Public Services Programme

Quality, Performance & Delivery

public attitudes
metrics
inspecting and managing
incentives
regulating performance

Public Services Programme

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A word from the Director

Public Services and their performance are central to politics and the economy in modern societies, and in many traditional ones too. But who defines what as 'public services' and 'performance'? How can we measure and shape performance? And what are the causes of better or worse performance, however we measure or assess it?

The ESRC, an autonomous public body created in the 1960s to fund public-domain social science research, has created the Public Services Programme to explore public service performance using methods of analysis taken from all the social sciences, from anthropology to law and economics. The Programme, running from 2005 to 2010, comprises almost 50 different research projects, a host of conferences, workshops and seminars, and equally importantly a network of expertise that can be drawn on as new problems and policies emerge.

This document catalogues our research projects. We have grouped them into six broad analytic themes that we think are central to the analysis of public service performance. But we do not pretend that these six themes are either jointly exhaustive or mutually exclusive, and many of our projects fall under several of the headings. We have prepared this brochure to give you a quick overview of the range of things we're doing, and obviously it can't cover every nuance and angle. But if you want to know more about the Programme's research and other activities – and I hope you will – check our regularly-updated website www.publicservices.ac.uk or call us on +44 (0)1865 285968.

Christopher C. Hood

Christopher Hood,
Programme Director
Gladstone Professor of Government and Fellow of All Souls College, University of Oxford.

Contents

Programme at-a-glance

Why research into public service performance?

It's socially important

- Public services are central to the politics of modern democracies.

- Everyone wants good public services but what counts as 'good' is contested and so are reform recipes.

It's intriguing

- We can fill gaps and resolve contradictions (for instance different claims about what the public knows/wants/thinks).

- We can explore paradoxes and unexpected effects or relationships (see graph).

It's 'doable'

- 'Politics is the art of the possible, research is the art of the soluble'.

- Not all questions about public service performance are researchable, but some important ones are. That's what we focus on.
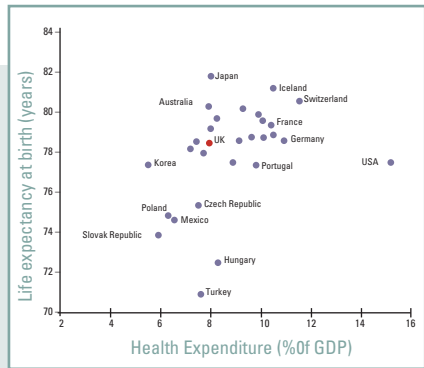
So you think more spending on health makes you live longer?

OECD Health Data 2006 after J. De Kervasdoue

What are we trying to find out?

Like the letters in a stick of rock, the theme of 'performance' in public services runs through everything we do. Questions we are asking include:
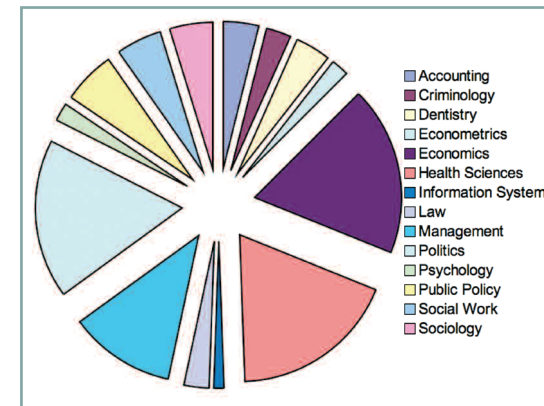
- Who sees what as public services, who values what kind of performance, and who thinks what kind of measures (such as choice) lead to good or bad performance?

- What are the effects of reforms intended to affect performance, like targets, transparency, incentive-based contracts?

- What are the scope and limits of different kinds of performance metrics and what intended and unintended effects do they have?

- What can we learn about performance by tracing developments over time, by comparing experience across the UK and by comparing the UK with other countries?

Quality, Performance & **Delivery**

Who are we and how do we work?

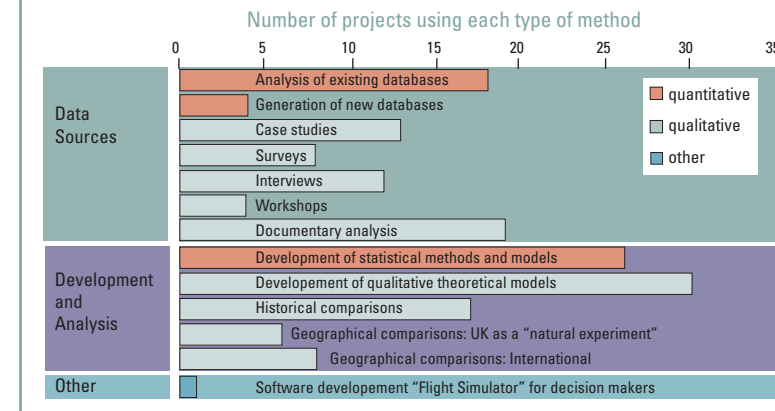The Programme consists of around 100 researchers

