Reviewer's report

Title: A cross-sectional pilot study of the Scottish Early Development Instrument: A tool for addressing inequality

Version: 2 Date: 19 August 2013

Reviewer: Sandy Tubeuf

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions
- When reading in the title "a tool for addressing inequality", the reader expects an analysis of inequalities and a discussion on ways to address inequalities with a potentially new tool that will be usable in other contexts. However the present study focuses on validating an instrument to use in an inequality analysis. The outcome of the research is therefore much more restrictive that what the title suggests.

- It would be useful to clearly states that the SEDI uses proxy-respondents (teachers) and so, the instrument will suffer from reporting bias. Typically it could be expected that for the same child two teachers won’t complete the questionnaire the same way. How has this been addressed in the study? Have the researchers tested the likelihood of reporting bias by doubling some interviews and compare discrepancies? A number of studies in quality of life outcomes for children have discussed the use of proxy-respondent and so this paper could review some of those elements at least in the discussion section (see Pickard, S., Knight, S.J.: Proxy evaluation of Health-Related Quality of Life. Med. Care 43(5), 493–499 (2005) // Ravens-Sieberer, U., Erhart, M., Wille, N., Wetzel, R., Nickel, J., Bullinger, M.: Generic health-related quality of life assessment in children and adolescents—methodological considerations. Pharmacoeconomics 24(12), 1199–1220 (2006) // Rebok, G., Riley, A., Forrest, C.B., Star#eld, B., Green, B., Robertson, J., Tambor, E.: Elementary school-aged children’s reports of their health: a cognitive interviewing study. Qual. Life Res. 10, 59–70 (2001) )

- The paragraph before Discussion ends with "this is very affordable for the average LA", what are the arguments for this? Do the authors have an idea of the amount of the budget and the willingness to pay for such instruments?

Minor Essential Revisions
In the abstract, Background section, several elements are very unclear.
Please clarify who is "us" in "to allow us to target tailored interventions". Similarly "at a reasonable cost" is very elliptic, which cost is it about? who would support it? what do you mean by reasonable?

Please clarify if the 7 children for which income quintile was not informed have
been completely excluded from the study (end of procedure subsection).

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

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**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