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Participant Information Sheet

Decommissioning health care: identifying best practice through primary and secondary research

You are being invited to take part in a Delphi exercise that is part of a wider research study into decommissioning health care. Before you decide whether to take part it is important for you to understand why the research is being carried out and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is the purpose of the study?

Health care systems such as the NHS have to balance the need to make efficiency savings whilst also maintaining high quality care and this creates challenges for those responsible for planning or commissioning services. As well as investing in new provision attention has increasingly turned to the need to ‘decommission’ services that are no longer deemed essential or effective. However, decommissioning – defined as *the planned process of removing, reducing or replacing health care services* – remains strikingly under-researched. This project is designed to address this important knowledge-practice gap.

The overall purpose of this study is to formulate evidence-informed best practice guidance to enable the effective decommissioning of NHS services. To this end the project will address three key research questions:

- What is the international evidence and expert opinion regarding best practice in decommissioning health care services?
- How and to what extent are NHS organisations currently decommissioning services?

- What factors and processes facilitate the successful implementation of decisions to decommission NHS services?

Why have I been chosen?

You have been identified as having an important perspective and/or experience in relation to this topic. This is for the following reasons:

- You have been involved in or led recent decommissioning projects within the English NHS, or within overseas health services
- You are acknowledged as having academic expertise on this topic

What will my participation in the study involve?

We would like you to take part in a Delphi exercise. This will involve three rounds of questions, where you will be asked to complete an online question sheet about your views and experiences in relation to decommissioning health care. The question sheet will be comprised of approximately three to five ‘semi-structured’ questions each time. You will therefore be able to comment on any issues of importance to you, as well as addressing the pre-set questions.

You will be asked to complete and return the question sheet within one week, electronically. You will then be asked to repeat this process and fill out and return an online question sheet two more times, at approximately two to three week intervals. You will be sent an anonymised summary of the results of each round of questions, thus providing you with an opportunity to see early findings of the study. The aim is for the Delphi exercise to - iteratively – build understanding and consensus around what is current ‘best practice’ relating to decommissioning.

Do I have to take part?

Your participation is voluntary. You can either agree or decline to take part in the Delphi exercise up to 7 days before the start of the Delphi exercise. If you agree to take part you consent to take part in all three stages of the Delphi exercise. Please note once you have submitted your responses you will not be able to withdraw them from the study.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Each participant in the research will be assigned a unique ID number and their responses will be referred to by this number. Details of which individual participant is linked to each individual ID number will be kept strictly confidential and will be known only to the research team.

During the writing up of the research any direct quotation will be attributed to either a generic job title or a generic role within the study (e.g. 'Director A' or 'Commissioner B') and organisation ('Trust A').

Data from the study will be held securely by the Research Team for a period of ten years before being destroyed; this is in line with the University of Birmingham's Code of Practice for Research.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The research will be written up as a final report to the funder and in papers for both professional and academic journals, and will be presented at professional and academic conferences. We will also hold feedback events with participants as well as groups of service-users and patients.

Who is funding the research?

The research is funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) for a period of three years. The sponsor for the research is the University of Birmingham.

What indemnity arrangements are in place?

This study is covered by the University of Birmingham's insurance policy for negligent harm. The study is not covered for non-negligent harm, as this is not included in the University of Birmingham's standard insurance policy.

How can I get further information?

Please contact Dr Iestyn Williams (tel. XXXX/ [XXXX](#)) for further information.

Thank you for your help.

Decommissioning of health care:

a Delphi study of expert opinion to establish what we know about ‘best practice’ from around the world

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this three-round Delphi survey. You are one of 30 participants. Each of you has been selected on the basis either of your experience of leading (or being involved in) decommissioning processes, or through your expertise in evaluating or studying such processes.

Please provide your name and email address in the space below. Please note that this is so the research team can keep a record of who has taken part in this Delphi survey. No one else will be able to see your responses, and your details will not be referred to in any presentations of the results.

Purpose of the study

Health care systems have to balance the need to make efficiency savings whilst also maintaining high quality care. This creates challenges for those responsible for planning or commissioning services. As well as investing in new provision, attention has increasingly turned to the need to ‘decommission’ services and/or interventions that are no longer deemed essential or effective. Examples might include:

- Reducing investment in or access to a specific treatment
- Replacing existing services (including, for example, transferring the delivery of services into more cost effective or accessible settings)
- Closure or discontinuation of health care programmes and organisations

In this study we use the term ‘decommissioning’ to refer to each of the above activities. This topic is under-researched and this project is designed to address this gap.

There are three rounds of data collection involved in the exercise. As explained in the participant information sheet, you will receive an anonymised summary of the results of each round of the Delphi study. The aim is to build consensus around what is current ‘best practice’ relating to this challenge for those making and implementing decisions about health care delivery and organization.

This first round comprises just five questions and you are asked to complete it within the next week. The questions seek your views on a range of aspects of decommissioning including the criteria informing decisions to decommission or disinvest, and the factors that influence decommissioning processes and outcomes.

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In no particular order, please suggest up to five factors that - either in your direct experience or based on your expertise – **negatively** shape the **outcome** of decommissioning a health care service (or services):

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Please comment below on why you think the factors you have listed are important:

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QUESTION 5: Developing best practice in decommissioning healthcare services

Given your responses to questions 2-4, what would you recommend as best practice with regards to implementing decommissioning? Please state your recommendations in the form of action points for those leading decommissioning processes, in no particular order.

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2

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4

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Please provide any further comments relating to why you think these are important here:

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Further comments on the research project

The next stage of this research project will involve investigating four case studies of decommissioning of healthcare services and/or interventions.

Please use this space to provide any interesting examples of decommissioning you are aware of. The examples can be past, current, or planned.

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Thank you

This first stage of the Delphi survey is now complete.

In approximately two weeks you will receive the second stage of the survey which will anonymously summarise all the responses we received and ask some further questions as we together try to build consensus on current 'best practice' in the decommissioning of health care.

If you have any further comments or questions about the Delphi survey overall please provide them here:

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