NEW PROGRAMME OF RESEARCH ON WORKFORCE ISSUES

SCOPING EXERCISE: THE IMPACT OF LOCAL LABOUR MARKET FACTORS ON THE ORGANISATION AND DELIVERY OF HEALTH SERVICES

Introduction
The SDO Programme wishes to commission a short scoping exercise on the impact of local labour market factors on the organisation and delivery of health services. This is one of three workforce scoping exercises being commissioned by the SDO. The others focus on the relationship between workforce issues and health outcomes, and on skill mix issues in secondary care, respectively.

Along with other initiatives, this scoping exercise will inform the SDO’s Workforce Commissioning Group about research priorities in this area, and enable it to commission appropriate empirical research.

Background
The context for this scoping exercise is the increasing profile that workforce issues have in the delivery of effective, timely and appropriate health care. In a Refreshing of the National Listening Exercise carried out by the SDO Programme during 2002 workforce issues emerged as the top priority for further SDO research. They have come to the fore for a variety of reasons. Problems concerning the recruitment, retention and morale of staff have increased in recent years. At the same time attention has been drawn to the relationship between workforce issues and the organisation and delivery of health care in a number of documents, including the *NHS Plan* and the *National Service Frameworks*.

Workforce is an extremely broad term and initiatives concerned with the NHS workforce have occurred at a number of levels. A review of workforce planning in the NHS was originally recommended by the House of Commons Select Committee in March 1999. The consultation document *A Health Service of all the Talents: Developing the NHS Workforce*, appeared in April 2000. A White Paper, *Investment and Reform for NHS Staff: Taking Forward the NHS Plan*, followed in February 2001. This provided the foundation for modernization of NHS workforce planning.

A number of national bodies concerned with NHS workforce issues have subsequently been established. The *Workforce Numbers Advisory Board* advises on the future number of training places required. The *National Workforce Development Board* has responsibility for delivering the required number of training commissions. The twenty four *Workforce Development Confederations* are concerned with developing innovative approaches to the delivery of integrated education and training.

*Care Group Workforce Teams* take a national overview of the challenges of delivering services to particular client groups. Within the Modernisation Agency the *Changing
Workforce Programme is supporting new ways of working in health and social care, to improve patient services, tackle staff shortages and increase job satisfaction. An evaluation of the first wave of thirteen pilot sites, supported by the Department of Health’s Policy Research Programme, is currently underway. Pay and conditions of service of NHS staff is under review following publication of Agenda for Change: Modernising the NHS Pay System, and subsequent guidance.

Proposals for this scoping exercise on the impact of local labour market factors will need to take account of these and other developments in this rapidly developing field.

Local labour market factors

The remit of the SDO Programme in relation to workforce is limited to the impact of workforce issues on the organization and delivery of services, and does not extend to broader policy issues relating to the NHS workforce. Aspects of workforce of specific interest to the SDO Programme include the impact of local labour markets and local pay bargaining on the delivery of services.

This scoping exercise is concerned with the impact of local labour market factors on the organisation and delivery of health services. Both of these terms will need to be interpreted broadly: local may be interpreted to include anything below national level, such as regional. Other workforce issues will be important, but the focus of this scoping exercise should be on local factors.

This is an issue where current literature is limited and fragmented. SDO wishes to obtain a clearer picture of the extent and nature of this literature, to gain a better understanding of the conceptual, methodological and other issues involved, and to develop a research agenda in this field.

Particular questions which might be addressed here include:

- To what extent do local labour markets affect recruitment into the NHS?
- Which staff groups, and which parts of the country, are affected most?
- Is there evidence of successful local recruitment strategies used by other parts of the public sector, and by the private sector?
- What is the extent of local pay variations in health care between the public and private sectors?
- What impact has this had on the recruitment and retention of staff in the NHS?

Nature of the Scoping exercise

The aim of this scoping exercise is to advise the SDO Programme what research should be commissioned in this area. The scoping exercise should therefore include the following:

1. A map of the available published and grey research literatures (theoretical and empirical) from both outside and within the health care sector. This should include private and public (non-health sectors) where appropriate.
A comprehensive literature review is not required at this stage. However the review should be sufficiently comprehensive and rigorous to be able to identify the research which has been carried out, gaps in the field, and relevant methodological issues which may be important to consider in future commissioning.

2. An analysis of the current NHS context, and how the findings from the scoping exercise can inform the development of workforce management within the NHS.

3. The policy implications for the Department of Health, and the various NHS organisations, of the findings of the scoping exercise.

