

OUTCOMES, QUALITY AND COSTS OF COMMUNITY EQUIPMENT SERVICES

PSSRU

Outline of a research project

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BACKGROUND

Community equipment services have developed as an important element in keeping older and younger disabled adults independent within their own homes. The Department of Health *Guide to Integrating Community Equipment Services* (DH, London, 2001) identified the role of community equipment as enabling adults who require assistance to perform essential activities of daily living, maintain their health and independence and live as full a life as possible. A significant investment was made in attempting to integrate and prioritise community equipment services by modernising and expanding services and setting targets to increase the number of people benefiting from these services. The aim was to improve both the quality and range of equipment available, from simple devices such as grab rails to extended use of the more modern telecare systems.

While a number of policy initiatives highlighted some progression in community equipment service, there is still a need to improve assessments, delivery times and access to equipment. There is a dearth of research investigating the outcomes, quality and cost of community equipment services, the relationship between them and how to measure them. This is particularly pertinent as the Information Centre for Health and Social Care plan to conduct a User Experience Survey of users of community equipment services in 2007/08. This should provide a valuable benchmark from which to measure any improvements in outcomes and quality resulting from the Care Services Efficiency Delivery proposed reforms.

AIMS

The principal objectives of this research are to:

- To identify methods of measuring equipment service outputs, quality and outcomes for younger and older disabled adults.
- To feed into methods of performance measurement and the User Experience Survey.
- To provide an understanding of community equipment services and the relationship between service user-assessed quality, outcomes and costs.

METHOD

There are three planned stages to the work. The overarching aim of the project will be to explore the outcome, quality and costs of community equipment services designed to help both older and younger disabled people to live independently at home. The objective in the first stage will be to establish the key aspects of quality and outcomes and other contextual and efficiency related factors associated with cost and quality variation. This will include a systematic review of the literature and consultations and interviews with service users, providers, commissioners and experts, including those involved in the supporting and monitoring of equipment services.

Following on from the findings of this first stage, the objective of the second stage will be to develop indicators of outcomes and quality and to validate the proposed approach with service users and other stakeholders. The final stage will use the measures developed in the second stage to feed into the 2007/08 User Experience Survey (UES) on equipment. It is proposed that a number of items developed in stage two will be selected as compulsory for this survey, but all authorities/

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providers will be invited to use the full questionnaire. Additional data will be collected about factors hypothesised to affect variations in outcome, quality and costs. Analyses will focus on factors associated with variations in quality, outcome and costs.

OUTPUTS AND DISSEMINATION

Research summaries will be produced in an accessible format and made available on the PSSRU website. All participating service users, providers, commissioners and other experts will receive a short feedback report summarising key findings should they so wish. Full research reports will be made available on the website (see below). Articles for peer review journals and presentations at conferences will be based on these reports.

The results of the work will feed into the PSSRU's current Department of Health funded programme on costs, quality and outcomes. In particular the results will feed into the approach being developed to measure outputs, efficiency and productivity of social services for national accounts and other purposes.

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