Reviewer’s report

Title: Large-Scale Implementation of Alcohol Brief Interventions in New Settings in Scotland: A Qualitative Interview Study of a National Programme

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Reviewer: Lawrence Doi

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Title: Large-scale Implementation of Alcohol Brief Interventions in New Settings in Scotland: A Qualitative Interview Study of a National Programme

This manuscript tackles an important issue of implementing Alcohol Brief Interventions in wider settings. Overall, the paper is well written and presents an important contribution to knowledge in the ABI implementation field.

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
The authors have clearly defined the aim of their study: “to explore experiences of implementation of ABIs in settings outside of primary healthcare in the Scottish national programme in order to identify learning for implementation that may be relevant to any non-primary care setting”. ABI implementation is often faced with many challenges therefore identifying these five key strategies as helpful is an important step forward.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
Generally, the data collection and methods are explained well and appropriate. The quotes are excellent and reflect key themes.

However, could the authors explain the difference between the 11 mainland health boards and the other three health boards aside from their geographical locations? Since telephone interview was the only method of data collection, I wonder why they included participants from only the mainland health boards.

3. Are the data sound?
The authors indicate that resources available and timescale for the study dictated their sample size. Can they comment whether they felt data saturation was reached?

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
Yes

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
The authors suggest that although five key strategies were identified by the implementation leaders as helpful, yet it did not necessarily follow that the
strategies could be successfully employed. In the discussion, the authors should provide a much more detailed evaluation of the key helpful strategies identified by their study in relation to their practical implications to successful ABI implementation in different settings.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
The authors clearly discuss the limitations of their study. They note their concerns regarding the generalisability of their findings, but I think their findings are relevant and resonate internationally. However, the authors should make recommendations for further research on how these five strategies can be tested.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
Hard to answer definitively.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
The title is appropriate and the abstract explicitly outlines the five key findings of the study and the conclusion is sound.

9. Is the writing acceptable?
Yes

Major Compulsory Revisions
1. The authors should provide some details on the rationale for implementing ABIs in Scotland in their introduction.

2. In the discussion, the authors should provide one or two more detailed evaluation of the key helpful strategies identified by their study in relation to their practical implications to successful ABI implementation in different settings (similar to their critical evaluation of strategy 3 - adapting the intervention).

3. The authors should make recommendations for further research on how the strategies identified can be tested.

Minor Essential Revisions
4. Could the authors please define i) ‘HEAT target’ ii) ‘national standard’

5. Alcohol screening normally precedes ABI delivery and I feel the introduction will benefit from giving a brief background of alcohol screening and its relevance to ABI delivery in wider settings.

6. The authors indicate that resources available and timescale for the study dictated their sample size. Can they comment whether they felt data saturation was reached?

7. P7, L23 – “these included distortions in recording such that reported ABI figures were felt in some cases to be misleading”. I feel this assertion is quite strong and wonder whether a quote could be provided to support it?

Discretionary Revisions
8. Could the authors please provide some explanation on why they recruited participants from only the mainland health boards, especially when they only used telephone interviews to collect data?

9. P9, L13 – “Wee” (colloquial term meaning small) should be inserted in P8, L19 where the term was first used.

10. P12, L5 – “ABIS” should be “ABIs”

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

**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.