

A SYSTEMATIC EVALUATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPACT OF THE SINGLE ASSESSMENT PROCESS IN ENGLAND

PSSRU

Outline of a research study funded by the Department of Health

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BACKGROUND

The Department of Health has commissioned the Personal Social Services Research Unit to evaluate the development and impact of the Single Assessment Process (SAP) for older people in England. The study began in November 2003 and is to last for three years.

The SAP was set out in the National Service Framework for Older People and is intended to ensure that older people receive appropriate, effective and timely responses to their needs. It is envisaged that the SAP will avoid duplication in assessments and promote a standardised approach to assessments across health and social care. The SAP has been implemented incrementally and councils with social services responsibilities have been required to meet a number of milestones regarding its implementation, leading up to April 2004.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The project has two aims: The first is to review the conduct of assessment across health and social care in order to highlight key issues in the initial implementation of the SAP. The second is to evaluate the impact of the SAP from the perspective of multiple stakeholders: users and carers; managers in health and social services; and professionals including specialist clinicians.

DESIGN

The study is in two stages. Stage one will consist of a literature review raising key issues in implementation of the SAP using evidence from previous research and international material. This will take place at the outset of the study in order to address issues of importance in judging the eventual outcome of the SAP. It will be supplemented by focus groups of managers and older people to comment on and prioritise the issues identified in the literature review.

Stage two will take place following the review of the SAP. Information will be collected at three levels: national, authority and individual service user, to evaluate the impact of the SAP.

- First, a national survey of managers for older people's services in health and social care to identify who co-ordinates assessment, the types of material collected, and to what extent this is shared electronically.
- Second, data from specialist clinicians in old age psychiatry and geriatric medicine to explore the extent to which medical practitioners are involved in the SAP, whether this enhances clinicians' knowledge and contributes to patient welfare. For old age psychiatrists, this will be compared with data already available from a previous PSSRU survey, permitting comparison of pre- and post- SAP implementation.
- Third, a sample of older people in receipt of care management in three local authorities for which comparable data exists in relation to the extent of multidisciplinary working, service receipt and quality indicators of user involvement and management practice. These data will permit comparison pre-

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and post- SAP implementation on the extent to which care packages are more closely aligned to needs.

- Fourth, a sample of older people being assessed in one local authority at the point at which entry to care homes is being considered. This sample will be compared with a previous sample in similar circumstances in the same authority using standardised assessments. This will permit comparison pre- and post- SAP implementation on the extent to which the SAP has led to more effective identification of needs.
- Fifth, a survey of users and carers to capture user and carer experiences of the SAP and to identify the extent to which information was provided, their views addressed and whether an assessment summary was made available.

OUTPUTS

The findings from the study will be disseminated both nationally and within authorities participating in the research. Regular accessible summaries will be available to those concerned with SAP implementation. Dissemination will also take place at a seminar for local agencies, to users and carers and on the PSSRU website.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The PSSRU staff conducting the study are David Challis, Paul Clarkson, Jane Hughes, Michele Abendstern and Caroline Sutcliffe at PSSRU, University of Manchester and Alistair Burns of the PSSRU, the Department of Psychiatry and Manchester Mental Health and Social Care Trust. For further information please contact Paul Clarkson (0161 275 5674) or email pssru@man.ac.uk.

The **PERSONAL SOCIAL SERVICES RESEARCH UNIT** undertakes social and health care research, supported mainly by the Department of Health, and focusing particularly on policy research and analysis of equity and efficiency in community care, long-term care and related areas — including services for elderly people, people with mental health problems and children in care. Views expressed in PSSRU publications do not necessarily reflect those of funding organisations. The PSSRU was established at the University of Kent at Canterbury in 1974, and from 1996 it has operated from three branches:

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