Reviewer’s report

Title: The effects of an area-based intervention on the uptake of maternal and child health assessments in Australia

Version: 2 Date: 28 July 2008

Reviewer: Matt Egan

Reviewer’s report:

This is an informative, interesting and important study with a clear research question. The methods, results and general presentation are all of a sufficiently high standard to warrant publication following some relatively small revisions listed below.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Typos
absract 'World health Organisation'
Page 4 ‘linkages between services existing services’
page 5 – ‘parenting information and welcome were used’
page 7 – no page break
page 10 – ‘might be a barrier is a barrier to health’

Please make more clear
Page 5 ‘Recent evidence suggests that further evidence that parental confidence might be a major…’
Page 8 ‘The dependent variables were the survey questions – Seen information about the 3.5 year Ages and Stages visit and Confident a good parent’.

Table 1 is unclear. What do the figures 3309 and 3009 refer to? They do not appear in the text.

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

Abstract – the conclusion could give the (erroneous) impression that this study has measured and found reductions in child health inequalities. It would be more in keeping with the rest of the manuscript to say something like
...community-based initiatives in disadvantaged areas may improve parents’ access to child health information, improve their confidence and increase MCH service use. These outcomes suggest such programmes could potentially contribute to strategies to reduce child health inequalities.

Your Discussion section already identifies potential limitations. It would be helpful
if the main limitations were discussed under a ‘limitations' sub-heading.
Why did the parent’s survey not ask about exposure to the MCH program? It sounds like this is a major limitation in terms of the ecological fallacy you refer to, so a brief explanation would be useful.

Page 7 – Has there been an exploration of the effects (if any) that the under-representation of one parent families may have had on the study’s findings? If there has, this should be described here. If there has not, this should be explained (perhaps within the discussion of the study’s limitations).

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