**Editorial - Have your say on Mental Health Act reforms**

The Mental Health Act white paper for England and Wales, informed by the Independent Review of the Mental Health Act 1983, is out for consultation.

It includes proposals to change existing legislation to support increased patient choice and end persistently rising rates of detention, particularly among those from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities (BAME) who are hugely overrepresented in this regard.

If passed, the act will mandate that nurses and other professions will need to take statutory advance choice documents into account. Service users will be able to identify their own ‘nominated person’, replacing the current and archaic ‘nearest relative’.

People with a learning disability will only be able to be detained if they have a co-occurring mental health condition, which will be a welcome and overdue change in the legal framing of developmental disorders.

Proposed changes in law are to be supported by pilots of culturally appropriate advocacy services and development of a tool to help mental health NHS trusts consider what is needed to improve mental health outcomes for BAME communities.

White paper contains good ideas that mental health nurses will support.

The aims of the white paper are admirable, and nurses will certainly support changes to reduce unnecessary coercion and increase patient choice.

The white paper contains good ideas, although most of the general processes in the new act will remain substantially unchanged.

The planned changes seem unlikely in themselves to drastically change such socially influenced issues such as overrepresentation of BAME people under detention. Mental health law cannot address broad issues of inequality and discrimination in society, so changes in law can only be a part of the answer.

As vital contributors to our mental health system, nurses can and should provide their views to the white paper consultation, for example, through our professional organisations. The consultation on the white paper is open until 21 April.