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RELATED RESEARCH ENHANCING THE EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF ASSESSMENT IN COMMUNITY CARE – SELF ASSESSMENT PILOT PROJECTS

The Department of Health provided funding to a small number of local authorities to stimulate innovations in self assessment practice, designed to improve efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of care to service users and commissioned the PSSRU in Manchester to evaluate these pilot projects. These innovations were set in the context of recognition of the importance of involving users as fully as possible in their own assessments and longstanding concerns about the efficiency of the assessment process.

The research explored the extent to which changes in approaches to assessment can allow the process to be undertaken in a more streamlined way with associated reductions in the bureaucracy and commensurate improved user satisfaction.

This was a two year study which began in the autumn of 2006. Fieldwork was undertaken in all the sites hosting the self assessment pilot projects.

For further information please contact PSSRU@manchester.ac.uk.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF THE SOCIAL CARE WORKFORCE FOR OLDER PEOPLE

Recently there have been several changes in the care environment relating to the delivery of services for vulnerable older people. First, is a commitment to a more user-oriented style of care service. Second, demographic and social changes have led to increased demand for care services thereby requiring an expansion in the social care workforce. Third, there has been a decline in the supply source for this traditionally low skilled work. Fourth, in response to policy requirements, there have been changes in the arrangements for the delivery of social care which mean that around two thirds of the workforce is now employed outside the statutory sector. This has led to increasing attention being

placed on the processes of commissioning and contracting as a means to increase the skills and quality of the social care workforce and develop employment practices which promote continuity of care for vulnerable older people.

The study is to explore the nature of commissioning and contracting arrangements employed by local authorities in respect of services for vulnerable older people. It will seek to identify factors within these processes which influence employment practices within domiciliary care services and care homes which are likely to affect the quality of care received by service users.

This study is part of a research project being jointly undertaken by the PSSRU and the European Work and Employment Research Centre, part of the Manchester Business School.

For further information please contact Jane Hughes (telephone 0161 275 5229, email Jane.Hughes@manchester.ac.uk).

RELATED PUBLICATIONS

Clarkson, P. (2008) Performance measurement in adult social care: looking backwards and forwards, *British Journal of Social Work*, Advance Access published on June 24, 2008. doi:10.1093/bjsw/bcn096.

Clarkson, P., Davies, S., Challis, D., Donnelly, M. and Beech, R. (2008) Has social care performance in England improved? An analysis of performance ratings across social services organisations, *ESRC Public Services Programme Discussion Paper*, No. 0806, August, www.publicservices.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/dp0806-final.pdf.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The literature review used to frame the research questions, including material from other public services, is available at: www.pssru.ac.uk/pdf/MCpdfs/DPM160.pdf For information about the ESRC Public Services Programme, including links to other research, some of which has relevance for social care, see: www.publicservices.ac.uk

The **PERSONAL SOCIAL SERVICES RESEARCH UNIT** was established in 1974, and from 1996 it has operated from three branches:

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The Design and Use of Local Metrics to Evaluate Performance:
A Comparative Analysis of Social Care Organisations



Research and Policy Update

Issue 1 December 2008

PSSRU

Personal Social Services Research Unit
at the University of Manchester

EDITORIAL

There has now been almost a decade-long performance measurement regime in social care, covering all major user groups. Since the Modernising Social Services reforms, this regime has included ratings on key indicators and also composite 'star' ratings for all social services authorities in England. The original aim of this system was to improve the performance of social care by the use of comparative information; data were reported for consumption by citizens and the users of services and also as a way of galvanising local managers to improve service delivery in line with national standards and targets.

Such a regime has also operated in other public services, including health and education. However, in social care, as a locally delivered service, there has been a degree of criticism about the operation

of this nationally-based system, particularly when allied to rewards and punishments for 'good' and 'poor' performance respectively. It has been argued that centrally-driven government targets and national comparative information do not adequately reflect performance on the ground. There have also been concerns that external factors, over which local management has little control, such as levels of deprivation and need, are not fully taken into account in rating some authorities as 'poor performers'.

However, it is only in England that such a national regime has operated. In the other devolved administrations of the UK, and in other countries, social care performance has been monitored in other ways. In England also, a sea-change is occurring in the way

performance is measured. A reduction in the range of nationally available indicators and a drive towards monitoring local capacity and improvement of social care councils is to be instigated.

