Reviewer’s report

Title: Negotiating commissioning pathways for the successful implementation of innovative health technology in primary care

Version: 0 Date: 02 May 2019

Reviewer: Simon Bishop

Reviewer's report:

Many thanks for the opportunity to review this paper. I read the paper with interest, and in my view it is clear and well written. There is clearly some good and candid data available, and the issue is of current relevance. I do think the line of analysis running through the paper (and particularly the results) could be strengthened, as I suggest in the comments below.

Approach and literature

The literature section is clear and well written. I do feel a theoretical approach or framework could help develop the paper, and may allow a stronger line of analysis in the results. One suggestion would be to consider Strauss’ negotiated order perspective (given the emphasis on contingent negotiations), which has been applied in health organisational research a number of times, but not, to my knowledge, to explicitly examine commissioning. However, other implementation or decision-making frameworks could clearly be considered to provide structure.

I think the above would help provide clarity on the assumptions underpinning the research. Commissioning is described as an 'emergent and contingent process' perhaps suggesting a social constructivist view of organisations (and indeed some of the research cited would support this). Results sections suggest (in places) a more objective approach e.g. 'commissioning decisions are consistently guided by the highest priority areas…'. Perhaps this could be addressed with a statement in the methods sections stating the paradigm/assumptions of the research.

As a minor point, I was unsure about the focus on 'evaluating' decisions, rather than 'making' decisions.

Results.

I think some improvements could be made to the way the results are reported. Currently there are some quite long verbatim quotes, and I would suggest some of these could be cut down to allow greater room for narrative summary of the data as a whole, as well as reflections and analysis
(for example building on a position/framework for analysis identified in the literature section). Some examples of individual points within results section that I thought could use further reflection:

- In the section on managing competing priorities, it is suggested that CCGs need to prioritise. However, it doesn't elaborate on how priorities are selected; I would suggest they are not self-evident (indeed the last quote in the section alludes to this out, but isn't discussed further)

- In the section on valuing evidence, it isn't clear what kind of evidence is valued. It mentions focus on improving care for patients (suggesting population health evidence?) but then also mentions in quotes business cases (suggesting more financial / strategic evidence?) as well as subjective local judgements (e.g. 'how difficult something is'). Rhetorically, evidence on benefit to patients is clearly the legitimate reason for implementing innovations, but in practice a host of factors clearly play a role.

- In the reconfiguring care pathways section, many of the quotes are about wider complexities, differing incentives and wider barriers to cross-organisational collaboration. This could be reflected better in the text (and the theme in general).

- The distinction between the 'reconfiguring care pathways' and 'negotiating commissioning pathways' isn't completely clear.

The discussion is clearly written, but I think could be strengthened by making the line of argument/analysis in the results clearer. I like the point about commissioning requiring significant inter-organisational work, and wonder if this could be expanded (e.g. what does this involve?). Again, part of the write up of discussion suggests a more objectivist view (e.g. that commissioners should focus on highest priority areas for local populations- suggesting these are fixed, clear and agreed entities; i'm not sure the results support this given the ambiguity and conflicting interests/perspectives identified).

**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

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Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

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