Legend: Accounting, Criminology, Dentistry, Econometrics, Economics, Health Sciences, Information Systems, Law, Management, Politics, Psychology, Public Policy, Social Work, Sociology

- Drawn from 14 different academic disciplines

- Working in universities right across the UK and beyond

"It's the way we do it…"

Number of projects using each type of method

Data Sources	Analysis of existing databases Generation of new databases Case studies Surveys Interviews Workshops Documentary analysis
Development and Analysis	Development of statistical methods and models Development of qualitative theoretical models Historical comparisons Geographical comparisons: UK as a "natural experiment" Geographical comparisons: International
Other	Software development "Flight Simulator" for decision makers

Legend: quantitative, qualitative, other

- And using a variety of different, often innovative, methods.

Public Attitudes to Public Services

Why do people in England appear fairly satisfied with the performance of their local schools and hospitals, but think education and health services as a whole are failing? This apparently contradictory pattern, observed for several public services (see graph), suggests that public service performance, like beauty, can be in the eye of the beholder. So exploring the subjective side of public service performance – who sees what as 'public services' and 'performance' – is a central theme of our Programme.
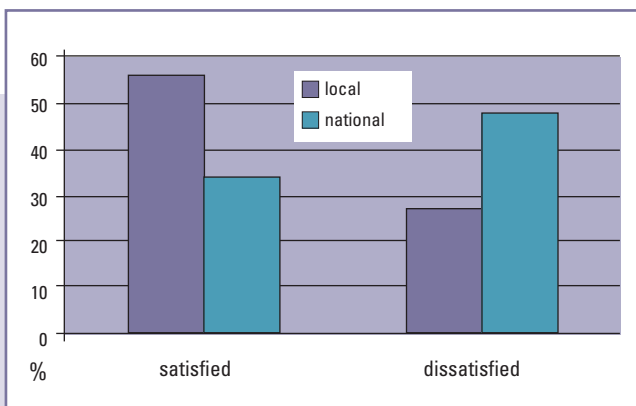
We're exploring public attitudes to public services in four main ways: we're analyzing existing survey data to see how British attitudes compare with those of other EU countries; we're asking hypothetical questions (such as whether people would send their children to private schools if their income went up substantially); we're comparing survey data on satisfaction and expectations with administrative performance records; and we're comparing public attitudes across the UK by mounting, for the first time ever, a large-scale randomized survey involving all four UK countries.

Public Satisfaction with Criminal Justice in England and Wales

Roberts & Hough, 2005, Understanding Public Attitudes to Criminal Justice, Open University Press

Among our discoveries are:

- Public attitudes to choice as a recipe for improving public service performance vary across the UK countries, but not by large amounts and not always in predictable ways;

- Respondents are more enthusiastic about some kinds of choice than others and are more enthusiastic about choice in the abstract than the sort of choice that could mean their own local school or hospital closing down;

- User satisfaction with public services seems to relate less to administrative measures of performance than to perceived performance minus the user's expectations of the service (ironically suggesting that one way to raise user satisfaction is by lowering expectations).

Research Projects

Public Attitudes and Public Service Responsiveness
John Curtice, Oliver Heath & Miranda Phillips

What attitudes do the public have towards key public services?   Are public expectations the same in the devolved administrations as in England? This large-scale, randomised survey is the first to examine public attitudes to public services in all four countries of the UK, and will form a benchmark for future studies.

Public Attitudes towards Services of General Interest in Comparative Perspective
Steven van de Walle

What exactly are public services? Should we include access to an internet connection, a post office and a railway among the list of essential public services? And how do these perceptions vary across Europe?

Exit and Voice as a Means of Enhancing Service Delivery
Keith Dowding & Peter John

Was Hirshman right to suggest that there is a trade-off between 'choice' and 'voice' (that is, between switching provider and expressing dissatisfaction through voting, private complaints or public forums)? It appears so: those who are able are more likely to change provider when dissatisfied, while those locked-in to services are more likely to voice their disapproval.

Expectations, Performance and Satisfaction
Oliver James

Why does citizen satisfaction fall while 'objective' measures of local government services improve? This project uses an online panel survey to show that public satisfaction is closely related not to local government performance alone, but to perceived performance minus the respondent's expectation of the service.

The Police Under Public Scrutiny – Experiences, Perceptions and Reactions to a Public Service Institution 1982-2003
#### Andreas Cebulla, Mike Stephens & Camilla Nevill

Have recent reforms intended to improve the police's relationship with the public had a positive impact? This study shows that dissatisfaction with the police service among victims of crime remains high despite falling levels of reported crime.

