

# Preface

There has been a widespread perception that health and social care tends to be too fragmented, and that services are too influenced by professional and institutional boundaries when they should be co-ordinated around service users' needs.

As a result of this viewpoint, the integration of health and social care has been on the agenda for years. It has been seen as the most promising way – in the absence of extra resources – to deal with financial problems and improve the user experience. Successive governments have wanted everybody who uses both health and social care services to have services that work together to give the best care based on an individual's personal circumstances.

This publication surveys the evidence to date, informed by many discussions with practitioners, to pin down:

- what integration means
- how it might be expected to improve efficiency and save money
- the problems that make it difficult to achieve in practice
- possible solutions to the problems
- how to assess and monitor progress.

The publication will be useful to managers and finance staff in the health and social care sectors, partner organisations and public sector bodies who work with them. It will also be of use to anyone who needs to grasp the rationale for integration from a strategic or political point of view and to understand the best way to take it forward.

This publication was written by Paul Carey-Kent.

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