



# DEVELOPING TOGETHER

## SOCIAL WORK TEACHING PARTNERSHIP

### **Knowns / Unknowns Exercise**

This exercise is to help you think about the importance of what information is included in an article/report as well as the importance of information that is not included. It also highlights how depending on what information is available, your understanding of the situation may change.

Below is how I have developed and used this exercise having read the example suggested by Wilkins & Boahen in 'Critical Analysis Skills for Social Workers' (2013) p.24.

1. Read both news articles (below)
2. Write down what you learn about the story from each article, and compare this.
3. Write a second list of what information has NOT been included in the stories. This may include what was missing from one of the articles, but included in the other, or may be information that has not been included in either of these articles.
4. Once you have completed your two lists, think about why some information may have been included and some may have been left out.
5. Finally, think about whether any information that has been omitted may have changed your view on the situation.



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### **Two News articles on the same story - The Guardian (online) and BBC News (online story)**

## **Hundreds of mental health beds needed to end 'shameful' out-of-area care**

**Treatment of patients miles from home causes more suffering, says Royal College of Psychiatrists**

**Denis Campbell, Health Policy Editor**

Cuts in mental health beds have gone too far, leading to the “shameful practice” of patients being sent hundreds of miles from home to be treated, according to psychiatrists.

The Royal College of Psychiatrists is calling for the **NHS** to urgently create hundreds of extra beds for people who are seriously mentally unwell in order to tackle a damaging shortage.

“Cuts in the number of mental health beds have gone too far and patients and their families are suffering as a result,” said Prof Wendy Burn, the college’s president. “It is clear that some parts of England urgently need more properly funded and staffed beds. Hundreds more are needed.

“Trusts struggling with dangerously high levels of bed occupancy are being forced to send seriously ill people hundreds of miles away from their homes for care. That must stop.”

NHS data shows some mental health trusts are operating with all or almost all their beds full, despite the college’s belief that they should never exceed 85% capacity. For example, between April and June, bed occupancy at the Sussex Partnership trust was 100% while it was 98.9% at the Barnet, Enfield and Haringey trust in London and 97.2% at the Birmingham and Solihull trust.

Widespread and persistent shortages of mental health beds have led to trusts sending patients out of their home area in order to get a bed elsewhere in England. That happens regularly even though mental health experts agree it can harm patients by increasing their distress, separating them from their family and setting back their recovery. Such placements



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could have a “devastating” impact on patients and their loved ones, Burn said.

The government has pledged to end the use of clinically inappropriate out-of-area placements for adults by 2021. However, the most recent figures show that, on 31 July, a total of 745 people in England were being treated outside of their home area.

“Steps taken so far to tackle this shameful practice have not worked and that is why we’re calling for more beds, although of course we recognise this is only part of the solution,” said Burn.

The Royal College of Psychiatrists wants those parts of England which regularly send patients out of area to be made the priority if hundreds of extra places are approved. These areas are Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire; Devon; Hampshire and the Isle of Wight; Lincolnshire; Norfolk and Waveney; and Nottinghamshire.

The 8,640 people who had an inappropriate out-of-area placement between August 2018 and July this year travelled a total of 555,000 miles to get a bed, according to an estimate by the college.

The number of NHS mental health beds in England has fallen by 73% from 67,100 in 1987-88 to just 18,400. That was part of a drive to provide more “care in the community” and treat more mentally ill people in or close to their homes. However, the promised expansion of out-of-hospital mental health care has not occurred on anywhere near the scale originally envisaged.

A new report commissioned by the college [into the availability of mental health beds](#) found that a much larger number of beds – 1,060 – need to be created in order to reduce bed occupancy from 90% to the 85% level psychiatrists think is good for care.

Vicki Nash, the head of policy and campaigns at the mental health charity Mind, said: “These figures are a stark reminder of the growing crisis in mental health. As demand increases it’s tantamount to negligence that beds are being cut in some areas without a viable alternative.”

NHS England declined to comment.

The Guardian, Wed Nov 6<sup>th</sup> 2019



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### **Mental health beds shortage 'causing distress'**

By Nick Trigg Health correspondent

### **More mental health hospital beds are needed in England to end the "distressing" sending of patients far from home, analysis suggests.**

Patients with conditions such as schizophrenia can be sent to hospitals miles away from their home if their nearby units do not have space.

The Department of Health aims to end inappropriate far-away placements by 2021.

But the Royal College of Psychiatrists report suggested the push had stalled.

The number of inappropriate out-of-area placements at any one time has been consistently between 700 and 800 patients in recent months, after dipping below 600 towards the end of 2018.

#### *Simon's story: 'Being sent far away was a nightmare'*

*Simon Rose, 49, was sent to Harrogate, 80 miles away from his Derbyshire home, when he became severely depressed and suicidal six years ago.*

*His wife, Janine, had just given birth to their daughter Louisa, when he became ill. He was in hospital for 14 weeks.*

*The father of four, who now works as a lived-experience educator for Derbyshire mental health trust, said: "It was a nightmare being so far away.*

*"My community psychiatric nurse couldn't come up to Harrogate.*

*"The strain on my family was horrendous. My wife was trying to cope with having a newborn baby at a time when I was not just severely ill but physically absent.*

*"They wanted to visit me regularly in hospital but it was a two-hour drive, so that was impossible to do often."*

There are currently 18,400 mental-health beds - down from more than 67,000 in the late 1980s.



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The number was reduced so more services could be made available in the community - something the college supports.

But president Prof Wendy Burn said it was clear the reductions had gone too far.

"Trusts struggling with dangerously high levels of bed occupancy are being forced to send seriously ill people hundreds of miles away from their homes for care," she said. "That must stop."

Research for the college suggests 1,000 extra beds are needed.

Marjorie Wallace, chief executive of the charity Sane, said the drive to cut bed numbers had been "relentless" and caused "widespread distress and neglect".

"Far too many people contacting us are being shunted around the country like unwanted parcels," she said.

"We believe this has led to ever more patients left at risk of self-harm and suicide."

But the NHS has always maintained it has plans in place to boost community mental health care.

Some £2.3bn of the extra £20bn that will be available to the NHS by 2023 has been earmarked for mental health and out-of-hospital services in particular, which officials say will reduce the demand on hospital beds in the coming years.

There is also a focus on a small number of trusts responsible for a disproportionate number of far-away placements.

Meanwhile, the Liberal Democrats have this week announced they would increase funding further by putting some of the money raised by their policy of putting 1p on income tax towards mental health.

It would mean the budget being increased by close to £2bn a year.

BBC news website