

The Baker's Dozen: unit costs and funding

Secretariat to the Older People's Inquiry into 'That Bit of Help'

Introduction

The *Older People's Inquiry into 'That Bit of Help'* was set up as a response to recent policy statements on involving older people in developing and shaping programmes and strategies that will affect them (Department of Health, 2005; HM Government, 2005). One of the main tasks for the Inquiry was to identify examples of 'That Bit of Help'; low level supports that will enable people to remain independent and contribute to society. Such provisions will become increasingly important as the proportion of older people in society rises. The Inquiry was commissioned in 2004 by the Steering Group of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation Older People's Programme and brought together older people and representatives of major national agencies.

Background papers were prepared by the Secretariat on demographics and service provision, what older people say they want by way of help, and the broader policy context that reflected areas of life older people see as important to them (see Raynes et al., 2006). The Secretariat sought examples of 'That Bit of Help' from local authorities, primary care trusts, housing associations, and from voluntary, faith and BME organisations. Letters were also sent to newspaper editors to ask readers to send in examples. Unit costs would be estimated for selected examples of 'That Bit of Help'.

After lengthy debate Inquiry members selected a 'Baker's Dozen' and then prioritised them based on information about the costs and the extent to which they would make a difference to older people lives. As shown in Table 1, home maintenance, help to return home from hospital, domestic help, and a 'pop-in' night service were rated highest but all 13 were considered important.

Table 1 also shows the user charges. Inquiry members felt that overall pressure on local government spending was likely to result in less money for preventive services. Given high levels of poverty among older people, filling the gap between funding and costs by raising user charges would only reduce use of these supports by the very people who need them most.

Costs

For each Bit of Help the unit cost is estimated using information from just one scheme. Each is funded from a particular mix of sources and provided by a particular organisation within a particular locality. Costs, therefore, are likely to change if the service were provided elsewhere or if supply and demand features changed. If the support were provided by a public sector or a for-profit organisation, or as a larger or smaller scale operation, it is likely there would be different management and overhead costs. This would also change overall costs.

The unit costs are estimated with a view to expanding availability of such supports. Almost all have been estimated using financial information from the managing organisation and reflect the closest approximation of their long-run marginal opportunity cost using 2003-2004 prices (see, for example, Beecham 2000). The two exceptions are the Primary Night Care Scheme, for which the Borough Council provided the unit costs, and the Ideal Retail Stores. For the latter, the components the Inquiry members were felt important are listed in Box 1.

A cost for volunteer time has not been included in the estimates. Despite the high dependence on volunteers, who were often older people, all but one of the schemes commented on the difficulties of getting enough volunteers. Were these examples to be made more widely available, paid workers might be required. Older people's volunteering activity is estimated to be worth around £5 billion a year (Meadows, 2004).

Funding

There was a lot of creativity in finding formal resources for these examples of 'That Bit of Help'. Money came from central government initiatives, health improvement and public health budgets, regeneration funds, and from the business community (see Table 2). Fundraising, legacies, donations and charges played a vital role. These resources were often used to subsidise shortfalls between formal funding and the cost of providing the service. Inquiry members were concerned, however, about short-term and unstable funding and contracting arrangements. This not only leads to uncertainty for voluntary organisations but may also mean an important source of support is removed from an older person's life.

Making a difference

Each of the Baker's Dozen illustrates a good way of providing a service, or an innovative service; they are not necessarily the only example. Age Concern, for example, run domestic help and mobile toenail cutting services in many areas. One member summarised the Inquiry's concerns about the availability of such supports.

...We would be concerned that some local authorities could feel that because they can identify several examples of such services in their area that they are already 'doing enough'. The reality is that if the rhetoric of prevention, independence and choice is to become a reality for older people, much more is needed.

Is 'That Bit of Help' effective? Is it good value for money? Two of the schemes, RISE and SMILE, had been formally evaluated by outside organisations. For the other examples the main report illustrates the difference they might make to older people's lives with quotes taken from the schemes' surveys or feedback and monitoring exercises.

It is imperative that such supports are properly evaluated. More evidence is needed on how people use, and would like to use, 'That Bit of Help' over time, its impact on the users' welfare and quality of life, as well as the role of such supports in preventing – or delaying – use of costly high-support services such as residential homes or hospital wards.