Management by Numbers: Metrics of Performance

Numbers are widely and increasingly used to represent public service performance, whether they be school test scores, local 'crime maps' or international governance indicators. But what are the most telling or important numbers when different measures can paint sharply divergent pictures of performance (see graph)? How can we construct meaningful performance numbers or evaluate the existing numbers and their uses in managing public service performance?
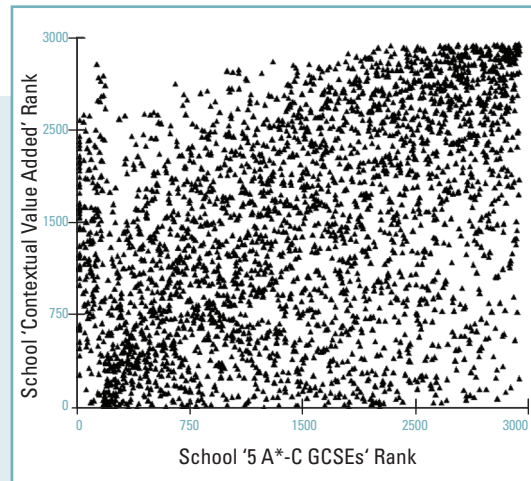
We're exploring these questions in several ways, including:

- seeing how far data collected as a by-product of routine administrative operations (such as railway timetables, payment records for dental treatment or health waiting time records) can be used to analyze public service performance;

- testing the validity and reliability of composite ranking systems (rankings which boil down a mass of separate numbers into a single number);

- exploring the scope and limits of new ways of measuring performance, for instance by making international rankings more meaningful by the use of common hypothetical questions ('anchoring vignettes', in the jargon).

A Tale of Two Rankings: Correlation between English School Rankings

Wilson & Piebalga, 2008. International Public Management Journal 11(3) 344-366

Among our discoveries to date are:

- Composite ranking systems, though widely used internationally and applied to 'scorecard' other organizations (such as local authorities and health trusts in England in the early to mid-2000s), can be shown to be problematic both in validity and reliability. That is, such measures often reflect something other than performance as ordinarily understood, and rankings can jump about sharply with minor changes in weightings;

- The pros and cons of using performance numbers as targets, as comparative rankings or as background intelligence for learning or ad hoc interventions;

- Numbers originating from routine administrative processes can sometimes produce telling indicators of public service performance, such as train speeds over a century and a half.

Research Projects

Standards of Evidence for Assessing Public Service Performance

Oliver James

Various types of evidence are used to judge public service performance, from administrative statistics to surveys of user-satisfaction, but how reliable are they? Are different standards used for different purposes? And, what happens when the evidence is contradictory?

Exploring the Impact of Public Services on Quality of Life Indicators

Rowena Jacobs, Maria Goddard, Peter Smith & Adriana Castelli

What leads to longer life expectancy – better healthcare provision or better housing? This innovative project aims to quantify just how much public services impact on people's quality of life and in what ways.

International Comparison of Responsiveness Using Anchoring Vignettes

Nigel Rice & Peter Smith

How can we improve cross-national comparisons of performance? In collaboration with the World Health Organisation, this study examines the use of 'anchoring vignettes' – that is, asking respondents in different countries for their assessment of how services behave in a common hypothetical situation.

The Effect of Ownership and Regulation on British Railway Performance, 1850-2006

Tim Leunig & Nicholas Crafts

What has happened to train speeds over the last 150 years? This vast new dataset shows that while speeds on inter-city journeys have increased, severe neglect of commuter lines, which account for far more passenger miles, has resulted in speeds stagnating since the 1950s.

Research Projects

Correlates of Success in Performance Assessment

Iain McLean & Dirk Haubrich

How effective was the 2002-04 Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) regime? Tested against four reliability and validity criteria, the measure fails on all four counts and creates contradictory incentives with other measures, notably the index of multiple deprivation.

Metrics, Targets and Performance

Mary O'Mahony, Philip Stevens & Lucy Stokes

Are star performers more productive? This study examines the relationship between hospital 'star ratings' (2001-05) and hospital productivity and finds that there is no statistical relationship between the two.

Are Composite Measures a Robust Reflection of Performance?

Rowena Jacobs, Maria Goddard, Peter Smith & Adriana Castelli

Are star ratings and the CPA methodologically robust? This study finds they do not take account of random variation and are highly sensitive to small changes in aggregation methods, thus neither is robust.

The Design and Use of Local Metrics to Evaluate Performance: A Comparative Analysis of Social Care Organisations

David Challis, Paul Clarkson, Michael Donnelly & Roger Beech

What is the best way of evaluating social care performance? Through top-down implementation of standards and measurement, as is practised in England, by descriptively comparing organisations, like in N. Ireland, or using the Japanese bottom-up approach?

