

Restraint Reduction Network (RRN) welcomes launch of new Mental Health Units (Use of Force) Act 2018 statutory guidance

A new landmark piece of legislation - known as Seni's Law - regarding the use of force in mental health units has been launched today (7 December 2021) by Gillian Keegan MP; Minister of State for Care and Mental Health; Steve Reed MP and Aji Lewis, mother of Seni – a 23-year-old black man who died after being restrained by 11 police officers while in Hospital in 2010.

[The Mental Health Units \(Use of Force\) Act](#) gained royal assent in 2018 and today the Department of Health and Social Care has published statutory guidance for NHS funded organisations in England and police forces in England and Wales, following a public consultation earlier this year and the growing support of patients, people with lived experience and the NHS. It will provide guidance on how practitioners should meet the legal obligations placed on them by the Mental Health Units (Use of Force) Act 2018.

Alexis Quinn, Manager of the Restraint Reduction Network, activist and Autism campaigner, said: "At the Restraint Reduction Network, we welcome today's announcement and after a long journey, we are pleased to see this statutory guidance finally being enacted. What Seni experienced in hospital was barbaric and should never have happened – shockingly there is still an over-reliance on the use of force and restrictive practices in the health and social care sector.

"Seni's family have worked tirelessly to make this Act as meaningful as possible to ensure it reduces inequalities, improves people's experiences of care and ensures that staff have access to the right training. We would like to pay tribute to Seni's mother, Aji, for her determination, belief and hard work. We are proud to work with her as an RRN Trustee!

"We can't truly know what the state of restrictive practice is in this country unless we have the right data. This Act will go some way to providing us with a benchmark upon which we can start to challenge ourselves to do better and work in a way that respects people's human rights."

The new guidance references the Restraint Reduction Network's Training Standards and Certification as providing a national benchmark for training in the prevention and, where necessary, use of restrictive interventions, in line with the requirements of the Act. These Standards are based on a human rights-based and person-centred approach to improving training and practice encompassing:

- Protecting people's fundamental human rights and promoting person centred, best interest and therapeutic approaches to supporting people when they are distressed
- Improving the quality of life of those being restrained and those supporting them
- Reducing reliance on restrictive practices by promoting positive culture and practice that focuses on prevention de-escalation and reflective practice
- Increasing understanding of the root causes of behaviour and recognition that many behaviours are the result of distress due to unmet needs
- Where required in rare and exceptional situations, focusing on the safest and most dignified use of restrictive interventions including physical restraint.

Alexis Quinn continued: “This new statutory guidance will mean improved recording and reporting better training and stronger leadership through having a person or lead taking responsibility for practice. However, we now face an unusual situation where we have better protection for adults in mental health services than for children in our schools. This concern was raised at RRN’s flagship conference last week and shared by a panel of Children’s Commissioners across the nations. We must address this and we are calling for the RRN Training Standards to be applied consistently across education to benefit children and young people.”

The RRN is a coalition of committed organisations and individuals who provide education, health and social care services, alongside experts by experience and families, all aiming to eliminate the use of unnecessary restrictive practices.

To find out more about RRN’s work, visit: <https://restraintreductionnetwork.org/> or follow on Twitter @theRRNetwork

For further information on the RRN Training Standards, visit: <https://restraintreductionnetwork.org/know-the-standard/>

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Notes to Editors

- The Restraint Reduction Network has an ambitious vision to eliminate the use of unnecessary restrictive practices and make a real difference in the lives of people. The Network brings together committed organisations providing education, health and social care services.
- The Network was originally co-founded by the Crisis Prevention Institute. The facilitation and stewardship of the network was taken over by the Bild Group – a charity that exists to champion the rights of autistic people and individuals with learning disabilities – working alongside the Restraint Reduction Steering Group.
- The Steering Group includes representation from all relevant government departments, professional bodies, regulators, leading academics and wider practitioners in the sector. The group’s responsibilities include overseeing the development of new training quality standards and developing organisational and individual self-assessment tools to facilitate reduction in restrictive practices.
- Find out more about our work by visiting www.restraintreductionnetwork.org
- Join the Restraint Reduction Network for free by submitting your pledge to support the elimination of unnecessary restrictive practices by visiting www.restraintreductionnetwork.org/become-a-member
- Follow RRN on social media on Twitter @theRRNetwork, Facebook @RestraintReductionNetwork or LinkedIn @Restraint-Reduction-Network