



Ministry  
of Justice



# **Notes and Definitions accompanying Restricted Patients Statistics, England and Wales**

**Ministry of Justice**  
Guidance Documentation

April 2026

## **Introduction**

This document supplements the Restricted Patients statistical bulletin by providing definitions of terminology used in the bulletin.

## **Who a restricted patient is**

A restricted patient is a [mentally disordered offender](#) (MDO) subject to a [restriction order](#), due to the risk of serious harm they pose to others, and liable to a [hospital order](#). They cannot be transferred between hospitals, discharged or allowed leave without consent of the Secretary of State for Justice. The First-tier Tribunal (Mental Health) in England and the Mental Health Review Tribunal for Wales can also discharge restricted patients if they conclude that the criteria for detention in hospital under the Mental Health Act 1983 is no longer met.

## **How a patient becomes a restricted patient**

An offender can become a restricted patient by a number of routes and may be diverted from the criminal justice system to hospital for treatment by a court under the Mental Health Act 1983. The routes:

1. The court issues a Hospital Order (s37), with restrictions added under s41 (including those found unfit to plead and not guilty by reason of insanity).
2. An offender can be transferred to hospital from prison by the Secretary of State (s47): convicted prisoners, with restrictions added under s49.
3. An offender can be transferred to hospital from prison by the Secretary of State (s48): remand and unsentenced prisoners, Immigration Detainees and Civil Prisoners transferred to hospital, with restrictions added under s49.
4. Hospital directions (s45A/45B): patients with a parallel prison sentence who will be sent to prison if treatment in hospital is successful.

## **Discharges**

Discharge refers to restricted patients released into the community, either as a conditional or absolute discharge. Those receiving a conditional discharge continue to receive treatment in the community, remain liable to detention in hospital and may be recalled to hospital by the Secretary of State. Those receiving an absolute discharge are not liable to detention in hospital and cannot be recalled to hospital by the Secretary of State.

Discharge could be ordered by either the Secretary of State for Justice, the First-Tier Tribunal (Mental Health) in England or the Mental Health Tribunal for Wales (which are independent judicial bodies with discharge powers separate from those of the Secretary of State).

## **Disposals**

A disposal involves leaving treatment as a restricted patient other than as a discharge or a transfer to another hospital in England and Wales. Disposals are all other outcomes for, and movements of mentally disordered offenders (e.g., return to prison custody), other than (i) discharges and (ii) transfers to another hospital in England and Wales.

For those prisoners transferred to hospital who are serving a determinate prison sentence, the restrictions attached to the Secretary of State transfer direction will cease on the earliest date of release. If they still require treatment in hospital, they will remain detained as unrestricted patients and not subject to the management of the Secretary of State for Justice.

## **Admission**

The admittance of an offender to secure hospitals as determined by the sentencing court or Public Protection Group (PPG) on behalf of the Secretary of State for Justice and/or where a patient's legal category changes. In some cases, a patient may appear to have been admitted or discharged more than once within a given year, although he/she may not have physically moved. In particular, patients transferred from prison to hospital while unsentenced or untried can reappear in the figures as admitted under restricted hospital orders. Transfers between hospitals in England and Wales are not counted as separate admissions, unless the patient's legal category also changes.

## **High secure hospital**

High secure hospitals hold patients detained under mental health legislation, who require treatment under conditions of high security because of their dangerous, violent or criminal propensities. There are three high secure hospitals, Ashworth, Broadmoor and Rampton.

## **Other hospitals**

Other hospital refers to any psychiatric hospital in England and Wales, which provides secure mental health services. These include 'medium secure' and 'low secure' hospitals and they admit other patients requiring mental health treatment as well as mentally disordered offenders.

