ISRCTN17381762 https://doi.org/10.1186/ISRCTN17381762

Investigating the effectiveness of inpatient mental health rehabilitation services in the NHS and independent sector

Submission date
08/07/2022

Recruitment status
Recruiting

Registration date
01/11/2022

Overall study status
Ongoing

Last Edited
04/09/2025

Condition category
Mental and Behavioural Disorders

[_] Prospectively registered
[X] Protocol
[_] Statistical analysis plan
[_] Results
[_] Individual participant data
[X] Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
Mental health rehabilitation services provide specialist treatment to people with particularly severe and complex problems. These services include inpatient units and supported accommodation in the community. Over half of the 4400 mental health inpatient rehabilitation beds in England are provided by the independent sector, but there have been no studies investigating the effectiveness of inpatient rehabilitation services that have included the independent sector. Our study aims to address this gap.

Who can participate?
Any patient with an adequate understanding of English at one of the mental health inpatient rehabilitation units selected for this study.

What does the study involve?
A research interview which takes about 30 min where participants will be asked a series of questions about how satisfied they are with different aspects of their life, how they spend their time, the freedom they have to make day-to-day decisions, and how they feel about the care you receive from the inpatient rehabilitation service. The research team will also invite participants to a brief 5 min interview at 6, 12, and 18 months after the first interview. These interviews will be done over the telephone or video call (e.g. Zoom or Microsoft Teams).

The research team will also ask participants for their permission to ask a staff member about their abilities, needs, any specific difficulties they may have, their activities in the community, and whether they have been at risk or posed any risk to others. The research team will then contact staff involved in the participant's healthcare at regular intervals over the next 18 months to see if they have been discharged from the inpatient rehabilitation service, and, if they have been discharged, details of where they have been discharged to and whether they have had any readmissions. Participants may ask the researcher to see a copy of these questions.

The research team would also ask participants for their permission to collect some information from their healthcare records about the care they have received from mental health services in the past.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
By participating in this study, participants will help the research team to assess the effectiveness of NHS and independent sector inpatient mental health rehabilitation services. It is hoped that the information collected from this study will help to improve inpatient rehabilitation services in the future. Each participant will be offered £20 in recognition of the time they have given to be involved in the study.

Where is the study run from?
University College London (UK)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
From December 2019 to October 2025

Who is funding the study?
National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Health Services Delivery Research programme (UK)

Who is the main contact?
Christian Dalton-Locke (Project Manager)
c.dalton-locke@ucl.ac.uk

Study website
https://www.ucl.ac.uk/psychiatry/acer

Contact information

Type(s)
Principal Investigator

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Type(s)

Scientific

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Additional identifiers

EudraCT/CTIS number
Nil known

IRAS number
311434

ClinicalTrials.gov number
Nil known

Secondary identifying numbers
CPMS 52629, IRAS 311434, award ID: NIHR130693

Study information

Scientific Title
Assessing the Clinical and cost-Effectiveness of inpatient mental health Rehabilitation services provided by the NHS and independent sector (ACER)

Acronym
ACER V1.0

Study objectives
1. Do sociodemographic and clinical characteristics of patients differ between people receiving inpatient rehabilitation in the NHS and the independent sector?
2. Does service quality differ between inpatient rehabilitation units provided by the NHS and the independent sector?
3. Do the experiences of treatment and care, from the perspectives of patients, informal carers and staff, differ between inpatient rehabilitation services provided by the NHS and the independent sector?
4. Is inpatient rehabilitation clinically more effective at preventing readmission when provided by the independent sector or the NHS, after adjusting for differences between the sectors in terms of patient characteristics and length of stay?

5. Is inpatient rehabilitation more cost-effective when provided by the independent sector or the NHS, after adjusting for differences between the sectors in terms of key predictors of costs such as patient characteristics and length of stay?

