

Service provision forum about different models of provision across the UK

Chair – Gill Packham, PMG conference planning committee

Presenter 1 – Alison Bradley

Alison Bradley's presentation on different models of provision is based on the research she completed in 2019/20 as part of her Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree in healthcare management.

Research aim

Alison's research investigated if there were any differences in quality between wheelchair services when they were operated by the NHS, or by a private provider. There are few quality comparison studies between NHS and privately contracted services. Fewer still have considered differences in organisational quality (i.e. staff satisfaction, evidence of CPD, and patient choice), as most quality projects look into outcome measures and patient satisfaction.

NHS England correlates limited information on referral to treatment (RTT), patient numbers, and budgets for wheelchair services (NHS England, 2019). The National Wheelchair Tariff (introduced 2019/2020) aimed to improve commissioning by providing wheelchair service (WCS) specific guidance for commissioners (NHS England, 2020d). However, no other data are currently collected either centrally (Government), or by special interest groups, to assist commissioners.

Conclusions

This research aimed to find if there was a difference in the quality of wheelchair services in England when operated by the NHS or private providers. The focus was the structural facets of quality, including CPD; teamwork, trust & satisfaction; leadership & support, and client choice.

Research objectives were to examine current literature and ascertain (via questionnaire) if staff experience, wheelchair choice, and staff satisfaction differed between NHS and privately operated services.

There is a variation in the quality of wheelchair services – they can be good or bad regardless of who provides them. Upon commencing this research, Alison had heard the stories – that private providers were 'ruining' wheelchair services and that no-one wanted to work for them (which was echoed by some respondents). However, whilst this research found the structural quality of private providers to be inferior, in some fields it was not by huge amounts, or statistically significant.

Private providers generate a substantial proportion of their revenue from wheelchair contracts – they do not want to fail. What became apparent during this research is that commissioning, not just the actual WCS, must be considered. Whether a service is publicly or privately provided, any supplier delivering a low-quality service simply "poisons the well".

Presenter 2 – Susan Gold, chair of PMG

As well as being chair of the PMG executive committee, Susan holds the brief of monitoring service provision developments in Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. In her presentation, Susan will outline the different models currently in place in the three countries.

Presenter 3 - Krys Jarvis, previously chair of the National Wheelchair Managers Forum and founder member of both the Wheelchair Alliance and the Wheelchair Advisory Board. Krys's presentation will provide an historical overview.