Reviewer's report

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

Version: 3 Date: 14 November 2008

Reviewer: Catherine Law

Reviewer's report:

Thanks to the authors for addressing most of the points I made.

The point about the feasibility of randomisation (#1 in my original comments) was a general one which I thought worth referring to. Clearly it was not feasible in this case and the addition made by the authors in the methods is, I think, potentially confusing. If it is to be included (which was my recommendation) then I think it is better placed in the discussion. If the authors disagree, that is fine, but they might set out, for my benefit and that of the editors, the basis of that disagreement.

Background para 2

I suggested including the more recent evaluation of Surestart as well because it shows contrasting findings to those reported in the early evaluation. Thus without the subsequent evaluation included, para 2 is out of date. The most recent evaluation has now been reported in the peer reviewed literature. I recommend it is included (which would require some revision of the para).

Melhuish E, Belsky J, Leyland AH, Barnes J, National Evaluation of Sure Start Research Team.


Minor point

The sentence in the discussion on targeted versus population approaches needs changing to refer to these as either singular or plural (last 3 lines para 4 of discussion)

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.