Author's response to reviews

Title: Transition to parenthood: the needs of parents in pregnancy and early parenthood.

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Reviewer 1 (Caroline Homer) comments:

There have been amendments made to the ‘background’ section to articulate what this study adds and how it is different from previous studies.

The fact that it was the same couples that were interviewed ante- and postnatally, and that the couples were interviewed together, was already described in the methods section of the paper. However, to ensure that this is fully understood this has been further clarified.

The use of the term ‘delivery’ has been changed to ‘birth’, as suggested, but we do still use the former term in the UK. There were explanations for the abbreviations but these have been removed, we can understand that these could be misunderstood.

The data analysis section has been changed and detail added to reflect the steps that were undertaken. We have looked at several text books and discussed this with several qualitative researcher colleagues because we did not understand some of the reviewers’ comments relating to methodology. There appear to be different viewpoints regarding comparative analysis, one that links it with grounded theory and one that does not. Therefore, in an attempt to be unambiguous, we feel that content analysis defines the process that we undertook for the analysis. Issues relating to the lack of a framework and data saturation are therefore now not relevant.

The section describing the discussions with managers and supervisors has been placed at the beginning of the methods section to ‘set the scene’ for the study and to explain the purpose of discussing the study with them.

We understand that the UK model of care, both ante- and postnatal, is different from other countries around the world. Therefore, we have added a section in the background about the ‘normal’ models of care that are offered to women in the UK. Midwives work independently and, because of their individual needs, each woman will receive a slightly different package of care from another. Continuity of care is not often possible but antenatal groups are offered to all women. We have alluded to these aspects in the section that we have added.

The NHS Pregnancy Book has been briefly described. The name ‘Bounty packs’ has been removed because this is very specific to the UK and unlikely to be understood outside of it. Instead we have called them commercial gift packs. To prevent confusion, the use of the adjective ‘non-terrestrial’ television has also been removed.

The themes have been described in more detail and some of the sections have been rephrased with quotes removed to ensure that the parents’ views are understood more fully.
The discussion has been reworded and the value of the DVD, from the parents’ perspective has been drawn out. I do not feel that I am in a position to say whether this would address the issues that the parents have raised. They are the ones who have said it would be helpful we have reported and discussed their views, as we set out to. The aim of this study was to find out the parents’ views and since the lack of preparation was the overarching difficulty for them, it is this which we felt was important to discuss in relation to previous studies and current education.

Recommendations for antenatal education and future research have been moved to the conclusions (as with other BMC papers) and these have been amended and laid out differently to make them clearer. We hope we have managed to achieve this.
Amendments made to manuscript 1860175583154855 - Transition to parenthood: the needs of parents in pregnancy and early parenthood.

Reviewer 2 (Linda Bloomfield) comments:

The sampling strategy has been described in more detail and we hope that by doing this we have clarified this section. We did aim to recruit two groups but, as explained in the new draft, recruitment was very slow and we were unable to spend any more time on recruitment. The numbers involved were too small to look at differences between ages, employment etc. However, no interview raised particularly different issues from the others.

The reason for the research midwife to know about any complications about the woman’s delivery is to ensure that she is fully briefed when she contacts the mother/couple. This has been removed from the text but the sentence about contacting the family health visitor has been amended to clarify the purpose of the contact.

The confusion of different terms being used for the women (nulliparous etc) has been removed and ‘primparous’ has been used wherever relevant.

Reference to the unpreparedness of fathers has now been included.
Amendments made to manuscript 1860175583154855 - Transition to parenthood: the needs of parents in pregnancy and early parenthood.

Reviewer 3 (Eva Nissen) comments:

We believe that we have given more focus to the paper and clarified what this study adds and how it is different from previous studies.

We have changed the use of ‘supported’ and ‘unsupported’ from the text since this does not describe accurately how women were recruited. We recruited two groups of women: those who reported they had a stable partner and those who stated that they did not. This is what we have added to the text to remove confusion.

The theory of ‘transition’ underlies the process of the study and this has been further described (and referenced) in the ‘background’ section and discussed in the ‘discussion’ section. We have also referenced the methods section.

The data analysis section has been changed and detail added to reflect the steps that were undertaken. We have looked at several text books and discussed this with several qualitative researcher colleagues because we did not understand some of the reviewers’ comments relating to methodology. There appears to be different viewpoints regarding comparative analysis, one that links it with grounded theory and one that does not. Therefore, in an attempt to be unambiguous, we feel that content analysis defines the process that we undertook for the analysis. Issues relating to the lack of a framework and data saturation are therefore now not relevant.

The sampling strategy has been described in more detail and we hope that by doing this we have clarified this section. There would have been women who refused to take part in the study but, as has been added into the text, the midwives were not able to record who did and who did not agree to take part in the study.

We have added the basic demographic details that were collected from each woman/couple in the study. However, rather than using a table, we feel that a description of the women/couples involved is sufficient and gives the reader an idea of the sample recruited.

We have changed the term ‘generalisability’ to ‘transferability’, an interesting but important difference.

Recommendations for antenatal education and future research have been moved to the conclusions (as with other BMC papers) and these have been amended and laid out differently to make them clearer. We hope we have managed to achieve this.
Amendments made to manuscript 1860175583154855 - Transition to parenthood: the needs of parents in pregnancy and early parenthood.

Reviewer 4 (Anna-Karin Elisabeth Dykes) comments:

We agree that the subject matter of our study is not new. However, as we have outlined in the ‘background’ section, the qualitative, combined with the prospective, elements to our study are new.

Our aim is not a question it is a statement, since that is the format of an aim. We have not posed a question, per se. Implicit within the aim is the question, ‘How can the needs of first-time parents be improved in the antenatal period (particularly in relation to preparing for the transition to parenthood and their parenting skills)?

The data analysis section has been changed and detail added to reflect the steps that were undertaken. We have looked at several text books and discussed this with several qualitative researcher colleagues because we did not understand some of the reviewers’ comments relating to methodology. There appears to be different viewpoints regarding comparative analysis, one that links it with grounded theory and one that does not. Therefore, in an attempt to be unambiguous, we feel that content analysis defines the process that we undertook for the analysis. Issues relating to the lack of a framework and data saturation are therefore now not relevant.

We have added further details to both the methods and discussion sections about validity, credibility and transferability of the study.

Apart from the sub-titles, we felt that our manuscript did generally adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition for the journal. However, we agree that the aim should be placed at the end of the ‘background’. We also noticed from other papers in BMC that recommendations formed part of the conclusion and therefore we have moved them to this section. We have checked our paper against the ‘RATS’ criteria and feel that these meet these criteria.

The discussion section has been amended and, therefore the methods and content has been extended.

We feel that the term ‘transition to parenthood’ is understood and has certainly been widely used in previous studies. Since there is no succinct way to describe this in any other way we would like to keep this in the title and within the text.

The conclusions section has actually increased in size, mainly due to the addition of the recommendations for action and future research.