

CARE HOME OUTREACH: SPECIALIST MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT TO OLDER RESIDENTS OF CARE HOMES

PSSRU

Outline of a research project being conducted by the Personal Social Services Research Unit (PSSRU) at the University of Manchester. This study has been funded by the National Institute for Health Research.

June 2010

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BACKGROUND This study forms part of a larger research programme that aims to examine the most appropriate ways to care for older people with mental health problems. It builds upon previous work undertaken by the PSSRU on old age psychiatry services. The National Dementia Strategy was published in 2009, designed to increase awareness of dementia, ensure early diagnosis and intervention and improve the quality of care that people with the condition receive. For those in care homes, it recommends the commissioning of specialist in-reach services from community mental health teams. Considerable concern has also been expressed with regard to the overuse of antipsychotic medication to manage the behavioural and psychological symptoms associated with dementia. The prevalence of depression has also been shown to be particularly high for older people in care homes and often remains unrecognised and untreated.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY The study has two main aims:

- To map the provision of specialist mental health outreach to care homes for older people with mental health problems and identify national variation.
- To identify and describe different models of outreach provision.

DESIGN This study has three parts:

- A systematic literature review identifying examples of outreach initiatives, both to provide important background information and to inform the subsequent surveys.

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The **Personal Social Services Research Unit** undertakes social and health care research, focusing particularly on policy research and analysis of equity and efficiency in community care and long term care and related areas, including services for elderly people, people with mental health problems and children in care. The Unit's work is funded mainly by the Department of Health.

The PSSRU Bulletin and publication lists are available free of charge from the PSSRU librarian in Canterbury (01227 827773) and on the Internet the Unit Web site can be found at <http://www.PSSRU.ac.uk>. The PSSRU was established at the University of Kent at Canterbury in 1974 and from 1996 has operated from three sites:

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- A national survey of old age psychiatrists to ascertain how outreach is undertaken and characterised, as well as the range and extent of the interventions undertaken in different types of care home by local mental health services.
- A survey of a sample of care home managers to obtain information and perspectives on the mental health outreach services that they receive.

The information from the above will be used to describe national trends in specialist mental health outreach provided to care homes, and to identify different models of service delivery.

OUTCOMES

The study will contribute to the wider programme on old age mental health services. It will also link with concurrent PSSRU research into the provision of specialist healthcare support for the physical health needs of older people resident in care homes. Dissemination will be through a wide variety of methods, including the PSSRU website, reports, peer-reviewed papers and conference presentations.

THE RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP

The research programme, of which this study forms part, is led by a partnership that brings together substantial expertise in the research and practice of care for older people with mental health problems, including: PSSRU, University of Manchester (lead research team); Manchester Mental Health and Social Care Trust; Manchester Mental Health Joint Commissioning Team; PSSRU, London School of Economics; Health Methodology Group, University of Manchester; and patient and community group representatives.

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