Ethics approval required
Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)
Approved 08/06/2022, North East - Newcastle & North Tyneside 2 Research Ethics Committee (NHS BT Blood Donor Centre, Holland Drive, Newcastle upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear, NE2 4NQ; +44 (0)2071048086; newcastlenorthtyneside2.rec@hra.nhs.uk), ref: 22/NE/0067

Study design
Observational cohort study

Primary study design
Observational

Secondary study design
Cohort study

Study setting(s)
Hospital

Study type(s)
Treatment

Participant information sheet
Not available in web format, please use the contact details to request a patient information sheet

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Mental health

Interventions
As we cannot compare NHS and independent sector services through a randomised trial, our programme will draw together findings from four components to assess the effectiveness of these services:
1. Survey of 60 inpatient mental health rehabilitation services across England (30 NHS and 30 independent sector)
2. In-depth interviews with users, relatives/carers, staff, and commissioners of these services to explore their experiences and perspectives
3. Cohort study to compare outcomes for 600 patients of the NHS and independent sector rehabilitation services surveyed in Component 1, using statistical methods that take account of any differences between them such as the severity of their mental health problems
4. Health economic evaluation to assess the cost-effectiveness of inpatient rehabilitation services provided by the NHS and the independent sector

Survey:
We aim to recruit 500 patients from 60 inpatient mental health rehabilitation units across England (30 NHS and 30 independent sector) over a 12-month period to participate in a survey

(patients at this stage will be asked to consent to take part in Components 1 and 3). Once selected services have agreed to participate, researchers will visit the unit and describe the project to staff. The staff will be asked to introduce the patients to the researchers who will then provide the patient with a Participant Information Sheet. The study will be fully explained to the patient, including the purpose of the study, what their participation would involve, what data will be collected and how it will be collected, and that they are free to withdraw from the study at any point without it affecting their clinical care. The patient will have at least 24 hours to consider whether they would like to participate and have the opportunity to ask the researcher any questions. Patients who provide their informed consent by completing the consent form will then participate in a research interview where data will be collected using standardised measures regarding their quality of life (DIALOG, Recovering Quality of Life, EQ-5D-5L), autonomy (Resident Choice Scale), engagement in activities (Time Use Diary), satisfaction with care (Client Assessment of Treatment), and healthcare costs (Client Receipt Inventory). In addition, staff will be asked to complete standardised measures on the patient's social functioning (Life Skills Profile), challenging behaviours (Special Problems Rating Scale), alcohol and drug use (Clinical Alcohol and Drug Scale), needs (Camberwell Assessment of Needs, and activities (Time Use Diary). Sociodemographic, healthcare service use, current and previous risk, and engagement in community-based activities will be collected from the patient's healthcare records. Also, researchers will complete the QuIRC with the managers of each service. The QuIRC is a quality assessment tool developed specifically for inpatient mental health rehabilitation units.

In-depth interview (qualitative) study:
We will select and invite 10 inpatient rehabilitation units (5 NHS and 5 independent sector) participating in Component 1 to participate in Component 2. We will invite all staff from these services to participate in a focus group and ask about their experience and perspective of working in these services. We will also conduct additional staff interviews, including interviews with senior service managers, commissioners, and community care coordinators, to expand on any themes not adequately covered in the focus group, including the decision-making process about where an individual receives their inpatient rehabilitation.
From these participating services, we will also aim to interview between three and five patients from each service (between 30 and 50 in total) and ask about their experiences and perspectives on the care they are receiving. We will ask these patient participants for permission to contact and invite their relatives/carers to participate in an in-depth interview. We aim to recruit around 20 relatives/carers in total. Interviews with relatives/carers will take place via telephone or videoconferencing.

Cohort study:
Participants recruited into Component 1 will comprise the cohort for Component 3. The researchers will contact the services managers of the inpatient rehabilitation units participating in Component 1 once a month for 18 months to ask if any of the participants have been discharged from the unit, and if they have been discharged, information about where they have been discharged to including contact details of relevant staff (i.e. their 'key informant') who we may complete future monthly follow-ups with. We expect on most occasions this will be the participant’s community care coordinator. We will invite all participants to a short research interview via telephone or video call (Teams of Zoom) at six, 12, and 18 months to complete two quality of life measures (Recovering Quality of Life and EQ-5D-5L). In addition, at six, 12, and 18 months we will ask key informants of participants who have been discharged from the inpatient rehabilitation service they were recruited from about any subsequent inpatient service use, and social care costs (use of supported accommodation and any individual ‘care packages’).