4. Identification of areas for further research, and how these might be addressed.

Applicants should demonstrate that they have an excellent understanding of current workforce developments in the NHS, and should indicate how they will take account of developments occurring during the course of the scoping exercise. Applicants should also explicitly state how their proposed scoping exercise adds to our generalisable knowledge of the management, organisation and delivery of health services.

The proposed scoping exercise should take no more than 4 months to complete. By way of guidance it is anticipated that searches will be completed within 6 weeks, that analysis and interpretation will take an additional 6 weeks, and that report writing will be completed within a further 4 weeks.

Methods

Applicants should clearly outline their proposed methods for the scoping exercise. In mapping the literature the following areas should be covered:

- The theoretical bases of the review.
- Methods for identifying relevant published and grey literatures. It is expected that applicants will plan to use a variety of methods including the research team’s prior knowledge; search of electronic databases; and advice from key researchers and practitioners in the field.
- Methods for judging the quality of the literature available and for summarising the results should also be made explicit.
- Methods for providing an analysis of the current and changing NHS context.

The scoping exercise may also include the collection of statistical and other data where appropriate. Applicants may also wish to undertake some interviews with key informants.

Applicants should indicate what other issues will be included in the scoping exercise. These may include conceptual and definitional issues, and methodological issues. The scoping exercise must include suggestions for the commissioning of further research.

Applicants should demonstrate that they have assembled a team of researchers whose knowledge and skills are appropriate.
Outputs
The principal output of the scoping exercise will be a detailed report, providing a map of the literature that should:

- contain a short and coherent executive summary;
- critically describe the methods used and the available literature;
- provide an authoritative, thorough and substantive map of the available literatures (both theoretical and empirical) and its implications;
- provide rigorous and detailed conclusions about what is currently known in this area and the strength of the evidence on which this is based;
- clearly identify areas for further research and how they might be addressed. This could include both more systematic reviews of the literature and/or primary research; and
- contain an analysis which clearly indicates how the findings are relevant to developing policy and practice in the NHS.

In addition, the scoping report should include discussion of the other issues identified under methods, as described above.

The research team should produce a report which will be appropriate for use by the SDO’s Workforce Commissioning Group, when deciding on the approaches to take when commissioning further substantive research in this area. Successful applicants may be required to present their completed work to the SDO Programme Board.

Guidance Notes for submitting a proposal: Workforce Scoping Exercises

Applications should be submitted by 1pm on Wednesday 2nd April 2003 to:

Damian O’Boyle
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National Co-ordinating Centre for NHS Service Delivery and Organisation Research and Development
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London
WC1E 6AZ
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TWENTY FIVE HARD COPIES of the proposal should be submitted (minimum font 10pt), together with a copy on disk or CD. Please note we will not accept faxed or hand written proposals. No late applications will be considered. Proposals should include:

Cover sheet (Stating the title of the project, reference number of the advertisement, names and contact details of the lead researcher and all other applicants).

Scoping Proposal (Maximum of 5 sides of A4 paper, stating the aims and objectives, background, methods and project timetable).

CVs (Brief CV of each applicant, stating relevant knowledge and
experience to undertake the work).

Costing (Complete with staff inputs, equipment, consumables, travel and overheads).

Teams should ensure that their proposal complies with the Research Governance Framework, which can be found on the Department of Health website, or via a link on the SDO website under the ‘Call for Proposals’ page.

The successful team will be required to provide proof of research ethics committee approval for their project, if this is required (information regarding this can be found on the SDO website under the ‘Calls for Proposals’ page).

Please clearly label the outside of the envelope in which you submit your proposal with the following: ‘Tender Documents’. This will enable us to identify proposals and keep them aside so that they may all be opened together after the closing date and time.

The budget for this scoping exercise is expected to be up to £50,000. Please note that our final decisions will be based on the overall quality of the applications received.

Projects should start no later than 30th June 2003, and must be completed within 4 months. The target date for submission of the final report is 31st October 2003.

We anticipate that there will be informal discussions with NCCSDO during the period in which the report is prepared to clarify issues as they arise.
Addendum
This document was published by the National Coordinating Centre for the Service Delivery and Organisation (NCCSDO) research programme, managed by the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine.

The management of the Service Delivery and Organisation (SDO) programme has now transferred to the National Institute for Health Research Evaluations, Trials and Studies Coordinating Centre (NETSCC) based at the University of Southampton. Prior to April 2009, NETSCC had no involvement in the commissioning or production of this document and therefore we may not be able to comment on the background or technical detail of this document. Should you have any queries please contact sdo@southampton.ac.uk.