

# Predicting Service Demand with the CSED POPPI System

*Predicting demand for services continues to be a problem area for local authority social care business units and the Care Services Efficiency Delivery Programme (CSED) in the Department of Health confirmed this in extensive consultation with councils. This article discusses CSED's approach and describes the POPPI web-based forecasting system developed by CSED with the Institute of Public Care, Oxford Brookes University (IPC) to help councils address the problem.*

Councils face a dynamic environment with changing population profiles and innovations in commissioning and consumer choice across the health economy. They need to detect and manage changing demand, tactically and strategically, to plan effectively and shift services/resources to meet this demand.

## **The CSED Approach**

CSED, working with a core group of councils, has focused on forecasting tools that councils can apply rapidly with minimal analytical and systems support.

CSED emphasise links to the council's corporate planning cycle and the use of operational management data to monitor demand and analyse trends. Routine reporting and analysis of variance engages staff and managers in interpreting "what is going on" and can point up demand changes for early management attention.

This can also extract value from operational database investments and generate a virtuous circle of data quality improvements as the information in the database is actively used. The data can be used for capacity planning, and provides a focus for local decisions and local priorities that are not easily represented in a generic model.

The focus is on forecasting entrants and leavers to each service, avoiding complex interactions and response functions so that assumptions are visible and risks are identified quickly. Changes in entrants and leavers over time can indicate changes in demand, outcome or length of stay. They can indicate differences between teams in the process or policy for allocation, or market changes.

CSED believe that a single model is unlikely to provide a practical solution for councils and see POPPI as a starting point for forecasting demand for older people's care, from which local strategies can be developed.

## **The POPPI System**

POPPI stands for Projecting Older People Population Information. It has been designed to give councils with social service responsibilities easy access to existing forecasts of the numbers and characteristics of older people in their locality.

POPPI uses the Office of National Statistics Subnational Population Projections down to District level. The projections are based on the 2001 census with trends of fertility, mortality and migration from 2000-2004.

POPPI also contains information for each district – usually from the 2001 census - showing the characteristics of older people in the district in terms of living status [living alone, housing tenure etc], support arrangements [including provision of unpaid care and ability to manage domestic tasks] and those with a limiting long-term illness.

POPPI has information on the prevalence of 12 health conditions, such as dementia, stroke and mobility, likely to affect the care needs of the elderly population.

These may change over time but applying the characteristics and prevalence rates to the forecast of population by age gives a starting point for population needs analysis.

Councils can compare with projections based on the numbers currently receiving services. They can also compare their figures with data for other councils and national data on a consistent basis.

All the tables in POPPI can be downloaded to Excel spreadsheets for analysis, chart and graph creation or insertion into a Word documents for reports.

POPPI brings together all the relevant information for local authority planners and commissioners and provides a consistent starting point for Strategic Needs Assessment.

It is easy to register on the POPPI website – [www.poppi.org.uk](http://www.poppi.org.uk). Automatic registration is restricted to those with .gov and .nhs e-mail addresses. Other users can be registered manually if IPC receives a council e-mail with the appropriate authority. A user guide, 'Getting started with POPPI', can be downloaded from the CSED website - [www.csed.csip.org.uk](http://www.csed.csip.org.uk)

Further information on this workstream is available from Ray Beatty ([ray.beatty@dh.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ray.beatty@dh.gsi.gov.uk)) whilst further information on CSED is available from Brian Conway ([Brian.Conway@dh.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Brian.Conway@dh.gsi.gov.uk)).