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Coverage
United Kingdom
Theme
Economy

Improvements in measuring health service productivity

Latest developments in measuring health service productivity are described in an article, *Public Service Productivity: Health*, published today by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

Since the publication of the previous article on health productivity in October 2004, the ONS has carried out substantial work drawing together information and research from a number of sources to produce better measures of health service inputs and outputs.

In particular, the article discusses various methodologies and measures of quality improvements in the National Health Service. It draws on work recently published by the Centre for Health Economics, University of York and the National Institute for Economic and Social Research and by the Department of Health.

Launching the third of a continuing series of ongoing articles relating to the productivity of key public services, National Statistician, Karen Dunnell, said:

"Measuring value for money in the public services is of major importance to everyone. The article published today takes forward the assessment of the productivity of the Health Service. But this needs to be seen as a staging post in an ongoing journey. What is now needed is a thorough public discussion of the methodologies involved. Working with the expert community, we expect to be able to continue to improve our understanding over time. ONS, in collaboration with Department of Health, will be organising a consultation to help us to achieve this."

The UK Centre for the Measurement of Government Activity, the responsible directorate within the ONS, has further articles planned for release later this year on other key public services, such as Social Services and the Criminal Justice System.

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BACKGROUND NOTES

1. The productivity article and the complementary technical article on *Sources and Methods* are both available on the National Statistics website at:
<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/data/methodology/specific/PublicSector/output/health.asp>
2. A joint project by the Centre for Health Economics (University of York) and the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR), funded by the Department of Health (DH), has produced a set of estimates of quality change in NHS services which were published in *Developing New Approaches to Measuring NHS Outputs and Productivity* (York 2005). DH has been working in parallel and has published estimates of quality change in NHS services which complement and broaden the York/NIESR estimates, in *Healthcare Output and Productivity: Accounting for Quality Change* (DH 2005). All of these estimates are taken into account in this article, and are complemented by other sources of information.
3. Sir Tony Atkinson produced his final report *Measurement of Government Output and Productivity for the National Accounts* on 31 January 2005. The full Atkinson report is at:
www.statistics.gov.uk/about/data/methodology/specific/PublicSector/Atkinson/final_report.asp.
The National Statistician responded in detail on 18 July 2005:
www.statistics.gov.uk/about/other_letters/default.asp
4. The National Statistician set up the UK Centre for the Measurement of Government Activity (UKCeMGA), as a new directorate within the Office for National Statistics (ONS), to develop and take forward the work needed to respond to the challenges posed by the recommendations in the Atkinson Final Report. UKCeMGA's Executive Director is Joe Grice. UKCeMGA has its own Advisory Board chaired by Professor Peter C Smith. To find out more about the work of UKCeMGA, visit:
www.statistics.gov.uk/about/data/methodology/specific/PublicSector/output/default.asp
5. ONS previously published information on the productivity of the health service on 18 October 2004 and is available on the ONS website at:
<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/article.asp?ID=987>
A further article covering productivity in the Education service was published on 31 October 2005. For details see
www.statistics.gov.uk/about/data/methodology/specific/PublicSector/output/education.asp
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