Performance Indicators in Health Care: A Comparative Anglo-Dutch Study

Stephen Harrison & Christopher Pollitt

Why, despite their similarities, have England and the Netherlands pursued such different policies to performance indicators in healthcare; the English embraced them, while the Dutch virtually shunned them? And why are there now signs of convergence?
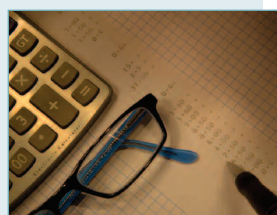
Research Projects

An Exploratory Study of Parliamentarians and their Use of Health Care Performance Metrics: The Scottish Parliament Health and Community Care Committee

Gordon Marnoch

How do politicians use metrics? Are they used at all? Are they simply used for point-scoring and propaganda? Or are they used constructively to monitor services and make informed decisions about future provision?

"One key aspect of the [Programme's] research is the light that it casts on the strengths and limitations of current managerial techniques for improving performance, and the complex interplay and trade-offs between those approaches and public attitudes towards the public sector."

Nick Manning, World Bank
December 2008, email

Inspecting and Managing Public Service Performance

Recipes for managing public services, like recipes for child-rearing, are many and various. For some, the answer is performance reporting that helps voters to punish or reward political incumbents for their performance. For some, the answer is to invest in high-powered audit and inspection systems with a zero-tolerance approach to poor performance. For some, the answer lies in turnaround teams to transform 'basket case' public organizations. But others see more subtle approaches to management as the key to good performance, and stress the damage that ill-advised tough policies can do. As it happens, in the 2000s the UK's four countries were a laboratory for testing such doctrines because those countries' public service management policies comprised both common features and varying ones, such as different emphases on naming and shaming and draconian central interventions.

We're exploring this issue in three main ways. We're using the natural experiment of the UK in the 2000s to compare the performance outcomes that go with different public management policies. We're looking at case studies of performance management in different organizations and policy domains, including social services, health care, crime control and higher education. And we're looking carefully at the relationship between changes in management and levels of performance, using over-time performance data for more than 400 English local authorities.

Among our discoveries are:

- Voters tend to punish poor reported performance in English local authorities but do not correspondingly reward incumbents for top performance, suggesting more electoral payoffs for mediocrity than for excellence (see graph);

- Management by fear systems, often castigated by management theorists, sometimes seems to be more effective than management by softer systems in effecting sharp changes in a short period;

- while poor performance in English local authorities is linked to management team turnover, senior managers other than chief executives have frequently taken the blame.

English Local Authorities in the year before each election
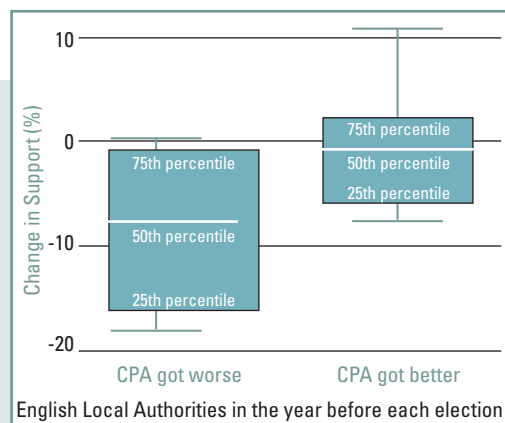
Rewarding Mediocrity? The Relationship between CPA Performance and Local Electoral Success, 2004-2007.

Data from the research project 'Leadership Change and Public Services', Boyne et al.

Research Projects

Theories of Performance
Colin Talbot

Is there a robust theory of organisational performance for the public services? Despite a raft of measures to improve public service performance over recent years – such as targets or turnaround teams – there is little theorising as to why these initiatives should work.

Responding to Evidence of Poor Performance: Explaining Public Organisations' Capacity to Deal with Failure
Kieran Walshe, Chris Skelcher, Gill Harvey & Pauline Jas

How do local government and health care organisations respond to evidence of poor performance? This project provides the first systematic UK analysis and will produce practical guidance for future policy on strategies for coping with failure.

Targets and Waiting Times: Exploring a Quasi-experiment to Evaluate the Use of Targets in the Provision of Health Care in the UK
Frank Windmeijer, Carol Propper, Matt Sutton & Shelley Farrar

Was the English target regime successful in reducing hospital waiting times? By comparing with Scotland, this study finds it was and is now exploring whether that success comes with any unintended side-effects.

Leadership Change and Public Services: Reinvigorating Performance or Reinforcing Decline?
George Boyne, Oliver James, Peter John & Nicolai Petrovsky

Does new leadership usually improve performance? This project is providing systematic evidence about whether changes in leadership are a cure-all for failing local authorities, and who takes the fall when performance is poor.

Research Projects

Error, Blame and Responsibility in Child Welfare: Problematics of Governance in an Invisible Trade

Sue White, David Wastell, Susan Peckover, Chris Hall & Andrew Pithouse

The social care of children is fraught with risks and difficult decisions over resource allocation. So, how can scarce resources be best managed to minimise the risks, such as the death of a child? This project is developing a unique 'management simulator' to test and improve managerial decision-making.

