



Community treatment orders (CTOs)

Explains what a community treatment order (CTO) is, how it can affect you, and how you or your family members can change or end it.

If you want to contact us with any feedback, email contact@mind.org.uk.

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- This information applies to England and Wales.
- This information applies to adults. It doesn't apply to children unless specifically stated.

Overview

If you have been detained in hospital, you may be discharged on to a community treatment order (CTO).

Quick facts

- A CTO is an order made by your [responsible clinician](#) to give you supervised treatment in the community.
- This means you can be treated in the community for your mental health problem, instead of staying in hospital. But your responsible clinician can [return you to hospital](#) and give you immediate treatment if necessary.
- A CTO will come with certain extra [conditions](#) that you have to follow. For example, living in a certain place or going to appointments for treatment.
- You can only be put on a CTO if you are in hospital [under certain sections](#), and if [certain criteria are met](#).
- A CTO lasts 6 months from the date of the order. It can be [renewed by your responsible clinician](#).
- If you want to be discharged from your CTO, you can [apply to the Mental Health Tribunal](#).
- While you are on a CTO, you have the right to support from an [independent mental health advocate \(IMHA\)](#).
- Your [nearest relative](#) will have certain rights relating to your care and treatment. For example, finding out information about you and discharging you.

These pages contain general legal information, not legal advice. We recommend you get advice from a specialist legal adviser or solicitor who will help you with your individual situation and needs. See our [useful contacts](#) page for organisations which may be able to help.

About CTOs

- [What is a CTO?](#)
- [When can a CTO be made?](#)

- [What are the criteria for making a CTO?](#)
- [How long does a CTO last?](#)
- [What support can I get when I am on a CTO?](#)
- [What is an independent mental health advocate?](#)

What is a CTO?

A community treatment order (CTO) is an order made by your [responsible clinician](#) to give you supervised treatment in the community.

This means you can be treated in the community for your mental health problem, instead of going to hospital. But your responsible clinician can [return you to hospital](#) and give you immediate treatment if necessary.

The CTO will come with certain [conditions](#) that you have to follow. Sometimes, if you don't follow the conditions or you become unwell, they can [recall you to hospital](#) for treatment.

While you are in the community, you will have a specialist team responsible for your care:

- A [responsible clinician](#), who is responsible for the CTO. They are likely to be known as your 'community RC'.
- A [care coordinator](#), who will be your main point of contact.

If you are on a CTO, the [Mental Health Act](#) describes you as a 'community patient'.

When can a CTO be made?

A [responsible clinician](#) can only make a CTO if you are in hospital under certain sections of the Mental Health Act:

- Section 3
- Section 37 hospital order
- Unrestricted transfer direction under section 47 (Notional section 37)

You cannot be put on a CTO if:

- You are under sections 2, 4 or 5
- You have already been discharged from your section.

See our pages on [sectioning](#) to find out more about the different sections of the Mental Health Act.

What are the criteria for making a CTO?

The Mental Health Act states that you can only be put on a CTO if you meet these criteria:

- You are suffering from a [mental disorder](#) for which you need to receive medical treatment.
- You need to receive this medical treatment for your health or safety, or for the protection of others.
- You can receive this treatment without needing to be detained in hospital.
- Your responsible clinician needs to be able to recall you to hospital if necessary.
- [Appropriate medical treatment](#) is available for you in the community

An [approved mental health professional](#) must agree in writing that you meet these criteria, and that they are appropriate for you.

The form which they will use to put you on a CTO depends on whether you are in England or in Wales:

- If you are in England, visit this [CTO forms page on the UK Government website](#). Here you can find a copy of 'Form CTO1 section 17a: community treatment order' as a Microsoft Word document. This form is used for CTOs in England.
- If you are in Wales, visit this [CP forms page on the NHS Cymru website](#). Here you can find a copy of the form 'CP1 - Section 17a - Community treatment order' as a PDF document. This form is used for CTOs in Wales.

Example

Ali has been [detained](#) under section 3 for 9 months. He has a diagnosis of [bipolar disorder](#) which is managed by medication.

He and his care team have agreed that he will be discharged onto a CTO next week, so that he can get supervised treatment in the community.

How long does a CTO last?

A CTO lasts for 6 months from the date of the order. But it can be renewed.

