

QUALITY MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME

PSSRU

Outline of a research programme funded by HM Treasury

Julien Forder, James Caiels, Ann Netten, Jan Smith and Ann-Marie Towers

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INTRODUCTION

The Quality Measurement Framework (QMF) programme is being funded for three years by the Treasury under Invest to Save and led by the Office of National Statistics (ONS). The aim of the QMF programme is to create entirely new mechanisms for more effective and efficient measurement and monitoring of third sector provision of public services, reducing the burden on the third sector while releasing cash through more efficient use of public funds to provide public services. The purpose is to develop methodologies for measuring and assessing the value added of the relevant public services. They will constitute a framework/tool so that service commissioning authorities can assess and monitor the performance of public services delivered by third sector organisations in a way directly comparable with performance of public or private sector providers.

The work builds on previous research commissioned to feed into the Atkinson review of the measurement of government outputs and productivity for the purposes of National Accounts. This developed an approach which uses research findings and routinely collected information to identify the value of the outputs of services or interventions in terms of their potential to achieve (capacity for benefit) and the degree to which this is achieved (quality) (Netten et al., 2005; 2006).

The programme will last three years in total, starting in January 2007. The PSSRU will carry out four research projects, three projects focusing on the outputs of particular service areas as outlined below and the last project to ascertain the relative importance of the specific aspects or domains of wellbeing that these services affect.

The service projects each have three stages.

1. To develop the approach, methods and tools in order to measure the outcomes of services. A main analytical framework drawing on the quality of life, wellbeing and economics/psychology literature will be developed and adapted for each service setting.
2. To pilot the concepts and measurement tools with a small number of providers.
3. To refine the measurement tools and conduct a larger survey of providers to enable more robust assessment of the outcomes toolkit/framework.

MEASURING AND MONITORING QUALITY OF OUTPUTS OF CARE HOMES

The aims of this study are to develop and validate a method of measuring quality of care based on reported care standards and also a method for monitoring the dependency of residents. After the conceptual developmental stage, the project will conduct small-scale in-depth studies with 6 homes (three older adult and three for younger people with learning disabilities (PWLD)) to test the measure of quality. The pilot work will gauge how people interpret the measure and compare the results on quality and outcomes with the regulatory assessment of care homes used by CSCI. The third stage is a larger study across 100 care homes for older adults and 100 for PWLD.

ESTIMATING THE OUTPUTS OF LOW- LEVEL INTERVENTIONS

Much activity in the voluntary sector is directed towards low-level interventions (such as day care, active living centres, sitting services, meal services, home improvement agencies, etc.) that the government funds through grants. Stage 1 will see the development of measurement approaches, taking into account the outcomes likely to be important to people using these services. In addition, the initial stage will consider the scope and definition of the low level services sector. As above,

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Stage 2 will involve fieldwork with a small number of third-sector providers and people using those services. The results will feed into a larger sample study with a more diverse group of providers. The larger sample results will be evaluated to see whether they reasonably capture the effects of services on wellbeing and quality of life, given the complexities of those concepts.

KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION PROJECT

The aim of the project is to find a way of measuring the value of information and advice services. This study will mirror the staging of those above but account for the lack of conceptual work that has hitherto been done in this area on how to capture the outcome consequences. The first stage of the work will therefore entail in-depth work with providers, service users and commissioners to investigate: what people expect of these services, what they see as the outcomes and quality, and what measurement techniques are likely to be relevant. Stage 2 will involve a small sample (3-5) of provider organisations (including the Elderly Accommodation Counsel (EAC)) which would inform a larger study of a range of advisory services (stage 3). Given the embryonic nature of work in the field the emphasis will be on establishing a feasible approach rather than refining measurement tools.

PREFERENCE STUDY

The aim of the preference study is to ascertain the relative importance or weight people give to domains of outcome (e.g. being clean and nourished, socially participating, being in control, etc.). The work will build on a pilot preference study (Burge et al., 2006) and will use a range of 'preference elicitation' techniques (such as discrete choice, best-worst). Particular attention will be paid to phrasing and description of outcome states, and possible context / framing effects in people's responses. The preference study will need to accommodate the wide range of possible outcomes as exemplified by the diversity of services considered above.

TIMETABLE AND OUTPUTS

The programme will run for three years from January 2007.

The outputs of this project will include: interim and main reports; background papers and annexes on specific issues; and a toolkit for the measurement of adult social care outcomes.

REFERENCES

- Burge, P., Gallo, F. and Netten, A. (2006) Valuing PSS outputs and quality changes, PSSRU Discussion Paper 2356.
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RESEARCH TEAM

Julien Forder – telephone 01227 823873; email J.E.Forder@kent.ac.uk
James Caiels – telephone 01227 827552; email J.Caiels@kent.ac.uk
Ann Netten – telephone 01227 823644; email A.P.Netten@kent.ac.uk
Jan Smith – telephone 01227 827954; email jes31@kent.ac.uk
Ann-Marie Towers – telephone 01227 827954; email A.Towers@kent.ac.uk

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University of Kent, Cornwallis Building, Canterbury, Kent, CT2 7NF
London School of Economics and Political Science, Houghton Street, London, WC2A 2AE
University of Manchester, First Floor, Dover Street Building, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL

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