

Service innovations for people with multiple long-term conditions: reflections of a rapid evaluation team

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Published June 2024
DOI: 10.3310/PTRU7108

Plain language summary

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Health and Social Care Delivery Research 2024; Vol. 12: No. 15
DOI: 10.3310/PTRU7108

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Plain language summary

Many people in England live with two or more physical and/or mental health conditions that are expected to last for years. Estimates vary, but it is likely that a majority of National Health Service services are serving people living with two or more long-term conditions. We wanted to find out how well the needs of this group are taken into account when new types of health care are introduced, or existing services are reorganised.

To do this, we went back to all 10 of the health service innovations that had been studied by our Birmingham RAND and Cambridge Evaluation Centre from 2018 to 2023. We did some extra research, including discussions with patient representatives and interviews with National Health Service policy-makers and managers at national and regional levels. We also looked at what new research had been published about one example of a new healthcare technology that is intended to help people who have several long-term health conditions: monitors that can be used by health service staff to measure patients' symptoms when they are in their own home.

Our main finding was that most National Health Service attention is given to organising care for single conditions, often treating them in isolation. Patients' many treatments and needs are not routinely considered all at the same time by healthcare staff, nor by researchers. Care for one condition is too often not co-ordinated with care for other health problems that a patient may have. Although the situation of people living with several long-term health conditions is in principle understood by healthcare staff, managers and researchers, relatively little is done in practice to meet their needs. We conclude by suggesting ways that policy-makers, healthcare staff and researchers could improve how they help people living with multiple long-term conditions.

Health and Social Care Delivery Research

ISSN 2755-0079 (Online)

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Health and Social Care Delivery Research (HSDR) was launched in 2013 and is indexed by Europe PMC, DOAJ, INAHTA, Ulrichsweb™ (ProQuest LLC, Ann Arbor, MI, USA), NCBI Bookshelf, Scopus and MEDLINE.

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

This journal was previously published as *Health Services and Delivery Research* (Volumes 1–9); ISSN 2050-4349 (print), ISSN 2050-4357 (online)

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The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the HSDR programme or one of its preceding programmes as award number NIHR134284. The contractual start date was in January 2021. The draft manuscript began editorial review in May 2023 and was accepted for publication in November 2023. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The HSDR editors and production house have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors' manuscript and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the draft document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this article.

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