Your [responsible clinician](#) will decide whether to renew your CTO. An [approved mental health professional](#) will also need to approve the CTO being renewed.

Your responsible clinician may ask you to attend an appointment to assess whether to renew your CTO. If they ask you to do this, you must attend the appointment. This is a [condition of your CTO that you must follow](#).

If your responsible clinician decides to renew your CTO, they will need to fill out a form. The form they use depends on whether you are in England or Wales:

- If you are in England, visit this [CTO forms page on the UK Government website](#). Here you can find a copy of 'Form CTO7 section 20a: extending the community treatment period' as a Microsoft Word document. This form is used for CTOs in England.
- If you are in Wales, visit this [CP forms page on the NHS Cymru website](#). Here you can find a copy of the form 'CP3 - Section 20a - Report extending the community treatment period' as a PDF document. This form is used for CTOs in Wales.

What support can I get when I am on a CTO?

When you are discharged from hospital onto a CTO, you can get certain aftercare services. You are entitled to this under [section 117](#) of the Mental Health Act.

This means you can get support in the community for your mental health problems. This support is to help you stay well, so you don't have to return to hospital. You will not have to pay for this support.

See our page on [leaving hospital](#) for more information about section 117 aftercare services.

What is an independent mental health advocate?

If you are on a CTO, you have the right to get support from someone called an [independent mental health advocate \(IMHA\)](#).

An IMHA can help you in lots of different ways. For example, they can:

- Support you with participating in meetings
- Help you get relevant information
- Look at alternative options for you
- Help you challenge decisions

Hospital staff should give you information about getting support from an IMHA. If they don't, you can ask the [Mental Health Act administrator](#) of the hospital or your [care coordinator](#).

See our guide to [advocacy](#) for more information on [IMHAs in England](#) and [IMHAs in Wales](#).

CTO Conditions

- [What conditions can be attached to a CTO?](#)
- [Can CTO conditions change?](#)
- [What happens if I don't follow the CTO conditions?](#)

What conditions can be attached to a CTO?

Every community treatment order (CTO) will have these two conditions:

1. If your [responsible clinician](#) asks to see you about renewing your CTO, you must make yourself available to meet them.
2. You must see the [second opinion appointed doctor](#) if you are asked to.

Your responsible clinician can also add other conditions. But these will depend on your circumstances. For example, you may need to:

- Live in a certain place
- Attend activities or therapy
- Get tested for alcohol or illegal drugs
- Attend appointments for treatment

The conditions must be necessary or appropriate to:

- Make sure you get medical treatment
- Prevent risk to your health and safety
- Protect other people

A condition is **unlawful** if it restricts your freedom more than if you were [sectioned](#).

Any conditions that are added must take your views into consideration. This means that you should be involved in planning your discharge and deciding your conditions. And you must have support to help you follow the conditions. This will help make sure that you are happy to follow your conditions.

Your [approved mental health professional](#) must also agree to any conditions added to your CTO.

Example

Eloise is being discharged onto a CTO. It has a condition that she must attend [cognitive behavioural therapy \(CBT\)](#) at the local day centre.

The care team must make sure that she is able to get to the day centre. For example, this might mean making sure that it is within walking distance. Or that she can apply for a bus pass so that she can get the bus.

It would be unreasonable for them to expect Eloise to pay for a taxi every day if there are no buses.

Can CTO conditions change?

Yes. Your [responsible clinician](#) can change or temporarily stop your conditions. They do not need the [approved mental health professional](#) to agree to do this.

You can ask your responsible clinician to change the conditions by writing or speaking to them. You can tell them why you want to change the conditions.

Any changes to your conditions will be recorded on a certain form, depending on whether you are in England or Wales:

- If you are in England, visit this [CTO forms page on the UK Government website](#). Here you can find a copy of 'Form CTO2 section 17b: variation of conditions of a community treatment order' as a Microsoft Word document. This is the form your responsible clinician will use to record any changes to your CTO conditions, in England.
- If you are in Wales, visit this [CP forms page on the NHS Cymru website](#). Here you can find a copy of 'CP2 - Section 17a - Variation of conditions of a community treatment order' as a PDF document. This is the form your responsible clinician will use to record any changes to your CTO conditions, in England.

What if my responsible clinician doesn't want to change the conditions?

