Literature review

The process of revising included finding and selecting literature from multidisciplinary sources and encompassed both published papers and ‘grey’ literature, i.e., material which had not been reviewed for publication. The study found that thinking has moved on from a focus on the problems of accessing services to exploring ways in which they may function in an integrated way.

A group of service providers from health and social care in the same locality, who were beginning to work together in an integrated way to provide care for older people, a field beset by the historical divisions in the UK between health and social care, and between care and services, such as housing and transport. The empirical study collected data from staff and service-users to explore their experiences of care, and the ways in which integration had been developed. This literature review was designed to support and expand this activity, by providing a foundation for enquiry and analysis, identifying key concepts and definitions, and informing the development of the questions that the empirical study would seek to answer.

In addition to concerns about the impact that these factors have on the quality of care that older people receive, there had been increasing awareness that they have an impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of the available services. For example, an older person may have an extended period of hospitalisation resulting from difficulties in arranging the necessary services to support them in the community rather than their need for specialist in-patient care. In this situation, ineffective use is made of the available hospital service and the overall cost of care is increased because in-patient care is more costly than care in the community.

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