



Top 6 integrated care

Integrated care..

- ..takes the user perspective
- ..improves people's experience of care
- ..improves population health
- ..helps those that are most vulnerable
- ..can represent better value for money
- ..fosters a motivated and satisfied workforce

1

Takes the user's perspective

Takes the user's perspective as the organising principle for delivering services – it is easily forgotten that 80% of care is self-care and only about 20% is professional care. Users (and their families or carers) are the true primary health care providers. Hence, a focus on prevention and self-care is essential.

2

Improves people's experience of care

Integrated care improves people's experiences of care – a recent systematic review concluded there is evidence of perceived improved quality of care, evidence of increased patient satisfaction with services, and evidence of improved access to care.

3

Improves people's health

Improves population health – reviews by The King's Fund and the Nuffield Trust of the evidence from research conclude that significant benefits can arise from the integration of services where these are targeted at those client groups for whom care is currently poorly coordinated. People that benefit the most from an integrated approach are frail older people, children and adults with disabilities, people with addictions, and those with multiple chronic and mental health illnesses, for whom care quality is often poor and who consume the highest proportion of resources⁶. Integrated care is also important for those requiring urgent care (e.g. cancer patients) where a fast and well-coordinated care response can significantly improve care outcomes.

4

Helps those that are most vulnerable

Helps those that are most vulnerable – those that suffer most from a lack of integration and coordination of care services are people who are poor and/or vulnerable. There is an ethical imperative to help those most in need, ensuring equal access to quality care.

5

Can represent better value for money

Can represent better value for money through improved coordination - The evidence on whether integration leads to value for money remains inconclusive and difficult to interpret due to the complexity of evaluating it. Evaluation of integrated care is still an evolving and emergent field and the quality of existing economic evaluations is not yet robust enough^{7,8}. But the lack of evidence does not mean that it does not hold promise. There is some evidence⁹ that better coordination can save money and raise quality for particular patients. The rationale is that breaking down barriers and working as a well-coordinated team leads to more efficient delivery of services. This allows us to make better use of existing resources by avoiding duplication and ensuring people receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time. Particularly cost-effective seem to be initiatives that use reliable data to identify the patients most at risk of deterioration, and then ensure that they get the appropriate type of coordinated care and self-care services⁹. Essentially, integrated care can save money if the right approach is used, if it is implemented correctly and depending on the context (e.g. financing system) and timescale over which savings are estimated. Successful examples include models of care to prevent hospital admissions and programmes that prevent chronic care and illness.

6

Fosters a motivated and satisfied workforce

Fosters a motivated and satisfied workforce – the workforce is the most vital resource when it comes to delivering care services¹⁰. Through greater coordination, integrated care can free up valuable space and time for staff to spend more time on what they are good at, extend their skills and their scope of practice. This means patients get better care, but it also means staff's careers are more rewarding, helping to address potential gaps in the workforce.