Author's response to reviews

Title: 'Reaching the Hard to Reach' - Lessons learned from the VCS (Voluntary and Community Sector)

Authors:
Sarah M Flanagan (s.m.flanagan@bham.ac.uk)
Beverley Hancock (b.hancock@bham.ac.uk)

Version: 4 Date: 1 May 2009

Author's response to reviews:

Dear Editor,

'Reaching the Hard to Reach’ Lessons learned from the VCS (Voluntary and Community Sector) Sarah Flanagan and Beverley Hancock

Thank you for supplying reviewers comments for the above paper submission. I was pleased that you reviewers both agreed that the subject was an area of importance and interest, but also provided very useful comments. I have tried to address these comments as thoroughly as possible and I hope the paper is more acceptable in its current from.

Please find below the responses to these comment to accompany the revised manuscript.

Reviewer: Jane South

Essential revisions
1. The abstract now summarises the main results and has added a conclusion
2. I have included a short review of the literature pertaining to the VCS as requested to situate the study and provide context for the study.
3. I have refined the study aims to clarify the aims in terms of the how the lessons of the VCS may be transferable to statutory health services.
4. I have provided more detailed explanation of the sampling strategy for the study
5. I have ensured that participants’ anonymity cannot be compromised by removing possible means of identification. I have removed the numbers from the table.
6. I have provided a more thematic interpretation of the results with wider referencing and discussion.
7. I have modified the reporting style of the respondents to avoid objectification of the respondent.
8. I have updated the discussion with wider reference to the literature and tried to
better integrate the discussion and results.

Minor essential revisions

1. I have changed the headings to improve readability and clarity.

Discretionary revisions

I have provided more detail on the process of analysis

Reviewer: Sue Thompson

I hope I have given a wider context in terms of how the experiences of the VCS may be relevant for statutory health provision.

I have substantially updated my literature reviews to encompass issues relating to the VCS, ‘hard to reach groups’, and statutory health policy.

I have included a broader interpretation of the notion of ‘hard to reach’ including ‘less traditional’ groups, who are ignored in some of the earlier literature.

I have developed discussion points from the barriers and facilitator section to try to offer greater elucidation and hopefully give the paper more relevance.

I have added in implications for future practice along with areas where health services have been seen to be embracing some of the practices that are common place within the VCS.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Flanagan