Performance Assessment and Wicked Issues: The Case of Health Inequalities

Tim Blackman, David Hunter, Linda Marks, Gareth Williams & Lorna McKee

Which of the different countries comprising the UK has been most successful in dealing with the 'wicked issue' of health inequalities? Using the natural experiment created by devolution, this study investigates the varying approaches to health policy and performance assessment employed in the UK.

The Innovative Capacity of Voluntary and Community Organisations

Stephen Osborne & Celine Chew

Is the oft quoted innovativeness of VCOs inherent, or more a result of policy and funding frameworks? With a change in policy emphasis away from innovation, there was a marked reduction in VCO innovativeness between 1994 and 2006.

Comparing for Improvement: The Development and Impact of Public Services Audit and Inspection in UK Local Government

Steve Martin, Sandra Nutley, James Downe & Clive Grace

What benefits has the explosion of audit and inspection over recent years brought about? This study compares the differing regimes in England, Scotland and Wales and explores their impacts.

Research Projects

Analysing Delivery Chains in the Home Office

Martin Smith, David Richards & Andrew Geddes

Can policy-makers effectively ensure their policies are implemented at 'street level'? This study finds that delivering central government targets on crime involved unsustainably high levels of attention from the centre through command and control mechanisms that eliminate local autonomy.

Performance Management of Higher Education

Jane Broadbent, Richard Laughlin & Carolyn Gallop

How is performance management approached in UK higher education institutions? This study finds two basic forms of performance management systems, transactional and relational, which are very much influenced by the culture and context prevalent in the respective funding bodies of the institutions.

Performance, Strategy and Accounting

Andrew Goddard & Martin Broad

How do attitudes to performance measurement vary between higher education and local government? This study finds that the culture of performance measurement is much more pervasive in the latter. However, where performance measurement is pervasive so are its dysfunctions, reflecting a lack of useful outcome measures.
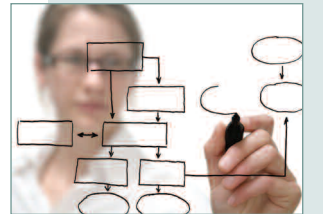
Incentives, Blame and Liability

To improve the performance of primary care doctors (GPs) in the UK, from 2004 GPs were given a financial incentive to perform certain medical procedures, with 25 per cent of each practice's income dependent on 147 performance indicators called the Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF: see table). The outcome was that GPs racked up so many QOF points that NHS primary care costs in England blew out by £1.76 billion over the level policy-makers expected. And there were some signs that QOF caused doctors to focus on the 147 things that were incentivized over key medical concerns (such as mental health treatment) that were left out of QOF.

Clinical Domain Area	Number of Indicators	Points Available	2004/05 Pounds per Point	Unadjusted Total for 2004/05	2005/06 Pounds per Point	Unadjusted Total for 2005/06
Diabetes Mellitus	18	99	£75	£,425	£125	£12,375
Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease	8	45	£75	£3,375	£125	£5,625
Coronary Heart Disease	15	121	£75	£9,075	£125	£15,125
Asthma	7	72	£75	£5,400	£125	£9,000

Points Mean Prizes: QOF Incentives for GPs (unadjusted)

Data from the research project 'What Changes When Incentives Change', Guthrie et al.

For some, those who provide public services are motivated by the same incentives as any other actors. Others think those who choose to be teachers or social workers (for instance) are different from those who choose to be bankers or estate agents, and will respond to incentives in different ways. We're putting claims like these to the test by methods such as relating dentists' clinical behaviour with the types of contract under which they work, relating data on the quality of hospital care to the financial arrangements for insuring against malpractice suits, and relating data on local authority performance to the exposure of local authorities to litigation and judicial review.

Among our discoveries are:

■ Orthodox economic theory mostly predicts the direction of the relationship between money incentives and measured outcomes (e.g. doctors and dentists do more treatment when paid on a piece-work than on a salary basis), but the strength of such relationships varies greatly;

■ Much trumpeted initiatives often appear to have very little discernable impact; for example, in the cases of risk management, marketisation and delayed discharge;

■ Policy-makers often miscalculate individual and organizational responses to orthodox financial incentives in public services.

Research Projects

Creating a Clinical, Economic and Psychological Research Resource

Jan Clarkson, Martin Chalkley, Colin Tilley, Linda Young, Debbie Bonetti & Andrea Baker

What happens when you pay dentist on a fee-per-item basis rather than a fixed monthly salary? This study finds that you get 25% more treatment, and that dentists' attitudes to treatment were a significant factor in which type of contract they gravitate towards.

Governance and Leadership in Education

Tim Besley, Steve Machin & Iftikhar Hussain

Is head-teacher pay sensitive to school performance? Findings from this study suggest there is an active labour market for high quality head-teachers where schools and teachers match and this creates a wage premium for good performance.

