The Mental Health Act

The Mental Health Act 1983 deals with when it may be appropriate for someone with a mental health problem to be admitted into hospital against their will. This is sometimes called being 'sectioned' because people can be detained in hospital under different sections of the act. It is also known as an 'involuntary admission'.

The act also describes how support should be arranged for people once they are discharged from hospital.

The act is designed to protect the rights of people with mental health problems, and to ensure that they are only admitted to hospital against their will when it is absolutely essential to ensure their well-being or safety, or for the protection of other people.

Under the act doctors and other professionals are expected to consider all other treatment options first, and to only detain someone against their will as a last resort. If a person agrees to enter hospital voluntarily then the Mental Health Act should not be needed.