New Projects

These two pages highlight some of our current, recently completed and planned work. Others are mentioned in the news section on pages 4–5. For a more comprehensive outline of the PSSRU programme of research with a listing of publications, see the section starting on page 32.

Measuring the Impact of the Workforce on Productivity in Care Homes

The PSSRU at Kent has been commissioned by Skills for Care UK to follow up the ‘Measuring Quality in Care Homes’ study which formed part of the Treasury funded Quality Measurement Framework (QMF) project. This project aimed to develop a method of measuring the outputs of care homes that reflected the changing needs of care home residents and the quality of homes over time.

The emerging results of this project are looking promising and Skills for Care UK have asked the PSSRU to test the sensitivity of QMF quality measures to additional inputs, specifically to workforce learning and development inputs.

The key objectives of the study are to establish:
- whether a link exists between skills levels, qualifications and other characteristics of the workforce and quality (based upon the data gathering and analysis undertaken as part of the QMF project)
- the strength and nature of the relationship between quality ratings and specific workforce characteristics (i.e. higher levels of qualification, pay etc.)
- the extent to which additional factors may influence, distort or skew the relationship between workforce inputs and quality/outcomes

Our exploratory work suggested that homes would be happy to take part in a telephone survey. These telephone interviews, now completed, collected:
- items of information available for all homes that are also collected for the NMDS-SC, including pay rates, turnover and social care relevant qualifications
- information about resources available for training, level of in-service training provided, relevant accreditations such as LiP, and other factors relevant to workforce development and support

This should permit an analysis that includes key aspects of the model for most homes in our sample (actual numbers depending on response rates).

The data collection took place in parallel with the analysis required for the QMF project and was completed at the end of February 2010. A report summarising the outcomes from the feasibility study is available now and the final report will be available at the end of April 2010.

Project team: Ann Netten, Elizabeth Welch, Julie Beadle-Brown (Tizard Centre, University of Kent), Karen Windle

Evaluation of Supported Housing Pilot for Teenage Parents (SHPTP)

Funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, this project is a collaboration between the Centre for Housing Policy, University of York, BMRB Social Research, and PSSRU at LSE. This evaluation focuses on the Supported Housing Pilot for Teenage Parents (SHPTP), and aims to assess the effectiveness of enhanced support packages in terms of the impact on outcomes for teenage parents and provide greater understanding of what the key components of an enhanced support package should look like. The LSE component, led by Martin Knapp and Jennifer Beecham, involves assessing the cost effectiveness/value for money of each pilot authority’s enhanced support package delivery model.

Admission Risk to Care Homes (ARCH)

Kent County Council Social Services Department has commissioned the PSSRU at Kent to examine admission risks to care homes in Kent. The particular concern is to investigate the final ‘triggers’ which lead to admission, in order to inform the commissioning processes for arranging accommodation for residents of care homes. Phase 1 of the project concerns care for older people, and a further study, concerning care for younger adults, will be considered at a later date.

The reasons reported in general surveys of admissions do not necessarily identify the precipitating factors leading to admission. This study aims to produce an up-to-date picture of the reasons for admission through a three stage process. The first stage will review existing evidence, through a review of the recent literature and other studies of admissions, and a comparison of the data collected in previous PSSRU surveys. The second stage will identify recorded triggers to admission to care homes in Kent, drawing on (anonymised) information on the circumstances of admission from case files for people admitted to care homes in Kent over a period of 12 months. The third stage will identify interventions and the scope for prevention of these admissions in discussions with groups of practitioners, drawing on the evidence from the first two stages, in order to examine alternative forms of care to admission to a care home, and assess the suitability of such approaches, using their professional judgement.

Project team: Robin Darton and Diane Fox
NEW PROJECTS

Evaluations of two Extra Care Schemes for Thomas Pocklington Trust

Thomas Pocklington Trust provides housing, care and support for people with sight loss in the UK, and has recently opened two extra care schemes aimed specifically for people with sight loss. The first scheme was opened in Birmingham in January 2008, and the second was opened in Plymouth in June 2009.

Thomas Pocklington Trust has commissioned the PSSRU at Kent to extend the evaluation of extra care schemes supported by the Extra Care Housing Fund (see page 18) to include the two new schemes. Data are being collected using selected questionnaires developed for the main evaluation, amended to record information on sight loss.

