Reviewer’s report

Title: "Did the trial kill the intervention?" Experiences from the development, implementation and evaluation of a complex intervention.

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Reviewer: Suzanne Moffatt

Reviewer’s report:

The paper has been considerably strengthened, particularly the results section. However, before finally accepted for publication, the authors should address the following points:

1) Section on “Patients perceptions and rehabilitation programmes”
This remains a primarily descriptive account. At the end of this section, can the authors identify why some in SM exercised and some did not? (p12)

2) Section on “Staff and patient perceptions of involvement in a trial” – still needs an analytical concluding paragraph that is more explanatory than descriptive (p14)

3) Section on “Impact of organisational culture”
p15 “The programme and its evaluation were ultimately undermined by the reluctance of some staff to prioritise psychosocial care” – this is a very strong statement and indicates that this was the most important element. Some further analysis of how this conclusion was reached is required either at the end of this section or in the discussion, and reference to the literature on power relationships within medical hierarchies required.

4) Discussion
p16 How would authors operationalise their recommendation that, “In our own study, a trial could have evaluated whether having access to a patient centred rehabilitation service improve patient outcomes as opposed to testing whether a defined set of rehab interventions improved patient outcomes”

5) Strengths and limitations
The authors need to give an explanation of the ways in which this study has relevance beyond this particular trial/setting. For example, do they mean to all complex HSR interventions, if not, which ones? What are the particular characteristics of this study that make it transferable?

6) Finally, recommendations for further research in this area based on the authors’ insights would be useful.
Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.