

Mental wellbeing of older people

Introduction

The NIHR Public Health Research (PHR) programme evaluates public health interventions, providing new knowledge on the benefits, costs, acceptability and wider impacts of non-NHS interventions intended to improve the health of the public and reduce inequalities in health. Topics for research are identified and prioritised, and studies are commissioned to help answer questions of public health importance. The studies include both primary research and evidence synthesis.

Question:

What is the relative effectiveness and cost effectiveness of home based support programmes in improving the mental well being of older people living in their own homes?

- **Population:** Older people over 75 years living in their own homes, (excluding those with a diagnosis of dementia), and their carers.
- **Intervention:** Home based interventions (including telephone support programmes). Researchers to specify and justify.
- **Comparator:** None specified, researchers to specify and justify.
- **Primary outcome:** Improved mental well being. **Secondary outcomes:** Reduced utilisation of health and social care services, improved self efficacy, quality of life, physical activity.
- **Time:** Researchers to specify and justify.
- **Design:** Randomised design, researchers to specify and justify design.
- **Setting:** Homes of study participants.

Background to commissioning brief:

In 2006, there were 4.7 million people in the UK aged 75 and over. The number is projected to increase to 5.5 million by 2016 and to 8.2 million by 2031, a rise of 76 per cent over twenty-five years. This places an immense burden on health and social care services as older people become less independent.

Despite better health and increases in wealth over the last 50 years, there is evidence that many older people are becoming increasingly dissatisfied, lonelier and more depressed, many living with low levels of life satisfaction and wellbeing. This may also impact on their physical health.

These factors may affect whether older people remain living in their own homes. There are benefits if older people are able to remain living in their own homes; both for the individual and also societal benefits, such as reduced spend in other areas.

NICE guidance states that there is good evidence from two studies about the cost-effectiveness of occupational therapy (OT) interventions to improve the mental wellbeing of older people. However, there is a shortage of trained occupational therapists, and a lack of evidence concerning the effectiveness and cost effectiveness of alternative interventions.

Primary research is required to investigate ways of supporting older people in their own homes, through effective and cost effective home based support programmes, recognising that mental wellbeing has a significant impact on overall health and quality of life. Cost effectiveness data, to provide comparative evidence for the OT work already performed is also required. Study to be designed taking into account the views of older people.

Notes to Applicants

The NIHR Public Health Research programme is funded by the NIHR, with contributions from the CSO in Scotland, WORD in Wales, and the Research and Development Office in Northern Ireland.

Applicants are asked to:

1. Read the 'Commissioned proposal guidance notes' in full before starting the online application form.
<http://www.phr.ac.uk/Fundingopportunities/Commissioned/index.htm>
2. Refer to the Medical Research Council's Complex interventions guidance: <http://www.mrc.ac.uk/Utilities/Documentrecord/index.htm?d=MRC004871> when planning how studies, particularly RCTs, will be supervised. Further advice specific to each topic will be given by the PHR programme at full proposal and contract stages.

If you wish to submit an outline proposal on this question, please complete the online application form at <http://www.phr.ac.uk/fundingopportunities/commissioned.asp>

Applications submitted by the cut-off date of 13:00 on 9 September 2009 and deemed within the PHR programme's remit will be considered by the PHR Research Funding Board at its meeting in October 2009. Following this meeting shortlisted outline proposals will be invited to submit a full proposal to be considered by the first PHR Research Funding Board in 2010. Shortlisted applicants will be given a minimum of eight weeks to submit a full proposal.