Reviewer’s report

Title: The ELSIPS trial: Evaluation of Lay Support In Pregnant women with Social risk: a randomised controlled trial.

Version: 1 Date: 22 November 2011

Reviewer: Edwin van Teijlingen

Reviewer’s report:

The researchers provide generally a good outline for the research with appropriate justification why multiparae women are excluded.

Abstract

The sentence about why the trial has a qualitative research element is vague / not explaining why this method has been chosen.

Not sure what to envisage for the expression ‘women from a multi-ethnic background’? Does it refer to women with more than one ethnic background hence ‘multi’? For example, White mother and Afro-Caribbean father? It is obviously different from women from an ethnic-minority background, otherwise surely the researcher would have used the expression ethnic minority women, or the more common in the UK and more politically correct ‘women from BME communities’ (Black and Minority Ethnic groups). This expression multi-ethnic background is probably unclear for the international readerships of BMC Pregnancy & Childbirth.

Page 3

NICE now stands for: National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (see http://www.nice.org.uk/) NB you give correct definition in your list of abbreviations.

Page 4

Give RCT in full on first use.

Page 6

Give in full BMI & DNA

Page 12

The researchers make a rather sweeping statement about the limitations of formal interviews: “tends to reproduce the ‘theory’ about the role, idealised accounts and retrospective explanations about action….” without providing a reference to a methodological text to back up this statement.

Page 13

It is unclear from the ‘Data collection statement’ whether two researchers together will observe /shadow one POW at the time, to benefit from their
combined professional perspectives, or whether the social researcher and the clinical researcher will each separately shadow different POW at the same time. The former could lead to overcrowding (two people shadowing one POW), the latter could mean different researchers interact differently with different POW they shadow. I assume the procedure is the latter as under ‘Recruitment’ is a statement “...accompanied by a researcher ...”

Figure 1 needs legend for abbreviations; MW and POW

Check list of abbreviations for completeness, I noticed that BMI, MW are missing.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests