

ESSENCE SUMMARY 15

British Red Cross 'Support at Home' hospital discharge scheme

A small-scale social care intervention: economic evidence

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WHAT IS THE INTERVENTION?

In this British Red Cross scheme, volunteers offer short-term (4–12 week) support for older people recently discharged from the hospital (1). The volunteers offer practical and emotional support including transport home from hospitals and door-to-door transport for other essential health-care journeys. They may also help with everyday tasks such as picking up prescriptions or shopping. Additionally, they may provide companionship and help older people rebuild their confidence. They may also help arrange for bills to be paid and for short-term use of wheelchairs and toilet aids.

IS THE INTERVENTION EFFECTIVE?

Part of the British Red Cross evaluation involved qualitative research on the intervention's effectiveness (2). The results of the evaluation indicated multiple benefits of the intervention such as enabling safe discharge, supporting carers and enabling patient advocacy. Additionally, there were quality of life benefits, but they could not be included in the economic analysis.

IS THE INTERVENTION COST-EFFECTIVE?

The intervention costs an average £169 per person, including volunteer time, which was valued at minimum wage. Additionally, the programme led to savings from older people needing less help with daily activities and improvements in wellbeing. These savings amounted to £884 per person on average (costs are at 2011 price levels). These savings lasted up to six months after the intervention concluded. Specifically, these savings comprised of:

- reduced use of paid homecare workers (£167)
- unpaid care valued at minimum wage (£411) and general help (£75)
- reduced healthcare costs for treatment associated with falls (£153), malnutrition (£74) and depressive symptoms (£4)

WHAT IS THE QUALITY OF EVIDENCE ON THE INTERVENTION?

The evidence on the evaluation was not of high quality. This is because it could not identify a control group, so it did not involve an adequate external comparison group for the economic evaluation.

HOW IS THE INTERVENTION IMPLEMENTED?

The volunteer scheme has been successfully implemented across the UK, with the majority of the schemes existing in England. However, individuals must be referred to the scheme by their GP or another health professional. There is also support for carers limitedly available in the UK (1).

OTHER INFORMATION

Further details are in a report analysing the economic impact of the scheme (3). For more information on help at home please see ESSENCE Summary 5.

REFERENCES

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3. Dixon J, Winterbourne S, Lombard D, et al. (2015) An Analysis of the Economic Impacts of the British Red Cross Support at Home Service. PSSRU, LSE.

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