Author's response to reviews

Title: Women with disability: the experience of maternity care during pregnancy, labour and birth and the postnatal period

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Response to Reviewers point by point:

Reviewer 1 Comments-Prof Caroline J Hollins Martin

This is a very well written paper by clearly competent researchers, so my comments are few. Pending a few changes/additions this paper is worthy for publication.

(Minor Essential Revisions)

Here are my thoughts:

(1) Clear well written abstract – needs one sentence about the primary study to explain how the original data was collected, e.g., The primary study was a postal questionnaire consisting of ? number of items that addressed……..

More details added to the abstract concerning the primary study, but had to reduce length to conform to the 350 wards limit.

(2) Under the study design section we need a paragraph of information about the primary study:

• Qualitative or Quantitative or both?

Information about the survey design was added to study design section, page 6.

• The questionnaire and where it can be viewed?

The survey questionnaires can be accessed through the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and Healthcare Commission (HCC) websites, details added

• How many items?
Numbers of items were for added to the study design section, page 6.

- Subscales?

No formal psychometric instruments were used in the survey.

- Validity and reliability?

Many survey items were used previously in 2010; two relevant references were added to the design section, page 6.

- An example question?

A question used in relation to women’s overall view of care of the different phases of care was described in the study design section on page 7.

- How was it scored?

The scoring in the survey was done using three to five point Likert type scales. This information was added to the study design section page 7.

(3) Nice comparison of percentages between those labelled as disabled and those who were not.

Comment from the reviewer. Thank you.

(4) On page 10 the sentence:

However, almost all women in both groups (92% ?vs. you have and 93%) rated their care as ‘good’ or better. Better than what? Sentence is unfinished.

The ratings of were explained in the study design section, page 7, paragraph 4. The rating of ‘good’ or better than ’good’ utilised responses to ‘good’, ‘very good’ and ‘excellent’. Addition made to sentence.

(5) In the conclusion I think you need to mention a recommendation for practice. For example: Midwives and health visitors require to be aware of the differences in breastfeeding interest and success and how they may approach this. Also the communication issues. A little application to section.

Emphasis reflecting reviewer suggestion was added to the conclusion page 21, paragraph 2.

Few ‘wee’ mistakes


Changes made.

Page 9 – 32% vs29% should read 32% vs. 29%. Check right the way through as do not all match.
Changes made.

Page 12 – ‘care given help’ should read ‘care and given help’

Changes made.

Page 13 – ‘go on breastfeed’ should read ‘go on to breastfeed’
(74% and 79%) should read (74% vs. 79%)

Changes made.

Page 17 – ‘likely breastfeed’ should read ‘likely to breastfeed’

Changes made.

Outside these comments this is a well written paper that just needs a little more information about the primary study from which the secondary analysis is taken and a bit on recommendations for midwives and health visitors and possibly what they could do to address breastfeeding and communication differences. Perhaps a ‘well done’ for paying so much attention to those who are disabled.

Reviewer’s report-2- Julie Jomeen

This is a well written paper that addresses an important issue for maternity care. The background feels somewhat limited, however, I feel this accurately reflects the dearth of research undertaken within this field and as such highlights the value of this paper, in raising the issue. The methods are well described and the data is presented in a readable manner. I have no real issues with the paper in its current format other than the few thoughts below.

Discretionary Revisions

1) Pg 20 - the last sentence in the first paragraph of that page, does it either need to say confounding variables or confounders?

Changes made.

2) I realise the authors are constrained by word count but would have liked to have seen more discussion about why staff might not feel equipped to provide support, good communication etc to disables women - this seems to be particularly pertinent for the women with MH and may relate to midwives anxieties about dealing with women with MH, which has been documented previously.

Sentences were added emphasizing the points made by the reviewer along with two references to support this, page 18 and 19.
3) I did also wonder if there is a slightly boarder discussion to be had about expectations of maternity care from women who are in regular contact with other NHS services, which will have a philosophically different approach to care.

We added a sentence about the expectations of maternity care from these women; this has been added to the discussion section, page 19, first paragraph.

4) The issue of partner support may also be an interesting one to tease out as these women's desires for partner (who also may be a main carer in terms of their disability) support may be naturally higher or may reflect care that they feel is not entirely meeting their needs despite higher levels of input from maternity services. It may be that only the further work you suggest is able to tease out some of those issues.

A sentence was added to the discussion, on partners’ support, page 21, last paragraph of the discussion section.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.