Reviewer’s report

Title: Feasibility and acceptability of point of care HIV testing in community outreach and GUM drop-in services in the North West of England: A programmatic evaluation

Version: 1 Date: 14 February 2011

Reviewer: Hugo McClean

Reviewer’s report:

Important study with good design features and findings that will be useful to other sexual health settings. Generally well written and structured with supported conclusions.

Discretionary Revisions

Abstract/Background/Line 3-4 “… increase testing uptake in marginalized target groups … .” Suggest: “increase testing uptake in targeted marginalized groups”

Abstract/Conclusions/Line 3 “…many of whom would not have tested.” Suggest: “…many of whom would not have otherwise tested.”

Minor Essential Revisions

Title page. “*These authors contributed equally to this work” should be omitted since the asterix is not linked and the individual author contributions are listed at the end of the paper.

Abstract/Line 1 “MSM” should be inserted after the first full spelling of the term, i.e. MSM (men who have sex with men).

Background/Second para/ Lines 6-8 –does reference 5 really support this statement about these groups specifically in Liverpool?

Methods/ Planning and Implementation of POCT for HIV/Line 6 “Services meeting these criteria …” Please describe what these criteria were for services likely to interact with individuals at risk of HIV infection who may also find it difficult to access specific health care for HIV infections: other services reading this study may well find this useful.

Methods/ HIV-testing Procedures. Please specify that a blood sample was collected by fingerstick. Please say a bit more about the environment used to support this being done, including the type of worker doing testing, privacy, client contact details, and health and safety issues. Also, please comment on the system used to communicate and provide support for confirmed positive results.

Methods/ Statistical Methods. Mention is made of the chi-square test, but, in Table 2, use of a two sample test for proportions is stated, but this could mean the z-test, t-test. Perhaps it would be better to state that a chi-square test was
used at the bottom of Table 2

Results/Second para/lines 6-7. Not sure what this means: “POCT was conducted in-situ, as opportunistic screening on individuals with self-identified risk behaviour.”

Results/Third para/line 4. Not sure what this means: “community mobilisation”

Table 2. Suggest omitting N=953 at the bottom of Table 2. For LCSH the denominator is 556, and this could be stated as n=556, under the LSCH heading at the top of the fourth column, rather than repeat this after every value. However, I am afraid I find the variation in denominators for the target groups difficult. The denominator for the community group is 397, but, presumably because of missing data, various denominators are stated for the categories for the community group for comparisons with the LCSH. Some explanation for the missing data is needed. Please obtain further statistical advice about the effects of this.

Also the ‡ does not link to where the non-parametric test was used (note that this should be Wilcoxon and not Wilcoxon). Presumably this was used to test for any difference between age in the two groups?

Finally, confidence intervals should be stated.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests