
Safeguarding the rights of clients with mental health needs: reflections on the use of Community Treatment Orders (CTOs) by mental health social workers

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Abstract

The introduction of CTOs across all jurisdictions in the UK represents a substantial shift in the way the law is used to deal with issues of care, control and coercion in the community. As a result social workers are now mandated to carry out legal functions that create new sets of ethical dilemmas when engaging with service users, carers and other professionals. This presentation will begin by summarising the evidence base for the use of CTOs, mostly drawn from studies carried out in jurisdictions in Australasia and North America, but also the early research findings from UK literature. The second part of the presentation will develop a number of arguments about consequences for the mental health social work role in the use of CTOs, and suggest a model for understanding ethical decision making in this complex area of practice.
