Reviewer's report

Title: Acceptability of financial incentives and penalties for encouraging uptake of healthy behaviours: focus groups

Version: 1 Date: 24 November 2014

Reviewer: Richard Ashcroft

Reviewer's report:

This is an excellent, very well presented paper, with rich and interesting data on the qualitative reasons for and against the acceptability of health incentives to the general public. It is important that the target group for the focus groups was the general public, not current patients who might be targets for incentives. It also is important that the respondents were not given much in the way of "framing" about incentives. Many of the moral arguments against incentives that were given only make sense if one sees the incentive as a payment for performance, rather than as a "staging" tool in shaping behaviour change by the person themselves, or indeed as a treatment (all treatment costs money, including money as a treatment!). It would be interesting to explore in more detail what the respondents meant by "fairness". But these may be themes to explore in further work. As presented, this is a very valuable contribution to the literature and I have no substantive revisions to suggest.

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest 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.