## **Legislative Framework**

The key legislation affecting this bulletin is the Mental Health Act 1959, the Mental Health Act 1983, as amended by the Mental Health Act 2007 and the Criminal Procedure (Insanity) Act 1964 as amended by the Criminal Procedure (Insanity and Unfitness to Plead) Act 1991 and the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 (which came into force on 31 March 2005). The 1959 Act was amended by the Mental Health (Amendment) Act

1982 and was then consolidated by the 1983 Act which was largely implemented on 30 September 1983. The provisions of the two Mental Health Acts are similar and references below are to the 1983 Act only. In terms of admissions, the 1983 Act provides for:

- i. the diversion to hospital by the courts of convicted offenders who satisfy certain conditions (sections 37(1) & (2)) by making a hospital order. This may be with or without a restriction order under section 41, which has the effect of requiring the Secretary of State's consent on all matters relating to leave of absence, transfer or discharge, except where the Tribunal orders discharge.
- ii. the admission of an unconvicted offender to hospital by the magistrates' courts where they are satisfied that the person concerned meets the criteria for admission and has done the act or made the omission with which charged (section 37(3)).
- iii. the imposition of a hospital order on unsentenced prisoners in their absence and without conviction for an offence (section 51(5)).
- iv. the recall to hospital, by order of the Secretary of State, of patients subject to restriction orders who were conditionally discharged (section 42(3)).
- v. the court to impose a prison sentence on a convicted offender together with a direction for immediate admission to hospital, subject to restrictions (hospital and limitation direction under section 45A).
- vi. the transfer to hospital, by order of the Secretary of State, of prisoners serving a sentence of imprisonment (section 47). Under section 49 these patients can be made subject to a restriction direction, which has the same effect as a restriction order under section 41.
- vii. the transfer to hospital, by order of the Secretary of State, of an unsentenced or untried defendant in criminal proceedings who is held in a Prison Service establishment (section 48). In this case a restriction direction is mandatory. Civil prisoners and persons detained under the Immigration Act 1971 or under the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002, may also be admitted under this section, but restrictions are not mandatory.
- viii. the transfer of patients from one part of the United Kingdom, Channel Islands or the Isle of Man to another. Those transferred to England and Wales are treated as if they had been admitted to hospital under the Act, so that some of them will, in effect, be subject to restricted hospital orders (part VI).

Section 2 of the Trial of Lunatics Act 1883 enables juries to return a verdict of acquittal on grounds of insanity, and Section 4 of the Criminal Procedure (Insanity) Act 1964, as substituted by Section 2 of the Criminal Procedure (Insanity and Unfitness to Plead) Act 1991 and amended by section 22 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 enables the court without a jury to find a defendant unfit to plead. The 2004 Act also gives courts a range

of disposal options ranging from a hospital order with restrictions to an absolute discharge.

In relation to disposals and discharges the Mental Health Act 1983 provides for:

- i. the removal of a restriction order by the Secretary of State so that the hospital order continues unrestricted (section 42(1)).
- ii. the discharge of a patient with a restriction order, either conditionally or absolutely, by the Secretary of State, and the termination of the restriction order where discharge is absolute (section 42(2)).
- iii. the return to prison of sentenced prisoners (section 50(1)a).
- iv. the return of unsentenced prisoners to prison to await court action where the Secretary of State or the court is satisfied that they no longer require treatment, or no effective treatment is available (sections 51(3) & (4) respectively).
- v. the transfer direction ceases to have effect in respect of untried prisoners at the end of their remand period, unless they are subject to further remand or committal for trial (section 52(2)).
- vi. the direction or recommendation by the First-tier Tribunal (Mental Health) or Mental Health Review Tribunal for Wales, of the discharge of a patient either conditionally or absolutely (sections 72-74).
- vii. the absolute discharge by the First-tier Tribunal (Mental Health) or Mental Health Review Tribunal for Wales of a conditionally discharged patient (section 75).

## **Sentence Type**

Sentence type refers to the classification of sentences based on their structure and purpose. Different sentence types are used to address the severity of the crime and the risk posed by the offender. Sentence types include determinate sentences, indeterminate public protection sentences (IPP), life sentences, and restriction orders.

