Reviewer's report

Title: Appropriate interventions for the prevention and management of self-harm: a qualitative exploration of service-users views

Version: 1 Date: 27 September 2006

Reviewer: Linda L Gask

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting and original piece of work, which is highly topical. The authors acknowledge that it is a pilot study, and the number of interviewees is relatively small, but this does not detract from the validity of the findings.

I consider these to be minor but essential revisions

1. I think there should be discussion of the impact of the service provision for self-harm in Edinburgh on the sample recruited. Were the subjects all admitted to the same unit at ERI as was the case in the past? This would have an impact on experiences of services.

2. I would like to see more discussion of the potential motives for the interviewees in ‘telling their stories’ in this setting and whether these should be taken entirely at face value or examined for other potential meanings in the context of this study. This is broached on page 19 in the second paragraph ( with the reference to ‘public accounts’), but could be examined further. Having worked for 25 years in the NHS, I have never seen a straitjacket used. M34 on page 14 claims to have experienced this and it interests me-as it sounds like a highly dramatised story. Was this explored further? There are also comments about the desire for continuity of care, but people who self-harm are often not easy to engage is actually attending for follow-up and psychological therapy when it is offered. Were interviewees pushed to say more about what had been offered, whether they were able to take up such offers and if not, why not? Engagement of people in services that can help them is a major issue in health care.

3. I would like to know if an opportunity has been taken to test out the validity of the conclusions- perhaps by a member check with interviewees or a service user group.

The following are discretionary revisions:

1. Why was there a cut-off at age 50? Was this arbitrary?

2. On page 6 I don’t like the phrase ‘three claimed they were depressed’- is there a better way of wording this- it seems to be judgemental in tone.

3. On page 7- I am left wondering about the person who could not be assigned to one of three themes. Can we be told more about them? How were they different?

4. On page 11- the comment by M 37 is intriguing- did the interviewee want the interviewer to be sacked?! This is unclear!
What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests