



How can we use historical data to support adult social care policy?



In the UK, long-term care faces funding challenges, and demand is increasing. Given this pressure, it is important to understand how targeting support to individuals with different needs affects outcomes. Long-term care needs have been widely recorded in UK electronic databases since the 1990s. While analysing large volumes of free text has not historically been practical, advances in technology creates an opportunity to extract information from this data.

What are we doing?

We have trained a model to classify long-term care case notes as being indicative of loneliness or social isolation. This may allow local authorities to better identify the needs of individuals receiving care, in order to improve the commissioning and targeting of services.



How will it help?

Combining this enriched data about individual care needs with service use data, we can model the risk factors associated with care home entry. We will examine whether loneliness or social isolation is recorded at the time of a person's needs assessment, and how long until an individual enters a care home. Survey data indicates there may be a link between loneliness and care home entry, but such an analysis has never been done before using administrative data.

Other next steps include using similar methods to extract further information from unstructured data, such as around economic deprivation or safety and risk. We also hope that our imminent publications will provide a recipe for other researchers with access to administrative data to do similar analyses.

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