

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF THE SOCIAL CARE WORKFORCE FOR OLDER PEOPLE

PSSRU

Outline of a research project funded by the Department of Health

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BACKGROUND 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 are 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.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY The study will 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.

DESIGN This study will identify and categorise different approaches to commissioning and contracting within local authorities with respect to services for older people. There will be two phases:

- In the first a review of the literature will be undertaken and a postal survey of all local authorities concerning commissioning and contracting arrangements conducted. These data will be analysed and provide a national overview highlighting policy and practice issues influencing the recruitment and retention of the social care workforce.

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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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- In the second phase different sets of approaches to commissioning and contracting arrangements will be delineated. This will be achieved by analysis of data from the questionnaire alongside publicly available information relating to domiciliary care agencies and care home and service users.
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OUTCOMES

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. The findings from this study will inform subsequent work in the project which, using a case study approach, will explore the influence on recruitment and retention issues within the workforce of different approaches to commissioning and contracting services for older people.

FURTHER INFORMATION

This work is being undertaken by David Challis, Helen Chester and Jane Hughes of PSSRU at the University of Manchester. For further information please contact Jane Hughes (telephone 0161 275 5229, email Jane.Hughes@manchester.ac.uk).