Reports drawing on the data collected for Pocklington Place and Pocklington Rise, and in the main evaluation and associated studies, will be prepared for Thomas Pocklington Trust. More general articles and presentations on the research on extra care will draw on the findings, in order to raise the profile of sight loss and highlight the role of housing in supporting people with sight loss.

Project team: Robin Darton and Theresia Bäumker

Putting People First

The Department of Health is looking to develop a new social care user experience survey (UES) for 2010/11 to be consistent with the principles and goals of Putting People First (PPF). The PPF survey will be used by national and local governments to monitor the quality of their services and to inform policy and practice. The survey will build on the success and methods of the national UESs that have been running since the turn of the millennium, but the aims of the PPF survey are more ambitious. The DH envisages that this survey will include all users of social care services. This includes groups who have not been surveyed in previous UESs such as residents of care homes, people with learning disabilities and, in the longer-term, self-payers.

Social care is often provided to people who are vulnerable and have a range of needs that may make it more difficult for them to take part in surveys. Therefore it is important to consider carefully how to approach service users and how best to involve them. This study is in four parts and will focus on three particular groups: people who have had help to complete previous questionnaires and do not live in an institutional setting, people who live in care homes and people with learning disabilities. These groups have been chosen because of their importance: more than 50% have help to complete the UES, and care homes and people with learning disabilities have not been included in previous surveys so little is known about how to engage with these groups in this context. The studies will be exploratory in nature and aim to gather information to generate guidance for conducting the PPF survey and to help interpret findings.

Project team: James Caiels, Julien Forder, Ann Netten, Juliette Malley, Nick Smith, Ann-Marie Towers and Jane Dennett

Differing Approaches to Healthcare Support for Residents of Care Homes

Older people living in care homes are some of the most vulnerable in our society. They experience high levels of morbidity, including significant undetected and treatable conditions. Improved clinical assessment and management can enhance resident quality of life and can also contribute to better care processes such as reduction of inappropriate hospital admissions and improved prescribing. However, they have variable degrees and levels of access to appropriate medical care services. The project, funded through BUPA Giving, seeks to identify and clarify the different approaches and models to provision of clinical assessment and management of needs, the costs of so doing and the likely costs and benefits of different approaches. This provides a basis for evaluation of the relative benefits and cost effectiveness of different approaches.

Money for Medication

Led by Queen Mary University of London with funding from the Health Technology Assessment programme, this project aims to establish the effectiveness and cost effectiveness of using financial incentives (MiM) to improve adherence to antipsychotic maintenance medication in patients with poor adherence when conventional methods to achieve adherence have failed through a cluster randomised controlled trial. The LSE component is led by Martin Knapp.

Ensuring Effective use of Research Evidence

This project, funded by the National Police Information Authority, involved conducting a systematic mapping review to identify, assess relevance and quality, categorise and summarise resulting literature in respect of both barriers and facilitators to the use of research evidence in policy and practice in the public sector, and where available specifically in relation to policing. This project was led by David McDaid.

Assessment and Resource Allocation in Social Care

PSSRU at Manchester will undertake this study building upon the very substantial programme of work undertaken in relation to assessment and care planning processes. These include an RCT of comprehensive assessment of older people; evaluation of the Single Assessment Process; evaluation of Self assessment Projects (Challis et al., 2008); and studies of assessment and care planning processes in care homes, including tool development.

The personalisation agenda has indicated the potential utility of mechanisms which can identify indicative personal budgets from needs-related characteristics. Such resource allocation approaches as have been currently developed are specific to each local authority and are based upon very small numbers of cases in the analysis. As a consequence any allocation is potentially subject to a wide error, and variations between authorities may be increased affecting equity. The approach will involve modelling the statistical relationships between personal characteristics, as recorded and measured in standard assessment tools, and subsequent allocation of costs and care packages. Data will be collected across a representative sample of local authorities to ensure that the model developed is generalisable and validated with stakeholder groups of agency staff and service users. The outcome will be a better understanding of resource allocation between service users, proving a basis for a more transparent method in the future relevant to the Common Assessment Framework.
NEW PROJECTS

Home Treatment for People with Dementia
This study, in conjunction with Prof. Martin Orrell and colleagues from UCL, Bangor and Hull as part of an NIHR Programme Grant, will develop and evaluate and implement a home treatment approach to intensively support and manage people with dementia experiencing crises at home, and prevent admissions to hospital or care homes. A systematic review of the literature looking at care management and crisis resolution approaches aimed at maintaining people with dementia at home is currently underway.

