

NEED FOR SOCIAL CARE FOR OLDER PEOPLE

PSSRU

Outline of a research study funded by the Department of Health

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P59/July 2004

BACKGROUND

The Department of Health is updating and improving the formulae for allocating funds for personal social services between local authorities in England, and has commissioned the Personal Social Services Research Unit to conduct research that will feed into the revised Formula Spending Share (FSS) for older people's services. The formula includes provision for care homes, day care, home care, home help services, meals for people over the age of 65, and the associated social work and administration costs. The essential principle underlying the FSS is that local authorities should be given an equitable share of public funds, and that this should reflect area variations in needs and costs.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- Provide updated estimates of the relative need for the principal services for older people, by people being provided with services and those who are not.
- Investigate ways in which the formula might take account of unmet need.
- Investigate approaches to allowing for variation in the ability of older people to pay for services.
- Highlight the particular circumstances and needs of minority ethnic service users.
- Investigate ways in which the formula might take account of new housing and care arrangements, such as extra care housing.
- Compare the characteristics of current admissions with the past and investigate other areas of policy interest.

METHOD

We aim to achieve a sample of 15 authorities, 1,200 admissions and 600 older people in receipt of home care. To ensure analysis is based on an adequate number of older people in a nationally representative sample, authorities were randomly selected from a sample stratified by local authority type and geographical region. Furthermore, authorities with higher proportions of older people belonging to minority ethnic groups were over sampled.

There will be two principal types of data collection:

1. A survey of all admissions of older people to care homes over a three-month period (new supported first-time admissions including those arranging deferred payment agreements; emergency admissions; existing residents being assessed due to a change in circumstances).

It is envisaged that the information about admissions to care homes would be provided by care managers or their proxies once they have obtained informed consent. We would expect that the information will largely correspond to that which would usually be ascertained during assessments. Data would include, for example, the characteristics of the older people being assessed, and the type and price of the home to which they are admitted.

2. Interviews with a nationally representative sample of older people in receipt of home care conducted by NOP, from a sampling frame provided by local authorities.

Data will include their source of referral, social care needs/dependency, financial circumstances, use of social care services (including home care, day care,

home help, meals) and use of secondary care services (including therapy and hospital spells).

Participating councils will also be asked if they are able to provide aggregate activity and expenditure data based on local, ward level or similar areas.

Data will be treated anonymously and kept securely, in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Act. In accordance with research governance recommendations, the Department of Health is acting as the research sponsor. The study has been subjected to ethical and scientific review.

MILESTONES

The Department of Health must have results from the study by the middle of 2005 in order to devise the FSS formulae for 2006/7. The proposed timetable for the research includes the following milestones:

Agreed participation with councils	August 2004
Pilot study	October 2004
Data collection/fieldwork	November–March 2005
Input, analysis of surveys, interviews, secondary data	April–May 2005
Final report to Department of Health	June 2005

OUTCOMES

Participation in this study will help to ensure that the distribution of resources for social care in England is based on up-to-date and accurate information, which reflects variations in local need and circumstances. Participating authorities will be provided with a summary of the overall results and of the results for their area. Overall results will be made publicly available on the PSSRU website.

PSSRU RESEARCH TEAM

The project director is Ann Netten (telephone: 01227 823963; email: A.P.Netten@kent.ac.uk). The team at the PSSRU will include:

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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. 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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