Reviewer's report

**Title:** Enabling pathways to health equity: a qualitative study of social capital in practice

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**Reviewer:** Jan E Ritchie

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The paper ‘Enabling pathways to health equity: a qualitative study of social capital in practice’ is a welcome contribution to on-the-ground research on policy and practice regarding the role of social capital and its impact on health. This kind of study has needed to be undertaken with specific communities and these practical outcomes communicated broadly in order to support the more general work already made prominent by WHO on the social determinants of health.

The title makes clear the purpose and the abstract summarises well the findings. The introduction clearly outlines the problem to be addressed and leads to the particular research question posed. The methods are justified suitably as fitting for answering this research question and are generally detailed appropriately. I am not certain if Table 1 works well enough to define the three cases to be studied – if the table is retained for publication it needs more careful attention to layout otherwise the material would be better in the body text. Under data analysis in relation to rigour the authors only mention peer-researcher review but they should also make clear their attention to rigour has been most adequately addressed in addition by the two other data analysis checks described earlier in the paragraph – the keeping of a sound audit trail and the triangulation gained by member-checking with the Reference Group.

The Results section is presently pertinently and the illustrative quotes reflect the themes in a way that holds the reader’s attention. Inclusion of Discussion within the Results section follows the recommended manner of reporting qualitative research. The limitations are adequately outlined.

The Conclusions are basically well stated although the prime learning I gained from the study report was that traditional, on-the-ground, community development work has far more potential to be sustained and effective if higher level policy supports it. A less theoretical statement to this effect could replace the final sentence thus better reaching out to practitioners.

There is a typo error on page 10 – a space is needed between ‘2004’ and ‘and’. There are some incongruous changes from past to present tense and back again in the early part of the Results, for instance on page 18 in the paragraph starting ‘Consultation with ...’: for consistency all should be in past tense so ‘is understood’ should be ‘was understood’ and ‘examine’ should be ‘examined’, etc.
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.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests