

SERVICES FOR OLDER PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS: THE IMPACT OF THE NATIONAL SERVICE FRAMEWORK

PSSRU

Outline of a research project undertaken by the Personal Social Services Research Unit (PSSRU) and the North West Dementia Centre (NWDC) in conjunction with the Royal College of Psychiatrists, Faculty of Old Age Psychiatry

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BACKGROUND

Recent analyses have identified considerable variation in the provision of health and social services for older people with mental health problems. The publication of the National Service Framework for Older People [2001] was thus widely welcomed as an attempt to address these inconsistencies and drive up the quality of care.

An essential component of the NHS Plan [2000], the National Service Framework sets out a ten-year programme of action and reform based around the achievement of eight standards. Whilst standard seven specifically addresses the provision of integrated mental health services, other aspects of the programme, including the elimination of age discrimination and the delivery of person-centred care, will also have a significant impact on the experience of older people with mental health problems.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study is designed to provide a view of the way in which services for older people with mental health problems are responding to the proposals set out in the National Service Framework one quarter of the way through its ten-year programme. The intention is to describe variations in both the nature of these services and the pace of service development.

DESIGN

A cross-sectional survey of consultant psychiatrists who work in England and have a substantial commitment to the care of older people will be undertaken. Potential respondents will be identified from the UK Royal College of Psychiatrists' membership list and locally held information.

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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 self-administered structured postal questionnaire, with items firmly grounded in the guidance of the National Service Framework, will explore three key domains:

- the nature and range of specialist mental health services provided for older people;
- the interface between specialist mental health services for older people and primary care, general hospital services and intermediate care; and
- the extent to which services for older people with mental health problems are truly person-centered.

OUTCOMES

The findings from the survey will be reported to reflect these three domains. The data will be compared with information about old age psychiatry services previously collected by the PSSRU to facilitate exploration of recent service developments, and with National Service Framework standards to identify key areas where further reform is needed.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The staff conducting this study are David Challis, Jane Hughes and Sue Tucker at the PSSRU/NWDC, University of Manchester, Bob Baldwin, Andrew Barker and Susan Benbow from the Royal College of Psychiatrists and Alistair Burns of the Manchester Mental Health and Social Care Trust. For further information please contact Sue Tucker [tel 0161 275 5938]; email Sue.Tucker@man.ac.uk
