Reviewer's report

Title: Development and evaluation of a youth mental health community awareness campaign - The Compass Strategy

Version: 1 Date: 4 April 2006

Reviewer: Sue Bailey

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General

1. The topic perse is of considerable importance and previously there has been a somewhat defeatist attitude in the scientific literature that measurement of change in mental health awareness campaigns in Young People is not unlike in physical health, feasible. Tackling this problem in a robust scientific manner is therefore new. The area to be addressed is well defined i.e. very clearly the two disorders of psychosis and depression in adolescents and young adults. previous campaigns in UK, Canada have attempted to address more disorders prevalent in youths that have a greater overlap with psycho-social difficulties e.g. substance misuse and conduct disorder.

2. The methods are described in detail are appropriate and technically could be replicated.

3. The authors are open about:
   a. Challenges of data collection.
   b. Almost inevitable difficulties related to control and non-control group.

4. The manuscript given the very limited available rigorous science in this specific arena of mental health does adhere to relevant standards for reporting and data deposition.

5. Discussion and conclusion – the authors are open about what turn out to be considerable limitations in their study but hints of this would have been helpful in the introduction e.g. spill over of health awareness information made available to target and control group. The authors should perhaps more strongly critique the section on actual scientific meaning of hits on website and knowing for what purpose e.g. schools gathering and utilise mental health awareness materials e.g. sometimes this is to collect materials for students to complete projects (findings in child part of Every Family in the Land Campaign in the UK).

6. The abstract clearly conveys this is the start of a development process but should contain within it more about the obvious limitations of the study outlined in the summary.

7. the writing is acceptable but at times demonstrates without adequate explanation. The introduction does refer to the field in general, but should acknowledge that the compass project is targeting whilst very important disorders, depression and psychosis, only part of a wide spectrum of childhood mental disorders which are characterised by multimorbidity and comorbidity.

The authors should perhaps refer more widely to other campaigns beyond Australia and specific campaigns in UK and Canada that have targeted school populations and have utilised on a small scale, comparison group e.g. work of Helen Cowie.

I would hope the authors would comment more on next steps and feasibility of replication in more
diverse, and challenging populations elsewhere in the world.