

SURVEY OF PRIVATELY-FUNDED ADMISSIONS TO RESIDENTIAL AND NURSING HOMES

PSSRU

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INTRODUCTION

Financing the long-term care of elderly people is an issue of immense current concern. Although long term care can be provided in private households, most high cost care is still provided in residential and nursing homes. The degree to which the costs of such care will fall to individuals themselves or be borne by the state will depend on government policies, both now and in the future. Information about the elderly people who are admitted to residential and nursing homes is crucial to both informing these policies and understanding their impact.

There are two central government departments with a key interest in this area: the Department of Social Security and the Department of Health. Each Department has funded a variety of research projects which provide information about the funding of long-term care. One study funded by the Department of Health is investigating the expected length of stay of publicly funded residents by tracking 2,500 people admitted in 1995.

However, there are important gaps in our knowledge. In particular, little is known about those people who fund their own care ('privately funded admissions'). In order to help understand their circumstances, the DSS has commissioned the Personal Social Services Research Unit (PSSRU) to carry out a study of people who are admitted to care homes who are funding their own care. The fieldwork is being conducted by the National Centre for Social Research.

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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. The PSSRU was established at the University of Kent at Canterbury in 1974, and from 1996 it has operated from three sites:

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London School of Economics, Houghton Street, London, WC2A 2AE

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The PSSRU Bulletin and publication lists are available free of charge from the unit librarian in Canterbury (01227 837773).

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Website: <http://www.ukc.ac.uk/PSSRU/>

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the survey are:

- to estimate expected length of stay of privately funded residents admitted to care homes;
- to investigate the factors affecting the decision to enter a care home and the choice of a specific home;
- to establish whether self-funded people who are admitted to residential care differ significantly in terms of financial assets and informal support from elderly people in private households; and
- to identify the level of receipt by all residents of social security benefits.

METHOD

A nationally representative sample of about 375 homes will be asked to supply basic information about the home itself and self-funded residents who have been admitted during the previous six months. Information will also be collected about all those residents who are admitted to the home during the subsequent six months. The relatives of those residents that have been identified and who are prepared to participate in the survey will be interviewed about the circumstances of the residents prior to admission and the decision making process.

The survey will:

- describe the context of the admission including the financial and informal resources of the elderly person and services that were being received prior to admission;
- compare privately funded admissions with publicly funded admissions in the previous survey funded by the Department of Health;
- identify factors affecting the decision to enter a care home, the home chosen and fees paid; and
- estimate expected length of stay based on characteristics on admission and the longitudinal survey of publicly funded admissions.

TIMETABLE

The two-year project began in January 1999. The final report will be available in the spring of 2001. A summary of the results will be sent to all homes that participated in the study.

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you would like to discuss the study further please contact Lesley Banks (telephone 01227 823963, email L.A.Banks@ukc.ac.uk) at the PSSRU in Canterbury, or Graham Whitfield at the National Centre for Social Research, 35 Northampton Square, London, EC1V 0AX (telephone 0171 250 1866).