National Evaluation of Partnerships for Older People Projects
Karen Windle

Within the Partnerships for Older People Projects (POPP) 29 local authorities and their health and voluntary sector partners were funded by the Department of Health between 2006 and 2009. They were to develop services for older people aimed at promoting their health, well-being and independence, and preventing or delaying their need for higher intensity or institutional care. The complex and multi-method national evaluation explored the process of implementation as well as the outcomes and found that a wide range of projects resulted in improved quality of life for participants and considerable savings as well as better local relationships.

- In total the 29 sites pilot sites set up 146 core local projects, with a further 530 small upstream projects commissioned from the third sector.
- Over a quarter of a million people (264,637) used one or more of these services.
- The reduction in emergency hospital admissions resulted in savings, to the extent that for every £1 spent on the POPP services, there has been an average £1.20 additional benefit in savings on emergency hospital stays.
- A standardised questionnaire, administered prior and post a sample of POPP projects, explored the impact of POPP on users’ health-related quality of life. Those receiving practical help (projects that included small housing repairs, gardening, limited assistive technology and shopping) reported a 12% increase in their health-related quality of life, with the same increase reported by users that took part in interventions providing exercise. Smaller improvements (4%) were reported by users involved with projects offering community support, proactive case coordination and specialist falls programmes (3%–4%). A very slight deterioration (less than 2%) was found in people involved in projects offering hospital discharge and complex care, but these individuals still fared better than the comparative sample.
- All local projects involved older people in their design and management, although to varying degrees, including as members of steering or programme boards, in staff recruitment panels, as volunteers or in the evaluation.
- Improved relationships with health agencies and the voluntary sector in the locality were reported, although there was some difficulty in securing the involvement of GPs.

The full report, appendices and summary reports can be downloaded from the PSSRU website (see below). The report authors and core evaluation team were: Karen Windle, PSSRU, Kent; Richard Wagland, University of Southampton; Julien Forder, PSSRU, Kent and LSE; Francesco D’Amico, PSSRU, LSE; Dirk Janssen, University of Kent; Gerald Wistow, PSSRU, LSE.

Further information

The evaluation findings were launched on 18 January 2010 by the Secretary of State for Health, when Karen Windle from the PSSRU presented key messages from the evidence collected.

The launch and findings were widely reported. The Guardian discussed the report under the headline ‘The cast-iron case for preventive care’ and Community Care (11 February) has an assessment of the report, which it calls ‘of great interest’, and the background and implications of the POPP projects.

The following publications from the evaluation are available to download from www.pssru.ac.uk

Summary
Final report and appendices
Interim report (October 2008)