Reviewer's report

Title: Understanding success and failure in multimorbidity: protocol for using realist synthesis to identify how social learning and workplace practices can be optimised

Version: 1 Date: 20 June 2013

Reviewer: Jan Illing

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for sending this protocol to me to review.

This is a complex topic and one which lends itself to the chosen approach of a realist synthesis.

The proposal is well written, very comprehensive and detailed.

The methods indicate attention to rigour.

There is also an awareness of the potential to find scant literature to support their research question. The authors have suggested mapping what is and is not known which I agree will be useful and which may indicate new areas for research.

Discretionary Revisions

The authors have referred to the appropriate realist literature; however, for readers who are new to realist synthesis, I think the proposal would benefit from a little more explanation of context, mechanism and outcome at the start of the methods section.

Should there be very little published to support the research question, there is a potential risk of having too many gaps to propose a programme theory. Have the authors considered this possibility and how they would deal with it?

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'