Reviewer's report

Title: PRISM (Program of Resources, Information and Support for Mothers) Protocol for a community-randomised trial [ISRCTN03464021]

Version: 3 Date: 8 September 2003

Reviewer: Christine MacArthur

Reviewer's report:

General
This paper presents the protocol and subsequent pre-publication changes of an important and very well designed cluster randomised controlled trial. The intervention tested is a complex one, comprising a program of care and support for postpartum women that includes primary care and community services components, each of which incorporate a set of intervention strategies. Detailing the nature of the intervention and describing the process outcomes is particularly important in complex interventions, and where it is likely that a main trial outcome publication would not allow inclusion of such detailed descriptions. The authors provide a well argued background, based both on their own research and the literature, on the necessity for the study and the rationale for the nature of the intervention as well as the for of evaluation they have designed. The outcomes are awaited with great interest.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
The authors described three ongoing UK trials to reduce depression and improve physical health (p 6, ref 40) as 'embedded'in existing services. It might be worth noting that two (Scotland/Sheffield) were delivered alongside services, that women had the option of taking it up and the third (W. Midlands) was 'enhanced' care, thus, in clusters randomised to the intervention, was delivered as an alternative form of routine care. The intervention in this present protocol seems to comprise both; the primary care component being 'enhanced' care delivered as routine in that cluster and the community component available to women 'alongside' care.

Minor Compulsory Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Advice on publication: Accept without revision

Level of interest: A paper whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Declaration of competing interests:
None