Health economic evaluation:
Using data collected in Components 1 and 3 analyses will be conducted to investigate the cost-effectiveness of NHS and independent inpatient rehabilitation services by calculating quality-adjusted life-years.

Intervention Type
Other

Primary outcome measure
Cohort study:
Successful discharge from inpatient rehabilitation, defined as being discharged to the community without readmission, measured using staff reports collected at 6, 12, and 18 months

Health economic evaluation:
Incremental cost-effectiveness ratio (ICER) comparing rehabilitation in the independent sector and rehabilitation in an NHS service calculated using cost-utility analysis (CUA) where the QALYs are measured using patient responses to the EuroQol 5-dimension 5-level (EQ-5D-5L) questionnaire collected at baseline, 6, 12, and 18 months

Secondary outcome measures
Cohort study:
Total inpatient days over the follow-up period measured using staff reports collected at 6, 12, and 18 months

Overall study start date
20/12/2019

Completion date
31/10/2025

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
Patients:
1. Inpatients at rehabilitation units that are participating in the study
2. Provide informed consent to participate in the study. All efforts will be made to maximise the capacity of each patient to be able to provide informed consent for the study (for example, by explaining the purpose and process of the study in simple terms and over a number of meetings), and any patient with capacity who declines participation will not be included. However, for eligible patients who lack capacity to give informed consent we will seek advice from a consultee on their participation. Further detail on the procedure for seeking informed consent and assessing capacity is provided in section 8. Research data for participants lacking capacity will be collected via staff interview and healthcare records (as described above), but these participants will not be asked to participate in an interview themselves. The researchers expect only a minority of eligible patients to lack capacity (around 8% based on the REAL study) but it is important they are included in the study in order to prevent sample bias.

Services:
1. High dependency, community, or longer-term high dependency rehabilitation units
2. Community rehabilitation units will only be included if they are registered with CQC as an inpatient unit (rather than supported housing or residential care)

Participant type(s)
Patient

Age group
Adult

Sex
Both

Target number of participants
Planned Sample Size: 500; UK Sample Size: 500

Key exclusion criteria
Patients:
1. Unavailable during the researcher's visit, because they are on leave from the ward during the visit or are otherwise unavailable
2. Do not have an adequate understanding of English to understand the main purpose of the research and what participating would involve for them

Services:
1. Highly specialist units that focus on sub-groups (such as people with a diagnosis on the autism spectrum or those with neurodegenerative disease)
2. Specialist forensic mental health units (i.e. low secure rehabilitation units) as they do not form part of the standard mental health rehabilitation care pathway and are subject to specialist commissioning by NHS England

Date of first enrolment
08/06/2022

Date of final enrolment
30/09/2025

Locations

Countries of recruitment
England

United Kingdom

Study participating centre
Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust
St Pancras Hospital
4 St Pancras Way

London
United Kingdom
NW1 0PE

Study participating centre
Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust
Bath NHS House
Newbridge Hill
Bath
United Kingdom
BA1 3QE

Study participating centre
Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust
Unit 1
50 Summer Hill Road
Birmingham
United Kingdom
B1 3RB

Study participating centre
Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust
Trust Headquarters
350 Euston Road
Regents PLACE
London
United Kingdom
NW1 3AX

Study participating centre
Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust
Wayside House
Wilsons Lane
Coventry
United Kingdom
CV6 6NY

Study participating centre
Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust
St Nicholas Hospital
Jubilee Road

Gosforth
Newcastle upon Tyne
United Kingdom
NE3 3XT

Study participating centre
Devon Partnership NHS Trust
Wonford House Hospital
Dryden Road
Exeter
United Kingdom
EX2 5AF

