Author’s response to reviews

Title: A qualitative study of employees' opinions on establishing a generic call-centre

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Author’s response to reviews:

The authors' response letter has ALSO been included as a supplementary file

Responses to review

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a revised version of the manuscript. Below we provide a point by point response to the editors and reviewers’ comments, which we have found very useful in improving the manuscript.

The pages and line numbers in our revised manuscript and the one the reviewer got is numbered differently. In our response below, we have given the page and line number in the attached revised version of the manuscript

Editorial comments

I would also like you to comment on the time that has elapsed since data collection - is this a possible limitation?

• We do not think that time since data collection is a limitation. The reason is that the article focuses on the vies during the process of establishing the generic call-center. Thus, it is largely not influenced by the time the data was collected.
Also, it would be interesting to know what has happened to the service since you conducted your study/do you plan a follow up to see how the service is operating? Whether participant views were realised?

• As this is not part of the scope of the article, we have not included information about this. Neither have we systematically collected data on this. But from our contact with those involved, especially the final part of the process where the topics discussed and the refinement of solutions were adjusted, was due to the views of the participants.

In your limitations section please specify why you think having a single interviewer is a limitation and please be clearer on what the second analyst did / how many transcripts were read.

• Discussion section, page 13, line 15 onwards. After considerations, we do not think that having one interviewer is a special limitation in this study and we have deleted the sentence. The contribution of the authors in the analysis is included as described in the response to the next comment.

Indeed, in your data analysis section please specify initials of the lead analyst and the initials of all other authors who second coded/participated in analysis and agreeing the final themes.

• Method section, page 6, line 15. Information about the specific contribution of the authors is added.

Reviewer report by Amy Halls (reviewer 1)

Overall this is a well-written paper covering a topical area within healthcare. The background is clear, and the findings relevant and drawn directly from the analysis. Detailed comments are below, several of them refer to typographical errors or small mistakes in use of language:

P4 line 7 enquiries rather than inquires

• Background section, page 3, line 5: changed inquires to enquiries

p4 line 23 unclear sentence, ’a gatekeeper and a career”?

p4 line 23 unclear sentence, ’a gatekeeper and a career”?
• Background section, page 3, line 13: changed career to carer. The term “carer” is used in the article we are referring to. The aim was to communicate that it is hard to both decide which people need care and then also provide the care.

p4 24 was not were

• Background section, page 3, line 14: changed were to was.

page 5 51 awkward sentence, be consistent in use of capitals (or not) in OOH

• Method section, page 4, line 28: sentence is reformulated.

• The consistent use of “Out-of-Hours” and “OOH-GP” has been controlled and altered where relevant in the whole document. This is not marked in the manuscript.

Page 6 6 what was the 'previous observed activity'? Additional background information here would be useful to provide a more detailed picture of the setting for the data collection.

• Method section, page 5, line 8. Inserted “informal”. Further description of the observational activity is described in line 20, page 5.

p6 5 regarding the number of years in employment, is this employment in their current role, or within a similar role more broadly? For those unfamiliar with the Norwegian setting, more information on the clinical requirements for undertaking this role would be useful.

• Method section, page 5, line 6: inserted “current”.

• Method section, page 4, line 27: Rewritten sentence about employees at safety alarm. In addition, the information about their professional background is given in the result section, table 1.

• See also response to rewire two about giving more information about the safety alarm on page 4 line 23 onwards.
p6 13 what was the basis of recommendation by others? Perceived willingness to participate?

• Method section, page 5, line 9: Inserted more information about the criteria used.

p6 35 was there an average duration? Did this differ for the individual interviews and focus groups, as I imagine the focus groups took longer on average? Were they recorded, if so was this audio and/or video?

• Method section, page 5, line 22 onwards: added average duration for focus group and individual interviews. Added information about recording of the interviews.

p6 38 I appreciate it's not part of this analysis directly, but I would like to know more about the time prior to interviews and focus groups - was this before Sept '13, or as part of this time period?

• Method section, page 5, line 27: Added “…during the data collection period”

p6 46 for the semi-structured interview guide, could you provide this as an appendix so the reader can see additional questions? The main question addresses the needs of the research question but it would be good to see others, especially how the individual interviews and focus groups were structured.

• Method section, page 5, line 31 onwards: As the interview guide included topics that will be the base for other articles and due to changes during the process, we have opted for describing the guide in some more detail in the methods section.

P7 22 were all original texts re-evaluated throughout the analysis, or a sample? What is the background and experience of the researchers doing the analysis? Were the transcripts returned to the participants, or a summary of results?

• Method section, page 6, line 25: All the original text was re-evaluated and this is now stated in the manuscript.

• Some more information about the authors is added in “Author details”
Method section, page 6, line 26: As stated, results were presented for employees at the units and to the management of the project.

p8 I would like to see more information from the quotes used. Whilst they do illustrate the finding being made, it would be useful to have additional (anonymous) information attributed to it, such as whether they were a leader, and length of employment/experience. For example, the quote on lines 35-39 sounds very formal and professional - was this said by one of the leaders? Similarly, is it possible to edit the table showing characteristics of participants? For example, participant 1, female, leader, length of employment 2 years.

