Out of Area Placements in Mental Health Services

Data Quality Statement
April 2020

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Introduction

The Out of Area Placements in Mental Health Services data collection opened on Monday 17 October 2016. NHS Digital is running this interim out of area placements data collection in the Clinical Audit Platform (CAP) until the data becomes aligned and available from the MHSDS. The collection is expected to capture data from both NHS and independent providers in England using NHS Digital’s CAP data collection system. The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has directed NHS Digital to carry out this work. NHS Digital work with DHSC and NHS England to manage the data submissions, analyse the data and publish the findings.

NHS Digital has been directed by DHSC under section 254 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to establish and operate a system for the collection and analysis of the information specified for this service. A copy of the Directions have been published here:


The Government set a national ambition to eliminate inappropriate out of area placements in mental health services for adults in acute inpatient care by 2020-21. Inappropriate out of area placements are where patients are sent out of area because no bed is available for them locally, which can delay their recovery. It is essential to introduce a collection of out of area placements data in order to monitor progress towards achieving the ambition and to understand where and why out of area placements are happening. Having this information is critical to improving patient care and ultimately eliminating the practice of inappropriately sending patients out of area to receive acute inpatient care.

Details of all out of area placements should be submitted, regardless of whether they may be considered appropriate or inappropriate. Completion of the Referred out of area reason field in CAP will confirm whether the out of area placement is appropriate or inappropriate. An out of area placement will be inappropriate if the reason is non-availability of a local bed. An out of area placement may be appropriate when:

- The person becomes acutely unwell when they are away from home (in such circumstances, the admitting provider should work with the person’s home team to facilitate repatriation to local services as soon as this is safe and clinically appropriate).
- There are safeguarding reasons such as gang related issues, violence, or domestic abuse.
The person is a member of the local service’s staff, or has had contact with the service in the course of their employment.

- There are offending restrictions.

- The decision to treat out of area is the individual’s choice e.g. where a patient is not from the local area but wants to be near their family and networks.

**Timeliness and punctuality**

Only ‘sending providers’ need to submit data to the collection. The sending provider is the organisation that takes the decision to place a patient outside of their usual Community and Mental Health Team (CMHT) network of local services for acute mental health service provision.

This collection does not collect data from providers outside of England.

There is a monthly submission timetable with cut-off dates which is available on the right hand side of the out of area placements webpage:


Providers can submit details of new out of area placements as patients are placed, i.e. during the same month. Some providers may record details in batches and submit all the month’s placements at the start of the following month. Providers have up to five working days in each new month to submit data for the previous month.

**Accessibility and clarity**

Data is presented in tables in the report publication on the NHS Digital website. Downloadable versions of the tables in spreadsheet format are also available through the website along with additional transparency supporting data.

The out of area placement data items specification can be found on the out of area placements webpage under *Provider Documents*:

Assessment of user needs and perceptions

This data has been collected and presented as part of a programme of work, led by DHSC and NHS England, to help meet the government’s ambition of eliminating inappropriate out of area placements by 2020-21.

NHS Digital is keen to gain a better understanding of the users of this publication and of their needs. Your feedback is welcome and may be sent to enquiries@nhsdigital.nhs.uk (please include ‘Out of area placements in mental health services’ in the subject line). Alternatively, you can call our contact centre on 0300 303 5678 or write to: NHS Digital, 1 Trevelyan Square, Boar Lane, Leeds, LS1 6AE.

Performance cost and respondent burden

Aggregated data from the data collection used in this publication is required to support the DHSC led programme of work on out of area placements.

Under the Health and Social Care Act 2012, NHS Digital has a statutory responsibility to seek to minimise the burden of data collections on the NHS. NHS Digital has a duty to make recommendations to the Secretary of State for Health on how reductions in burden could be achieved.

These responsibilities have led to the development of a new burden methodology and the launch of the Challenging Burden Service (CBS) which takes over many of the functions of the Review of Central Returns (ROCR) programme. The out of area placements collection has been through this Burden Assessment process.

The data is collected under Standardisation Committee for Care Information (SCCI) Technical Standard, SCCI 2213.

Confidentiality, transparency and security

As noted, patient identifiable data is being collected as part of the current process, to ensure data quality and to avoid duplication of records. Patient identifiable data is held securely and with restricted access and will not be released by NHS Digital to any other parties.

The out of area placements collection has been introduced under a Direction issued by DHSC under the Health and Social Care Act 2012. This means that explicit consent to collect information for this purpose is not required; but as part of good clinical practice and compliance with
the Data Protection Act 2018, patients should be provided with information about the collection by their provider. A patient information leaflet is available under Patient Documents on the right hand side of the out of area placements webpage:


The Directions issued to NHS Digital for this collection can be read on the www.gov.uk website.

Individuals are able to request that their information is removed from the dataset. At the initial contact, they will be given information about how to request that their information is removed.

It is expected that through the introduction of the out of area placements dataset, all organisations will continue to follow existing NHS codes of practice in regard to patient confidentiality, information security management, record management and other legal obligations.

A risk assessment has been carried out as to the possible identification of patients from this publication. Suppression procedures are in place to manage this risk. There has been a change in methodology from previous reports.

- All counts of people or placements are rounded, including national totals. Numbers between 1-7 are rounded to 5 and all other numbers are rounded to the nearest 5.
- Zeroes are shown unsuppressed.
- Percentages are calculated using rounded numbers. This can lead to misleading figures when dealing with small numbers so where the denominator is less than 20 the percentage is suppressed.
- For percentages where the denominator is zero, the percentage is displayed as a dash (-). Where the numerator is zero, this is shown as a zero percentage.
- Other calculations, such as averages, are rounded to the nearest whole number.

