

LOCAL AUTHORITY CARERS SURVEY 2009: SURVEY DEVELOPMENT

PSSRU

Outline of a research project funded by the Department of Health

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BACKGROUND

Government policy has increasingly recognised that informal carers play an important role in helping vulnerable people to live in the community. Estimated figures from 2001 show that 5.2 million people in England and Wales provide unpaid care to support family members, friends or neighbours. Informal care-giving can be associated with lower income, poorer health and reduced access to leisure opportunities.

The government's strategy on carers (2008) identified four key outcomes to be achieved by 2018:

- carers will not be forced into financial hardship
- carers will be supported to stay mentally and physically well and treated with dignity
- carers will be able to have a life of their own alongside their caring role
- carers will be respected as expert care partners

The Department of Health plans to monitor the impact of the new strategy on carers' experiences and outcomes over time. A voluntary local authority survey of carers' experiences will be carried out in 2009–2010 to help do this. It will be a self-completion survey of a sample of carers known to councils' social services departments. It will provide useful baseline information about carers' experiences and could be repeated at regular intervals over the next ten years.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the development project are to:

- liaise and consult with policymakers, carers groups, local authorities and other stakeholders to ensure the survey covers important topics and complements other data collections;
- develop and test survey questions for use in a voluntary local authority survey of carers' outcomes and experiences of support and services in 2009/10.

METHOD

Questions about carers' experiences of support and quality of life will be developed via:

- stakeholder consultations about the focus of the survey and particular questions;
- the review and development of a self-completion survey of carers' experiences developed by the PSSRU for Kent County Council in 2007–08, which drew on group interviews with carers;
- cognitive testing of questions with a purposive sample of 30 carers living in two local authorities, one northern and urban and one southern and rural.

TIMETABLE AND OUTPUTS

Consultations will be carried out between October and November 2008. Question design and testing will be carried out between December 2008 and March 2009, to deliver questions for review in April 2009.

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RESEARCH TEAM

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