Supported accommodation for people with mental health problems: the QuEST research programme with feasibility RCT

Helen Killaspy,1,2* Stefan Priebe,3,4 Michael King,1 Sandra Eldridge,5 Paul McCrone,6 Geoff Shepherd,7 Maurice Arbuthnott,8 Gerard Leavey,9 Sarah Curtis,10 Peter McPherson1 and Sarah Dowling1

1Division of Psychiatry, University College London, London, UK
2Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust, St Pancras Hospital, London, UK
3Unit for Social and Community Psychiatry, Newham Centre for Mental Health, London, UK
4East London NHS Foundation Trust, London, UK
5Pragmatic Clinical Trials Unit, Barts and The London School of Medicine and Dentistry, Queen Mary University of London, London, UK
6King’s Health Economics, Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience, King’s College London, London, UK
7Implementing Recovery Through Organisational Change (ImROC), c/o Learning and Development, Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, Nottingham, UK
8North London Service User Research Forum, Division of Psychiatry, University College London, London, UK
9Bamford Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing, University of Ulster, Londonderry, UK
10Institute of Hazard, Risk and Resilience, Durham University, Durham, UK

*Corresponding author h.killaspy@ucl.ac.uk

Declared competing interests of authors: None of the authors has any professional interests in the services studied in this research programme that could constitute a conflict of interest. Sandra Eldridge reports membership of the Health Technology Assessment (HTA) Clinical Trials Board and the National Institute for Health Research Clinical Trials Unit Standing Advisory Committee. Stefan Priebe reports previous membership of the HTA Mental, Psychological and Occupational Health Panel (2013–2018).
Plain English summary

The QuEST research programme with feasibility RCT
Programme Grants for Applied Research 2019; Vol. 7: No. 7
DOI: 10.3310/pgfar07070

NIHR Journals Library www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk
Plain English summary

Background

There are three main types of mental health supported accommodation in England: residential care, supported housing and floating outreach. Residential care and supported housing services provide on-site support whereas floating outreach services visit people in their own homes.

Methods

We amended existing measures of service quality and satisfaction for use in supported accommodation services and tested them to ensure that they remained valid and reliable. We used them to survey 87 services and 619 service users across England who we followed to see if they moved on successfully to less supported accommodation 30 months later. We also asked staff and service users what they found most helpful, and we tried to recruit service users to a trial comparing supported housing and floating outreach services.

Results

Many people had experienced severe self-neglect (57%) and had been exploited in the past (37%). People in residential care services had the highest needs and those in floating outreach services had less severe problems. Residential care was the most expensive service and floating outreach was the cheapest. After accounting for differences between people, those in supported housing had the most independence and a similar quality of life to those in residential care. Service users and staff felt that services should support people to gain independent living skills gradually. At follow-up, floating outreach service users were more likely to be managing with less support than people in supported housing or residential care (and those in supported housing were more likely to manage with less support than those in residential care). We recruited only eight people into our trial; service users were unhappy with their accommodation being decided by chance and staff felt that people needed to move from supported housing to floating outreach rather than going straight to floating outreach.

Conclusions

All three types of supported accommodation are needed to help people in their recovery. Methods other than trials are needed to compare services.
Programme Grants for Applied Research

ISSN 2050-4322 (Print)
ISSN 2050-4330 (Online)

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

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This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by PGfAR as project number RP-PG-0610-10097. The contractual start date was in April 2012. The final report began editorial review in April 2018 and was accepted for publication in February 2019. 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, NETSCC, PGfAR 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 PGfAR programme or the Department of Health and Social Care.

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