

Carers: Informing and Improving Policy and Practice Through Research and Evaluation: Event feedback

Thursday 30 January saw the gathering of people interested in research and evaluations on carers for a joint workshop hosted by the Social Services Research Group (SSRG) and the NIHR School for Social Care Research (SSCR) at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

The workshop, "Carers: Informing and Improving Policy and Practice Through Research and Evaluation", was attended by a mixed audience of practitioners, commissioners, policy makers, third sector representatives and researchers and chaired by Helena Herklots, Chief Executive of Carers UK.

"It's great to have a full day's conference focused on carers... Many of us are carers, were carers or will need to be cared for"

Helena Herklots, Chief Executive of Carers UK

It was great to see the level of interest in the event and the level of engagement during the event. Not only were we fully booked, but we still had people requesting places at the door! It was particularly good to see a number of practice colleagues and carers at the event.



Helena Herklots

The day started with a welcome from Colin Kelsey (SSRG Executive Committee) and introduction to Helena Herklots, chair

for the day. Helena was very pleased to be at an event focusing fully on research and evaluation on carers, and stressed the importance of such debate to improve services and support for carers.

Elaine Edgar from the Department of Health spoke first with a useful update on the Care and Support Bill. The Bill, currently at Committee stage, is due to become law later this year. It will place a new duty on Local Authorities to meet carers' eligible needs for support and extends obligations to provide carers' assessments. A major theme of the presentation was the mainstreaming of carers, with equal rights to support as the person they care for, and ensuring they are embedded in the bill not a separate section within it.

Elaine noted the DH were aiming to publish draft regulations for Care Bill in May for three months of consultation, and are keen to hear if people have ideas of gaps to fill in the practice guidance to support the Care Bill.

Many of the themes, the implications and the practicalities of the Bill were returned to throughout the rest of the day.

Mary Larkin from De Montfort University then presented on the next steps for carers research and explained her reasons for carrying out an overview of research on carers. She described the two themes that emerged from the research: 'gathering and evaluating' which includes areas such as profiling carers, the impact of caring on carers and support for carers; and 'conceptualising and theorising' which includes the concept of 'carer', models of caring, and theories of caring such as feminist critiques and power relations. Mary

discussed the strengths and weaknesses of each approach, looked to the way forward and ended with a hope that this work will lead to further debate on carers' research. Discussion after the presentation covered the under-representation of certain groups who are less likely to identify as carers, and the dangers of treating carers as one homogenous group.



Mary Larkin

After lunch, Diane Fox from the University of Kent described work funded by SSCR that the team there have done on carers' quality of life based on survey data. She point out the altruism of carers who filled out their survey despite their busy lives. She presented findings from the study which found that most variation in quality of life was associated with individual factors such as gender, employment and co-residence with the cared for person. A member of the audience noted the importance of councils feeding back to carers the results of surveys.

Wendy Mitchell's presentation focussed on Local Authority assessments and support planning for carers and the person they care for, an area that will be directly affected

continued

by the Care Bill and one that is of key relevance to social care practitioners as was demonstrated by the ensuing discussion. This University of York research, funded by SSCR, found that carers' assessments were generally not carried out separately, if at all; that many carers did not remember being asked about ability and willingness to provide care; and that carers supports needs were not being adequately considered. She noted that there is good guidance on how to involve carers in personalisation but reported experiences of carers was very variable. It was great to hear from delegates who provided two examples of where carers assessments are done well.

The day ended with a presentation by Jo Moriarty, Kings College London (KCL), on outreach services for family carers. Carers

have difficulties finding out about, and accessing, support for themselves, and there is still a lot of stigma associated with asking for help, particularly for certain groups. Related to earlier discussion was the added issue that many people do not see themselves as carers, and many groups of carers are under-represented. The KCL team looked at different types of outreach such as drop-in, carers' cafes, GPs, self-help groups and specialist outreach. They concluded that different types of outreach would help reach the diversity of carers. Delegates at the event also raised additional points such as the need for support and training for carers.

As Helena tweeted afterwards "Really interesting and thought provoking day focussing on #carers research

#ssrgcarers14. More to do to get research into policy & practice" We've moved forward in the discussion and brought a lot of key evidence together but we need to push forward to ensure the evidence feeds into policy and practice.

Presentations and the video of the event will be available on the SSRG website shortly.

Thanks to Nic Brimblecombe, Research Officer, Personal Social Services Research Unit at the London School of Economics and Political Science for contributing to this piece; and to Jo Moriarty, Research Fellow at the Social Care Workforce Research Unit at King's College London for her Storify story of the event (<http://goo.gl/JrBFqQ>) which contributed to this piece - Ed.

Children and Young People's Health Benchmarking Tool

This Benchmarking Tool has been developed by the Child and Maternal (ChiMat) Health Intelligence Network. It presents a selection of indicators that are most relevant to the health and wellbeing of children and young people in an easily accessible way to support local decision making.

The Benchmarking Tool brings together and builds upon health outcome data from the Public Health Outcomes Framework (PHOF) and the NHS Outcomes Framework (NHS OF).

Indicators relating to children and young people already published within these Outcomes Frameworks have been included in the initial release. As they are updated, the changes will be reflected in the Benchmarking Tool.

The Children and Young People's Health Outcomes Forum also recommended a number of important additional indicators and increased detail for some existing indicators.

Development of additional indicators will be considered as part of the formal refresh processes for the NHS OF and PHOF. Supplementary information will be added

The ChiMat Health Intelligence Network was established in response to the recommendations of the Children and Young People's Health Outcomes Forum: an independent group of experts from local government, the NHS and charities advising the Government on improving services and outcomes for children and young people. <http://www.chimat.org.uk/default.aspx>

as relevant data become available and a development schedule will be published shortly. Data will be made available at both local authority and clinical commissioning group level where possible.

The Children and Young People's Benchmarking Tool will inform local discussions and encourage improvements in services and health outcomes for children and young people.

The data is currently presented on two tabs, one showing indicators from the Public Health Outcomes Framework, and one

showing indicators from the NHS Outcomes Framework. Each tab has a list of available 'area types' shown within a drop down box.

For more information please visit: <http://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/cyphof>