Commissioning Brief (12/129)

Interventions to improve skills and care standards in the clinical support workforce for older people

Closing date: 13 September 2012

1. Remit of this call: main topic areas identified

This call invites researchers to evaluate interventions to enhance the skills and care by nurse and therapy support workforce for older patients. The need to improve the quality of older people care is well recognised and the central importance of support staff, who provide most of the day to day care. But little is known about what works in terms of training and organisational developments targeted at support staff.

High quality health services research is invited to address key knowledge gaps. Most of these will involve complex service initiatives and mixed-methods will usually be needed. Careful attention will need to be paid to design studies which give insight to context and produces findings which can be generalised to the wider NHS.

Key research priorities in this area include:

- Identifying the training and development needs of support workers caring for older people in different contexts

    Research is needed to understand the training and support needs of nursing, therapy and care assistants looking after older people in different contexts. These might include community nursing and care teams, care homes, geriatric wards, general medical and surgical wards. Evidence suggests the need for values-based training, although current activity is largely focused on tasks and core competences (such as safe handling and moving of patients). Qualitative research is needed to support the development of targeted and effective training and development interventions.

- Evaluating effective and cost-effective forms of induction, training and organisational development for support staff

    Well-designed evaluations are needed to understand what works best at what cost in improving care for older people. Training and induction interventions might vary in terms of length and duration of course, structure, combination of values or task-based and in teaching methods (including elements of interactivity, role playing and simulation). Organisational developments might include a range of supervision, mentoring, coaching and peer support. Rigorous research is needed to test these different initiatives, with a view to generalising findings to other settings and services. Cost and cost-effectiveness will be an important component of these studies, together with careful assessment of impact in terms of individual confidence, competence and insight as well as team cohesion and motivation.

- Evaluating effective mechanisms for performance management, appraisal and clinical supervision for support staff

  What mechanisms or arrangements need to be put in place to ensure the effective clinical supervision of the support workforce, and what implications do these have for the role and function of the nursing and therapy staff who manage or supervise these staff? How can effective clinical supervision be enacted especially in settings where the direct observation of care within the clinical team is not routine? What arrangements for the appraisal and performance management of the support workforce would be appropriate and proportionate?

- Lessons from outside traditional healthcare settings on supporting and developing assistant staff

  A systematic review of evidence from new providers of care (third sector, social enterprise and independent) and non-health sectors (police, education, social care) would be useful. The wider literature could be mined to extract lessons on potential interventions to enhance performance and care. There may also be support for carefully designed comparative case studies of induction, training and support for nursing/therapy/care assistants in different organisational contexts (such as NHS-funded and independent care and nursing homes).

2. Purpose of call

This topic was identified as a priority for service managers, clinical leaders and patients identifying key knowledge gaps for the HS&DR programme. There has been increasing focus on the poor quality of care for elderly people on general wards in hospitals, care homes and other settings. Most direct care is now provided by nursing, therapy and care assistants. There is growing recognition of the need to develop and nurture this staff group. However, there is little evidence on what works and what is cost-effective in terms of training, induction, support and development.

This is a targeted call for research which will address some key knowledge gaps. It will be useful to have research which is not just descriptive, but which helps managers to make decisions on where to invest limited resources to get the most from their staff and improve care for older patients.

Further information on the background to this call, including knowledge gaps and relevant research is given in supporting information.

3. Notes to applicants

The NIHR Health Services and Delivery Research (HS&DR) programme aims to produce rigorous and relevant evidence on the quality, access and organisation of health services, including costs and outcomes in order to improve health and health services. It is focused on research to support decisions by frontline managers and clinical leaders on the appropriateness, quality and cost-effectiveness of care.

The NIHR Health Services and Delivery Research programme is funded by the NIHR, with contributions from NISCHR in Wales and CSO in Scotland.

The programme operates two funding streams (this call is under the commissioned workstream); Researcher-led and Commissioned. Researchers in England and Wales are eligible to apply for funding from either workstream under this programme. Researchers in Scotland may apply to the Researcher-led workstream but are not eligible to respond to

the Commissioned workstream and should contact the CSO to discuss funding opportunities for healthcare delivery-type research. Researchers in Northern Ireland should contact NETSCC to discuss their eligibility to apply.

4. Application process and timetable
Please ensure you have read the commissioning brief supporting information and general guidance for applicants as well as the application form guidance notes that have been provided to support this call.

Should you have any questions or require any further clarification please refer to the NETSCC FAQs at HS&DR programme - FAQs, if the answer to your question cannot be found please email your query to hsdrinfo@soton.ac.uk with the title for the call for proposals as the email header. Applicants should be aware that while every effort will be made to respond to enquiries in a timely fashion, **these should be received at least two weeks before the call closing date.**

The process of commissioning will be in **two stages** and applicants should submit **outline proposals** via the HS&DR website by **1pm** on 13 September 2012. No late proposals will be considered. No paper-based only submissions will be considered.

Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their outline application in November 2012.

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal via the HS&DR website (a link will be sent to shortlisted applicants). Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their full proposal application in April 2013. Please note that these dates may be subject to change.

5. Transparency agenda
In line with the government's transparency agenda, any contract resulting from this tender may be published in its entirety to the general public. Further information on the transparency agenda is at:

http://transparency.number10.gov.uk/
http://www.ogc.gov.uk/policy_and_standards_framework_transparency.asp
http://www.contractsfinder.businesslink.gov.uk/