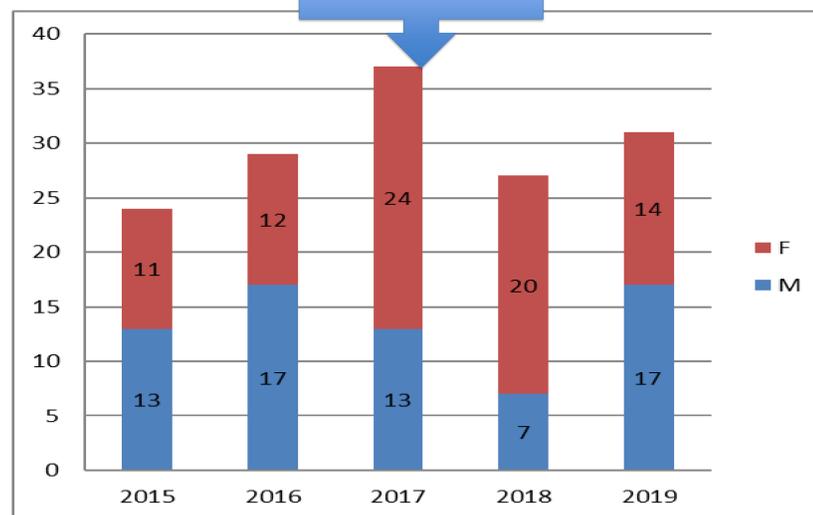
Method:

Trust MHA office data was examined looking at a 5 year period (covering the calendar years 2015 – 2019 inclusive), thus straddling the change.

Results:

Over the 5-year period there were 176 detentions. There was an increase in the number of attenders, and of repeat attenders.

Presentations by gender and year



Results continued:

No changes were seen in age, gender balance, timing of attendance, timing of assessment, or the length of assessment.

There was an overall trend for an increased use of the MHA as a disposal option, but this change most noticeably started in our data set, prior to the implementation of PACA (Pearson Chi Square value of 0.284)

Of interest, 2020 has seen 56 presentations (80% rise) with a similar admission rate - 23% vs 25% (2019).

Outcome of assessment by year



Conclusion:

- This evaluation did **NOT** support the original hypothesis - shortened assessment times have not lead to increased use of admission, as was feared.
- However there has been a steady increase in 136 presentations over the years coinciding with an increase in self harm presentation, rates of disorder, rates of hospitalisation and the use of the MHA overall.
- Comparisons with other Trusts would be useful, to see if there are similar patterns elsewhere.
- It is good to remember that things may not turn out as badly as we fear they will.

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