Reviewer's report

Title: Giving permission to care for people with dementia in residential homes: learning from a realistic synthesis of hearing-related communication'

Version: 0 Date: 23 Nov 2018

Reviewer: Frances Bunn

Reviewer's report:

This is a well written paper on an important topic. The methods are clearly described, and the authors provide a clear description of how they developed the programme theory. I have some comments which are detailed below.

1. I would have liked some more detail about the content expert group. For example, how many members of the group were there; did they all attend the same meetings or were there separate meetings for different groups; what was the role of people with dementia and their family supporters? The authors say that there were seven meetings of the group (which sounds impressive) but did all members of the group attend all meetings?

2. On the whole I think the data extraction and analysis processes are clearly described. However, I would have liked some detail about how the data from the excel spreadsheet (e.g. the salient results) were combined with or informed the data on the CMOs in Nvivo.

3. P5 line 2 - the studies were assessed for 'adequate rigor' - can the authors say how this was defined or judged?

4. P10 - my understanding is that the authors included 12 papers on staff training that were not specifically hearing related but rather that provided opportunities for transferrable learning. There are clearly many papers that might be relevant to staff training in care homes - what was the criteria for including those 12 papers and not others?

5. CMOC1 - I did wonder if there were really two ideas combined in CMOC1 - one related to PCC and leadership/modelling of PCC and the other relating to valuing staff. This is more of an observation than a request for a revision but I wonder if there is something about recognising the personhood of the staff as well as of the residents at play here.

6. P15 - as supporting evidence the authors use a quote about the role of 'genuine PCC'. I would have liked something more about this evidence. For example, what did that study
mean by genuine PCC and how did it could compel staff to change their behaviour (e.g. what is the mechanism)?

7. CMO1 and 3 - both seem to address PCC. Is there unnecessary overlap between the two?

8. In the discussion the authors say that they envisage further work to refine the CMOs. I would have liked some suggestions about what sort of interventions might be developed and tested.

9. A key argument in the paper is about the importance of permission. The authors refer to 'their concept of permission' and say that a previous review alluded to the concept of permission. I think that the previous review (Goodman et al) did more than allude to the concept of permission. It was quite an important part of the programme theory in that review. So the concept of permission in relation to embedding change in care homes is not new.

10. I noticed a few typos p2 line 1 - should be optimising. P4 line 24-25 doesn't make sense, p19 line 16 should be enable

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.

Not applicable

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

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I was an author on one of the papers referred to in the discussion of the paper.

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