

Mental Health Bill [HL] 2025

Statutory Implementation of the Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework (PCREF)

Written evidence by St Andrew's Healthcare

1. About Us

St Andrew's Healthcare is a registered charity (No. 1104951) delivering specialist mental healthcare for individuals with complex, challenging needs. Established in 1838, we now care for around 600 patients across sites in Northampton, Essex and Birmingham, with over 90% referred via the NHS. Our services include Men's and Women's Mental Health, CAMHS, Neuropsychiatry, Autism, Learning Disability and specialist community services. We employ over 4,000 staff, all committed to relieving suffering, giving hope and promoting recovery. With no shareholders, our resources are reinvested directly into improving patient care.

2. Rationale for Statutory PCREF

St Andrew's is proud to be the first mental health provider outside the NHS to volunteer for inclusion in the national PCREF pilot with NHS England, aimed at improving the experiences of minoritised groups within mental health services. We are committed to making meaningful changes based on feedback from everyone who uses our services. We want to understand what matters most to people—and what would make the biggest difference to their sense that services are truly helping them.

As a provider of complex mental healthcare, we are acutely aware of the persistent racial disparities that exist across the mental health system. Despite numerous anti-discrimination and anti-racism initiatives, structural and institutional racism remain widespread. This is reflected in disproportionate detention rates, limited access to early intervention and talking therapies, overrepresentation in Ministry of Justice (MoJ) pathways, and a continued lack of culturally appropriate care.

The Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework (PCREF) represents a co-produced, data-driven national effort to identify and dismantle the systemic processes that perpetuate inequality in access, experience, and outcomes for vulnerable and racialised mental health patients. It offers a clear pathway to embed racial equity across all mental health services.

The years of voluntary implementation have proven insufficient. Statutory backing is now essential to ensure consistency, transparency and accountability. Only through legal mandate can we ensure that patients from ethnic minority communities are heard, protected, and empowered—resulting in improved experiences and outcomes across the board.

St Andrew's Healthcare charity is committed to listening, learning, and leading meaningful change to ensure racial equity across our services. Our PCREF vision aims to make us a provider of choice and a place where care is truly inclusive, equitable, and recovery-focused. A system that is held up to similar standards would ensure better outcomes for all using mental health services

3. Legislative Recommendations

We urge the Committee to consider the following amendments to the Mental Health Bill [HL] 2025:

1. Introduce a statutory duty on NHS mental health providers to implement PCREF in full.
2. Require local co-production and community governance of PCREF implementation.
3. Link PCREF delivery to regulatory and commissioning oversight (e.g. via CQC, ICBs).
4. Ensure annual, transparent reporting on progress and impact.

4. Conclusion

The Mental Health Bill [HL] 2025 presents a vital opportunity to embed this commitment into law. However, lasting impact requires statutory PCREF implementation and a system-wide, co-produced, data-driven approach to address the deep-rooted disparities affecting the most vulnerable in our communities.