

## Out of area mental health placements

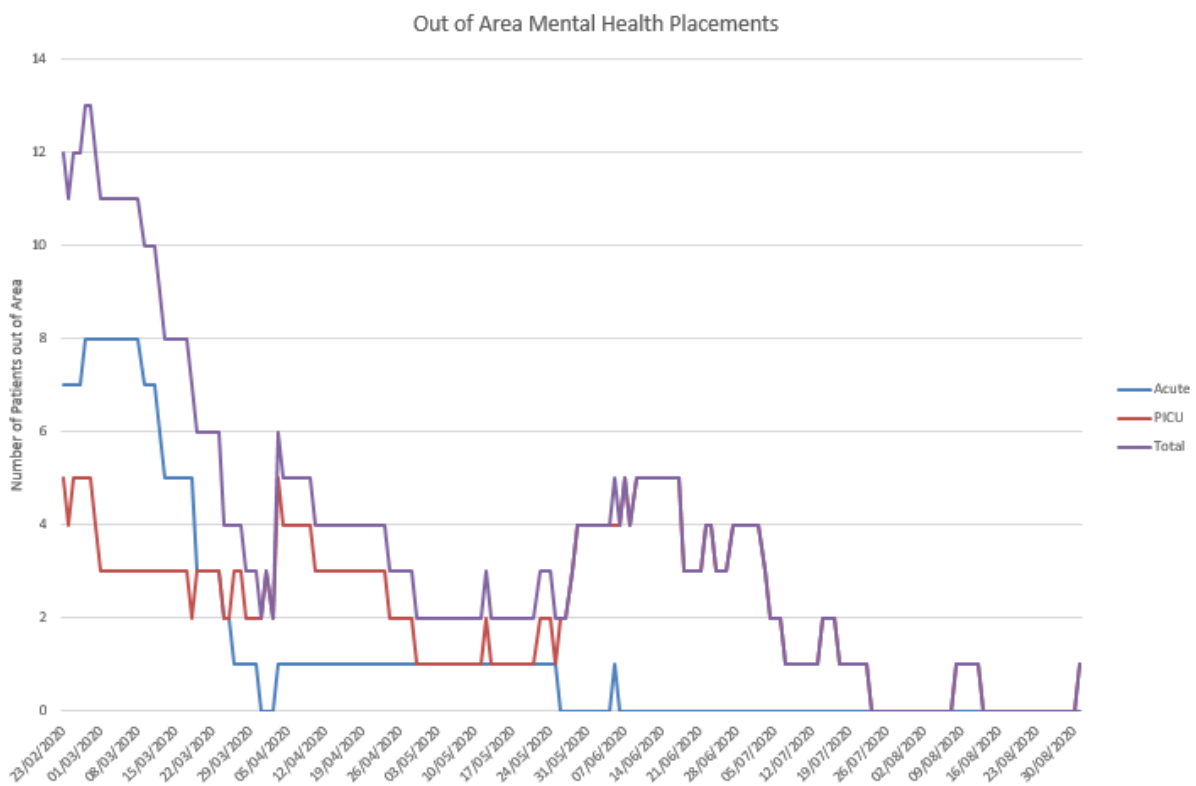
### Background and summary

A key priority for Southern Health is to ensure that people who need admission to a mental health hospital are able to access this care close to home. This enables greater continuity of care and makes it more straightforward for family and loved ones to remain in contact with patients, which is such an important part of recovery.

The Trust has been working in recent years to ensure that all patients within its catchment areas who need an admission are supported in a Southern Health hospital, or at least within the borders of Hampshire. Details of the ways the Trust has been doing this are outlined in previous HASC updates, most recently in February 2020. In summary this has involved a different way of managing access to beds (more frontline ownership of bed management) combined with rigorous daily monitoring and increased communication with patients and professionals at out-of-area sites.

Encouragingly, since February the Trust has continued to make significant and sustainable progress towards reducing ‘out of area’ mental health placements. As at the end of August there was a single patient placed out of area, with zero patients out of area on 25 days during August. This compares to over 80 patients placed out of area during a peak in 2019.

### Data



**Notes:**

'Acute' refers to general psychiatric admissions. 'PICU' refers to Psychiatric Intensive Care admissions – which are for patients who require more intensive support. Southern Health also contracts up to 17 acute beds to Marchwood Priory and up to 6 female PICU beds to Thornford Park. In both cases, the Trust has demonstrated effective joint care and discharge planning, effective sharing of patient records, and access for relations, and as such these beds are not counted as 'out of area' according to NHS England criteria.

**Next steps**

Whilst the progress outlined above is very positive for patients, families and NHS finances, it is important that this is maintained and sustained. After careful assessment of the demand for mental health beds and our capacity to deliver, there is a case for additional mental health beds within our services. We are now exploring the feasibility of opening additional beds within our existing hospitals in order to provide this, with the ultimate aim of eliminating out of area placements in all but the most extraordinary circumstances. This will reduce our reliance on our current partnerships with Marchwood Priory and Thornford Park. Creating extra capacity will also help to ensure the most therapeutic environment for patients and enable services to flex to meet peaks in demand.

A final, but very important point to make is that the Trust will always find a bed for patients who are assessed to need one – even if this involves placing a patient further from home than is ideal. Patient safety is the most important priority at all times.

For further information please do not hesitate to get in touch:

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