Reviewer’s report

Title: Motivations and experiences of volunteers and patients in mental health befriending: A thematic analysis

Version: 0 Date: 25 Sep 2018

Reviewer: Reviewer 2

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PEER REVIEWER COMMENTS: To view the full report from the academic peer reviewer, please see the attached file.

REVIEWER COMMENTS FROM REPORT: The study was well designed, covering multiple befriending organisations across the UK, with a different span of mental health diagnoses and age. Although there is an increasing wealth of qualitative information regarding befriending schemes (e.g., Mitchell and Pistrang 2011) there has not been much work on the befriending relationship in such a large group.

Authors have conceptualised the findings well and summarised the necessary details. As they identified that befriending is often necessitated by an organisation (i.e., the third party) it would have been interesting to include information from the volunteer managers/coordinators as to how they establish the boundaries and resolve conflicts (if there is any). If there is this additional information about how the third party participates in the befriending process this would be quite valuable for future adoption and practice of befriending schemes.

I would also have liked to see how the roles change in specific conditions; the authors identified that close to 70% of the sample had a mood disorder (most likely depression/anxiety) and that the age range was 22-94. It would be very informative if the age/primary diagnosis was matched to the information obtained in the interviews (e.g., perhaps by a word cloud or synthesized narrative). It would be valuable for certain organisations e.g., those offering befriending to older adults (aged 60+ with depression) to see what kind of activities that could benefit them as well as the type of relationship that evolves (e.g., friendship or more professional?)

REQUESTED REVISIONS:

Authors have done an excellent job in compiling the findings of this worthwhile study. I would recommend also including details in the Tables of the participants demographics per the befriending scheme as this would inform the findings further. A discussion perhaps even on the
geographical differences in the befriending relationship (if any) would be interesting as I suspect befriending schemes in London will be rather different to ones in the Greater Manchester. In addition, I would have liked to see the perspective of the volunteer coordinator and how they have played a role in the overall befriending scheme.

Methodology in abstract should include the type of analysis they used to obtain the results.

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Does the work include the necessary controls?**
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?**
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

No

**Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?**
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

Not relevant to this manuscript

**Quality of written English**
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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