

To: Mental Health Provider Chief
Nursing Officers and Chief Medical
Officers

NHS England
Wellington House
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cc. ICB Mental Health SROs and NHSE
Regional Mental Health SROs

7 September 2023

Dear Colleagues

Use of Vision Based Monitoring Systems in Mental Health Inpatient Settings

As many of you will be aware, in recent weeks, service users, their families and stakeholders have written an [\[HYPERLINK "https://www.nsun.org.uk/news/open-letter-on-the-use-of-oxevision-in-inpatient-settings/"\]](https://www.nsun.org.uk/news/open-letter-on-the-use-of-oxevision-in-inpatient-settings/) to Mental Health Trusts and NHSE England raising concern about the use of Oxevision – a vision-based monitoring system (VBMS) that provides staff with patient observations data in mental health trusts. Many trusts have used such technologies to provide innovative solutions for certain patient groups (eg reducing interruptions in sleep), concern has also existed regarding variation in application of VBMS in practice for some time across our sector with many provider colleagues asking for a national steer. Concerns have specifically included blanket utilisation of VBMS in inpatient mental health settings and the issue of informed consent.

These concerns have also been acknowledged by sector stakeholders, including the [\[HYPERLINK "https://restraintreductionnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/RRN-Surveillance-Explainer.pdf"\]](https://restraintreductionnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/RRN-Surveillance-Explainer.pdf). We recognise the importance of digital advances across the mental health pathway where they improve the quality, safety, effectiveness and experience of care and support the importance of patient voice within any developments. However, it is our view that any VBMS which operates as a form of surveillance should never be implemented in a blanket way and that any decisions to use VBMS in patient bedrooms should be made in a person-centred way, with the patient themselves where they have capacity to make a decision or through a Best Interest process compliant with the Mental Capacity Act 2005 where they lack capacity to consent to the monitoring system.

We are writing to you all to ensure you are sighted on these concerns and to set out our proposal to work with you all to agree best practice in use of digital technologies within inpatient settings.

Digital Solutions which support Therapeutic and Safe inpatient care

There are many digital solutions which enhance the quality, safety, effectiveness and experience of care within inpatient settings, and we are keen to support the sharing of best practice across the sector and to co-produce with you all some key principles we can all use when applying digital solutions within inpatient settings.

To do this, the [HYPERLINK "https://www.england.nhs.uk/mental-health/mental-health-learning-disability-and-autism-inpatient-quality-transformation-programme/"] plans to work in partnership with you all alongside people and families to consider the role of technology within inpatient settings as part of its national workstream focussed on the culture of care for patients and staff. The programme is taking the following approach between September 2023 and March 2024:

What we are doing:	How we are doing it:
Launch a national programme to support providers in developing the culture of care in inpatient settings	Co-producing a set of Core Commitments and Standards for the culture of care in mental health, learning disability and autism inpatient settings – these standards describe clear principles for ensuring that inpatient care is safe, therapeutic, compassionate, personalised and least restrictive, from which the development and use of any technological innovations can be considered and aligned.
Explore the evidence base for the use of VBMS	The Mental Health Policy Research Unit have been commissioned by DHSC and NHSE to draw together evidence (where it exists) for the use of surveillance technologies in mental health settings Completed a user-based research review of vision-based technologies in mental health settings Liaising with the British Institute for Human Rights to understand the human rights considerations regarding the use of cameras in health and care settings
Hold a set of workshops together with providers, academics and experts-by-experience to co-produce a set of principles regarding the role and use of digital technologies in inpatient settings	These principles will include consideration of key legal frameworks and focus on the following: ○ Therapeutic Relationship ○ Patient Voice ○ Restrictive Practices ○ Patient Outcomes and Experience ○ Safety ○ Releasing Time to Care

Our request for your support

It is our view that Vision-based monitoring systems should never be implemented in a blanket way and that any decisions to use VBMS in patient bedrooms should be made in a person-centred way, with the patient themselves where they have capacity to make a decision or through a Best Interest process compliant with the Mental Capacity Act 2005 where they lack capacity to consent to the monitoring system. The use of such systems should be carefully considered on a case by case, patient by patient basis to ensure that any decision to use such systems has a legitimate aim and is both lawful and fair. Their use must also be proportionate to the aim. We are, therefore, asking all services to please review, clinically and ethically, current VBMS practice within your organisation to ensure your use of these technologies aligns with the principles of least restrictive, compassionate, therapeutic and personalised care.



We would also encourage you to review the information governance arrangements in place in your organisation with specific focus on what records are kept about the decision to use and the use of such systems, what information is provided to patients, their families and staff about the use of such systems, how informed consent is obtained, and how information gathered through Vision Based Monitoring systems is stored, accessed and utilised.

For more information to support you with this, you can also refer to:

[HYPERLINK "<https://restraintreductionnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/RRN-Surveillance-Explainer.pdf>"]

[HYPERLINK "https://www.bih.org.uk/media/rqhfczqw/guide_human-rights-use-of-cameras-recording-equipment-in-health-care.pdf"]

[HYPERLINK "<https://www.cqc.org.uk/guidance-providers/all-services/using-surveillance-your-care-service>"]

[HYPERLINK "https://restraintreductionnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/RRN_SL_tool.pdf"]

To support us in our planned approach to co-producing a set of principles regarding the role and use of digital technologies in inpatient settings, we would be grateful if you could share your local approach to the use of VBMS with us via this Microsoft Teams Form to support us in establishing a baseline: [HYPERLINK "https://forms.office.com/Pages/DesignPageV2.aspx?subpage=design&token=5eff3e5955954e299053cbe53d55bcbd&id=kp4VA8Zyl0umSq9Q55Ctv4ipsP7_e1JJgnpzZOZy4ipUREIaVjQwNUo1NTk1Mks2NkEwVUkyTDJTVy4u"]

We look forward to working with you all to take forward a co-produced approach to the use of digital technologies in inpatient settings which promote the therapeutic, safe, compassionate, personalised and least restrictive culture we are all striving for.

Yours sincerely,

[I/S]

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