Information Sharing, Assessment and e-Technology in Social Care

14-15 May 2007
The Grange Hotel, York, UK

The history of the role of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the public sector in the UK is often characterised by huge overspends and mismanagement. Nevertheless, modernising health, education and social care management and practice in the UK has been underpinned by an assumption of the perceived change-management capabilities of ICTs. Indeed, for many policy initiatives, ICTs are seen as a central tool for enabling a range of objectives outlined in government policy.

Common to many policy developments, for example child welfare and the care of older people, has been the development of integrated services whereby professionals involved in service delivery share information through the introduction of a common or single assessment tool. This tool is based on assumptions that joint working can ensure that professional resources are used effectively and multi-professional interventions are promoted. It is also seen as a way of assessing and sharing needs and concerns that are identified at an early stage.

These common assessments are essentially about information, the gathering of it and the sharing of it between professionals working in health, education and social care. In theory it should overcome service users' experiences of giving similar information to any number of people/ agencies involved in delivering services to them. These fully functioning assessment tools would appear to demand an information system that could be accessed by health, education and social care professionals, patients/clients or carers, the voluntary and community sector and act as a resource for management. Such a system would also need to ensure client confidentiality and be compatible with national technology systems.

At the same time, such tools constrain and control the ways in which professionals make and share their assessments. A number of questions need to be asked about the impact of the extension of ICTs in inter-professional communication and everyday professional practice more generally. How is information translated between different professional groups? What IT skills and resources are required in order to participate? How is risk and accountability managed electronically?

This two-day event brings together researchers who are studying the impact of ICTs as a tool for a common assessment in public services to discuss how this is playing out in services particularly in terms of information sharing and electronic transfer. Through papers and roundtables, the event aims are:

1) To share findings of recent research into information sharing, assessment and e-technology in social care across service areas and to identify common themes and differences

2) To identify policy and research implications arising from this wider view of research (and discuss these with key policy makers)

3) To consider the possibilities of joint dissemination through publications and other forms of distribution (e.g. joint presentations to key audiences)

Speakers:

Asa Makitolo (University of Gotenberg)
Hans Rystedt (University West, Sweden) – Electronic Patient Records (Sweden)

Professor David Thorpe (Trondheim University)
Suzanne Regan (Lancaster University) – Children and Young People's Services

Chris Hall, Andy Bilson, Susan White and Susan Peckover (e-Society programme) – Children's Services

Hazel Kemshall & Jason Wood (De Montfort University) – probation service
Miriam Lipps, John Taylor and Joe Organ (OII - e-Society programme) – e-Government

Professor Ken Eason (Loughborough University) – NpfIT

Nicholas Pleace (University of York) – Homeless Services

Leigh Keeble, Michael Hardey and Brian Loader (University of York) – Older People's Services

Mark Hartswood (University of Edinburgh) – Community Mental Health Services

Rob Wilson (University of Newcastle) - 'Limits to Integration of Care'. Drawing on work recently completed on Service Directories and Single Assessment Process as the examples

Nigel Parton (University of Huddersfield) - Information Sharing, Early Intervention and Surveillance in Children's Services in England