



HLRU

HEALTH LAW AND
REGULATION UNIT

The Mental Health Act at 40

28th June 2024

School of Law and Social Justice Events Space – ([Campus Map](#))

The Mental Health Act (MHA) 1983 turned 40 last year. That it reached that milestone is remarkable. A judge famously said the Act was ‘out of date’ nearly 20 years ago and calls for its reform have grown louder since then. Despite two independent reviews of the MHA and several attempts to replace it, the 1983 Act remains on the statute book – and increasingly at odds with modern views about mental illness and the rights of persons with disabilities. Although meaningful change looked to be on the cards following the publication of a new Mental Health Bill in 2022, progress has stalled once again – the most recent King’s Speech made no mention of the MHA. The Act’s survival owes much to a lack of consensus about what a reformed MHA might look like – and whether we need it at all.

2024 is a general election year in the UK and a good opportunity to reflect on mental health law and policy in England and Wales. Featuring a programme of academic and professional experts, The Mental Health Act at 40 will examine the MHA’s 40-year legacy and interrogate the most important question for mental health policy: what, if anything, should come next?

Featuring contributions from **Sir Simon Wessely** (Regius Professor of Psychiatry, King’s College London); **Peter Bartlett** (Professor of Mental Health Law, University of Nottingham); **Lucy Series** (University of Bristol); **Neil Allen** (Barrister, 39 Essex Street); **Peter Lynes** (Mersey Care NHS Trust); **Natasha Binnie** (junior doctor, mental health activist, and founder of Future Frontline); **Daniel Pearson** (trainee anaesthetist) and **Shannon Farrelly-Treanor** (University of Liverpool).