

The capacity of health service commissioners to use evidence: a case study

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Declared competing interests of authors: Sophie Staniszewska is a member of the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Evaluation, Trials and Studies Coordinating Centre Patient and Public Involvement Reference Group and is Associate to Professor Kate Seers (NIHR Health Services and Delivery Research Commissioning Board).

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

Published March 2018

DOI: 10.3310/hsdr06120

Plain English summary

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Health Services and Delivery Research 2018; Vol. 6: No. 12

DOI: 10.3310/hsdr06120

NIHR Journals Library www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk

Plain English summary

Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) lead a network of organisations that plan and make decisions about what services to provide through the NHS. By examining decision-making about service interventions designed to reduce potentially avoidable elderly care admissions into acute hospitals, our study explores the capacity of CCG-led commissioning networks to make decisions that are based on evidence. Empirically, we study 13 cases of representative (region, size, urban/rural) commissioning networks in England, drawing on interviews with commissioning managers, general practitioners (GPs), patient and public involvement (PPI) representatives and other relevant stakeholders. CCGs can not only draw on evidence about what is most clinically effective or cost-effective, but can also consider patient experience and local knowledge held by doctors. However, the inclusion of GPs and PPI representatives is limited, so the local knowledge of doctors and the patient experience are not considered as fully as they might be in commissioning decisions. CCGs can use government agencies, such as commissioning support units, that provide external information about local population and existing service provision, but they fail to do so adequately. The voluntary sector can play a key role in providing local knowledge about individual patients and their needs. Finally, given the need for health and social care organisations to collaborate to support older people so that they do not experience potentially avoidable admissions to acute hospitals, there is a need for organisations to develop joint evidence-based strategies and work together in real time to exchange information. From our research, in collaboration with a PPI reference group, a self-assessment questionnaire for CCG-led commissioning networks was developed, which allows CCGs to assess and develop their capacity to acquire and use different types of evidence in their decision-making.

Health Services and Delivery Research

ISSN 2050-4349 (Print)

ISSN 2050-4357 (Online)

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

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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 12/5002/01. The contractual start date was in September 2013. The final report began editorial review in December 2016 and was accepted for publication in August 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 and Social Care. 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 and Social Care.

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