

Audit: Transfers from prison to hospital in the 12 months pre and post Covid

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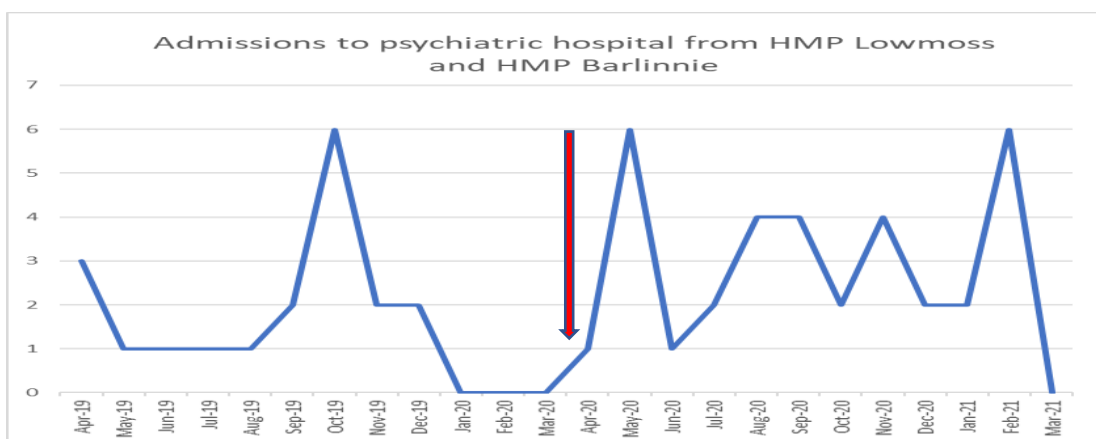
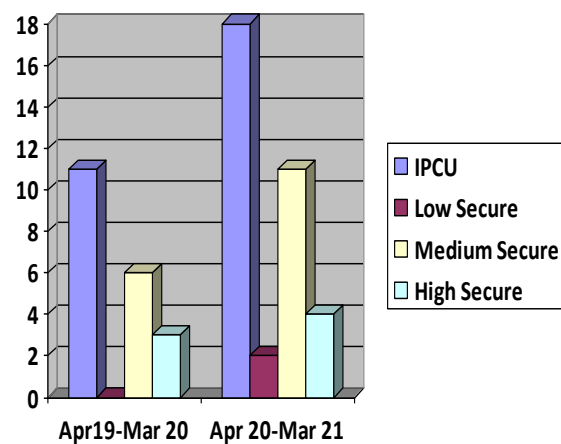
Aims: At the beginning of the Covid 19 pandemic in March 2020 services understandably had to make drastic changes to how they ran. This included prison psychiatry. In NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, in the months following the initial lockdown in March 2020, there appeared to be an increase in transfers out of prison into a psychiatric hospital. The aim of this audit was to look at the number of transfers out of prison to a psychiatric hospital in the 12 months before the initial lock down in March 2020 and in the 12 months afterwards.

Methods: Numbers of patients transferred from prison to a psychiatric hospital were collected from two NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde prisons, HMP Barlinnie and HMP Lowmoss.

Results: In the time period April 2019 – March 2020 there were a total of 19 patients transferred from prison to psychiatric hospital. In the time period April 2020 – March 2021 there were a total of 34 patients transferred from prison to psychiatric hospital.

Chart 1: Numbers of patients admitted by level of security

Chart 2: Admissions to psychiatric hospital by month. Arrow signifies the initial lockdown.



Conclusions: Although numbers are too low to allow statistical analysis there appears to have been an increase in patients transferred from prison to a psychiatric hospital during the first 12 months of the covid 19 pandemic. The reasons for this are likely multifactorial. We would postulate that these may include:

- A change in normal provision of community mental health services meaning people became more unwell which may have led to an increase in criminal behaviour
- A change in the normal routine of the prison meaning prisoners spent large amounts of time alone in their cells. This may have led to isolation which could have impacted on their mental state. Additionally, this may have led to an increase in illicit substance use due to boredom.

Further exploration of this and comparison with admissions across mental health services during the same time would be required to draw more definitive conclusions.