If your responsible clinician doesn't want to change the conditions, you can take these steps:

- **Complain through the hospital's complaints procedure.** The hospital should be able to give you a copy of their complaints procedure if you ask them for it. If you are not happy with the response, you may wish to complain to the [ombudsman](#) or [regulator](#). See our pages on [complaining about health and social care](#) for more information.
- **Complain to the Care Quality Commission (CQC).** The CQC website has [guidance on how to complain](#).
- **Apply for a judicial review.** If your responsible clinician doesn't change your conditions, you might be able to apply to change them by [judicial review](#). This is a legal process and it is important that you get specialist legal advice. The Law Society has a [directory of solicitors](#) that you can search to find legal support.

What happens if I don't follow the CTO conditions?

If you don't follow the conditions of your CTO, your [responsible clinician](#) may:

- Change the conditions or the support you receive, if there is a problem with either of these
- Return you to hospital

You cannot be [recalled](#) just because you don't agree to medical treatment. As long as you have [capacity](#) to consent to treatment, you can only be given treatment if you consent to it. But there are different rules if you are recalled to hospital or do not have capacity. See our page on [recall to hospital](#) to find out more.

Example

Marco is on a CTO with a condition that he goes to hospital to take his medication. He has experienced side effects from the medication so he doesn't want to take it any more.

Marco's [responsible clinician](#) can't recall him just because he refuses to take the medication. But if Marco doesn't take his medication, he may become unwell. In this situation, his responsible clinician may choose to recall him.

Instead, Marco goes to the hospital and speaks to his responsible clinician about changing his medication.

When will a CTO end?

Your community treatment order (CTO) can end in several ways:

- **Your CTO expires.** This will happen if the CTO is not renewed or ended for one of the reasons below.
- **Your CTO is revoked.** If you are recalled to hospital and your CTO is [revoked](#), the CTO will end and you will be placed back under your original [section](#). This is because your [responsible clinician](#) thinks that you meet the criteria to be detained in hospital. See our page on [recall to hospital](#) for more information.
- **Your responsible clinician discharges you.** Your responsible clinician can end your CTO if the [criteria for making the CTO](#) no longer apply.
- **You apply to the Mental Health Tribunal to be discharged.** See our page on the [Mental Health Tribunal](#) for more information.
- **A hospital managers' hearing discharges you.** You can ask for a meeting with your [hospital managers](#) to consider discharging you. You can do this if you believe your CTO criteria no longer apply to you.
- **Your [nearest relative](#) uses their right to discharge you.** See our page on [family members](#) for more information.

If your CTO comes to an end, this means:

- You will no longer have to follow any conditions
- You cannot be recalled to hospital

Recall to hospital from a CTO

- [When can I be recalled to hospital from a CTO?](#)
- [What happens if I am recalled to hospital from a CTO?](#)

When can I be recalled to hospital from a CTO?

You can be [recalled](#) to any hospital from a community treatment order (CTO) if your [responsible clinician](#) thinks you meet these criteria:

- You need medical treatment in hospital for your [mental disorder](#).
- There would be risk of harm to your health or safety, or to others, if you are not recalled.

You can only be recalled if you meet both criteria. For example, you cannot be recalled just because you stop taking your medication. But if you stop taking your medication, and your responsible clinician thinks that you will get unwell, they can recall you.

Your responsible clinician can also recall you if you don't follow the [two conditions attached to every CTO](#).

Example

Dionne has a diagnosis of bipolar disorder. One condition of her CTO is to let the community psychiatric nurse into her house to give her medication.

Dionne decides that she is better and doesn't need her medication. She stops letting her community psychiatric nurse into the house. Nobody sees her for two weeks, including the community nurse. They worry that Dionne is unwell. So her [responsible clinician](#) decides to recall her.

What happens if I am recalled to hospital from a CTO?

If you are [recalled](#) to hospital, you must first be given notice in writing. This can either be sent to you in the post or be given to you in person. The form the [responsible clinician](#) will use depends on whether you are in England or Wales:

- If you are in England, visit this [CTO forms page on the UK Government website](#). Here you can find a copy of 'Form CTO3 section 17e: community treatment order, notice of recall to hospital' as a Microsoft Word document. This is the form they will use to give notice of your recall to hospital in England.
- If you are in Wales, visit this [CP forms page on the NHS Cymru website](#). Here you can find a copy of 'CP3 - Section 20a - Report extending the community treatment period' as a PDF document. This is the form they will use to give notice of your recall to hospital in Wales.