What Changes When Incentives Change in Primary Medical Care?

Bruce Guthrie, Guro Huby, Huw Davies, Francis Watkins & Suzanne Grant

What happens when GP surgery income is linked to performance on measured indicators? GPs perform well on the measured indicators; however, improvements for incentivised conditions come at the price of neglecting of those that are not incentivised.

Historical and Longitudinal Small Area Analysis of the Effects of Market-Orientated Reform on Equity of Access to NHS Care from 1991-2001

Richard Cookson, Mark Dusheiko, Stephen Martin & Alan Maynard

Does market-oriented reform of health care reduce patients' equity of access to services? This is a rare quantitative study of NHS reforms that will provide evidence on which to ground debates about the controversial subject of marketisation.

Research Projects

Impact of Litigation and Public Law on the Quality and Delivery of Public Services

Maurice Sunkin, Todd Landman, Lucinda Platt & Kerman Calvo

How, if at all, do judicial review decisions in the areas of adult and child care and housing impact upon the way in which these services are delivered by local authorities in England and Wales? Results are showing there is a significant relationship between judicial review challenges and quality of services.

Liability, Risk Pooling and Health Care Quality

Paul Fenn, Alastair Gray & Neil Rickman

How do different insurance arrangements affect hospital performance on patient safety? This study finds that, while compliance with risk management standards does appear to improve patient safety (surprisingly, given the investment that goes into risk management) the association is very weak.

Financial Incentives and Discharge Policies

Allyson Pollock, David McCoy & Sylvia Godden

What happened when the 2003 Community Care Act gave hospitals in England and Wales the ability to increase income by charging social services departments if they delayed the discharge of patients? Unexpectedly, more than two thirds eschewed charges, choosing to work collaboratively to reduce delays using special grants.
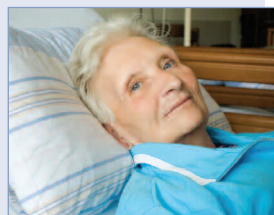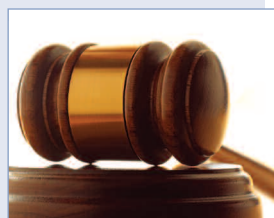
"This is an extremely exciting programme and it can really inform the Treasury."

Sir Nicholas Macpherson,
Permanent Secretary to HM Treasury
September 2006, PSP/Treasury seminar

"This is the right research at the right time."

Sir Andrew Turnbull, Head of the British Home
Civil Service and Cabinet Secretary, 2002–2005
January 2006, PSP/NIESR conference

Regulating Medical Performance

Medical care can improve the quality and length of our lives. But it also poses risks. Some studies have estimated that in the US about 200,000 people are killed each year by potentially preventable, in-hospital medical errors, and medical error is certainly not a phenomenon unique to the US (see graph). One of the main aims of medical regulation is to control and limit risks to patient safety, but there is little research to date that tells us what actually affects the performance of doctors and how regulation operates.

So we've set up a pioneering set of 11 complementary research projects, co-funded with the UK's General Medical Council (GMC), in a first attempt to throw light on some of the key contested issues in the field, including:

- What are the factors that seem to lead medical professionals to under-perform, and what if any interventions might mitigate the effect of those factors?

- What is the impact of low-trust regulatory reforms in health care, such as increased transparency in reporting individual performance?

- Why do doctors trained in other countries and from ethnic minorities seem to be over-represented in the final stages of fitness to practise over disciplinary proceedings?

We're examining these questions mainly through small-scale exploratory studies, using interviews and observation to tease out beliefs and experience, looking at what can be learned from administrative records and statistics and desk research to pull together lessons that can be drawn from other relevant studies. As this research progresses we are learning much about the ways in which various transitions medical practitioners face in their careers shape their performance, and about the way that the (not so) simple challenges of handling the vagaries of organizational paperwork can affect performance.

Patients Surveyed Reporting Medical Errors

2005 Commonwealth Fund International Health Policy Survey of Sicker Adults

(Bar chart: % on vertical axis from 0 to 40. Countries on horizontal axis: Australia ≈27, Canada ≈30, Germany ≈23, New Zealand ≈25, United Kingdom ≈22, United States ≈34)

Research Projects

Regulating Doctors: Between Performance and Practise
Mary Dixon-Woods

To what extent is it possible to theorise an effective regulatory framework for medicine? Is it possible to achieve consensus on contested terms like 'good practice', 'patient safety' and 'performance'?

An Analysis of Data on Registration and Fitness to Practise Cases Held by the General Medical Council in the Context of Risk-Based Approaches to Medical Regulation
Sally Lloyd-Bostock

How can we institute effective risk-based regulation? To begin with we need good information about risks. This study is the first to mine GMC fitness to practise data and analyse whether it is fit to provide that.

