

Audit Scotland Reshaping Care for Older People Review

Audit Scotland Review

The Audit Scotland report reviews the progress of RCOP three years into the ten-year programme. It considers the extent to which care for older people has shifted towards communities and away from hospitals and care homes; whether the Change Fund is helping to improve care for older people in ways that can be sustained; and examines the challenges facing organisations that deliver services for older people. The report includes recommendations which are intended to help the Scottish Government, NHS boards and councils increase the pace of change. The report has particular relevance given the current plans to integrate health and social care services and the emphasis on preventive investment in wider public sector reform.

Key Points

- Reshaping Care for Older People (RCOP) involves major transformational change to health and social care services. Its implementation has proved challenging and slow progress has been made to date. Strong national and local leadership is needed to take it forward.
- There is little evidence of progress in shifting more resources to community-based services and NHS boards and councils need clear plans to determine how this will happen in practice. To support this, Partnerships need to make better use of data, focus on reducing unnecessary variation and monitor and spread successful projects.
- The Change Fund has been successful in bringing together NHS boards, councils and the third and private sectors at a local level to develop and agree joint plans to improve care for older people and a number of local initiatives are underway. These initiatives, however, are not always evidence-based or monitored on an ongoing basis and it is not clear how successful projects will be sustained and expanded.
- The Change Fund represents only 1.5 per cent of all spending on older people in 2011/12.
- National performance measures have not developed in line with policy changes and a greater focus on outcomes is needed. There is no clear national monitoring to show whether the policy is being successfully implemented and what impact this is having on older people.

Background

Reshaping Care for Older People was launched in 2010 and aims to improve the quality and outcomes of care, and help meet the challenges of an ageing population. It focuses on giving people the support they need to live independently in their own home and in good health for as long as possible. In 2011/12, the Government introduced the Change Fund to help organisations take forward the policy. The report places the agenda within the context of demographic change and the need to reduce public expenditure. It predicts these changes will mean people will have more health and care needs in future and will have implications for our ability to pay for and provide care services.

The Pace of Change

The review found limited evidence of progress in transferring resources to community-based services and recommends more focus on funding services which prevent or delay ill health and which support people to stay at home. National data showed significant variation in how NHS boards and councils used money to provide services for older people across Scotland. The review concludes that to implement RCOP successfully, partners need to make better use of data, focus on reducing unnecessary variation, monitor and spread successful projects and have clear plans for shifting resources to community-based services.

Progress on Reshaping Care for Older People

The report states RCOP has yet to demonstrate how significant changes will be achieved. There is no clear national monitoring to show whether the policy is being implemented successfully and what impact it is having. The review calls for strong national and local leadership to take this challenging agenda forward.

The Change Fund is worth £300 million over four years, and the focus has been on developing partnership working and small-scale initiatives. Initiatives are not always evidence-based or monitored on an ongoing basis and it is not clear how successful projects will be sustained and expanded.

NHS boards and councils need to make changes at the same time as continuing to meet people's current care needs and provide services that help to prevent or delay ill health. Evidence shows that some services are under pressure which makes changes harder to achieve. NHS boards, councils and their partners must jointly plan more effectively and better understand the needs of older people and the costs of providing services. It is important that at a local level, health and social care staff understand and contribute to plans to improve services for older people.

Key barriers to change identified by the review include a lack of data on community health and social care services and on services that focus on preventing or delaying health problems.

Key recommendations

Scottish Government should:

- Set out clear measures for success when a new policy is introduced. The Government should monitor progress and publicly report on performance against these measures and use them to underpin local commissioning and scrutiny. These indicators should include measures that cover outcomes, quality, community services and services to prevent or delay ill health.
- Make information on the quality of care for older people more accessible and easier to understand. Continue to support the development of joint inspections by Healthcare Improvement Scotland and the Care Inspectorate, particularly in light of plans to integrate health and social care services.

Scottish Government should work with NHS boards, councils and their partners to:

- Improve and maintain data on cost, activity and outcomes for health and care services, particularly community-based services where there are key gaps. This helps local decision-makers to decide where and where not to spend money. It should be set out clearly in joint strategic commissioning plans.
- Do more to understand the reasons why activity and spending on services for older people vary across Scotland. They need to work with local practitioners to help: use information to benchmark activity and costs; identify areas for improvement; identify good practice.
- Set out clear plans for how resources will shift to community services in the short and longer term.

NHS boards, councils and their partners, supported by the Joint Improvement Team and other national bodies, should:

- Make better use of available data, focusing on understanding reasons for variation in activity and spend, and reducing unexplained variation.
- Monitor and spread successful projects by ensuring that initiatives aimed at improving services for older people have evaluation built in from the start to show how cost effective they are and how they are performing.
- Identify initiatives that have had a positive impact on older people and: specify how much they cost and the impact on other services; be clear how they can be sustained in the longer term.