PERFORMANCE INDICATORS IN THE SOCIAL CARE OF OLDER PEOPLE

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CONTEXT

A number of central government initiatives in the 1980s forged a climate of opinion around the idea of efficiency in managing public resources. This is now evident in a growing focus upon performance review and monitoring, which has increased the awareness and use of performance indicators throughout a range of public services. For social services, it is increasingly a requirement that data be available to make performance review possible. The recent White Paper, Modernising Social Services and other guidance, gives a sharper focus to these concerns at the local level. The aim of this work was to develop, implement and monitor a set of performance indicators for services to older people. The work was commissioned by a social services department with assistance from the Social Services Inspectorate.

DESIGN

This study was in four parts. Firstly, the social services department’s existing management information system was reviewed. Following this, a set of performance measures was derived within a framework, which permitted a more sustained analysis of their use. The efficacy of this system was reviewed and revised over a period of time. To achieve this, two staff from PSSRU worked with key staff in the social services department in a series of focus groups. The final part of this study – to set this innovative work in a national context by means of a published monograph – is near to completion.

FINDINGS

The work so far has provided the social services department with a set of indicators and information, which they have acted upon and begun to use in their local appraisal systems. The development of a framework – the Performance Indicator Analytical Framework (PIAF) – has assisted in integrating the levels and stages of activity in social care of older people with relevant indicators, directives and policy guidance. Work continues, linking the explanation and derivation of indicators with the experience of agency staff in implementation and utilisation. More generally, this work is seen as addressing the more macro aspects of care management and coordinated care such as quality assurance.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The PSSRU research staff conducting this study are Paul Clarkson and David Challis with assistance from Raymond Warburton (SSI).