



RCN Policy Unit

Policy Briefing 02/09

Integrated Care Pilots

April 2009

Summary:

- Integration is being pursued by the Government as part of its strategy to improve public services.
- There are a number of ways that agencies can improve integration.
- There is evidence of improved outcomes (including improved patient outcomes, reduced length of stay in hospital) where agencies are successfully integrated.
- The integrated care pilots offer an opportunity to learn from the experience of clinically-led integrated care models.
- If you are part of a pilot scheme please do contact the RCN Policy Unit to share your experience with us at policycontacts@rcn.org.uk

Introduction and background

Promoting better public services through integration has been an aspiration of recent government legislation, policy and initiatives. All services, including health, social care, housing, transport and education, need to work in partnership in order to provide the opportunity for individuals to have an improved quality of life.¹ The fundamental purpose of integrated practice should be to improve the quality of services and support received by patients/clients - integration is not an end in itself, but a vehicle for achieving improvement.

There is no single model of integrated care. Integration can be at an organisational level i.e. where organisations are brought together by mergers or structural change. For instance Care Trusts in 2002 combined both NHS responsibilities and Local Authority health responsibilities under a single management structure. Integration can be a partnership approach whereby patient care is integrated across a single process both within and across professions and organisations, such as an integrated care patient pathway. In this instance different parts of the care pathway may be delivered by an array of providers such as an acute trust, a PCT, an independent sector provider and a GP surgery. The important aspect of integration is that the patient is at the centre of services and the services they receive are appropriate to their needs.

The Government regards integration as one remedy for the fragmentation of services, which has been identified as a barrier to providing more effective and personalised care. It would like to see a simpler, more user-friendly system which will ensure greater continuity of services for individuals with a single point of access wherever possible.² The purpose of this briefing is to outline how the Government is taking forward its' integrated care agenda through the development of a number of integrated care pilots and to obtain feedback from members on the development of these pilots.

Evidence for integrated care

There is evidence to suggest that integration can improve the quality of care delivered to individuals and that it breaks down barriers between organisations. This evidence is discussed in more detail below.

International experience

The UK Government has examined different forms of integrated care models. One example is Kaiser Permanente in the USA which is a Health

¹ *Policy Framework for Integrated Care for Older People*, Kings Fund, August 2004.

² *The evidence base for integrated care*, DoH, 16th October 2008.

Maintenance Organisation (HMO). HMO's provide healthcare to a group of voluntary subscribers.

Kaiser Permanente combines the role of insurer and provider of care, delivering care to inpatients and outpatients using a multidisciplinary approach. There is evidence that this system reduces acute bed use.³ Other research suggests that integrated services are more responsive to clients'/patients' needs, reduce length of hospital stay and readmission rates, and improve patients' health and wellbeing.

English Care Trusts

In England, Care Trusts were introduced by the *NHS Plan*

Initially there were thirty five Children's Trust pathfinder sites established in 2004. The evaluation of these organisations found that generally Children's Trusts had a positive impact on outcomes for children and young people. It also found that they acted as a catalyst for more integrated approaches to the diagnosis and provision of services for children and enabled a joined up approach to workforce development and training.

- In April 2009 the final stage of the selection process was undertaken and the DOH announced that 16 pilot organisations had been selected to put their proposed care models into practice over the next two years.
- These pilots will be evaluated by Ernst & Young and Rand Europe.⁹ They propose to examine all sixteen of the pilots from a number of perspectives, including: the background of the pilots, the processes used to develop them, sustainability, patient outcomes and patient experience. The views of staff will be explored using staff questionnaires. Additionally 6-8 of the pilots will be examined in depth, this will include cost modelling. Some aspects of the nature of the evaluation will evolve as the pilots progress.

The pilots will all be clinician led, which is an opportunity for nurses. There are good examples of nurses working with a number of other agencies and disciplines in order to benefit patient care. Putting patients at the centre of care is core to nursing practice, therefore these pilots represent a good opportunity for nurses to demonstrate leadership and develop high quality integrated patient centred services.

RCN view and tell us more

Integration is an important issue in terms of the delivery of high quality patient care. The RCN is committed to patients being at the centre of care and ensuring that care is delivered by the most appropriate person, with the necessary skills. One way to ensure that this occurs is through the integration of services and ensuring patient care is delivered in a seamless way across an integrated care pathway.

As discussed earlier there have been many previous attempts to improve the integration of services, with varying degrees of success. Therefore the RCN is keen to monitor the progress of these pilots and support members who are working within them.

If you are working in one of the potential sites integrated care pilots we would like to hear from you. Please contact the policy unit at policycontacts@rcn.org.uk.

⁹ *Introduction to the evaluation approach-proposal*, DoH, 2009.

North West