Regulation, 'Donated Labour' and the NHS Reforms
Tim Ensor, Jerrett Myers, Roger Hay, Anne Kilby & Paula Palmer

It is often said that health workers are prone to working a lot of extra hours unpaid, so what effect have recent NHS reforms, such as targets and auditing, had on workers' motivation to 'donate' labour?

The Visible and Invisible Performance Effects of Transparency in Medical Professional Regulation
Gerry McGivern, Mark Exworthy & Ewan Ferlie

Does greater transparency result in better medical performance, or are there performance side-effects, such as 'gaming', to more transparent regulation?
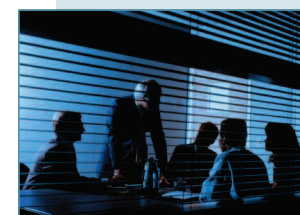
Research Projects

Managing Medical Performance: A Pilot Study to Investigate the Impact of Publishing Surgical Performance upon Clinicians and Managers

Mark Exworthy, Jon Gabe & Ian Rees Jones

How do public services professionals react to publishing performance data? This study examines how cardio-thoracic surgeons and their colleagues have reacted to the publication of mortality rates on the internet.

Identifying Biographical and Biopsychosocial Risk Factors Amongst Under Performing Doctors

Debbie Cohen, Melody Rhydderch & Naomi Marfell

What are the risk factors that cause doctors to underperform? Is it possible to design a process for the early identification of these risk factors and thus provide at-risk doctors with additional support?

Learning Responsibility? Exploring Doctors' Transitions to New Levels of Medical Responsibility

Trudie Roberts, Sue Kilminster, Miriam Zukas & Naomi Quinton

Doctors experience many transitions in their careers, so how can we ensure that these transitions – whether hierarchical or geographical – are smooth and do not result in a loss of performance?

The Experiences of UK, EU and Non-EU Medical Graduates Making the Transition to the UK Workplace

Jan Illing, Charlotte Kergon, Gill Morrow & Brian Burford

In most countries healthcare has an international workforce, so how do overseas trained doctors experience the transition to a foreign workplace, and how do they fare when compared against their home-trained contemporaries?

Research Projects

Equality, Diversity and Fitness to Practise: Exploring and Explaining Variation in the Identification, Handling and Outcomes of Concerns about Doctors

There have been a number of studies that show doctors from ethnic minorities or trained in other countries are over-represented in processes that deal with poor performance. Does race or origin play a role in the chain of events leading to concerns being raised about doctors or are there other factors at work, such as differences in training? What policies can we introduce to remedy this situation? The following three projects are a set of interlinked studies that explore these sensitive issues.

Challenges Encountered by Ethnic Minority and Migrant Doctors, Healthcare Workers and Related Groups and the Implications for Performance Regulation

Charlotte Humphrey, Aneez Esmail & Debbie Cohen

Clarifying the Factors Associated with Progression of Cases in the GMC's Fitness to Practise Procedures

Charlotte Humphrey, Martin Gulliford, Aneez Esmail & Debbie Cohen

Measuring Organisational Attitudes to Workplace Discrimination, Prejudice and Diversity: An Exploratory Study of NHS Organisations

Aneez Esmail, Caroline Humphrey & Debbie Cohen

The Broader Agenda for Public Services

Most of the 47 research projects in the Programme aim to explore an analytic theme in public service performance (such as incentives, public perceptions, metrics) by carefully-chosen case studies to act as a test-bed for propositions on those themes. The trick of most good research is to combine the general with the particular. But some of the work we do is more over-arching in nature, looking at broader policy and analytic questions such as:

- What do we know about 'what worked' in managing public services performance in the recent past? What are the options for public services in what may prove to be the much colder fiscal climate of the 2010s?

- Can we draw together the research done in the Programme with other relevant work into a coherent set of theories about the way public service performance relates to organization, regulation and other interventions, and about who sees what as evidence of good or bad performance?

- Is there a distinctive UK view about how public services should be conceived and about how their performance should be managed?

- Is there something specific about the risks faced in the provision of public services and if so what is it and what are its implications?

