The Rehabilitation Effectiveness for Activities for Life (REAL) study: a national programme of research into NHS inpatient mental health rehabilitation services across England

Helen Killaspy,1,2* Michael King,1,2 Frank Holloway,3 Thomas J Craig,3,4 Sarah Cook,5 Tim Mundy,6 Gerard Leavey,7 Paul McCrone,8 Leonardo Koeser,8 Rumana Omar,9 Louise Marston,10 Maurice Arbuthnott,11 Nicholas Green,1 Isobel Harrison,1 Melanie Lean,1 Melanie Gee5 and Sadiq Bhanbhro5

1Division of Psychiatry, University College London, London, UK
2Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust, London, UK
3South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, London, UK
4Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience, King’s College London, London, UK
5Centre for Health and Social Care Research, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, UK
6Centre for Leadership in Health and Social Care, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, UK
7Bamford Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing, Ulster University, Belfast, UK
8David Goldberg Centre, King’s College London, London, UK
9Department of Statistical Science, University College London, London, UK
10Department of Primary Care and Population Health, University College London, London, UK
11North London Service User Research Forum, London, UK

*Corresponding author

Declared competing interests of authors: none

Published March 2017
DOI: 10.3310/pgfar05070
Plain English summary

The Rehabilitation Effectiveness for Activities for Life (REAL) study
Programme Grants for Applied Research 2017; Vol. 5: No. 7
DOI: 10.3310/pgfar05070

NIHR Journals Library www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk
Mental health rehabilitation services work with people with severe and complex mental health problems: a ‘low-volume, high-needs’ group. Our research programme involved a national survey of NHS inpatient mental health rehabilitation services, the development of a staff training programme to help staff engage service users in activities, a trial to assess the effectiveness of the training programme and a longitudinal study to investigate aspects of the service and service user characteristics associated with better outcomes.

Almost all NHS trusts across England had inpatient mental health rehabilitation units, and 133 took part in our survey. Most were community based, and they provided an average of 14 beds and had an average length of stay of 18 months. Most service users had a diagnosis of psychosis and many had a history of self-neglect. Higher-quality services promoted service users’ independence and satisfaction with care.

Our staff training programme did not improve service users’ engagement in activities, possibly because staff stopped using the techniques and skills learnt after the training team left. However, over half of the service users we followed in our longitudinal study were discharged successfully to the community over 12 months. This was more likely for people who were more active and had better social skills, and in units that adopted a ‘recovery orientation’. A relatively small investment (£67 per service user per month) was required to achieve the improvements in everyday function we found.

Our findings support ongoing investment and further research into NHS mental health rehabilitation services to ensure that people with complex needs are successfully supported in their recovery.
Criteria for inclusion in the Programme Grants for Applied Research journal

Reports are published in Programme Grants for Applied Research (PGfAR) if (1) they have resulted from work for the PGfAR programme, and (2) they are of a sufficiently high scientific quality as assessed by the reviewers and editors.

Programme Grants for Applied Research programme

The Programme Grants for Applied Research (PGfAR) programme, part of the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), was set up in 2006 to produce independent research findings that will have practical application for the benefit of patients and the NHS in the relatively near future. The Programme is managed by the NIHR Central Commissioning Facility (CCF) with strategic input from the Programme Director.

The programme is a national response mode funding scheme that aims to provide evidence to improve health outcomes in England through promotion of health, prevention of ill health, and optimal disease management (including safety and quality), with particular emphasis on conditions causing significant disease burden.

For more information about the PGfAR programme please visit the website: http://www.nihr.ac.uk/funding/programme-grants-for-applied-research.htm

This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by PGfAR as project number RP-PG-0707-10093. The contractual start date was in January 2009. The final report began editorial review in July 2015 and was accepted for publication in July 2016. As the funder, the PGfAR programme agreed the research questions and study designs in advance with the investigators. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The PGfAR editors and production house have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors’ report and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the final report document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this report.

This report presents independent research funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The views and opinions expressed by authors in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the NHS, the NIHR, CCF, NETSCC, PGfAR or the Department of Health. If there are verbatim quotations included in this publication the views and opinions expressed by the interviewees are those of the interviewees and do not necessarily reflect those of the authors, those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the PGfAR programme or the Department of Health.

© Queen’s Printer and Controller of HMSO 2017. This work was produced by Killaspy et al. under the terms of a commissioning contract issued by the Secretary of State for Health. This issue may be freely reproduced for the purposes of private research and study and extracts (or indeed, the full report) may be included in professional journals provided that suitable acknowledgement is made and the reproduction is not associated with any form of advertising. Applications for commercial reproduction should be addressed to: NIHR Journals Library, National Institute for Health Research, Evaluation, Trials and Studies Coordinating Centre, Alpha House, University of Southampton Science Park, Southampton SO16 7NS, UK.

Published by the NIHR Journals Library (www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk), produced by Prepress Projects Ltd, Perth, Scotland (www.prepress-projects.co.uk).
Programme Grants for Applied Research Editor-in-Chief

Professor Paul Little  Professor of Primary Care Research, University of Southampton, UK

NIHR Journals Library Editor-in-Chief

Professor Tom Walley  Director, NIHR Evaluation, Trials and Studies and Director of the EME Programme, UK

NIHR Journals Library Editors

Professor Ken Stein  Chair of HTA Editorial Board and Professor of Public Health, University of Exeter Medical School, UK

Professor Andree Le May  Chair of NIHR Journals Library Editorial Group (EME, HS&DR, PGfAR, PHR journals)

Dr Martin Ashton-Key  Consultant in Public Health Medicine/Consultant Advisor, NETSCC, UK

Professor Matthias Beck  Chair in Public Sector Management and Subject Leader (Management Group), Queen's University Management School, Queen's University Belfast, UK

Dr Tessa Crilly  Director, Crystal Blue Consulting Ltd, UK

Dr Eugenia Cronin  Senior Scientific Advisor, Wessex Institute, UK

Ms Tara Lamont  Scientific Advisor, NETSCC, UK

Dr Catriona McDaid  Senior Research Fellow, York Trials Unit, Department of Health Sciences, University of York, UK

Professor William McGuire  Professor of Child Health, Hull York Medical School, University of York, UK

Professor Geoffrey Meads  Professor of Health Sciences Research, Health and Wellbeing Research Group, University of Winchester, UK

Professor John Norrie  Chair in Medical Statistics, University of Edinburgh, UK

Professor John Powell  Consultant Clinical Adviser, National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), UK

Professor James Raftery  Professor of Health Technology Assessment, Wessex Institute, Faculty of Medicine, University of Southampton, UK

Dr Rob Riemsma  Reviews Manager, Kleijnen Systematic Reviews Ltd, UK

Professor Helen Roberts  Professor of Child Health Research, UCL Institute of Child Health, UK

Professor Jonathan Ross  Professor of Sexual Health and HIV, University Hospital Birmingham, UK

Professor Helen Snooks  Professor of Health Services Research, Institute of Life Science, College of Medicine, Swansea University, UK

Professor Jim Thornton  Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, University of Nottingham, UK

Professor Martin Underwood  Director, Warwick Clinical Trials Unit, Warwick Medical School, University of Warwick, UK

Please visit the website for a list of members of the NIHR Journals Library Board:
www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk/about/editors

Editorial contact:  journals.library@nihr.ac.uk