In some cases, you can go to the hospital yourself. In others, the police or an ambulance will take you to hospital. You can also ask that someone comes with you, if you wish.

What will happen once I'm back in hospital?

Once you are back in hospital, they will complete a form with your details and the time your detention started. The form they will use depends on whether you are in England or Wales:

- If you are in England, visit this [CTO forms page on the UK Government website](#). Here you can find a copy of 'Form CTO4 section 17e: community treatment order, record of patient's detention in hospital after recall' as a Microsoft Word document. This is the form they will use to record the details of your recall once you are in hospital in England.
- If you are in Wales, visit this [CP forms page on the NHS Cymru website](#). Here you can find a copy of 'CP5 - Section 17e - Notice of recall to a hospital' as a PDF document. This is the form they will use to record the details of your recall once you are in hospital in Wales.

You can be kept in hospital for up to 72 hours. Your [responsible clinician](#) will see you and decide what the next steps are. You can be forced to have treatment if your responsible clinician thinks that you need it.

Your responsible clinician can then decide to either release you back to the community on the CTO or decide that you need to stay in hospital.

If you need to stay in hospital, your responsible clinician will revoke your CTO. You will be [detained](#) on your original [section](#).

An [approved mental health professional](#) will need to agree to this, and the responsible clinician will need to complete a form. The form they will use depends on whether you are in England or Wales:

- If you are in England, visit this [CTO forms page on the UK Government website](#). Here you can find a copy of 'Form CTO5 section 17f4: revocation of community treatment order' as a Microsoft Word document. This is the form they will use if your CTO is revoked and you are detained in hospital in England.
- If you are in Wales, visit this [CP forms page on the NHS Cymru website](#). Here you can find a copy of 'CP7 - Section 17f - revocation of a community treatment order'

as a PDF document. This is the form they will use if your CTO is revoked and you are detained in hospital in Wales.

See our information on [sectioning](#) to find out about what happens when you are detained in hospital.

Mental Health Tribunal for CTOs

This page is about applying to the Mental Health Tribunal to discharge you from a community treatment order (CTO). It covers:

- [How can I apply for discharge from a CTO?](#)
- [When can I apply for discharge from a CTO?](#)
- [When must I be referred to the Mental Health Tribunal?](#)

How can I apply for discharge from a CTO?

If you want to be discharged from your CTO, you can apply to the [Mental Health Tribunal](#).

The Tribunal will only consider how your mental health is now, and whether you should still be on your CTO or discharged from it. They cannot look at the conditions of your CTO. If you want help through this process, you can get support from an [independent mental health advocate \(IMHA\)](#).

When exactly you can apply will depend on what kind of section you are on:

When can I apply for discharge from a CTO?

When you can apply will depend on what kind of section you are on:

Section 3

- If you're on a CTO under [section 3](#), you can apply to be discharged within the first 6 months from the date that the CTO was made.
- After 6 months your responsible clinician can renew your CTO for a further 6 months. After that your responsible clinician can apply for your CTO to be renewed once a year. If your CTO is renewed, you can apply to be discharged during each period of renewal.
- If your CTO is revoked, you can apply to be discharged within 6 months, starting on the day the CTO was revoked.

If you apply to the Tribunal while detained under section 3 and you are then put on a CTO before your hearing, the Tribunal will still go ahead but will still consider whether you meet the criteria for a CTO instead of the section 3. You will not lose any right to apply for a further hearing.

Section 37

- If you're on a CTO after detention under [section 37](#), you can't apply for a Tribunal within the first 6 months of the date of the [hospital order](#) being made.
- After 6 months your responsible clinician can renew your CTO for a further 6 months. After that your responsible clinician can apply for your CTO to be renewed once a year. If your CTO is renewed, you can apply to be discharged during each period of renewal.
- If your CTO is revoked, you can apply to be discharged within 6 months, starting on the day the CTO was revoked. You cannot apply for a Tribunal within the first 6 months of the date of the hospital order being made.
- If you apply to the Tribunal while detained under section 37 and you are then put on a CTO before your hearing, the Tribunal will still go ahead but will still consider whether you meet the criteria for a CTO instead of the section 37. You will not lose any right to apply for a further hearing.

