The Changing Role of Occupational Therapy Services in Social Care: A Scoping Study

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BACKGROUND

The Personal Social Services Research Unit (PSSRU) at the University of Manchester has been commissioned to develop a means of describing the role of occupational therapists in community-based locations which will permit comparison across settings over time. This will focus on services provided for adults, including older people.

It will be conducted within the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Partnership (SSOTP) NHS Trust which provides integrated health and social care therapy services in the area covered by Staffordshire County Council and primary care occupational therapy services within Stoke-on-Trent. Both qualified occupational therapists and assistant-grade practitioners will participate.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study will create and pilot a schedule able to collect systematic and generalisable data on time use among practitioners in occupational therapy services. Both the tool and the lessons for service development consequent on its application will have a utility within the host Trust and further afield. Examples of potential uses include: identification of the principal components of the role by service setting; evaluation of the influence of policy and practice changes; and collection of data to establish the cost and resource consequences associated with different service configurations.

DESIGN

A four stage mixed methods approach will be employed in the design and development of the diary tool. First, a scoping review will be undertaken to collate existing literature complemented by a review of previous work undertaken by the researchers about the work of occupational therapists and the use of diary tools. Second, focus groups of practitioners will inform the design and implementation of the diary schedule. Third, the schedule will be piloted and the findings analysed and reported. Fourth, the utility of the diary study tool across services and user groups will be appraised by further focus groups of practitioners and a panel of first line managers.

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DISSEMINATION  There will be a targeted approach to the dissemination of findings. Local feedback will be available for managers and staff at the host Trust in the form of brief research summaries, presentations and posters. National dissemination of the findings will be achieved through peer-reviewed articles.

FURTHER INFORMATION  This work is being undertaken by David Challis, Jane Hughes and Mark Wilberforce within the PSSRU and Hazel Mackey in the SSOTP NHS Trust. For further information please contact Jane Hughes (telephone: 0161 275 5229, email: Jane.Hughes@manchester.ac.uk).