Reviewer's report

**Title:** Health service use in families where children enter public care: a nested case control study using the General Practice Research Database

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 5 October 2011

**Reviewer:** Kelly Noonan

**Reviewer's report:**

This paper addresses a very topic—What are the risk factors associated with entry into public care?

Minor Revisions

1. The initial data set has 370 case dyads and 1480 control dyads. As shown in Figure 1, the final sample consists of 147 case dyads and 538 control dyads. The authors do address some of the potential sample selection by comparing those with Townsend Scores to the “larger dataset.” Does this mean that the final analysis sample was compared to the 370 case dyads and 1480 control dyads?

2. The discussion really needs to take the estimates one step further and give some suggestions for what can be done to help children who are at increased risk for entering the public care system. Most of the findings are consistent with the prior literature but what can be done to help the children who are the greatest risk for entry into the public care system?

3. There needs to be more discussion about Table 2 and 3. What do the odds ratios tell us about the size of the effect? Is Table 2 presented just to show which variables were selected for inclusion in Table 3?

4. It would be interesting to change the sample used (i.e. lower the time from 12 months for primary care records to 6 months or 9 months) and see how this impacts the results. Are the results the same? Are the estimates of the same magnitude?

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests