Reviewer’s report

Title: Peer-mentoring for young first-time mothers from areas of socio-economic disadvantage: a qualitative study within a randomised controlled trial

Version: 1 Date: 25 October 2007

Reviewer: Caroline Homer

Reviewer’s report:

General

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Thank you for the opportunity to review this interesting paper. The paper describes a qualitative study that was undertaken as part of a RCT into peer mentoring for young first time mothers. This is a useful study as it adds to the knowledge about why some interventions (in this case peer mentoring) are difficult to implement even in a research setting. The complexities of the intervention, as well as the challenges inherent in implementation, are important to explore and report.

Most of my comments are about requiring more information and more clarity.

More information on the program is required. The training program is discussed briefly but I found myself asking what training in communication and facilitation did the mentors have; what ongoing support and ‘clinical; supervision (where they could discuss difficult cases or situation) did they have; were they reimbursed for travel, phone calls, childcare; what did they understand at the outset about what providing ‘support meant? Were the mentors given training in taking a strengths-based approach? It seems clear that the mentors were unclear about their role as were the women. Could more training and/or support to the mentors assisted with providing more clarity or purpose?

The authors say they used ‘grounded theory’ however there is a limited sense of categories or a core category. Perhaps they used some of the techniques in grounded theory to collect and arrange the data but not the methodology itself. The use of the term ‘deviant cases’ seems inappropriate in such a study (while I know what it meant – perhaps there is a clearer way to say it).

In the Results section, more clarity is required. How were the 12 women from 129 selected to be invited for this study. What were their characteristics? How was the decision made about who to approach? Were they purposively selected? On what grounds? This is important to work out if the women who participated in this study were similar to the other women in the study. Some comparison on some basic demographic characteristics between the responders and the total sample
would be helpful to assess whether they were similar to the whole sample.

The numbers in the text and quotes requires explanation. Does this refer to the case number of the participant? I am not sure about the difference between earlier or later interviews (page 6). Does this mean antenatal and postnatal or is it due to timing in the study?

The lack of understanding about the RCT is very interesting. More information about the information women received prior to consenting would be helpful. The behaviour scans mentioned on page 7 are confusing. This needs to be explained for the reader.

Some of the terms in the quotes need explanation for an international audience – eg – the ‘parentcraft’ on page 7. Is this classes or groups and when does it occur? The issues of local dialect also needs description. Were these women from a range of language groups? More information about the demographics of the sample is needed.

The title of the paper refers to young women but it seems that women from 16 to 30 years were recruited. How many of them were less than 20 years? Is 25-30 years really considered to be ‘young’.

The Discussion is rather brief and is limited in its exploration of the issues as to why these challenges and difficulties arose. Issues around training, ongoing support, building community partnerships and resilience could be explored in more depth. Understanding complex interventions and the diffusion of innovation might be useful frameworks to user when widening the exploration of the issues.

**What next?**: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

**Level of interest**: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**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 that I have no competing interests