Reviewer's report

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

Version: 4 Date: 20 May 2009

Reviewer: Sue Thompson

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Major

1. The authors have worked to tighten and clarify the paper, but there is still cause for concern over the extent to which it might serve as a review of the available literature for a newcomer to the area.

2. The discussion on the definition of 'hard to reach' has been usefully extended, but more could be done. In particular, although the reference to 'hard to reach populations' is useful shorthand in the discussion, there still does not seem to have been any real attempt to unravel this particular focus. For example, some 'hard to reach' individuals may well share certain characteristics with other individuals but cannot be considered to be 'members' of a population in the accepted sense: in other words it is often not possible to reach such individuals by approaching them in the normal ways since they are non-associative.

3. The discussion on the size of the sample and its possible limitations should be clearer about the representativeness of the findings.

4. Although the concluding section has been expanded, it is still unclear what the authors believe their study can contribute to the ways in which primary care can work to reach hard to reach members of the general population.

Minor

1. Typographical flaws and errors due to recent editing need attention.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare I have no competing interests