References

- Beecham, J. (2000) *Unit Costs: Not Exactly Child's Play*, Joint publication from the Department of Health, Personal Social Services Research Unit and Dartington Social Care Research Unit.
- Department of Health (2005) *Independence, Well-being and Choice; Our Vision for the Future of Social Care for Adults in England*, Department of Health, London.
- HM Government (2005) *Opportunity Age: Meeting the Challenges of Ageing in the 21st Century*, The Stationery Office, London.
- Meadows, P. (2004) *The Economic Contribution of Older People*, Age Concern, London.

Further Information

- Raynes, N., Clark, H. and Beecham, J. (eds) (2006) *The Report of the Older People's Inquiry in 'That Bit of Help'*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York.
- Raynes, N., Clark, H. and Beecham, J. (eds) (2006) *Evidence submitted to the Older People's Inquiry in 'That Bit of Help'*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York.
- The JRF summary of the report can be found at <http://www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/ebooks/briefing03.pdf>

Box 1 Attributes of an 'ideal retail store'

- Making all stores accessible to anybody who might want to use them
- Seating in shops or prompt provision if there isn't a seat in the right place
- Free delivery services provided for shoppers within a 30-mile radius
- Collection point(s) for purchases
- A restaurant facility in all shops
- In-store telephone ordering service staffed by people who know the products
- Web-based ordering services
- Literature available on all these services in all stores in a variety of formats
- An advisory service for shoppers that covers all products
- A connection service, for example, to plumb in washing machines
- A safe place to store packages purchased elsewhere
- 'Smart' trolleys
- Accessible, well-lit toilets.

Table 1 The Baker's Dozen: costs and charges

Scheme	Activities	User charges	Unit costs
Handy Help	Small home maintenance and repairs, such as fixing dripping taps or mending windows. Usually completed in one visit.	£10 per visit plus materials	£54 per visit
Welcome Home	Volunteer transports people from hospital and helps them settle at home by tidying, shopping, sorting post, etc.	No charge made	£78 per client
Help at Home	Paid workers clean, change bed linen, iron, (accompanied) shop, and collect prescriptions and pensions	£8.25 per hour	£10.70 per hour
Primary Night Care	Paid care workers make home visits at night.	£8.50	£21 per visit
Befriending Service	Volunteers provide weekly social visits to isolated people and those in need of support.	No charge	£5.35 per hour
Sole Mates	Regular visits to give foot bath, foot massage, and to cut toenails. There is also a one-off £10 charge for nail-cutters.	£3.50 per visit	£13.50 per hour
Cinnamon Trust	Provides help with pet care in the older person's home, and foster care for some pets.	No charge noted	£35 per person per annum
Digging Deep	Allotments developed in primary schools led by older volunteers. Part of the 5-a-day healthy eating initiative.	No charge made	Six schools in one area: £7,050.00
RISE	Provides visits to isolated older people, transport to lunch club, activities and outings. £10 optional membership fee.	£3 for lunch, small charge for outings	£8.30 per day
SMILE	A major component of this programme is monitored exercise clubs for beginners.	20p to £2.90 per session	£144 per user per annum
Social and Activity Centre	Provides lunch, classes and a range of activities. One of many services provided by a local charitable trust.	No charge noted	£44 per day
Keeping-in-Touch	Funding obtained to get more volunteers to provide practical help for visually impaired people. Running for only 6 months so unit cost appears high.	No charge noted	£34 per hour
Retail Stores: An Ideal	A range of items in retail stores that would make shopping easier.		

Table 2 The Baker's Dozen: funding sources

Scheme	Funding sources
Handy Help	Lloyds TSB Foundation, Messenger Newspapers, Rank Foundation. User charges and the user pays for materials.
Welcome Home	Social Services. Volunteer time.
Help at Home	New Opportunities Fund, County and Borough Council, PCT. User charges.
Primary Night Care	Borough Council. User charges.
Befriending Service	County Council, Borough Council, PCT. Volunteer time.
Sole Mates	County and District Councils, PCTs. Volunteer time. User charges.
Cinnamon Trust	Legacies and donations. Volunteer time.
Digging Deep	NHS, County Council, PCT and Age Concern partnership funds. New Opportunities Fund. Volunteer time.
RISE	Health Improvement Grant, Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. User charges and fundraising. Volunteer time.
SMILE	Borough Council. User charges.
Social and Activity Centre	Range of sources including Social Services. User charges. Volunteer time.
Keeping-in-Touch	Social Services, District Council, Nationwide Foundation. Department of Health Opportunities for Volunteering Scheme. User charges and fundraising. Volunteer time.
Retail Stores: An Ideal	