Author's response to reviews

Title: Enabling research in care homes: an evaluation of a national network of research ready care homes.

Authors:

Sue L Davies (s.l.davies@herts.ac.uk)
Claire Goodman (c.goodman@herts.ac.uk)
Jill Manthorpe (jill.manthorpe@kcl.ac.uk)
Adam Smith (adam.smith@dendron.org.uk)
Natasha Carrick (tashcarrick@hotmail.com)
Steve Iliffe (s.iliffe@ucl.ac.uk)

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Response to the reviewer's reports
Title: Enabling research in care homes: an evaluation of a national network of research ready care homes.
Date: 11th February 2014

Reviewer 1: Adam L Gordon

Many thanks for reviewing this paper and for your positive feedback.

Reviewer 2: Carmel Hughes

Thank you very much for reviewing this paper and for your suggested amendments and comments which are much appreciated. I have restructured and rewritten the abstract, method, results and discussion in line with your queries and suggestions. I hope this has clarified the purpose of the study, how it was conducted and made the paper more comprehensive overall. As many of your comments related to the structure of the paper, I have only given a detailed response to each point where you asked for further information.

Reviewer's report:
Abstract:
1. There may be word count restrictions, but it would be helpful to state how the evaluation of the impact of networks was carried out (briefly).
   The aim was to test the impact of the networks on care home recruitment to studies. However, the care home networks took longer to set up than anticipated; in fact two were still recruiting when data collection was complete. However after its initial setup, the network supported at least 18 new studies to undertake research in care homes. This included resident recruitment, engaging care home staff in writing groups, trial steering committees and the review of study protocols (see discussion p.14).

2. The results don’t seem to quite follow on from the method in that the former starts with a description of research which had already taken place in care homes, rather than starting with an assessment of the impact of the Network. It seems like two separate studies. Why was this mapping exercise carried out as it would not have had direct relevance to the impact of the network? Was it to act as a baseline? If so, I think this needs to be made clearer.
   I have clarified the method section to confirm that the mapping exercise was used to establish a baseline of care home research involvement prior to setting up the care home research network.

3. I also think the conclusion in the abstract may need to be rewritten as it starts with a summary of phase 1, and doesn’t mention phase 2 at all.
   It has been rewritten as has the rest of the abstract.

Background
4. On line 2, the authors mention long-term care in the context of care homes and nursing homes. ‘Care homes’ is usually the umbrella term that is used to encompass both nursing and residential homes. This is clearer in some of the subsequent text.  
Amended as suggested.

Method
5. The first line of the first paragraph mentions the piloting of the ENRICH network in four regions of England, and this is repeated in the last line of this first paragraph.  
Amended as suggested.
6. The second paragraph then describes the two phases of the project, and as I had commented in relation to Phase 1, this seems to be an exercise to establish a baseline. Therefore, the abstract needs to be restructured to reflect this.  
The abstract has been rewritten.
7. In the abstract, figures had been used to describe Phase 1 and 2. Here, in this part of the paper, the numbers are expressed as words. This needs to be consistent.  
Amended as suggested.
8. Why did they restrict their search of studies to the last 12 months? And what were the actual dates?  
Our focus was on identifying current or recently completed studies which enabled us to contact the researchers for further details on care home involvement where possible. Hence we restricted our search to studies from the previous year, January to December 2011. Some further studies were identified in 2012 prior to phase 2 from the other data sources.  
On page 5, some of the paragraph starting ‘the review established the range….’ reads more like a compressed results section and does not seem to be appropriate for a Methods’ section.  
Amended as suggested.
9. There should be a clear delineation of the process of collecting data for the baseline and interpretation of the data. How did they approach care homes staff who had already taken part in studies, and similarly, how did they recruit to focus groups?  
Amended giving details on how the care home staff were recruited apart from the focus groups which were not conducted because of delays in the governance process (see limitations p.15).
10. In phase 2, there needs to be a clearer description of how the network was established. How did they select the four pilot regions, and how did staff in these regions become engaged with the process? What were they expected to do? What were the incentives for care homes and staff to get involved?  
The four pilot regions were self-selected from the eight DeNDRoN regional networks who were all invited to take part in the pilot. The main aim was for each pilot region to set up a care home network and recruit up to 10 care homes to it. The main incentive for care home staff was to give them the opportunity to feedback on their experiences of research and how the support that care homes would need to be part of a care home network. By joining the network they had increased access to studies for residents and staff depending on the level of involvement they chose to have and in some cases they had access to training, depending on what was available with their local DeNDRoN network.

11. Data collection and evaluation needs to be described in greater detail e.g. what site documentation was reviewed? I also did not follow what was meant by (page 6) ‘different data sources to provide a descriptive account of the process of setting up ENRICH.’  
Amended as suggested.

Results
12. On page 7, comment is made about the 20 researchers responding to requests for more information. Who were these researchers—were they part of DENDRON, or a different group? These researchers were identified as the main study contact via the NIHR and Social Care Research Register portfolios. Amended as suggested.

13. It is difficult to follow the presentation of results in comparison to what was presented in the Methods. Another example page ‘Care home managers were recruited to the evaluation through the pilot sites’. So what does this mean? How many? What did you want them to do? And as with a previous section, there seems to be a blurring between one section and the next. As care home managers were recruited to the care home network, they were invited to do a telephone interview with the evaluation researcher about their previous research experience and expectations of the care home network. One care home manager was recruited after he contacted the ENRICH office directly. This section has been amended as suggested.

14. Towards the end of page 9, there is a commentary about difficulty in recruiting to focus groups and a summary about phase 1. This strikes me as material better suited to a discussion. This has been moved to the ‘Limitations’ section p.15.

15. The results in relation to Phase 2 are largely descriptive of the process of establishing the network. However, there are some details missing about numbers recruited to e.g. focus groups.

The results section has been amended and further details on recruitment numbers have been given.

16. Discussion
As per other parts of this paper, this is not a conventional discussion section as it is more a commentary on the establishment of the network and problems/challenges encountered and overcome (where appropriate).

The discussion has been restructured so that it is less of a commentary and there is more focus on discussing the findings from phase 1 and phase 2 and their implications.