Developing evidence to improve adult social care practice: the NIHR School for Social Care Research

Background

A ministerial announcement in 2008 set out plans to set up a National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) School for Social Care Research. The School formally began work in May 2009. It has a budget of £15 million over five years. Its main aim is to develop the evidence base for adult social care practice in England and so improve the quality of care and support services.

The School is a partnership between six leading centres of social care research in England: the new School is directed by Martin Knapp (PSSRU Director at LSE); and the other two PSSRU Directors, David Challis and Ann Netten, are two of the five Associate Directors of the School. The other three Associate Directors are: Caroline Glendinning (Social Policy Research Unit, University of York), Jill Manthorpe (Social Care Workforce Research Unit, King’s College London) and Jim Mansell (Tizard Centre, University of Kent).

Aims

The most important aim of the NIHR SSCR is to conduct and commission high-quality (‘world class’) research to produce new knowledge (including, where appropriate, reviews and syntheses of existing evidence) to inform the development of adult social care practice. Among the questions the School will try to answer are how users of care services can be given more control and greater choice, how unpaid carers can find a better balance with their working lives, whether there are better ways of commissioning services and whether social care meshes effectively with health care and other services.

The School is consulting with a wide range of people interested in social care – whether as users, unpaid carers, paid practitioners, providers, managers, strategic decision-makers or researchers. One reason is to identify areas where new research evidence could help to improve practice and so improve people’s lives. The School is also working with its Advisory Board and its User, Carer, Practitioner Reference Group to develop research ideas and to ensure wider involvement in the projects that are funded.

Commissioning new research

The School is now commissioning research projects with a clear element of originality, and which have relevance for the improvement of adult social care practice in England. Further calls for proposals are expected in 2010 – details will be provided on the School’s website.

NIHR SSCR Annual Conference – 30 March 2010

The School’s first annual conference will take place on 30 March 2010 at the LSE. The event will focus on key themes in adult social care practice research.

The conference is open to all, with a small registration fee. Further full details including conference programme and registration processes are available on the NIHR SSCR website, www.lse.ac.uk/collections/nihrsscr