Author's response to reviews

Title: Group interventions to improve health outcomes: a framework for their design and delivery

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Dear Editor

Response to reviewer’s report: Group interventions to improve health outcomes: a framework for their design and delivery

We would like to thank both reviewers for their comments. In particular Penelope Hawe has introduced us to some new literature that we were unaware of and which we have now included.

We have revised the abstract and the paper headings in accordance with the guidance on Type 3 Correspondence papers.

We have addressed the discretionary recommendations made by Penelope Hawe and have used track changes in the document.

1. We have edited the Background in the abstract and in the body of the paper, by moving some text from page 6 forward and adding some text to explain the weak evidence base early on in the paper.

2. As we limited our literature search strategy to health improvement and excluded the large literature on therapeutic groups in mental health, we failed to identify the work of Rudolph Moos. Text has been added to reference this work on page 16. As most of this work, including the Group Evaluation Scale (GES), has not been developed in the field of health improvement, we highlight that further cross-disciplinary work is necessary to identify the differences and similarities between groups in different contexts. We have been guided by the dimensions in GES and applied dimensions to Box 3 which has involved re-ordering and rewording some of the bullet points.

3. For the same reason our literature search strategy did not identify the work on activity settings by Clifford O’Donnell and colleagues or on behavioural settings by Richard Barker and colleagues in the field of psychological ecology. We have now included reference to these, with the same proviso that more cross-disciplinary comparative research is warranted. We have made some
minor changes to Box 1 accordingly.

4. We accept that the commentary around social network theory is limited, and as this literature is large, we have chosen to limit our discussion to the more circumscribed concept of social support as the reviewer suggested. We have re-labelled box 2.

5. We agree that our paper did not address all the potential settings which would be included in our broad definition of group setting on page 4. We have amended this as suggested and limited our definition to change processes in observable health improvement groups.

We hope that this meets with your approval

Kind regards

Pat Hoddinott (on behalf of all authors)