

## **Enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of assessment in community care: introducing self assessment in occupational therapy services - challenge or opportunity?**

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### **Introduction:**

System-wide transformation of the English adult social care system is aimed at enabling people to have more choice, control and power over the services that they receive. Self assessment, whereby a person assesses their own needs to establish eligibility or to access a service, could potentially facilitate more personalised - and cost effective - service delivery. Thirteen pilot projects implemented self assessment models within different community care contexts, with the majority involving provision of equipment and adaptations. This independent evaluation was commissioned by the Department of Health to inform the future development of community care assessment practice.

### **Objectives:**

To: classify and describe different self assessment approaches; gauge user experience; evaluate cost-effectiveness; appraise implementation and sustainability of new assessment practices.

### **Method:**

Multi methods approach: document research; qualitative interviews with managers; service user records, core data, satisfaction survey.

### **Results:**

The average self assessment recipient was older than 75, female, white and in fair or poor health; but still relatively active in terms of daily living activities. Equipment items deemed suitable for provision varied from site to site, but were mostly at the lower end of the cost spectrum. Self assessment accelerated the time between referral and completion of assessment, but did not necessarily reduce the time between assessment and service receipt. Service user experience did not differ between those receiving a traditional assessment and those who self assessed, with the majority of all users being highly satisfied. Those using on-line assessment tools, Asian service users, people with memory problems and those who rated their health less than very good; found self assessment more difficult. Potential cost savings varied across sites, tending to focus on front-line professional staff, not administrative infrastructure.

### **Conclusion and implications for occupational therapy:**

Diversity between pilot sites in terms of the funding, design and data made available to the research team affected the study design, requiring pragmatic programme evaluation. Whilst the concept of self assessment truly reflects occupational therapy's declared client-centred philosophy, its implementation within UK adult social care services presents the profession with both challenges and opportunities.