

The PSSRU

The Personal Social Services Research Unit was established in 1974 and now has branches at three UK universities: the University of Kent, the London School of Economics and Political Science, and the University of Manchester.

Its mission is to to conduct high quality research on social and health care to inform and influence policy, practice and theory.

A brief listing of our research plans can be found on pages 6–9; contact details for the staff at the three PSSRU branches are on the inside back cover.

About this Bulletin

The PSSRU Bulletin records recent developments in the Unit, presents recent findings from each of our main programmes of work, and gives a concise overview of research projects and recent publications with contact information.

The Bulletin is distributed free of charge to all local authorities, health authorities, relevant voluntary organisations, and to others on request. If you would like further copies, please contact the librarian at the PSSRU in Canterbury (phone 01227 827773; fax 01227 827038; email pssru_library@kent.ac.uk). If this copy was wrongly addressed, please let us know, quoting the mailing number from the label if you can.

We welcome comments on this Bulletin or other aspects of our work.

Other PSSRU publications

A wide range of publications reports the PSSRU's work. Some are mentioned in the articles which follow and listed in the section beginning on page 34.

The Unit website gives a complete listing, with summaries of longer publications and complete versions of shorter ones (including this Bulletin and previous issues), along with more information on current and completed research.

PSSRUlist

To subscribe to this email list for announcements of publications, events and developments at the PSSRU, go to www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/pssrulist.html

PSSRU website

<http://www.PSSRU.ac.uk/>

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The three branches of the PSSRU are recognised as Investors in People.

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

Introduction

As the contents of this fifteenth PSSRU Bulletin make clear, the major focus of the Unit's work is social care. Since our previous Bulletin the Green Paper *Independence, Well-being and Choice* has been published, proposing a new vision of social care. The emphasis is very much on positive interventions that empower service users and draw on the full range of governmental and non-governmental agencies and the wider community in promoting well-being and independence. The particular challenge presented is to deliver such improvements in a climate of rising demands and limited resources. It is important that the introduction of such fundamental changes can draw on sound research evidence.

We summarise here a wide range of completed and ongoing work. Some of these relate directly to issues raised by the Green Paper: the use of Direct Payments (p. 12); improving assessments and improving care coordination (pp. 10, 14); the development of performance measures that reflect the key objectives, such as service users' views of the quality of services (p. 16); regulation and performance management (pp. 10, 12, 29); the voluntary and community sector (p. 28) and the type of evidence available about independence for different client groups (p. 15). Others reflect more the context of these changes, presenting other challenges that will need to be addressed. This includes the projected rising demand for and costs of care (p. 20) and closures of care homes (p. 24).

The Wanless Review (p. 27) will also be invaluable in drawing together evidence about the financial and related implications of future demands for social care.

PSSRU has continued to build on its extensive national and international links in the mental health economics and policy fields and continues to conduct a variety of studies (p. 23). Moreover, the Unit is unique in systematically addressing the dearth of information about the costs of child health and social care at a time when there are major shifts in responsibilities at both national and local level (p. 18).

For PSSRU a key event in recent months has been the agreement of the next five-year contract with the Department of Health following a very successful scientific review. Pages 6–9 outline the proposed future directions of our work which include a wide range of exciting plans – many again linked to the Green Paper priorities such as individualisation of care and service user choice, the impact of different approaches to care coordination and evaluation of the developing role of extra care housing.

Many thanks are due to Jacquetta Williams and Karen Jones for editing this edition of the Bulletin and to Nick Brawn for his sterling work on design and taking it through to print.

*Ann Netten,
University of Kent, June 2005*

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