

Written evidence from a member of the public (COV0245)

- What will the impact of specific measures taken by Government to address the COVID-19 pandemic be on human rights in the UK?
- Which groups will be disproportionately affected by measures taken by the Government to address the COVID-19 pandemic?

I would like to answer the above two questions by sharing a brief summary of my experience as a disabled person of the adverse impact that the Government's measures have had on my human rights. I think the reader will be able to infer what specific human rights have been breached from what I have written.

I have mental health conditions for which I receive support through the NHS for as well as homecare support, which includes assistance with personal care, eating and managing medication. As a result of Government advice, both my NHS support and support at home were suspended with immediate effect which led directly to my being admitted to psychiatric hospital for the first time in my life. This withdrawal of support occurred at a critical time and had this not have happened, I would never have ended up in hospital. In the month prior to the decision being made to suspend my support because of the Government advice regarding covid-19, my mental health had significantly deteriorated to the point where I was struggling to eat, drink and wash and I had taken action to end my life approximately three weeks prior to my support being stopped. As a result of my support being stopped despite the obvious risk element, I became very physically weak through not eating or drinking adequately, I wasn't managing my medication, I was left to deal with a traumatic situation alone with zero emotional support and I became utterly hopeless and ultimately, suicidal and this how I ended up in hospital.

In psychiatric hospital, staff forbade all visitors as a result of Government advice. Even my social worker wasn't allowed to visit. We were also asked to make a decision on DNR if we were to contract covid-19 while in hospital, and this was sprung on us with no prior warning or time to contemplate the decision and no support from others (e.g. mental health advocacy workers). At no point during my admission did either staff or patients have access to PPE, for example, single-use masks. I was an informal patient yet on one occasion I was forced under extreme psychological duress to take medication against my will. It was highly traumatic and directly following the incident, I was too terrified to leave my room to obtain food, water or pain relief. For those unaware, it is against the law to force a patient to have treatment they do not wish if they are an informal patient not on a CTO or detained under the MHA. Because of the covid-19 situation, I was unable to obtain any support while in hospital to take this further, such as advocacy services or from anybody in person, and when I tried to report this incident to the external watchdog organisation responsible for safeguarding patient welfare, I discovered they were

operating a reduced service, specifically not conducting investigations or visiting hospital wards even where concerns were being raised about patient safety. I am still trying (but struggling with no support) to take this further.

Despite having made progress in hospital, this incident massively set back my mental health to the point where I was more suicidal than I was when I was first admitted yet I was almost immediately discharged without a care plan ever having been done or without ensuring adequate community support was in place. I was discharged back home to the same situation without my homecare support, despite the Government saying that essential support such as the type I receive with food and medication was not to be stopped during the pandemic, yet this happened to me. If it weren't for the goodwill of one specific person who gave up their time to physically place food, water and meds in my hands and to ensure my safety that first week I was out of hospital I would not be alive today. I ended up being sent to hospital in the weeks immediately after my discharge from the psychiatric hospital as I became acutely unwell and developed an infection as a consequence of dehydration due to not managing to consume enough fluids by myself.

Today is July 22nd 2020, until roughly three weeks ago I still had no homecare support, despite multiple professionals agreeing that I need this in place. I was rendered unable to eat or manage my medication again or go outside as a result of this and the severity of my condition. In addition because of the lack of support, I have been unable to sustain my job as a keyworker, ironically in a mental health service, which has led to loss of income and I will potentially lose my job. The Government failed to clearly convey to local authorities what they needed to do in such situations and this lack of clarity contributed to my being left without essential support for four months. My NHS mental health support, specifically psychological therapy, has still not been reinstated despite the fact I am dealing with significant trauma and depression.

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