

Preface

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In this seventeenth volume of the Unit Costs report, we have included a guest editorial followed by three short articles. Here we introduce these and also identify improvements, new information and any other changes that have been made this year. All data sources have been reviewed to ensure that the information is as up-to-date as possible, and information about any schemata which have been included in previous volumes, but excluded this year, are discussed in this section. As always, if a service or professional role is still available but the costs are out-of-date, current salary information and inflators are employed to adjust the costs to the present year. When a schema is ten or more years old, no recent data have been found, and the service is no longer relevant, we delete the schema from the publication until new research or other data are available. Previous articles and schemata which are no longer found in this edition are listed at the end of the report and these can still be downloaded online if required.

Guest editorial and articles

Economics and Cochrane and Campbell methods: the role of unit costs (pages 7-14)

The guest editorial this year has been written by Ian Shemilt and Miranda Mugford of the influential Campbell & Cochrane Economics Methods Group. They discuss how systematic reviews and economic evaluations of interventions inform health and social care policy and practice in the UK and explore how unit cost data fit into the overall picture.

Costs of support organisations for people with direct payments and personal budgets (pages 15-19)

As personal budgets are implemented it is expected that many more service users will choose to take their personal budget as a direct payment and should have access to direct payments support (DPS). In this article Vanessa Davey presents the first comprehensive calculation of DPS unit costs using a method which reflects resource utilisation and other costs such as those related to operating a scheme in a rural area.

The cost of services for people with dementia (pages 21-25)

Following the publication of the first ever National Dementia Strategy in February 2009 (Department of Health, 2009a) and the subsequent implementation plan (Department of Health, 2009b), Jennifer Beecham and Raphael Wittenberg have drawn on previous work in order to cost the proposed services for people with dementia. The National Dementia Strategy sets out initiatives designed to make the lives of people with dementia, their carers and families better and more fulfilled.

Social Care Institute for Excellence's (SCIE) work on economics and the importance of valuing unpaid care (pages 27-33).

Costing unpaid care is fundamental to economic evaluations in social welfare in order to form a reliable picture of the true costs and benefits of an intervention. In this article Jennifer Francis and David McDaid outline the importance of valuing unpaid care, and identify the issues involved in doing so. They discuss the different methods which can be adopted to value the principal element of caregiving: the cost of carers' time.

Improvements and new information

Expert Patients Programme

This year, following consultation with Gerry Richardson at the Centre for Health Economics (CHE) at the University of York, we have included a schema on the Expert Patients Programme (EPP) which provides the cost per participant for 2008/09. This programme is a lay-led self-management programme specifically for people living with long-term conditions. Having been successfully piloted, the Expert Patients Programme currently offers around 12,000 course places a year and is now being made available through primary care trusts and partner organisations.

Services for people with learning disabilities

The information used in previous years for some of the schemata in this section is now more than ten years old (Emerson and colleagues, 1999) and has been replaced with new estimates. This year we have drawn on a study funded by the Wellcome Trust and carried out by Felce and colleagues in 2005 in order to produce unit costs for group homes (4.1), fully staffed living settings (4.3) and semi-independent living settings (4.5). As no new estimates are available for village communities (4.2) and supported living schemes (4.4), but the services are still current, we have continued to include them in this report using the same Emerson study. However, following policy in the Government White Papers *Valuing People* (2001) and *Our Health, Our Care, Our Say* (2006), we have excluded the schema this year on NHS residential campus provision (previously 4.3) as the NHS, with its partners, is required to replace these by 2010 with appropriate housing and support using new alliances and approaches.

Unpaid care

This year, as well as an article on unpaid care discussed above, we have included new information in section 6 on a variety of values which can be used in order to estimate the cost of carers' time. This schema (6.10) will remain in the report every year and will be updated using either new information that becomes available or the appropriate inflators.

Salaries of NHS staff

In previous volumes, the salary information which is generated using a sample of organisations from the Electronic Staff Record (ESR) Data Warehouse, which records payments made to staff in the NHS, has been labelled as experimental. This was to allow time to remove the effect of sampling bias while the ESR was rolled out to all NHS organisations. Now the information provided by the Information Centre makes use of data from all NHS organisations taking up ESR, with the exception of two Foundation Trusts which are yet to join. The experimental label has therefore been removed and this year all NHS salaries have been taken from the NHS staff earnings estimates (January-March 2009) provided by the Information Centre.

Salaries of local authority staff

In last year's publication, it was reported that the National Minimum Dataset for Social Care (NMDS-SC) had been piloted across local government and it was hoped that this year we could use this information in the Unit Costs report. Unfortunately, because salary information has been received for social workers and social work assistants from a limited number of authorities, Skills for Care have advised that this year we should continue to use the Earnings Survey carried out by Local Government Analysis and Research (LGAR) which is based on information provided by 46 local authorities. We have, however, used information from the National Minimum Dataset for Social Care for local authority home care workers, which is based on a survey of 4,795 home care workers, of which 1,795 are local authority home care workers. No comparative information has been collected this year by the LGAR on home care workers.

Unit costs for the independent sector

Following the publication of the survey Adult Social Services Expenditure Survey 2008-09 (Local Government Association, 2009), this year we have included for the first time the unit costs for social care services (including private nursing homes for older people and residential homes for people with physical disabilities and for people with mental health problems) provided by the independent sector. These costs have been included in the relevant sections according to client group.

Hospital doctors

In this section this year, on advice from the Department of Health, we have included an additional group of doctors (registrars) and also the Associate Specialist in the hospital doctor section.

Superannuation

Each year we carry out a survey of 20 authorities for information on the local authority contributions to superannuation. Last year the rate had increased to 17.7 per cent from 15.9 per cent. This year the rate has increased to 18.6 per cent.

Other information

Paramedic and emergency ambulance services

The schema for this service (previously in the ‘hospital and other services’ section) has been excluded from this edition of the Unit Costs report following discussions with the Department of Health. This costing was carried out in the mid-1990s and has been updated in previous volumes ever since. It is now no longer representative of the paramedic and emergency ambulance services, but we hope to reintroduce this schema following work being carried out on Payment by Results (PbR) for ambulance services. This work is currently in the pilot phase (<http://www.library.nhs.uk/HealthManagement/ViewResource.aspx?resID=260848>). Information on paramedic services can now be found in 6.1 and more detail can be found in the Department of Health’s Reference Costs (http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_098945).

Personal Social Services Expenditure Return

Every year, the NHS Information Centre for health and social care (IC) reports on local authority income, expenditure and activity of key services in the PSS EX1. In 2008, the Department of Health published the document *Improved Reporting of Adult Social Care Finance and Activity Data* which provides information on planned changes to the PSS EX1 return. Following these recommendations, all changes made to PSS EX1 for 2008/09 are provided in information and guidance documents produced by the IC (The Information Centre, 2009).

Social worker – qualification costs

Development work in collaboration with the Social Care Workforce Research Unit has been carried out this year on the cost of qualifying social workers. This has involved providing an estimate of the expected working life of social workers and researching the investment costs of training social workers. This work will be reported in next year’s volume.

Finally, we would like to thank all those who have called or e-mailed to comment on estimates or to draw our attention to new material available. This information is invaluable and will help to ensure that we are providing information which is as up-to-date as possible.

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