The PSSRU was commissioned by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), as part of its Public Services Programme, to evaluate the operation of the performance system in social care, as described below. This is a major piece of independent research comparing England with other countries, investigating the use of local performance measures and systems for older people's services. *Research and Policy Update* is designed to provide information about this study. Further copies of the Update will be published at key stages in the study's progress.

THE PUBLIC SERVICES PROGRAMME AND THE PSSRU

The PSSRU undertakes research into health and social care issues, focusing on community-based long-term care, particularly in relation to services for older people and people with mental health problems. Increasingly, the research spans the interface between health and social care. This study, *The design and use of local metrics to evaluate performance: a comparative analysis of social care organisations* is being undertaken at the University of Manchester. It was commissioned by the ESRC as part of its Public Services Programme, which is investigating performance and its measurement in a range of public services settings. The project has four aims: First, to identify the variations in the way local social care organisations have monitored their performance. Second, to examine the relationships between how measures are used in organisations and how these organisations were rated in national performance reporting to draw conclusions about the validity of national mechanisms for measuring performance. Third, to

explore the influences on the level of performance of organisations, as rated in national data. Fourth, to observe what can be learned from other countries about the construction and use of measures to monitor local performance.

The study is in four stages reflecting the research aims. A literature review has been used to frame the research questions to be addressed, including material from other public services such as the NHS and local authority services more generally. The stages of the study are:

- a national questionnaire survey to those responsible for performance monitoring in all local authority social care organisations in England and all health and social services trusts in Northern Ireland. The survey included information on the range of measures used locally, the organisational context and the manner in which performance was measured.

- an enquiry into the way in which patterns of local data use and approaches to performance relate to national performance ratings.

- an examination of the extent to which the performance of organisations is associated with organisational and cultural factors. This will help identify the local management arrangements associated with more successful monitoring. Analysis from the survey and national data will be supplemented by interviews with managers in areas adopting distinctly different arrangements.

- an investigation of how the English top-down approach to measuring performance in this setting has compared with a more local approach through a comparison with Japan, which is more 'bottom-up' – monitoring the care provided in municipalities (local governments).

THE RESEARCH TEAM

The research staff conducting this study are David Challis, Paul Clarkson, Sue Davies (PSSRU, University of Manchester), Michael Donnelly (Queen's University, Belfast) and Roger Beech (Keele University). For further information please contact paul.clarkson@manchester.ac.uk. This Update was edited by Paul Clarkson and Sue Davies and typeset and printed by Craftprint Ltd.

FINDINGS FROM A SURVEY OF PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT APPROACHES IN ENGLAND

Introduction

This section presents some key findings from the survey across English social care organisations as part of the first stage of the study. As well as being used to inform the aims of the Public Services Programme, in terms of identifying what counts as successful performance monitoring in public services, these findings provide valuable information for social care managers and 'lead' performance officers as to how monitoring has worked and enable organisations to benchmark themselves against the practices of others. The study explores the operation of local performance systems in social care at a particular point in time (2007/08). This is a point at which the decade-long push for national ratings and central government control has waned somewhat to be replaced by a move towards greater localism and recognition of the need to monitor local capacity and improvement (DCLG, 2007; Grace and Martin, 2008). The material here is thus timely in terms of offering a picture of performance measurement after a sustained period of reform. After presenting the design of the survey, we move on to consider several questions that have been used to frame the reported findings.

The survey questionnaire

Two separate survey questionnaires were designed informed by the literature review and after consultation with representatives of the North West Performance Leads Group in social services in England. Overall, we collected information that would help to establish the position of each organisation in terms of its use of performance information (both local and national), its management processes in terms of strategy and culture, and the degree to which effective systems of performance management had been established. Information was collected from two key constituent perspectives: 'lead' performance or information officers in local authorities as the producers or designers of performance information; and older people's services managers as the users of such information. Approval for the survey was obtained from the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS).

One hundred and seventeen authorities returned questionnaires, a response rate of 79%. The survey therefore represents excellent coverage of social care organisations in England and permits valid generalisations to be made across the country in terms of the distribution of responses. There were differences, however, in the responses of particular constituents; more (N=102, 68%) performance leads than managers (N=91, 61%) completed questionnaires. There were therefore 77 (52%) authorities who provided data from the perspective of both constituent groups surveyed.

We concentrated our attention on older people's services within the social care setting as this is a particularly costly element within authorities and the majority of social

care users are older people. The data are, however, of relevance to other user groups and the issues raised are similarly germane to all parts of social care provision within local authorities in England.