Section 47/49 (Notional section 37)

- If you are placed on [section 47/49](#), you are still a serving prisoner. But if your sentence ends and you are still in hospital, you are automatically put under what is known as Notional section 37. Sometimes this is written as s37N. Once you are on a Notional section 37 you can then be put on a CTO.
- After 6 months your responsible clinician can renew your CTO for a further 6 months. After that your responsible clinician can apply for your CTO to be renewed once a year. If your CTO is renewed, you can apply to be discharged during each period of renewal.
- If your CTO is revoked, you can apply to be discharged within 6 months, starting on the day the CTO was revoked.

If you apply to the Tribunal while detained under Notional section 37 and you are then put on a CTO before your hearing, the Tribunal will still go ahead. But it will consider whether you meet the criteria for a CTO instead of the Notional section 37. You will not lose any right to apply for a further hearing.

It is your right to have legal aid to pay for a solicitor to help you with your appeal, and during the hearing. Your savings or property will not have to be assessed for you to get this help.

When must I be referred to the Mental Health Tribunal?

The managers of the hospital responsible for your care must automatically refer you to the [Mental Health Tribunal](#) at certain times:

- **If your CTO is revoked** and you have to go back to hospital under your original section, you'll be referred to the Tribunal as soon as possible.
- **If you're admitted under a section 2 or 3**, and there has not been a Tribunal application or reference, you'll be referred to the Tribunal 6 months from the date you are admitted. See our pages on [sectioning](#) for more information about your rights when you are admitted under section 2 or 3.
- **If you're aged 18 or over**, and it has been 3 years since the last time the Tribunal considered your case, you must automatically be referred to the Tribunal again.
- **If you're under 18 years old** and it has been one year since the last time the Tribunal considered your case, you must automatically be referred to the Tribunal again.

You will still have a Mental Health Tribunal if you have a change in status. For example, if you have been referred to a Mental Health Tribunal because your CTO is revoked and you are then put under another CTO right before the hearing, the hearing will still go ahead.

Can family members be involved with a CTO?

Yes. Under the [Mental Health Act](#), a family member called your [nearest relative](#) will have certain powers related to your care if you are on a CTO.

The Mental Health Act says that your nearest relative has the right to:

- Receive information about you
- Ask for an [independent mental health advocate](#) to see you
- Discharge you from your CTO

If your nearest relative wishes to discharge you from your CTO, they need to write to your [hospital managers](#). They must give at least 72 hours' notice.

If your [responsible clinician](#) doesn't object to the discharge notice, your CTO will end once the 72 hours have passed.

If your responsible clinician does object, they can make a report to the hospital managers. This report would say that, in their view, you would act in a way that would be dangerous to yourself or others. They must submit this report before the 72 hours are up.

If the responsible clinician objects to the discharge notice, then the notice will not have any effect. And your nearest relative will not be able to use this right again for the next six months, starting from the date of the responsible clinician's report.

See our information on [nearest relatives](#) to find out more about who your nearest relative is and what their rights are.

Useful contacts

Mind's services

- [Mind's Legal Line](#) provides legal information and general advice by phone and email.
- [Local Minds](#) offer face-to-face services across England and Wales. These services include talking therapies, peer support and advocacy.

Find an advocate

To find [advocacy](#) services and groups in your area, you could call Mind's Legal Line or contact your local Mind.

If you're in hospital, you can also contact:

- the [Patient Advice Liaison Service \(PALS\)](#) in England
- the [Community Health Council](#) in Wales.

In some circumstances, you may be legally entitled to get the support of an advocate. See our page on [your legal rights to advocacy](#) for more information.

Other organisations

Care Quality Commission (CQC)

cqc.org.uk

Regulates and inspects health and social care services in England.

Civil Legal Advice (CLA)

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[gov.uk/civil-legal-advice](https://www.gov.uk/civil-legal-advice)

Can tell you if you're eligible for legal aid, and give you free and confidential legal advice if so.

Law Society

[lawsociety.org.uk](https://www.lawsociety.org.uk)

Professional association for solicitors in England and Wales. Includes a searchable directory of solicitors.

© Mind June 2022

To be revised in 2025

References are available on request.