

# COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH TEAMS FOR OLDER PEOPLE: A STUDY OF THE OUTCOMES FROM DIFFERENT WAYS OF WORKING

# PSSRU

*Outline of a research project being conducted by the Personal Social Services Research Unit (PSSRU) at the University of Manchester. This work is part of a larger programme of research funded by the National Institute of Health Research*

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**BACKGROUND** In common with developed countries across the world, England is experiencing a significant increase in life expectancy, and a concomitant sharp growth in the number of older people with mental health problems is anticipated. This poses a considerable challenge for policy makers, for such disorders have a significant impact on individuals' quality of life and require additional resources for treatment and care. Community mental health teams for older people (CMHTsOP) are central to government ambitions to deliver comprehensive, accessible, individualised, and multidisciplinary specialist services for older people with all forms of mental health problems. There are now over 400 teams across England, with an estimated 6,000 (wte) staff. However, evidence to inform and improve the organisation and delivery of CMHTOP services is limited, and a number of different, largely unevaluated, team models have evolved.

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**PURPOSE OF THE STUDY** The planned research is designed to address this gap and to provide service commissioners, managers and team members with new insights into the impact of different team approaches on service user outcomes and staff satisfaction. Two critical aspects of team working practices will be investigated: the degree of integration between different professional disciplines / agencies, and the role of the consultant old age psychiatrist. Both these issues have received substantial attention within government policy and / or the wider research literature, but no empirical studies have sought to address their importance to the health and well-being of older people.

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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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## DESIGN

The study will draw on an earlier national survey of CMHTOP managers to identify eight teams that exhibit different ‘models’ of consultant involvement and degrees of service integration. Within these sites we will conduct the following data collection:

- Outline characteristics of a random sample of service users on each of these teams’ caseloads will be collated using existing data sources and/or a short proforma. A brief follow-up six months later will record any hospital admissions or change of residence experienced in the intervening period, as well as details of any continuing CMHT support.
- A sub-sample of service users from each team will be invited to take part in a face-to-face interview with a PSSRU researcher. This will seek to identify their views of the services they have received and measure a range of health and well-being outcomes. In addition, carers will be invited to complete and return a short questionnaire relating to their experiences.
- Staff within each team will be invited to complete a short survey including questions about their roles and experiences. This will be supplemented by face-to-face interviews with a small number of team members from each site.

The data will be analysed to investigate service user outcomes and staff perspectives, and to identify any differences that may be attributable to levels of service integration and differing consultant roles.

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## OUTCOMES

The research programme seeks to inform, influence and improve evidence for decision-making at both local and national levels. Dissemination will be through a wide-variety of methods, including local feedback; national conferences; accessible reports; and peer-reviewed articles.

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## THE RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP

The research is led by a partnership bringing 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
- Division of Epidemiology, University of Manchester
- Manchester Mental Health Joint Commissioning Team
- Patient and community group representatives

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