Reviewer's report

Title: The effectiveness of financial incentives for smoking cessation during pregnancy: Is it from being paid or from the extra aid?

Version: 1 Date: 11 December 2011

Reviewer: Falko F Sniehotta

Reviewer's report:

This manuscript reports findings from a comparative semi-structured interview study exploring and comparing the experiences of pregnant women offered standard NHS Stop-Smoking Services who were offered additional financial incentives for smoking cessation or not. This is to my knowledge the first study of its kind and it has a particular relevance as financial incentive schemes are becoming more popular although our understanding of possible mechanisms is still in its infancy. The manuscript is well written, in particular the discussion provides an excellent coverage of the possible interpretations of the reported findings.

1. It would be helpful to further clarify the ‘opportunistic sampling frame’ used for this study and to clarify the recruitment procedures. Why were the groups different in size? How were the 78 participants selected whom the interviewer approached by telephone? What were the considerations for data saturation in both groups? In particular for the different experiences of the smoking cessation services it would be good to be reassured that the data was sufficient to support the interpretations made in this manuscript.

2. For the geographic area this study was conducted in it seems surprising/unusual that 34 out of 36 pregnant woman were classified as white British. Would the authors comment on possible reasons for non-white british people potentially being underrepresented in their sample?

3. How comparable were the two groups? My understanding of the recruitment and consent procedures is that women in the FI scheme agreed to be interviewed when they were initially allocated to the FI scheme whereas women allocated to the standard Smoking cessation services appear to be invited to take part in the interview at a later stage. Where both groups at point of consent offered £20 for taking part in the interviews? Is it possible that the groups differed as a function of slightly different recruitment procedures?

4. Would it be helpful to add a little flow chart to describe the recruitment and interview process?

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.