Author’s response to reviews

Title: Community intervention to reduce social isolation in elderly people in disadvantaged urban areas: study protocol for a mixed methods multi-approach evaluation

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Author’s response to reviews:

Dear editor,

The manuscript has been revised according to the comments and, as requested, a specific answer to each comment has been provided.

Best regards,

María J. López

Editor comments

- Please provide adequate justification why disadvantaged urban areas are worth studying.

Following the suggestion of the editor, we have added to the previous paragraph justifying the loneliness in deprived urban areas, a new study showing that urban areas have more loneliness than rural areas and a new sentence justifying why disadvantaged urban areas are worth studying. The new sentences are:

“Overall, recent studies confirm that rural residents reported less social isolation and more social relationships than urban residents [7]. Therefore, disadvantaged urban areas need to be studied, and evaluated interventions in these areas should be prioritized.”
The new reference is:


- The novelty of this protocol and the unique contribution to the existing literature are unclear. Please include this in the Background.

As requested by the editor, we have included the contribution of the study in the Background section:

“Therefore, studies evaluating the effectiveness of interventions designed to reduce the impact of social isolation on wellbeing and quality of life in older people are much needed. Detailed protocols on how to evaluate this complex interventions can help to standardize the evaluation across interventions and homogenize the evidence on this area. In this sense, this protocol might be useful as a tool for future interventions to be evaluated.”

- In the Methods, there is significant text overlap to previously published papers. While we realize some overlap in methods may be unavoidable, please rephrase where possible in your own words.

We have slightly modified some sentences of the Methods section.

Reviewer’s comments:

- The manuscript reads much more clearly

We acknowledge the comment

- Recommend adding a description of the intervention in the abstract: a planned 22 weekly group sessions called School of Health for Older People to reduce social isolation.

Following the suggestion of the reviewer, we have included the description in the abstract. We have added this new sentence at the end of the first paragraph:

“The objective of this study was to evaluate the process, the effectiveness and the cost-effectiveness of a planned 22 weekly group sessions called School of Health for Older People to reduce social isolation.”

- Recommend completing the sentence in 3) of the abstract.

We have completed the sentence in 3) as requested by the reviewer. The new sentence is:
“3) A cost-utility analysis, which will be conducted from a health system (primary care) perspective, including direct costs of the program and the primary care health services used.”