To support the out of area placements dataset implementation, a Privacy Impact Assessment has been undertaken, to help identify privacy risks, to support action to mitigate those risks prior to any collection, sharing, retention or analysis of out of area placements information.
Data quality and interpretation issues

Participation

Any mental health care provider in England that provides adult inpatient acute mental health services is in scope of this collection and should complete a return each month. This includes Mental Health Foundation Trusts, Mental Health Non-Foundation Trusts and some Independent Sector providers. Trusts that do not provide adult acute inpatient mental health services are not in scope.

Participation information is calculated for the latest month’s figures. There are 57 organisations we consider to be in scope to submit data, of which 48 (84 per cent) participated in the collection.

A participating organisation is one that is considered to be in scope and to have done at least one of the following three things during this period:

• To have created a new out of area placement.
• To have discharged an out of area placement.
• To have confirmed that they had no out of area placements to discharge or create. It is unclear how many of the non-participating organisations would have data to submit and how many will have no data. Not all organisations within scope are expected to have data every month.

Participation is not calculated for the three month or year to date breakdowns.
Service provider feedback received

In this section, we will publish data quality notes from providers, in order to help with the interpretation of data. Provider feedback should be emailed to enquiries@nhsdigital.nhs.uk, with “Out of area placement provider feedback” in the title of the email. Please include all relevant organisation codes, and the reporting periods that the feedback refers to.

Table 1: Data quality notes received from providers since the last out of area placements publication

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No provider feedback has been received for this month.

Source: Out of Area Placements in Mental Health Services, April 2020

Impact of the collection start date

This collection only includes out of area placements that have started since the beginning of the collection (17 October 2016). This means that the current maximum duration for an out of area placement in this data collection is 1,292 nights.

Some out of area placements have a duration longer than this and as such are excluded. This means that the collection undercounts out of area placement activity.

The Mental Health Services Dataset (MHSDS) published a proxy measure about people receiving adult acute inpatient care away from their usual provider before the out of area placements collection became active.¹

These measures are not affected by the 17 October 2016 start date issue and as such can be used to give an indicative measure of the impact of the start date on the out of area placement collection.

The MHSDS proxy measure and the out of area placement collection do not measure the same thing, but they are similar enough to provide a useful comparison. Appendix B in the main report provides a

¹ These proxy measures can be identified in previous editions of the Mental Health Services Monthly Statistics publication series using the metric codes AMH34a, AMH35a, AMH60a, AMH60b, AMH60c and AMH60d
breakdown on the differences between the MHSDS collection of out of area placements data, and this collection.

Figure 1 provides a cumulative percentage of the MHSDS proxy measure with a duration that is shorter than the maximum duration of the out of area placement (OAP) collection up to the end of March 2018.

As the months across the bottom show, the longer that the out of area placement collection goes on, the greater percentage of the total number of out of area placements are expected to be included in this collection.

By now, the coverage has risen to the point where the impact of this issue on this report should be considered minimal.

**Data entry**

The out of area placements data collection requires that most data items be returned, and has 100 per cent completeness in many fields. However, a completed field is not necessarily a valid field, for example 100 per cent of records have a postcode but 4% of the returned postcodes cannot be used to calculate a distance.

Although the *Discharge Date* and *Cost per bed day* fields are mandatory, dummy data can be added here if the information is not known by the submitting provider, as follows:
**Discharge date:** A dummy date of **01/01/1900** may be entered. An actual discharge date is needed, once known, in order to close the placement record; otherwise a new placement record for that patient cannot be added should they be placed out of area again in the future.

**Cost per bed day:** A **zero** cost may be entered until the actual cost is known. Any cost information can be amended until the placement record is closed. A record is closed once the actual discharge date is entered. If an out of area placement occurs within the same organisation it is considered to have a cost of 0.

**Low frequency events**

The number of recorded out of area placements nationally is very low which means that the figures are susceptible to random variation (chance). As the geographic area decreases, the potential for chance to have impacted the numbers increases. As such caution is advised when comparing two different geographies, e.g. region, or changes over time.

**Provisional data**

An out of area placement is active in the CAP system until it has been closed by the submitting organisation by completing the Discharge Date with an actual date rather than a dummy date (see Data Entry section above). Until the Discharge Date is completed, any information recorded about the placement can be amended.

Therefore, the data contained in this report is provisional and is subject to change. Appendix D in the report shows changes in the average number of out of area placement days open between the published figures and the same period in the latest data. This means that the three month period, or the year to date is not the sum of the previously published figures. Equally the numbers published are unlikely to match any future publications that cover the same time period.
Comparison with Mental Health Services Dataset (MHSDS)

It is now possible to produce information on out of area placements from version v4.1 of the Mental Health Services Dataset (MHSDS). As with any change to a data collection it is expected that there will be a period of time during which compliance to the changes introduced is improving.

To assist organisations during this period, we have published a comparison of the number of inappropriate out of area placement days in this collection and in MHSDS. This can be found in appendix B of the main report and in the additional data sheets.

Comparison is a complicated subject and detailed notes accompany the released information.

Currently the information on out of area placements in the MHSDS is not considered of sufficient quality and completeness to replace the interim collection as the official source of out of area placement statistics.
Information and technology for better health and care

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