Author’s response to reviews

Title: Challenges in identifying barriers to adoption in a theory-based implementation study: lessons for future implementation studies

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Thank you for taking the time to feedback comments on our article, prior to sending it out for peer review. We have addressed each of the four points that you raised and feel that it is a significantly better paper as a consequence. Thank you for this opportunity.

As you may recall, our research article summarises the first case study from our implementation research programme, where we illustrate to the reader how we used a theory-based survey and interviews to explore local factors influencing health professionals’ adoption of a clinical recommendation. The overall aim of the research programme is to increase health professionals’ referrals of women with mild to moderate postnatal depression for psychological treatment, in keeping with NICE guidance. In addressing the points raised, particularly that regarding the lack of clear research question in the original submission, we have more heavily focussed the paper upon the challenges faced in engaging busy health professionals in implementation research. This brings to the readers’ attention the trade off between trying to adopt a rigorous, scientific, approach versus the realities of doing such research in the health services. This discussion has led us to raise questions regarding the feasibility and sustainability of such survey-based approaches to theory-based implementation research and to call for future research exploring different approaches. The structure of the method section has been re-vamped, specifying a case study design using survey and interviews more clearly in the opening paragraph, and summarising the setting and participants also in the opening paragraph, rather than later on in the methods section. Clearer subheadings have also been added into the methods section to guide the reader. A sentence has also been inserted justifying why we interviewed those who had not completed the survey. Finally, as requested, the link between the three key factors identified by the questionnaire and interviews and the factors from the underlying theoretical framework has been made more explicit: this was an oversight in the original submission.
We hope that these amendments has satisfactorily addressed the points you raised and look forward to hearing from you in due course