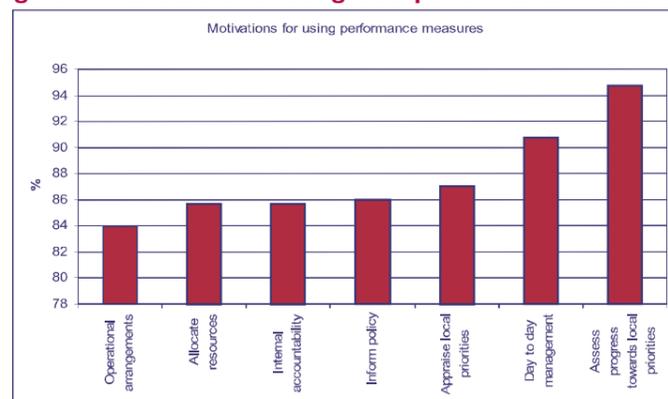
How performance is measured in social care organisations

Earlier experience in social care, from research commentary and internal authority documents, focused predominantly on performance measures as supporting local management (Barnes and Miller, 1988; City of Westminster Social Services, 1993). However, such a local approach has been superseded by a focus on national ratings and comparisons across councils (Commission for Social Care Inspection, 2007). A more locally-based approach obviously also has resonances with more recent proposals to measure local capacity and achievements (Grace and Martin, 2008). We therefore wish to form a picture of the configuration of performance measurement in social care: have authorities adopted local performance measures? What kinds of measures are employed? Do managers use them? How and to who are they reported? What particular techniques have been developed? Of the 117 authorities responding, 62 performance leads (42% of authorities, 60% of respondents) indicated that they had adopted locally developed performance indicators (defined as those linked to

objectives set out in local service or business plans or to assist managers in running the service). All authorities reported the use of electronic systems for recording client information in order to construct these measures. Authorities tended to adopt those measures sanctioned by the national regime (such as 'number of care home admissions') more frequently than devising more detailed local measures (such as 'spend per case'). There were some measures adopted by performance leads which were not as routinely used by local managers. These included: 'user satisfaction' measures; 'numbers in each eligibility band'; 'number of cases per team'; 'hours of home care per case'; and 'case load size per social worker'. These differences may reflect the challenges in moving from adopting particular measures to implementing them as part of management information systems monitoring local service delivery, a finding echoed in management research in other countries (de Lancer Julnes and Holzer, 2001).

Figure 1 shows the different motivations and reasons for using local performance indicators. Here, authorities using measures to a 'large' or 'very large' degree have been included. The most prevalent reasons for using local measures were to assess the progression towards the achievement of local authority specific priorities and to assist in the daily management of services.

Figure 1: Motivations for using local performance measures



Those surveyed were also asked how performance measures were used and applied; in other words, what were the performance practices of authorities and to whom were data reported. Figure 2 details how performance leads viewed the use of measures.

'Comparison with other local authorities', trend and audit were the predominant concerns with other locally-based analyses, such as 'real time' alerts of performance and geographical mapping used less frequently.

Figure 2: Performance practices of authorities

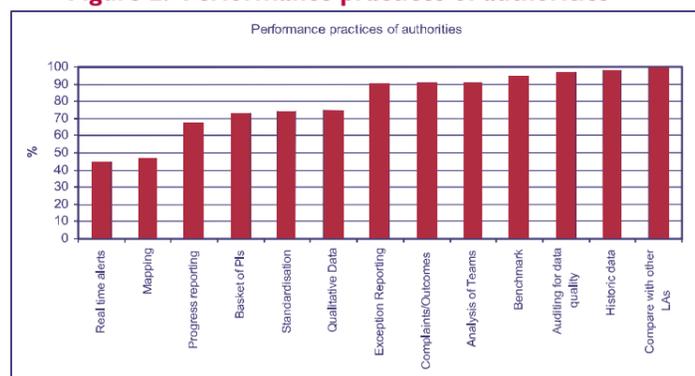
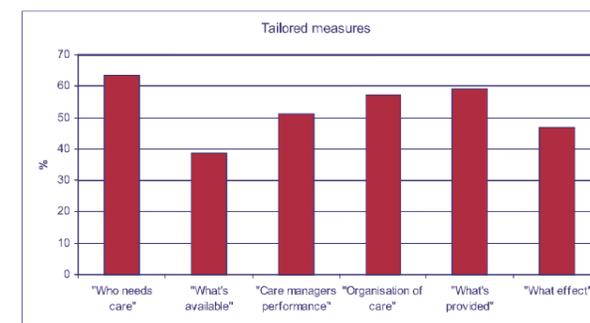


Figure 3: The range of locally tailored measures, according to the PIAF, developed in authorities



- * Practice Process – 'what care managers do' (e.g. number of ongoing cases);
- * Service Process – 'how services are organised' (e.g. costs of care packages);
- * Intermediate Outcome – 'what is provided' (e.g. number of residential admissions);
- * Final Outcome – 'with what effect' (e.g. number of users satisfied with service).

