Reviewer's report

Title: The effectiveness of community engagement in public health interventions for disadvantaged groups: A meta-analysis

Version: 1 Date: 17 February 2014

Reviewer: Lisa Jones

Reviewer's report:

This systematic review poses a well defined question to examine the effectiveness of public health interventions that incorporate community engagement strategies. The reporting of the systematic review follows the PRISMA guidelines and therefore adheres closely to the relevant standards for reporting. Overall, this is a good quality systematic review that makes an important contribution to the literature.

*Minor essential revisions

1. I am concerned that the scope of the manuscript is a little too broad and that consequently some of the important findings get rather lost. Some re-organisation and editing of the manuscript (particularly the Results section) to make it more focused would help - for example, there is some repetition of the methods throughout the Results (e.g. 4th paragraph, pg 15) and reporting of effect sizes both in the text and in tables.

2. Description of data/additional analyses. The statistical methods used in the subgroup analyses and additional analyses are not clearly reported in the Methods. Both random effects ANOVA analyses and random effects meta-regression analyses are reported but I could not find any details about the effects meta-regression analyses in the Methods section.

3. Study characteristics. The characteristics of the included studies are only presented in the text, which makes it difficult for the reader to gain an understanding of the types of the studies included in the meta-analysis. As a number of subgroup and additional analyses are presented it would be useful to be able to identify which studies contributed to which analyses. This could usefully be provided in a further appendix, perhaps combining the risk of bias information in one table?

*Discretionary Revisions

1. Further elaboration is required as to why the authors chose a method of study identification primarily via systematic reviews. It is not until the Discussion that this method of identification is discussed in relation to publication bias.

2. Whilst further information are reported to be available in a longer report the authors should report the time frame for the literature search in the main sections
of the manuscript (or perhaps in the study flowchart?).

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests