Reviewer’s report

Title: Exploring the views of being a proxy from the perspective of unpaid carers and paid carers: developing a proxy version of the Adult Social Care Outcomes Toolkit (ASCOT)

Version: 0 Date: 20 Jul 2017

Reviewer: Sandra Bradley

Reviewer's report:

An interesting study and one worth doing however I have the following comments:

1. In the Methods section, you have not described why some domains were tested on focus groups but not others and why the informal carers were subject to all domains? More details about why you chose to do it this way rather than testing the same domains for all is needed.

2. You have not adequately explained the theoretical framework that you used to do the analysis - please don't ask the reader to read your reference and figure it out - please identify whose framework you used, the steps involved and how you met the steps involved in your own research.

3. What is the name of the national social care research ethics committee in England? I presume it has an official title?

4. I am most concerned that you have lumped carers of people with different diseases and disorders together to ask about social conditions - a person caring for a person with dementia will have a different experience as a carer than a parent who has lived with a child with disability. The same goes for paid care workers. A table illustrating which participants cared for which types of people and the responses they provided would help you to define if there were differences in responses based on the type and time of caring. This is important information for creating an ASCOT for different type of carer situations if you want to know what proxies will do and if you are trying to minimise bias between proxy and self-reporting.

Results section:

1. You do not actually identify your themes and sub-themes. In lines 26-33, you say there are themes and then head into sub-themes which have not previously been discussed. Make your themes the headings with sub-themes as sub-headings.

2. You are including discussion in your results (see top of p.9, first para). It is difficult for the reader to know whether the finding is your interpretation or has actually been derived from the data. This can be rectified by actually describing only the findings without comment about what they might mean and by including more commentary that justifies the sub-theme or theme.

3. It is difficult to know which domains are being discussed within sub-themes without
identification of the domains. It would be beneficial to actually provide a table of the ASCOT questions in the Methods section and then refer to the specific domain under discussion in the Results section.

4. The measurement bias difference (p.17, lines 38-40) may also be attributable to the psychological element of being cared for versus caring for someone - the stresses involved are different for both - you might like to discuss this within your considerations of measurement bias.

5. Language in Results section is subjective in parts rather than being based on the findings. Leave subjective interpretations for the Discussion.

Overall:
1. Need more commentary to justify some of the author comments (p. 14, lines 37-42).

2. Although I think the study is important, mixing two different types of carers with people caring for people with many types of diseases is not going to assist you in creating an ASCOT which is more subtle and refined. It may be better to present this data as separate information, particularly based on paid careworkers.

3. You have identified that perhaps the differences between paid and informal carers have not created enough subtlety to eliminate measurement bias. This is important to learn from but does not necessarily warrant a published paper as I would argue this should have been considered from the outset.

Separating and reporting the findings differently would make a better published paper. Specifically if you have found differences in relation to the carers for specific disease states, e.g. dementia, Parkinson's vs spina bifida or other

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

No

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

Unable to assess

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No

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Not relevant to this manuscript

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