Responses from performance leads in terms of which types of measures had been developed, shows that need indicators were those most generally available followed by Intermediate Outcome indicators (Figure 3). Supply indicators were available in the authorities of less than 40% of those who responded, an interesting finding in light of the reduced availability of such indicators (e.g. the number of places in residential homes) in national collections. Final Outcome indicators were also seen as more difficult to develop, a finding which mirrors other surveys (de Lancer Julnes and Holzer, 2001).

How much variation in local performance measures and systems is there?

There were different practices across authorities in terms of their use of local data and other systems, such as the types of detailed local targets employed. On average, 36% of performance leads' time was spent in statutory data reporting to national regulatory bodies with 32% of time spent providing information for operational level management. However, these figures conceal a degree of variation across councils. The time spent on operational level reporting, to assist managers in running services, ranged from 0 to 65%. In terms of target setting, most managers' targets were based on national pressures or requirements. However, the degree to which targets reflected national pressures varied. A small number (three per cent) of authorities based their targets on national requirements to only a 'small degree', 63% to a 'large degree' and 34% to

As part of the survey, we also wished to know the extent of involvement of various stakeholders in creating local performance measures as this element of performance management has been cited as important in leading to effective systems (Kravchuk and Schack, 1996; Poister and Steib, 1999; Berman and Wang, 2000; de Lancer Julnes and Holzer, 2001; de Waal, 2003). A range of stakeholders were reported, by performance leads, to have driven or motivated the development and creation of local performance indicators. The stakeholders largely motivating the creation of local measures were those internal to the organisation, such as service managers and the performance teams within authorities. External players, such as the Department of Health and Councillors were not as involved. Social workers and service users themselves were largely not involved in the creation and development of local measures, a finding that echoes previous small-scale surveys in this setting (Caldwell, 2003) and surveys in other areas of local government, such as in the US (Poister and Streib, 1999). The data on the involvement of councillors are interesting in the light of recent moves to explicitly recognise the role of local political leadership in influencing performance improvement (Grace and Martin, 2008). Whilst this survey shows that performance measures remain largely 'officer-led', there were 38% of authorities questioned who cited the involvement of councillors.

To what extent do authorities use their own, specifically tailored, measures?

The development of local 'bespoke' measures – in contrast to those produced merely for national reporting – is important in preparation for the need to measure local improvement in the near future. The survey asked about the range of local, specifically tailored, measures that had been developed to monitor older people's services. To explore to what extent these measures reflected the most important elements of local service delivery, a framework – the Performance Indicator Analytical framework (PIAF) – was used based upon earlier work in one local authority (Challis et al., 2006). This model clarifies the domains of enquiry from which sets of measures can be devised in order to fully express the local production process characterising social care. Each of these domains is defined as:

- * Need – 'who needs care' (e.g. number of older people living alone);
- * Supply – 'what is available' (e.g. number of home care hours);

a 'very large degree'. Older people's services managers in seven per cent of authorities did not use average local standards to compare different areas with the authority as a whole. However, 64% of managers found such local standards 'useful' with 19% considering them 'very useful'. Whilst 80% of managers considered that their everyday management processes were focused on improving national ratings, 20% were neutral or disagreed that this was the case.

Conclusions and further work

These findings provide a picture of performance measurement practices after a sustained period of pursuit of nationally-set measures and standards in social care. The survey shows that the predominant concerns of those reporting data were, in fact, with adopting measures sanctioned by the national regime in England. However, there are encouraging signs that many authorities have more locally-based systems in place that will be important for the future in gauging their capacity for improvement through the analysis of local data (Grace and Martin, 2008). However, there were variations in authorities' responses to questions in the survey. This variation will be important in eliciting meaningful conclusions regarding the factors associated with successful, and not so successful, performance. Further work in the study will use measures of local organisational arrangements, drawn from the public management literature, to address key questions concerning social care performance: are there particular management strategies associated with successful performance? Is organisational culture important in securing successful performance management practices and in achieving higher national ratings? Can different patterns of local arrangements be identified that are important in leading to improved performance?