We informed the participants that it would not be possible to identify them in the final publication. The reason was to get them to speak freely. As there are e.g. few leaders, just adding the information that someone was a leader would identify this person. Thus, we cannot give more detailed information about who contributed with the citation without breaking the promise given.

p8 47 fewer, not less, and their, not theirs.

Result section, page 8, line 7. Changed less with fewer and theirs to their.

p9 2 may read better if 'were not able to' instead.

Result section, page 8, line 14. Changed to “were not able to”.

p10 2 todays needs missing apostrophe.

Result section, page 9, line 12. Apostrophe added.

p10 19 ad not add.

Result section, page 9, line 20. Deleted “d”

p10 11 did anyone provide any ideas for what an effective campaign would, or would not, include
• It was talked about ad’s in various channels and distributing leaflets, and starting in good time. None of these ideas was went beyond what we consider the ordinary characteristics of such campaigns, so we have not added any more information about this.

p10 34 and 49 do not rather than don’t

• Result section, page 9, line 21. Changed to do not.

• Result section, page 10, line 4. Changed to do not.

p10 44 too not to

• Result section, page 10, line 2. Added o.

p10 51 paid not payed

• Result section, page 10, line 5. Changed to paid.

p10 56 who suggested this? Do call handlers all have clinical backgrounds? what is the required level of expertise?

• Result section, page 10, line 7. Changed to “some participants”.

• See response above and table 1 regarding background.

p11 7 professionally not professional

• Discussion section, page 10, line 14. Changed to professionally.

p11 15 informants reported, rather than believed?

• Discussion section, page 10, line 18. Changed to reported.

p11 18 GPs rather than GPS
• Discussion section, page 10, line 20. Changed to GPs
p11 line 33 originate not origin

• Discussion section, page 10, line 27. Changed to originate.
p11 alternative not alternate

• Discussion section, page 10, line 29. This is not changed as it is about alternating between two different types of work
p11 line 52 have not has

• Discussion section, page 11, line 5. Changed to have.
p11-12 lines 60 to 1 - it would be useful to know which level of staff reported this. Was it roughly a majority, or a certain group? Was anything reported about moving between call handling and clerical work and direct patient contact? If possible?

• As commented above, we have omitted detailing the “level of staff” to preserve anonymity. We have stated in the result section that it was staff at the safety alarm center who suggested this (see response above).
p12 4 does this depend on the type pf calls? Calls similar in nature might be more monotonous than calls which are harder to anticipate the nature of?

• We have thought the same, and the next two sentences (starting page 11 line 13) is about this “complex tasks are found to enhance working conditions and reduce stress”
p12 12-15 'studies' mentioned in plural but only one reference. Use ref 7 as an example, or provide others.

• Discussion section, page 11, line 16. Inserted “a Swedish study”, line 17: changed find to found, line 18, changed is to was.
p12 19 relevance of less physically demanding - was this mentioned by participants, is this seen as a positive by all?

- The statement about physical demanding is from the referenced literature, and we decided to keep it as it broaden our findings.

p12 29 employees' not employee’s
- Discussion section, page 11, line 26. Changed to employees’

p12 35 an increase
- Discussion section, page 11, line 29. Added an

line 54 informants'
- Discussion section, page 12, line 7. Changed to participants’

p.13 'list-patients'
- Discussion section, page 12, line 11. Changed to list-patients’

p13 19 a phrase such as 'thought it would' rather than meant?
- Discussion section, page 12, line 21. Changed to thought it would.

p13 25 NHS Direct in England has now closed, NHS 111 service, worth adding as a footnote for clarity?

p13 35 complements
- Discussion section, page 12, line 30. Changed to complements.
p13 48 who rather than that

• Discussion section, page 13, line 6. Changed to who.

p13 50 employees'

• Discussion section, page 13, line 7. Changed to employees’

p13 54 this variation in sample should be mentioned earlier.

• Discussion section, page 13, line 10. We think that the information in table 1 is sufficient to show this variation. We have therefore added a reference to this table.

p14 20 good information to the public and in plenty of time.

• Conclusion section, page 13, line 23. Added “…public sufficiently early.”

Reviewer report Robert Daniel Hoffman, reviewer 2.

An interesting study regarding out of hours call centers. Although the focus was a local issue of merging two call centers, the interviews covered other, more general issues that will interest readers from other countries.

The English needs to be worked on a bit. I noticed three lines that had to revised - but a more careful perusal may find more.

Page 8 line 26 "lead to variation" should be allows variety.

• Result section, page 7, line 26. Last part of sentence deleted.

Page 9 line 22 "applaud" should be applause.

• Result section, page 8, line 24. Changed to applause.

Page 10 line line 40 "loyally" is unclear.

• Result section, page 9, line 31. Removed the last part of the sentence which included loyalty.

I would recommend changing "safety alarm service" (a local term not necessarily understood internationally) to "emergency call service".
- Methods section, page 4 Line 23 onwards. We have struggled with this translation, but "emergency call service" does imply other types of services as well. We have therefore decided to keep "safety alarm service" and added a more thorough description in the methods section.

I would also recommend changing the participants from "informants" to participants. "Informants" has a negative connotation.

• We have changed to “informant”. The change is not highlighted in the manuscript