

Provision for parents on psychiatric inpatient units

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		<input type="checkbox"/> Protocol
Registration date 24/02/2026	Overall study status Ongoing	<input type="checkbox"/> Statistical analysis plan
		<input type="checkbox"/> Results
Last Edited 24/02/2026	Condition category Mental and Behavioural Disorders	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual participant data
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims

When a parent is admitted to a psychiatric inpatient unit, they are separated from their family and this is often distressing for parents, children and carers. Visiting can help maintain family relationships, but many inpatient wards have limited or unsuitable facilities for children and families. Some visiting rooms are described as unwelcoming, uncomfortable or inappropriate for children.

The Provision for Parents on Psychiatric Inpatient Units (POPI) study aims to understand how parents, children and young people, carers and healthcare professionals experience family visits during psychiatric hospital admission. We also aim to identify practical improvements to the hospital environment and visiting procedures that could better support emotional wellbeing and parent–child relationships.

Who can participate?

1. Parents aged 18 years or over who have been admitted to a psychiatric inpatient unit since July 2021 and had a child aged under 18 years at the time
2. Children and young people aged 8–18 years who have visited a parent in psychiatric hospital since July 2021
3. Adult carers of children whose parent has been hospitalised
4. Healthcare professionals who currently work, or have worked in the past 2 years, on adult psychiatric inpatient wards

What does the study involve?

The study has two parts.

In Part 1, participants will take part in a one-to-one interview (30–60 minutes), either online, by telephone, or in person. Children and young people will be invited to take part in a creative “draw, write, tell” interview to help them share their experiences.

In Part 2, a larger group of parents, carers and healthcare professionals will complete a short (10–15 minute) anonymous online questionnaire about visiting experiences and suggested improvements.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

Participants may value the opportunity to share their experiences and contribute to improving

services for families in the future.

Discussing hospital experiences may feel emotional or upsetting. Interviews will be conducted sensitively by trained researchers, and participants can pause or stop at any time. Information about support services will be provided.

Where is the study run from?

The study is led by the University of Sussex (UK). Recruitment takes place both in the community (across the UK) and within two NHS trusts: Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust and Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?

March 2026 to November 2026

Who is funding the study?

The study is funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Research for Patient Benefit Programme (NIHR207868) (UK)

Who is the main contact?

Dr Abby Dunn, Abby.Dunn@sussex.ac.uk

Contact information

Type(s)

Public, Scientific, Principal investigator

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Additional identifiers

Integrated Research Application System (IRAS)

340906

National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR)

NIHR207868

Study information

Scientific Title

Mixed methods investigation into provision of family rooms and support for parents admitted to psychiatric inpatient units and their children

Acronym

POPI

Study objectives

Aim:

To understand the perceptions and experiences of family hospital visits from stakeholders and end users (patients, children and young people, carers and healthcare professionals) with the aim of identifying target enhancements. This will inform a co-production process to develop a template 'Family Visit Pack' (this is a subsequent project not detailed in this protocol).

Research questions:

1. How do patients, children, carers and healthcare professionals experience psychiatric inpatient unit provision for family visitation, and how could it be improved?
2. What enhancements to the hospital environment and service delivery are prioritised by users and what changes would facilitate emotional wellbeing during visits?

Objectives:

1. To interview parents, children and young people, carers and healthcare professionals to gain understanding of experiences of visitation during parental psychiatric hospitalisation.
2. To conduct a survey of patients, carers and healthcare professionals to determine what environmental and service delivery changes are priorities for users of family visiting facilities within inpatient psychiatric inpatient units.

Ethics approval required

Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)

approved 26/01/2026, East Midlands - Derby Research Ethics Committee (2 Redman Place, London, EC20 1JR, United Kingdom; +44 (0)207 104 8285; Derby.rec@hra.nhs.uk), ref: 26/EM/0005

Primary study design

Observational

Secondary study design

Mixed methods

Study type(s)

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied

Experience of treatment within a psychiatric inpatient unit

Interventions

Exploratory sequential mixed-method design in which qualitative data collected during online interviews (work package 1) will inform the design of a subsequent online questionnaire (work package 2).

Intervention Type

Other

Primary outcome(s)

1. Experience of family visits during hospitalisation measured using qualitative interview at a single timepoint
2. Experience of family visits and on suggested enhancements measured using online questionnaire at a single timepoint

Key secondary outcome(s)

Completion date

30/11/2026

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria

Work package 1:

Children/young people:

1. Aged 8 to 18 years
2. Can recollect visiting a parent (including co-parent/biological/adopted/step/grandparent) who has been treated on a IPU since July 2021
3. Capacity to consent to take part (if aged 16 years or over) or assents to take part and parent /carer consents for their participation (ages 8-15 years)
4. Has provided contact information for parent/carer

Work package 1 and 2

Parents

- Adults (18 years and above).
- Current or prior experience (since July 2021) of psychiatric hospitalisation while a parent (biological, step, adopted) to child (<18 at time of hospitalisation) who visited a parent in hospital.
- Capacity to consent.
- No exclusion on grounds of diagnosis or spoken English.

Carers

- Adult (18 years and above)
- Capacity to consent
- Current/prior experience (since July 2021) of caring for a child (<18) whose parent (co-parent /biological parent; grandparent; sibling; foster carer) was hospitalised on IPU.

Healthcare Professionals

- Adult (18 years and above)
- Currently working on an adult IPU or has worked on an adult IPU in the last two years for a minimum of six months. Roles will include nurses, care assistants, psychologists, occupational therapists, psychiatrists, reception staff.

Healthy volunteers allowed

Yes

Age group

Mixed

Lower age limit

8 years

Upper age limit

100 years

Sex

All

Total final enrolment

0

Key exclusion criteria

Work package 1:

Children and young people (CYP):

1. Aged under 8 years of age
2. Difficulties with speech, learning or development such that involvement in the interview process is deemed to be challenging or distressing (will be determined with CYP and carer)

Work packages 1 & 2:

Parents:

1. Under 18 years of age
2. Does not have capacity to consent

Carers:

1. Under 18 years of age
2. Does not have capacity to consent

Healthcare professionals:

1. Works in a role which does not have familiarity with family rooms (e.g., human resources)

Date of first enrolment

02/03/2026

Date of final enrolment

30/11/2026

Locations**Countries of recruitment**

United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre

Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Trust Hq
18 Mole Business Park
Randalls Road
Leatherhead
England
KT22 7AD

Study participating centre
Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
Trust Hq
Swandean
Arundel Road
Worthing
England
BN13 3EP

Sponsor information

Organisation
University of Sussex

ROR
<https://ror.org/00ayhx656>

Funder(s)

Funder type

Funder Name
National Institute for Health and Care Research

Alternative Name(s)
National Institute for Health Research, NIHR Research, NIHRresearch, NIHR - National Institute for Health Research, NIHR (The National Institute for Health and Care Research), NIHR

Funding Body Type
Government organisation

Funding Body Subtype
National government

Location

United Kingdom

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

IPD sharing plan summary

Not expected to be made available