### **Determinate Sentence**

A determinate sentence is a fixed prison term assigned by the court. The length of the sentence is set and cannot be altered by a parole board or other agency. For example, if someone is sentenced to five years in prison, they will serve exactly five years.

### **Indeterminate Public Protection Sentence (IPP)**

An Indeterminate Public Protection Sentence (IPP) is a type of sentence where the offender is given a minimum term to serve, but their release is not automatic after this period. Instead, they must prove to the Parole Board that they no longer pose a risk to the public. This type of sentence was introduced to manage offenders deemed dangerous but not serious enough for a life

sentence. IPPs were abolished in 2012, but many prisoners still serve under this regime.

### **Life Sentence**

A life sentence means that the convicted individual is to remain in prison for the rest of their natural life, or until released by the Parole Board, pardoned or commuted to a fixed term. Life sentences are typically reserved for the most serious crimes, such as murder or terrorism.

### **Restriction Orders**

Restriction orders encompass the other various types of legal directives that impose additional controls on offenders, particularly those with mental health issues. This category includes various legal restrictions that are not traditional court sentences. These orders encompass Section 37/41 hospital orders, Section 48/49 transfer directions, Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act (DVCV) restrictions, and Unfit to Plead restrictions.

### **Data sources, quality and revisions**

The data presented in this brief are drawn from the Public Protection Unit Database (PPUD) administered by the Mental Health Casework Section (MHCS) within the Public Protection Group of HMPPS.

Case workers within the MHCS input data into PPUD on a daily basis as they process applications relating to restricted patients and interact with courts and hospitals for updated information about restricted patients.

Although care is taken when inputting, processing and analysing information in PPUD, the reported information is subject to inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system.

The data are extracted at the end of each year for reporting. We may at any point identify the need to correct or amend the previous year's data. If required, these revisions are made in the following year's report, and a footnote on the relevant table will indicate the scale of the revision.

## Related publications

Offender Management Statistics Quarterly Bulletin<sup>1</sup>: This bulletin provides key statistics relating to offenders who are in prison or under Probation Service supervision. It covers receptions into prison and releases from prison.

Re-offending bulletin<sup>2</sup>: This report provides key statistics on proven re-offending in England and Wales. It gives proven re-offending figures for offenders who were released from custody, received a non-custodial conviction at court, received a caution, reprimand, warning or tested positive for opiates or cocaine.

The above two reports provide a context around offenders in and released from prisons.

MAPPA Annual Report<sup>3</sup>: This report provides key statistics relating to offenders who are managed by Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA). These are a set of statutory arrangements to assess and manage the risk posed by certain sexual and violent offenders and involves Police, Probation and Prison Services.

Criminal Justice Statistics<sup>4</sup>: This report contains quarterly statistics on activity in the criminal justice system, offending histories, and biennial compendiums on the experiences of women and different ethnic groups of the criminal justice system.

## Release Schedule

This bulletin was published on 30 April 2026 and includes calendar year statistics for the year 2025.

The next Restricted Patients Bulletin is scheduled to be published on 29 April 2027.

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<sup>1</sup> Offender Management Statistics: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/offender-management-statistics-quarterly>

<sup>2</sup> Proven re-offending statistics: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-justice/series/proven-reoffending-statistics>

<sup>3</sup> MAPPA Annual Report: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/multi-agency-public-protection-arrangements-mappa-annual-reports>

<sup>4</sup> Criminal Justice Statistics: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/criminal-justice-statistics>

## Contact

Press enquiries should be directed to the Ministry of Justice press office:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-justice/about/media-enquiries>

Other enquiries about these statistics should be directed to:

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General enquiries about Restricted Patients statistics can be e-mailed to:  
[MHCSMailbox@justice.gov.uk](mailto:MHCSMailbox@justice.gov.uk)

General information about the official statistics system of the UK is available from: <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/>

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