Reviewer’s report

Title: Health services changes: is a run-in period necessary before evaluation in randomised clinical trials?

Version: 1 Date: 25 November 2013

Reviewer: Derrick Bennett

Reviewer’s report:

1. Were there equal numbers of physiotherapists in each of the 4 PCTs included in the study?
2. For the results of the joinpoint regression model the authors should make it clearer what the equivalent time changes are for the mean change in slope values. For example, it was not immediately apparent that -0.21 (0.03) in Figure 2 is equivalent to a 12 second reduction in call time mentioned in the result section first paragraph.
3. If the run-period had insufficient power to detect equivalence between usual care and Physiodirect service how can the researchers be sure that the non-statistically significant difference during run-in between the interventions was not due to lack of power?
4. Did the authors consider using a stepped-wedge design in order to implement the Physiodirect intervention?

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.