Reviewer’s report

Title: Deliberative Dialogues Focussed on Healthy Public Policy

Version: 1 Date: 15 January 2014

Reviewer: Hilary Thomson

Reviewer’s report:

Evaluating deliberative dialogues focussed on healthy public policy

Thank you for sending me this paper to review.

The paper addresses an interesting issue but is based on a very small sample—n=29 at baseline and n=14 at follow-up. I think there is a risk that the analysis over emphasises the meaning of the data.

Major essential revisions

1. Until today I had never come across the term “deliberative dialogue”. To help other readers new to this phrase and approach there needs to be some, albeit brief, description about what deliberative dialogues involve. The authors describe what they might achieve and possible mechanisms for this but it would be useful to know how they should be operationalised, and what are the key components of a deliberative dialogue. In the methods section some more detail about how the dialogues being evaluated here reflected with the these key components, as well as a summary of the format, content and timing of each of the three deliberative dialogues.

2. It is not clear but it appears that the 29 participants completed Questionnaire 1 after each of the three deliberative dialogues—this needs to be clarified, and if so did all 29 participants return completed questionnaires for each dialogue. There are no reports of missing data in table 1, 3, or 4.

3. It also needs to be clarified whether data on the questions around theories of planned behaviour for all three deliberative dialogues were included in the regression analysis. I am not a statistician but I am unclear if a) a sample of 29 participants is sufficient to support a complex regression analysis; b) sub-group analysis is appropriate; and c) if including three responses on highly related variables for each participant but treating the variables as if they were independent is not at risk of triple counting and over reporting.

4. The numbers reported to describe the written comments on the usefulness of the dialogues are not very useful (in particular see p8 para 1). Rather than try to quantify qualitative data it would be more useful to know to what extent the comments were similar for each of the three dialogues and to what extent comments were similar and consistent. There is no report of the number of participants who recorded comments

5. I cannot see the appendix with the questionnaire, which is unfortunate.
Abstract- minor essential revisions

6. The sample size and distribution across the three groups (policymaker, stakeholder, researcher) should be reported in the abstract.

7. The country of the study should appear in the abstract.

8. The abstract should be revised to reflect any substantive changes to the analysis following peer review.

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

**Quality of written English:** Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

**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'