Performance Measurement in Adult Social Care: A comparative analysis of social care organisations
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PSSRU Manchester, along with colleagues from Queen’s University, Belfast and Keele University, have been involved in a large-scale project investigating performance measurement approaches in adult social care as part of the Economic and Social Research Council’s Public Services Programme. This programme of work, across sectors such as social care, education, the NHS and transport, is looking towards disseminating research findings as to what counts as successful performance monitoring and the challenges involved in this monitoring. The PSSRU project is examining the links between local performance (through, for example, the use of specially created ‘bespoke’ measures) and the national ratings that have existed (for example, Performance Assessment Framework and Star Ratings). The project began in November 2006 and lasts until March 2010. The project aims to:

- discover whether there are variations in the way local social care organisations have monitored their performance
- examine the relationships between how measures are used in organisations and how they were rated in national performance reporting
- observe what can be learned from other countries about the construction and use of measures to monitor local performance.

The project has conducted a national survey of both managers in older people’s services and performance ‘leads’ throughout English social care organisations and comparable personnel in Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland. A comparison with Japan will also shed light on the use of local performance measures in a system where national ratings and competition between units does not exist as it has done in England.

Findings from the national surveys are now being disseminated widely. It has been found that there is variation in the way social care organisations in England monitor their performance. Some authorities have focused predominantly on the national measures mandated through inspection agencies, while others have developed local measures, created especially to assist them in running the service. Multivariate analysis (analysing the impact of various factors, controlling for others, on performance) shows that one of the most important drivers to obtaining a good ‘star’ rating was management strategy – particularly a ‘prospector’ strategy that continually searches for new opportunities and is an innovator (Miles and Snow, 1978).

As Figure 1 shows, the resources available to authorities (measured by the ‘Formula Spending Share’) were also associated with the probability of obtaining a good star rating although much less so.

Reference

Further information
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More on the project and also other projects on the ESRC Public Services Programme can be found at www.publicservices.ac.uk.

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\[\text{Figure 1 The probability of receiving social services star ratings (2007) according to the resources of authorities}\]