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: 12 November 2007

Reviewer: Judith Lumley

Reviewer's report:

This paper describes the experiences and outcomes of a small number of women (11), having their first child, who had been offered peer-mentoring support from the beginning of antenatal care to the end of the first year of the baby's life. The additional support was offered to women who were living in areas of very high deprivation, had no continuing health-care needs and who were identified as being eligible for the study in hospital antenatal clinics.

The intervention was designed to provide support through home visits or calling by phone, tailored to individual's needs. Women providing the intervention ("lay-workers") had a difficult role since the notion of mentors seemed to be unfamiliar to most of the mentees. At least one midwife was also critical of the mentors stating that they didn't realise what the job entailed. There were also notes that some women would 'hang on to what their own mother or an older sister had said rather than the mentor's views.

It might have been more helpful to the readers of this paper if:
* The criteria for selection of the 'lay-workers' had been described early in the paper;
* Description and discussion of the mentor training had been provided;
* All women and mentors who were interviewed in the antenatal period had been interviewed after the birth;
* A flow-chart of participation, retention and loss had been provided - despite the small numbers in each category;
* More explicit attention - in the planning phase - had been given to low uptake in earlier studies of mentoring/extra support: e.g. references 11, 13, 14;
* The authors' conclusions had reflected what actually occurred in the implementation of the study.