

## DEFINITION OF MENTAL ILLNESS

### Definition

For the purposes of the Mental Health Act (Section 4) a person is taken to have a mental illness if they experience, **temporarily, repeatedly or continually**:

- a serious impairment of **thought** (which may include delusions) **OR**
- a serious impairment of **mood, volition, perception or cognition**.

Disorder	Description	Examples of psychopathology
Thought	A disturbance of thought form, flow, content or possession of thought, characterised by disturbances in the organisation, coherence, and logical progression of thoughts.	Delusions, loosening of associations, tangentiality, word salad, neologisms, thought blocking, perseveration, concreteness in thinking
Mood	Characterised by disturbances in a person's emotional state or mood.	Depression, mania
Volition	Volition refers to the wilful intention or the ability to choose to perform an action. A disorder of volition is characterised by abnormalities in the ability to initiate and execute voluntary actions or decisions.	Apathy, impulsivity, abulia, hypobulia, hyperbulia
Perception	Characterised by disturbances or abnormalities in the way a person perceives sensory information from their environment.	Hallucinations, illusions, depersonalisation, derealisation, sensory processing disorder, prosopagnosia, synaesthesia
Cognition	An inability to think clearly, process information, understand, reason, remember, or make decisions.	Disturbance with attention, memory, language, perception, problem-solving, and executive function.

### Inclusion:

The serious or permanent physiological, biochemical or psychological effects of alcohol use or drug-taking.

### Exclusions:

A person is not taken to have a mental illness by reason only of:

The person's current or past expression of, or failure, or refusal to express a particular political, or religious opinion, or belief, or activity, OR a particular philosophy, OR particular sexual preference or orientation or gender identity or expression, OR current or past engagement in a particular sexual activity or sexual promiscuity, OR illegal conduct, OR antisocial activity, OR particular economic or social status, OR membership of a particular cultural or racial group, OR intoxication, OR intellectual or physical disability, OR acquired brain injury, OR dementia, OR temporary unconsciousness.