Author's response to reviews

Title: Maternal Obesity Support Services: A qualitative study of the perspectives of women and midwives

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Author's response to reviews: see over
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Dear Dr Devane / Mr Bongcayao

Thank you for your response to our manuscript resubmission, entitled ’Maternal Obesity Support Services: A qualitative study of the perspectives of women and midwives,’ manuscript reference MS: 3583372505791147.

We note that a few more changes were required to the manuscript following Associate Editor review. We would like to resubmit the manuscript and have addressed comments as indicated overleaf, with all changes tracked in blue.

We hope the changes will meet the requirements and expectations of the associate editor. We look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely

Penny Furness, Kerry McSeveny, Maddy Arden, Carolyn Garland, Andy Dearden, Hora Soltani.
"I would like the authors to respond to some minor points as per attached document. Please kindly highlight in a different font colour any additional changes to those previously made."

POINT 1
- Overweight women: We agree that overweight women are also relevant to the aims of this study (and the subsequent stages described above). The research team has discussed this issue at some length early in the design stages of the project. We have decided to maintain the focus on BMI ≥ 30 for the present, but if feasibility / RCT studies were successful with this group, we would consider expanding the service to a wider group, including overweight (BMI 25-30) pregnant women.

I think it important to make reference to factors influencing this decision in the discussion.

OUR RESPONSE
We agree with this point and have made insertions in the design (p. 7) and discussion sections (p. 25) of the paper, which both explain the decision to focus upon obese women and the potential for future work to take a more inclusive approach.

POINT 2
- Obstetric involvement: We agree that obstetric non-involvement in the study was very disappointing. In the experience of some members of the team, however, difficulty engaging medics is not isolated to this study. A recent practice-based interprofessional learning project involving PF had similar problems in some clinical areas. In that case, it seemed that a lack of time and a tendency to prioritize projects with immediate relevance to their medical / surgical practice were the issues. It is not yet clear whether obstetricians we tried to include in this study had similar concerns. We are making further strenuous efforts to engage obstetricians in evaluations of the service prototype at present.

Although you address this to some extent in the discussion, I think it would be helpful to your readers to be aware of that highlighted above.

OUR RESPONSE
We have included a short section to that effect in discussion p. 24.

POINT 3
- Focus group methodology: Focus groups were used because we wanted the women and midwives to discuss not only their experiences of obesity in pregnancy and services for obese pregnant women but also their perceptions of how services could be improved and the notion of a text messaging service to support women with weight management. We separated women and midwives so that participants in each group had much in common including potentially sensitive issues such as the experience of being obese and encountering negative responses from others. This reduced the potential for confrontation and distress which can arise when people with very different experiences and perspectives are brought together. It seemed to us important to bring participants together so they could share their ideas and experiences with one another and not just us. This helps to broaden (although, admittedly, not always to deepen) the discussion. Focus groups allowed us to hear not only individual perspectives but enabled these perspectives to be aired before and discussed with others who have similar experiences. They also reduce the ‘voice’ of the interviewer and to emphasize the opinions and concerns of the group. Focus groups can be very positive, creative, and synergistic when carefully managed.

The points you raise here are important and you need to incorporate this into your paper so that the use of focus group interviews, as distinct from other data collection methods (e.g., individual interviews) are justified.

OUR RESPONSE
We have expanded the section detailing methodological justification of focus groups on p. 9.