We're answering these broader questions in three ways: by a few deliberately wide-ranging projects; by half a dozen Programme fellows whose aim is to pull our work together and 'read across' from one application to another; and by a set of conferences, workshops and other forums. Those cross-cutting events are in many cases producing symposium publications on broader themes. Among these are publications on transparency, performance metrics and ranking and rating systems. Information about these and other publications can be found on our website.
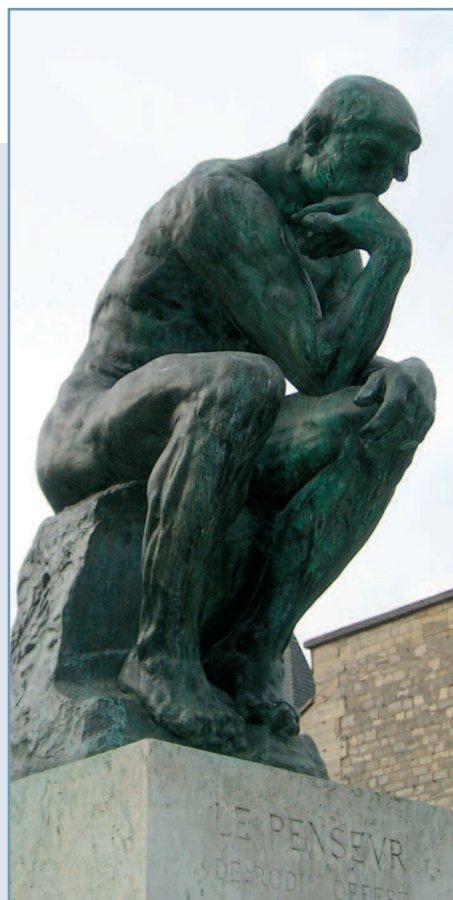
Research Projects

Public Attitudes and Public Service Responsiveness
John Curtice, Oliver Heath & Miranda Phillips

What attitudes do the public have towards key public services? Are public expectations the same in the devolved administrations as in England? This large-scale, randomised survey is the first to examine public attitudes to public services in all four countries of the UK, and will form a benchmark for future studies.

Options for Britain II
Iain McLean, David Halpern, Varun Uberoi & Adam Coutts

What are the big questions facing policy-makers over the coming decade and what has the Labour Government achieved since 1997? By commissioning experts in a variety of fields this project aims to provide a comprehensive policy portfolio for the next government whatever its political complexion.

Public Service Reform in Scotland: Current Knowledge and Future Prospects
Tobias Jung

This project, in collaboration with the Scottish Government, asks, 'Which of the Programme's and other findings on public service reform can be applied to the particular context of Scotland?' It has also established a Scottish public management network.

Theories of Performance
Colin Talbot

Is there a robust theory of organisational performance for the public services? Despite a raft of measures to improve public service performance over recent years – such as targets or turnaround teams – there has been little theorising as to why these initiatives should work.

Regulating Doctors: Between Performance and Practise
Mary Dixon-Woods

To what extent is it possible to theorise an effective regulatory framework for medicine? Is it possible to achieve consensus on contested terms like 'good practice', 'patient safety' and 'performance'?

Major Publications
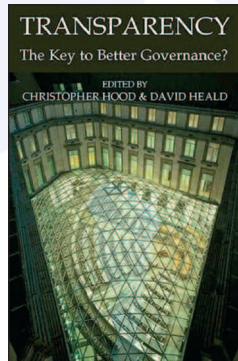
Transparency: The Key to Better Governance

Christopher Hood & David Heald (eds)

Oxford University Press

"The essays in Transparency… analyse clinically and from every angle the concept and practice of open government, not only in this country but elsewhere… Having read [Onora O'Neill's chapter] and some of the other excellent essays in this book, I have a strong desire to go away into a corner by myself and have a quiet think about what I actually do believe. And that illustrates why, in my view, scholarship matters when considering issues of government."

An extract from a review by former Cabinet Secretary, Lord Wilson of Dinton.
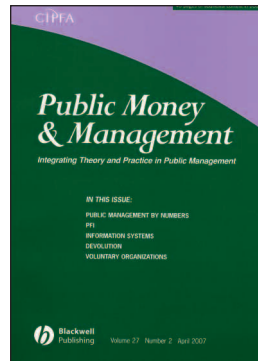
Public Management by Numbers

A special issue of Public Money and Management, Vol. 27, Issue 2, Blackwell

This special issue contains four articles from the Programme's research which look at metrics from different but complementary angles. They examine: Which indicators should be used where? Are composite indicators, like the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), robust, valid and reliable? And, are indicators used differently by different organisations?

Ratings and Rankings of Public Service Performance

A special issue of the International Public Management Journal, Vol. 11, Issue 3, Routledge

Love them or loathe them it seems rankings and ratings of public services are here to stay, so this special issue attempts to go beyond the standard social science critique of rankings' statistical reliability and validity. Among the many issues discussed, it presents a method for ranking the rankings themselves that would allow kite-marking to help consumers make sense of the rankings world.

The Use of Measured Performance Indicators in Governance and Public Services

A video interview with Prof. Christopher Hood

Available at http://uk.youtube.com/user/PSProgramme

Drawing on many of the Programme's findings, Christopher Hood discusses the functions and dysfunctions of targets, rankings and intelligence as various types of measured performance indicators.

These are the Programme's major outputs as of October 2008. Check the Library section of our website for more publications as they appear and to find a vast array of individual journal articles.

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Index of Subjects

Notes

ESRC Public Services Programme Overview

Legend:
- Previous Years' Events
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- Published Outputs
- Anticipated Outputs

Based on autumn 2008 data and estimates

Visit our website
www.publicservices.ac.uk
for full details of our projects, publications, events and much more!

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