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Catalogue of Social Care Measures

BACKGROUND

Social care research often struggles with a lack of data, but more recently there has been an increase in the collection, dissemination and utilisation of data on social care.

However, such data come from discrete and varied sources and there is a need to help researchers and other stakeholders with an interest to use the data. These people must be able to easily discover what data are available for important social care issues and from what time periods and where such data can be found.

KEY FINDINGS

- Multiple datasets were searched for measures related to the receipt, need or provision of social care services.
- Measures were recorded along with additional information such as age of participants, details of the responder.
- The measures found were listed and described on a website so that anyone with internet access can search for relevant measures to support their own research, policy or practice decisions, or for other reasons.

AIMS AND METHODS

The catalogue of social care data (CASCID) collects measures from large UK datasets relevant to social care and displays them in one website.

Accessible to experts and non-experts alike, it aims to increase social care data usage, encourage comparisons across datasets and the filling of research gaps which might have escaped notice due to the fragmented nature of social care data, and promote the harmonisation of UK social care data.

It also aims to help researchers from other fields use social care data which they might not otherwise be able to find. The website was created by researchers identifying large UK datasets and then searching through their measures for ones relevant to social care.

FINDINGS

The creation of our website gives a national catalogue where social care data sources for England can be searched for relevant measures (2516 measures from 43 UK data sources at time of writing).

The website provides a detailed list of what information was collected from participants or data managers during data collections, but it does not provide the datasets themselves.

The website provides links to the organisations which hold the data. The Catalogue of Social Care Data (CASCID) can be accessed via https://cataloguesocialcare.uk/.

Once users have arrived at the homepage, they will see that two methods of searching UK social care data are available:

1. Via a list of UK datasets which contain social care measures (the 'All datasets' method). This list of datasets can be filtered by various parameters such as age at recruitment or start year. Once a dataset is selected, users can read the details of all included measures which relate to social care.
2. Via a long list of all measures contained across all datasets which concern social care (the 'All measures' method). This list can then be filtered using a custom search builder. For example, users could mandate specific keywords in the wording of the questions to find measures relating to mental health or measures about carers.

The datasets included have measures relating to service users, formal carers, informal carers, their relatives and even service providers. All these groups feature as informants in dataset sweeps, but the content and scope of included datasets vary widely.

The 2516 measures on the website cover a variety of topics, from questions concerning Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) and Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADLs) to questions asking carers how many hours per week they provide care. Excel templates are even sometimes used to collect data from local authority or provider managers about resource usage.

Due to this variation, all measures on the catalogue are categorised as either relating to the need, receipt or provision of social care services. However, all measures can be searched together via the aforementioned 'All measures' method.

On the 'Using the site' page, a video helps users understand how to run both types of catalogue searches as well a page providing written instructions and a glossary of all the terms used on the website. When applying filters to the list of datasets, users can filter datasets by related measures, study design, sample characteristics, age at recruitment, sample size, geographic coverage and start date.

When searching through all included measures in the catalogue, users may also filter the list by adding conditions using the custom search builder; filtering for whether measures concern the need, receipt or provision of services, the year measures were collected, who the informant was, the reporting term, the contents of questions and response scales and whether measures were part of standard data collection instruments.

The catalogue team has also provided buttons next to filtered lists of measures which users can press to export selected

measures as excel, pdf or csv files. This allows users to export all information attributed to each measure they have found instead of having to return to the website and re-run searches.

Information is provided about each dataset so that catalogue users can understand how the measures were gathered and what additional information might be available to them if they use data from a particular source.

For example, whether the same informants were asked about their health status or income in another part of a questionnaire. The website also provides a link for each dataset to where data can be directly accessed or to the required application process for access to the data (the catalogue shows users what data exists rather than providing raw data).

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

We hope our catalogue will enhance usage, and – over time – improve the quality, of social care data by:

- enabling website users to see what data currently exists by displaying measures from multiple data sources;
- encouraging harmonisation of data after researchers view the types of measures already collected and so design the data they collect to be comparable;
- allowing gaps in social care data to be noticed; evident after searching the website;
- helping researchers from other fields to find social care data without requiring prior knowledge of what datasets exist or how to find them.

STUDY INFORMATION

Research team

Martin Knapp
Derek King
Raphael Wittenberg
Shari Jadoolal
Edmund Stubbs

Contact

e.stubbs@lse.ac.uk

London School of Economics and Political Science

PARTNERS

Ben Schlaepfer (web developer)

Sarah Moncrieff (web designer)

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