The Quality Measurement Framework Project
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Background
The QMF project is being funded for three years by the Treasury under ‘Invest to Save’ and is being led by the Office of National Statistics (ONS). The aim of the project is to create entirely new mechanisms for more effective and efficient measurement and monitoring of third sector provision of public services. New methodologies will be developed that can measure and assess the value added of the relevant public services. These 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 the performance of public or private sector providers. Four workpackages are being carried out within the project by PSSRU. Three focus on the outputs of the key service areas, (care homes, low-level interventions, and information and advice services). The final workpackage will identify the relative importance of the specific aspects or domains of wellbeing that these services affect through a population preference study, due to begin in summer 2009.

The PSSRU workpackage, measuring quality in care homes, began 2008 with a pilot study involving six care homes in two regions of the country. Following this work, procedures and instrumentation were finalised. Fieldwork for the main-stage of the work began in earnest in May 2008. Since then, approximately 172 homes have agreed to take part across the four regions and fieldwork has taken place in 161 of them. Altogether we aim to achieve a sample of 200 care homes in this project, which would yield a sample of up to 1000 service users in total.

Pilot work has been completed with both staff and users of low-level services, focusing primarily on day care services. Staff and service user focus groups examined the key aspects of quality facilitated by low-level service providers that affect people's functioning states and quality of life. Users also took part in a series of one-to-one cognitive interviews to help develop instruments that are currently being used in a larger fieldwork exercise. This work will involve up to 1000 users of services delivered by up to 135 providers.

Stakeholders and key informants concerned with the delivery of Information and Advice (I&A) services have been involved with establishing the outcomes for users across a range of different I&A services. Focus groups are being conducted with users of these services to establish the needs met by I&A services from a service user perspective including short, intermediate and long term outcomes. Tools and approaches for measuring short-term and intermediate outcomes are being developed and will be tested using cognitive interview techniques as part of the next phase of this work.

References