

Interventions to manage use of the emergency and urgent care system by people from vulnerable groups: a mapping review

Andrew Booth, Louise Preston,* Susan Baxter,
Ruth Wong, Duncan Chambers and Janette Turner

School of Health and Related Research, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK

*Corresponding author l.r.preston@sheffield.ac.uk

Declared competing interests of authors: Andrew Booth is a member of the National Institute for Health Research Complex Reviews Support Unit Funding Board.

Published September 2019

DOI: [10.3310/hsdr07330](https://doi.org/10.3310/hsdr07330)

Plain English summary

Interventions to manage use of the emergency care system

Health Services and Delivery Research 2019; Vol. 7: No. 33

DOI: [10.3310/hsdr07330](https://doi.org/10.3310/hsdr07330)

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

Plain English summary

Emergency and urgent care services (such as accident and emergency departments) face great pressure from increasing numbers of patients. People who are labelled as 'vulnerable' sometimes use emergency services more than other people. Vulnerable people include those who are socioeconomically deprived, are unemployed and homeless or have substance misuse problems. It is not completely understood why vulnerable people use emergency services instead of other parts of the health service.

The National Institute for Health Research asked us to summarise research that has already been carried out. We wanted to find out how the NHS might reduce the number of vulnerable people using emergency services if they could be seen elsewhere. Help could be offered in different ways or in different places.

Few researchers had tested out approaches targeting vulnerable people. Instead, most research had looked at people who frequently attend emergency departments. There are many reasons why some people go more often than expected to emergency departments. They could be from a vulnerable group with a particular health condition requiring emergency attention or they may struggle to use other health and social services, such as their local general practitioner. Research on frequent attenders therefore may not tell us much about people in vulnerable groups, and different types of people can be described as 'vulnerable'.

Currently, little research is available to help us understand how best to meet the health needs of people from vulnerable groups and to reduce demands on emergency care. Reasons why vulnerable groups use emergency departments are complicated and may include the burden of disease, how easy it is to access primary care and what patients prefer. It is more helpful to target the specific needs of and barriers for each vulnerable group in turn, rather than treating them as a single user group, and then to evaluate their effects carefully. With a limited number of suggested approaches, particularly outside a community setting, it becomes even more important to evaluate their effects using different types of data. Future research would benefit from basing interventions on a good understanding of vulnerability and how it affects emergency department use and from understanding how interventions work either better or worse based on their context.

Health Services and Delivery Research

ISSN 2050-4349 (Print)

ISSN 2050-4357 (Online)

This journal is a member of and subscribes to the principles of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) (www.publicationethics.org/).

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

The full HS&DR archive is freely available to view online at www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk/hsdr. Print-on-demand copies can be purchased from the report pages of the NIHR Journals Library website: www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk

Criteria for inclusion in the *Health Services and Delivery Research* journal

Reports are published in *Health Services and Delivery Research* (HS&DR) if (1) they have resulted from work for the HS&DR programme, and (2) they are of a sufficiently high scientific quality as assessed by the reviewers and editors.

HS&DR programme

The HS&DR programme funds research to produce evidence to impact on the quality, accessibility and organisation of health and social care services. This includes evaluations of how the NHS and social care might improve delivery of services.

For more information about the HS&DR programme please visit the website at <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/explore-nihr/funding-programmes/health-services-and-delivery-research.htm>

This report

The research reported here is the product of an HS&DR Evidence Synthesis Centre, contracted to provide rapid evidence syntheses on issues of relevance to the health service, and to inform future HS&DR calls for new research around identified gaps in evidence. Other reviews by the Evidence Synthesis Centres are also available in the HS&DR journal.

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 16/47/17. The contractual start date was in January 2018. The final report began editorial review in January 2019 and was accepted for publication in June 2019. 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.

© Queen's Printer and Controller of HMSO 2019. This work was produced by Booth *et al.* under the terms of a commissioning contract issued by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. 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).

NIHR Journals Library Editor-in-Chief

Professor Ken Stein Professor of Public Health, University of Exeter Medical School, UK

NIHR Journals Library Editors

Professor John Powell Chair of HTA and EME Editorial Board and Editor-in-Chief of HTA and EME journals. Consultant Clinical Adviser, National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), UK, and Honorary Professor, University of Manchester, and Senior Clinical Researcher and Associate Professor, Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, University of Oxford, UK

Professor Andrée Le May Chair of NIHR Journals Library Editorial Group (HS&DR, PGfAR, PHR journals) and Editor-in-Chief of HS&DR, PGfAR, PHR journals

Professor Matthias Beck Professor of Management, Cork University Business School, Department of Management and Marketing, University College Cork, Ireland

Dr Tessa Crilly Director, Crystal Blue Consulting Ltd, UK

Dr Eugenia Cronin Senior Scientific Advisor, Wessex Institute, UK

Dr Peter Davidson Consultant Advisor, Wessex Institute, University of Southampton, UK

Ms Tara Lamont Director, NIHR Dissemination Centre, 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 Wellbeing Research, University of Winchester, UK

Professor John Norrie Chair in Medical Statistics, University of Edinburgh, 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 Great Ormond Street 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 Ken Stein Professor of Public Health, University of Exeter Medical School, UK

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

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

Please visit the website for a list of editors: www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk/about/editors

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