SOCIONICOL
SOCIONICAL is an Information and Communication Technologies Project funded under European Seventh Framework Programme (FP7), aiming to develop Complexity Science based modelling, prediction and simulation methods for large scale socio-technical systems. This is a joint project with the LSE’s Complexity Group, led by Margaret Ellis.

BUPA Analyses
The PSSRU Long-Term Care Finance team at LSE, led by Raphael Wittenberg, undertook analyses for BUPA looking at key elements in the future demand and supply of long-term care in England.

Psycho-Educational Insomnia Workshops
Funded by the NIHR Biomedical Research Centre, and led by the Institute of Psychiatry, King’s College London, this project aims to examine clinical effectiveness and health economic aspects of psycho-educational insomnia workshops for members of the public, using an RCT design. The LSE component of the work is being led by Jennifer Beecham.

Children’s Services Research
Jennifer Beecham is collaborating on a number of new research projects with colleagues at other institutions, including the evaluations of the Staying Put 18+ Pilot Programme led by Loughborough University, research on transition to adult services and adulthood for young people with autistic spectrum disorders (led by the University of York) and research coordinated by the Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People’s Services (C4EO).

Avoiding Injuries to Children
Funded by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence and led by PenTAG at the University of Exeter, this project aimed to locate, review and synthesise international comparative analyses or surveys looking at current practice and innovative approaches to prevent unintentional injuries to children and young people under 15, with particular reference to the home, road and wider environment. David McDaid and A-La Park at LSE were involved in identifying, summarising and critically reviewing reports and surveys for opportunities for comparative analysis or synthesis, and to develop some principles for identifying potential lessons for the UK.

Child Care Reforms in Europe: Lessons for Italy
Led by Dr Cristiano Gori at LSE, this project aims to examine national reforms in child care in European countries since the mid-nineties, compare the outcome of different reforms and draw lessons for the design of new child care policies in Italy. This project is funded by the Collegio Carlo Alberto, Italy.

Developing Improved Survey Questions
The Department of Health and the Nuffield Foundation have commissioned a study to develop improved questions to be used in surveys and economic evaluations concerning older people’s receipt of formal and informal care, payment for formal care services and provision of informal care. The study is being conducted by PSSRU at LSE and the University of Kent in collaboration with the Health Economics Group at the University of East Anglia and the National Centre for Social Research. The study began in May 2009 and will be completed in June 2010.

The overall aim of the research is to produce modules of questions on receipt of care services and related benefits, payment for care services and provision and receipt of informal care which would be suitable for use in population surveys that cover community-based care and in economic evaluations. The modules, it is envisaged, would be of value for the new Health and Social Care Survey and the English Longitudinal Survey of Ageing.

Home Care Services for Older People in the United Kingdom
PSSRU at LSE were asked by the BBC to prepare an overview of the home care industry in the UK for a Panorama programme broadcast in April 2009. Aggregate estimates of the volume and costs of care provided were derived from government figures, research literature and survey datasets. To reflect the considerable variability in the availability and accuracy of data, figures in the full report were presented separately by country and source of funding. The work was led by José-Luis Fernández and Tom Snell.

Evaluation of the Kent INVOKE POPP Programme
The Kent POPP programme, Independence through the Voluntary Action of Kent’s Elders (INVOKE), was one of the 29 Partnerships for Older People Projects sites. (See page 24 for information on the PSSRU-led evaluation of the national programme.) The PSSRU was commissioned by Kent County Council to evaluate the programme, which started in May 2007 and ended in March 2009.

Among the findings:
- users reported that their health-related quality of life improved in five key domains (mobility, washing/dressing, usual activities, pain and anxiety) following their involvement in the INVOKE projects
- take-up of state benefits increased: across all users, the mean overall take-up was an additional £243 per year

The full report of the evaluation and a summary document can be found on the PSSRU website.

PSSRU staff involved in this project were Margaret Perkins, Martin Knapp, Karen Windle, Dirk Janssen, Kate Ellis and Cate Henderson.