



**Staffordshire and
Stoke-on-Trent**
Integrated Care System

Section 117 aftercare support for your mental health



Mental health disorders and the Mental Health Act

The term **mental health disorder** describes people who have a mental illness. **Mental illness** is a general term for a group of illnesses that may impact on a person's thoughts, perceptions, feelings, and behaviours.

The **Mental Health Act** is a law that tells people with a mental health disorder what their rights are and how they should receive care and support when leaving hospital.

This is section 117 of the Mental Health Act.

You may be **detained or 'sectioned'** under the Mental Health Act if mental health doctors and professionals think:

- Your mental health needs an assessment and this cannot be done in the community
- Your mental health puts you or others at risk
- Hospital is the best place for you to get the help you need.

You should only be detained if there are no other ways to keep you safe. You should only be detained for the time you need to get well again.





Section 117 aftercare

You are entitled to **section 117 (s117) aftercare** if you have been in hospital under a **qualifying section of the Mental Health Act**. The qualifying sections are **3, 37, 45A, 47 and 48**.

Aftercare helps you to recover and to stay well after you have left hospital. The aim is to stop you from needing to go into hospital again.

Health and social care are both responsible for making sure your mental health needs are met. We work with you to understand your needs and plan how we will support you.

Aftercare is free for as long as you need it. It is available to people of all ages, including children and young people.

Your Care and Support Plan

When you are in hospital, you will be allocated a **keyworker** if you do not already have one. They will make sure all the care and support you need is ready for when you leave hospital.

A **planning meeting** will be held as soon as possible, to make sure everything is ready when you are able to leave hospital.

You will be at the meeting, along with:

- The people who will be involved in your care
- Your **advocate** (someone you have chosen to explain your views and wishes)
- Your carer or a family member.

Together you will work on your **Care and Support Plan** which shows:

- What your needs are
- How your needs will be met
- Who will meet your needs
- When the plan will be reviewed.

As it is based on your needs your Care and Support Plan is personal to you. It may include:

- What you can do to look after your mental health and how we can support you
- Where you live, such as special accommodation to meet your mental health needs
- The treatment you will get, such as medication, **talking therapy** (like counselling), or professional support from a social worker
- The structured activities you can do during the day
- The help you can get for things like managing your money, getting a job, or studying.





It is important that you are involved in writing your Care and Support Plan. You should sign the plan, and you should have a copy of it. You can choose to share your plan with your family and **nominated others** (anyone else who you choose to be involved in your care).

Contingency planning



Hopefully this never happens, but it is important to plan for a crisis or emergency where you are unable to manage your mental health.

Having a **contingency plan** as part of your Care and Support Plan means anyone supporting or caring for you knows what extra support to arrange if you start to feel unwell.

You know yourself best, so it is important that you are involved in writing your contingency plan. It should include:

- What can trigger you to become unwell, so we can look out for early warning signs and stop a crisis from happening, for example, you might feel like not taking your medication anymore, or you might stop talking to your team
- What you, your family, nominated others, and your community support team can do to address any issues
- What helps you, like having more support, reviewing your medication, staying with family, or having respite or crisis support
- Who you want to be contacted if you need to go into hospital. For example, who you want to look after your pet.



Reviewing your Care and Support Plan

Your Care and Support Plan must be reviewed at least once a year. This should involve you, your carers and family, and the people who are involved in your care.

If things change and you need to review your plan sooner, you can ask your keyworker to arrange a review at any time.

The review will discuss:

- How your Care and Support Plan is helping you to stay well
- Any changes that are needed
- If section 117 aftercare needs to end.

Does s117 aftercare end?

Health and social care have a legal duty to provide section 117 aftercare for free, and for as long as you need it.

Even if you are doing well, we know that you may still need aftercare to stay well.

Any decisions to end s117 aftercare must involve you, your carers and family, your advocate, and the people who are involved in your care. You will be sent a letter to explain any decisions that are made.



Aftercare cannot be ended for any of the following reasons:

- You have been discharged from specialist mental health services, such as a community mental health team (CMHT)
- A certain length of time has passed since you left hospital
- You go back into hospital **voluntarily** (by choice) or under section 2 of the Mental Health Act
- Your community treatment order (CTO) ends
- You refuse aftercare services.



More information

Ask your keyworker for help to understand how section 117 affects you.

The following links may also be helpful:

- [The Mental Health Act and section 117 aftercare – Mental Health and Money Advice](#)
- [Section 117 aftercare – Mind](#)
- [Section 117 aftercare – Rethink](#)
- [Mental health aftercare if you have been sectioned – NHS](#)
- [Inpatient mental health care: a guide for young people – YoungMinds](#)
- [Being sectioned – The Mix](#)
- [The Mental Health Act Code of Practice: Aftercare planning \(chapter 33.10, page 358\)](#)