Study participating centre
Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust
Prestwich Hospital
Bury New Road
Prestwich
Manchester
United Kingdom
M25 3BL

Study participating centre
Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust
Unit 2 Kings Court
Charles Hastings Way
Worcester
United Kingdom
WR5 1JR

Study participating centre
Leeds and York Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
2150 Century Way
Thorpe Park
Leeds
United Kingdom
LS15 8ZB

Study participating centre
Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
St George's

Long Leys Road
Lincoln
United Kingdom
LN1 1FS

Study participating centre
Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust
V7 Building
Kings Business Park
Kings Drive
Prescot
United Kingdom
L34 1PJ

Study participating centre
North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust
Lawton House
Bellringer Road
Trentham
Stoke-on-trent
United Kingdom
ST4 8HH

Study participating centre
Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
The Resource, Trust Hq
Duncan Macmillan House
Porchester Road
Nottingham
United Kingdom
NG3 6AA

Study participating centre
Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust
225 Old Street
Ashton-under-lyne
United Kingdom
OL6 7SR

Study participating centre

Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber NHS Foundation Trust
Woodfield House
Tickhill Road
Doncaster
United Kingdom
DN4 8QN

Study participating centre
South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust
Bethlem Royal Hospital
Monks Orchard Road
Beckenham
United Kingdom
BR3 3BX

Study participating centre
South West London and St George's Mental Health NHS Trust
Springfield Hospital
61 Glenburnie Road
London
United Kingdom
SW17 7DJ

Study participating centre
Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
Trust Hq
Swandean
Arundel Road
Worthing
United Kingdom
BN13 3EP

Study participating centre
Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust
Trust Headquarters
West Park Hospital
Edward Pease Way
Darlington
United Kingdom
DL2 2TS

Study participating centre
St Andrew's Healthcare
Billing Road
Northampton
United Kingdom
NN1 5DG

Study participating centre
Priory Group
Priory Head Office Floor 5
Hammersmith Road
London
United Kingdom
W14 8UD

Study participating centre
Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health NHS Trust
Trust Headquarters Block B2
St Ann's Hospital
St Ann's Road
London
United Kingdom
N15 3TH

Study participating centre
Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust
Pinewood House
Pinewood PLACE
Dartford
United Kingdom
DA2 7WG

Study participating centre
Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust
Sceptre Point
Sceptre Way
Walton Summit
Preston
United Kingdom
PR5 6AW

Study participating centre
Hampshire and Isle of Wight Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
Tatchbury Mount Hospital
Calmore
Southampton
United Kingdom
SO40 2RZ

Sponsor information

Organisation
Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust

Sponsor details
St Pancras Hospital
4 St Pancras Way
London
England
United Kingdom
NW1 0PE
+44 (0)20 7685 5949
sponsor.noclor@nhs.net

Sponsor type
Hospital/treatment centre

Website
http://www.candi.nhs.uk/

ROR
https://ror.org/03ekq2173

Funder(s)

Funder type
Government

Funder Name
National Institute for Health and Care Research

Alternative Name(s)
National Institute for Health Research, NIHR Research, NIHRresearch, NIHR - National Institute for Health Research, NIHR (The National Institute for Health and Care Research), NIHR

Funding Body Type
Government organisation

Funding Body Subtype
National government

Location
United Kingdom

Results and Publications

Publication and dissemination plan
Planned dissemination of findings through peer-reviewed scientific journal publications by the end of 2025, hosting two webinars for participating services at key stages during the study to report on the progress of the study, and also presentation of the main findings at conferences.

Intention to publish date
30/06/2026

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan
The data sharing plans for the current study are unknown and will be made available at a later date

IPD sharing plan summary
Data sharing statement to be made available at a later date

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Protocol file	version 1.3	07/06/2022	05/08/2022	No	No
HRA research summary			26/07/2023	No	No
Protocol article		06/02/2024	07/02/2024	Yes	No