Reviewer's report

Title: Revising acute care systems and processes to improve breastfeeding and maternal postnatal health: A pre and post intervention study in one English maternity unit

Version: 1 Date: 14 February 2012

Reviewer: Helen Cheyne

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to comment on this paper which is on a topic of current which is highly relevant to midwives and other maternity service providers.

The paper is well written throughout. The introduction sets the broad as well as the more local context for the remainder of the paper very clearly and the overall aim of the planned programme of improvement of postnatal services is clearly stated.

However, I feel that the purpose of this particular paper is sometimes difficult to distinguish from other aspects of the programme of work which is or may be reported elsewhere, some elements of which are alluded to here but not included. Likewise, the description of the intervention is a little unclear in the methods section, some parts are core clearly described in the discussion and I feel that it would improve the clarity of the paper to have more explanation earlier. I have identified some specific points below.

As requested these are identified as minor essential revisions:

Methods

1. The model of Continuous Quality Improvement - more information about the model would be helpful for example the engagement between senior management and project teams, what specifically was this?

2. The importance of engaging as many staff as possible was recognised – this sounds quite central to the process but nothing more is said about this.

3. I feel that this paragraph should, but doesn’t, explain the CQI model, I wondered if a diagram outlining the steps involved would improve clarity?

Planning the intervention

4. I think a clearer overall picture of the elements of the intervention would be helpful. Some important aspects, for example the use of MEWS, asking women what support information etc, and the information that support for breastfeeding was commenced as part of antenatal information, are mentioned for the first time in the discussion. These practical elements make the picture clearer and possibly could be included earlier in the paper. 5. A wide range of focus groups were held and pathway maps were developed. It would be really interesting to get even a
flavour of what these found and how they fed into the changes implemented.

6. The new hand held maternal record was evaluated as part of the evaluation - is the evaluation reported elsewhere? Can more be said about this?

Discretionary revisions
1. I am not sure what the heading ‘project review’ means.
2. The experiences of the women are reported elsewhere – would it be possible to include a few comments from this data and is there anything that could be reported from the focus groups or pathway mapping which would help the reader understand how the subsequent changes were determined?
3. Paragraph 2. Is it possible to describe compliance with CNST standard 5?

Data collection
4. There is very little information about the questionnaire used with the exception that the EPDS was included. Was the questionnaire developed specifically for this study?

Results
5. Women were recruited to the study by a research midwife which presumably means that there were times when women were not recruited and/or that some women did not accept the questionnaire. Is it possible to say whether the characteristics of the women returning questionnaires were similar to the overall characteristics of women who gave birth in the hospital?

Discussion
The discussion provides a very useful overview of previous research in this area in relation to the findings of this study. The discussion is well balanced addresses the main findings of the study building on previous work of the authors and others.

Overall this is a very useful paper which addresses a topic area of current clinical importance.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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