Improving the capabilities of NHS organisations to use evidence: a qualitative study of redesign projects in Clinical Commissioning Groups

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Declared competing interests of authors: John Powell works part-time (0.5 whole-time equivalent) for the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence as a Consultant Clinical Adviser in the Centre for Health Technology Evaluation. John Powell is a member of the National Institute for Health Research Health Technology Assessment and Efficacy and Mechanism Evaluation Editorial Board and was previously a member of the NIHR Journals Library Editorial Group. David Sharp was a NHS employee at the beginning of the project, and the NHS is an organisation that funds and uses research. David Sharp currently works at Optum Healthcare, an organisation that sells commercial services to the NHS.

Disclaimer: This report contains transcripts of interviews conducted in the course of the research and contains language that may offend some readers.

Published May 2017
DOI: 10.3310/hsdr05180

Plain English summary

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Health Services and Delivery Research 2017; Vol. 5: No. 18
DOI: 10.3310/hsdr05180

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Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) comprise managers, doctors, nurses, consultants and other health-care professionals. These groups make decisions about health-care services in local areas. Because the NHS needs to improve care and spend less money, CCGs must design the best possible services. Evidence use is one means to achieve this, but this is far from straightforward. Often, the needs of evidence users are not met or understood by evidence producers. To inform evidence-based CCG work, we conducted research at eight CCGs across England. Through case studies at each CCG, we found that decisions are based on a range of different evidences, including those produced in scientific research, local data, expertise and experiences and examples from elsewhere. We also found that certain conditions and practices (capabilities) increase the chances of evidence use, particularly those that encourage and manage stakeholder engagement and collaboration. We also visited a producer of evidence for use by NHS commissioners. We found that they hold varied ideas about how other people pick up and use evidence. We suggest that it is important to support NHS commissioners in understanding and identifying different categories of evidence relevant to their work and in using these together. We also identify specific capabilities that, our findings suggest, help enable the use of evidence. Based on our findings, we designed a learning tool (an online resource for self-assessment) aimed at supporting commissioning organisations in developing their own capabilities to use evidence when redesigning services.
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This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the HS&DR programme or one of its preceding programmes as project number 12/5002/20. The contractual start date was in September 2013. The final report began editorial review in June 2016 and was accepted for publication in January 2017. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The HS&DR 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, NETSCC, the HS&DR programme 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 HS&DR programme or the Department of Health.

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