

# **The Mental Health Bill and Human Rights: An Easy Read Guide**



BIHR would like to thank  
Pembroke People First for  
checking this Easy Read guide  
and adding the images.



# 1. What is in this guide?

What is this guide about?	Page 3
Changes to mental health law	Page 6
Why human rights matter in mental health law	Page 10
Using the Mental Health Bill to protect human rights	Page 18
What happens next?	Page 19



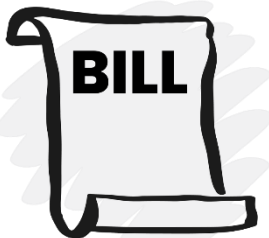
## What is this guide about?



This guide is about an idea for a new law in England and Wales.



Laws are the rules that everyone in the country must follow.



An idea for a new law is called a bill.



The bill we talk about in this guide is called the Mental Health Bill.



The Mental Health Bill has ideas about how mental health laws in England and Wales should change.



For the Mental Health Bill to become the law, it has to be talked about and agreed on by UK Parliament.



[Click here to read an Easy Read explainer on how laws are made.](#)



This guide talks about how the Mental Health Bill could affect human rights.



This guide was written in February 2025. The Mental Health Bill might have changed since then.



[Click here to check the progress of the Mental Health Bill towards becoming the law.](#)

This information is not Easy Read.



## Changes to mental health law



The Mental Health Act is a law in  
England and Wales.



The Mental Health Act tells  
people what to do if you need to  
stay in hospital because of your  
mental health.



This law says that you can be  
sent to hospital for care and  
treatment, to keep you or other  
people safe.



This is sometimes called being sectioned.



A few years ago, the UK Government looked at whether the Mental Health Act is working.



They decided that the law should change to give people more choice over their care.



The Mental Health Bill has 4 ideas, that staff in mental health services must think about:

1. Respect people's views and choices.



This means listening to what you want in your mental health care.

2. Limit people's freedom as little as possible.



This means not taking you to hospital if you do not need to be there.





### 3. Give people the help they need to feel better.

This means helping you get the  
right treatment and support you  
need to feel well.

### 4. Respect people as individuals.



This means treating you with  
respect, understanding you and  
what you need.



[Click here for an Easy Read guide](#)  
[by the UK Government on what](#)  
[the Mental Health Bill will](#)  
[change.](#)



## Why human rights matter in mental health law



The Human Rights Act is the main law which protects your human rights in the UK.



It works with different laws to protect you, including the Mental Health Act.



When the Government writes a new bill, they have to say if they think their ideas will support human rights.



Once a bill becomes the law,  
people must make sure their  
decisions using that law support  
human rights as much as  
possible.



[Click here for BIHR's Easy Read  
guide to the Human Rights Act.](#)



The Mental Health Bill has ideas  
which will affect different rights  
in the Human Rights Act.



- The right to life



This right is about your life being protected if there is a big risk that you could die.



The Mental Health Act means that you can be kept in hospital if there is a big risk that you could die.



[Click here for BIHR's Easy Read guide to the right to life.](#)



- The right to be safe from serious harm



This right is about being safe from anything that causes you a lot of pain or makes you feel upset.



The Mental Health Act means that your freedom can be limited in a lot of different ways, like being restrained.



But this should not be done in a way that causes you serious harm.



[Click here for BIHR's Easy Read guide to the right to be safe from serious harm.](#)



- The right to liberty



This right is about your freedom to move.



This is a non-absolute right, which means it can sometimes be limited if:

- A law says it is okay.
- It is for a good reason.
- It has been thought about properly.



The Mental Health Act says it is sometimes okay to limit someone's freedom if they need to be in hospital for their mental health.



You can ask someone to look at the decision for you to be in hospital for your mental health if you do not agree.



[Click here for BIHR's Easy Read guide to the right to liberty.](#)





- The right to private and family life, home and contact

This right protects



- your choices about you
- your physical and mental health
- your relationships
- and being part of your community.

This is a non-absolute right, which means it can sometimes be limited if:



- A law says it is okay.
- It is for a good reason.
- It has been thought about properly.





The Mental Health Act says it is sometimes okay to give mental health treatment against your wishes.



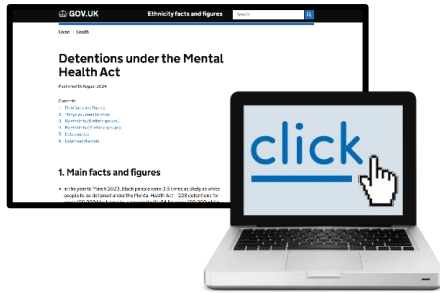
[Click here for BIHR's Easy Read guide to the right to private and family life, home and contact.](#)



- The right not to be discriminated against



This right is about making sure everyone can enjoy their human rights fairly.



A problem with the Mental Health Act is that Black people are kept in hospital for their mental health much more than white people.



Click here for BIHR's Easy Read guide to the right to not to be discriminated against.



## Using the Mental Health Bill to protect human rights



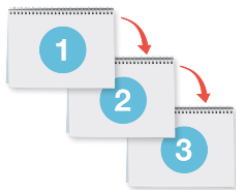
BIHR wants the UK Government to think about human rights when deciding how mental health law should work.



This means listening to people who will be affected about how the ideas will work in real life.



BIHR wants the UK Government to make sure mental health services have enough money, people, and training to look after your human rights.



## **What happens next?**



The Mental Health Bill is being looked at by UK Parliament to decide if it should be the law.



BIHR will keep you up to date on changes to mental health law through our weekly news.



[Click here to read BIHR's weekly news.](#)



[Click here for the UK Government's Easy Read guide on what the Mental Health Bill will change.](#)

This guide was made by the  
British Institute of Human  
Rights.



This guide can be used and  
shared by people and  
organisations to get  
information and speak up for  
human rights.



If you copy this guide, please

- do not change it
- make sure it says it was  
made by the British  
Institute of Human Rights
- tell us by sending an email  
to [info@bihr.org.uk](mailto:info@bihr.org.uk).





Please do not use this guide to make money or to sell your own services.



The British Institute of Human Rights is a registered charity.  
Our charity number is 1101575.



The British Institute of Human Rights is a registered company.  
Our company number is 4978121.



Our address is

BIHR

167-169 Great Portland Street

London

W1W 5PF



Our address is not open to  
visitors.



The British Institute of Human  
Rights does not give legal  
advice.



[Click here to find out about organisations that could help instead.](#)



You can click the links below to find out more about the British Institute of Human Rights:



- [On our website](#)



- [On social media](#)



- [On email](#)