Author’s response to reviews

Title: Health research systems in change The case of Push the Pace in the National Institute for Health Research

Authors:

Rebecca Moran (r.c.moran@soton.ac.uk)
Jennifer Butt (jennifer@jenniferbutt.co.uk)
Simon Heller (s.heller@sheffield.ac.uk)
Jeremy Hinks (jeremy.d.hinks@gmail.com)
Lynn Kerridge (lynn.kerridge@nihr.ac.uk)
Mark Samuels (mark.samuels@md.catapult.org.uk)
Stephen Hanney (stephen.hanney@brunel.ac.uk)

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Author’s response to reviews:

We appreciated the insightful and encouraging comments from our reviewer and thank them for taking the time to review our manuscript. We were grateful for their suggestions for improvements to the piece. The suggestions were excellent and we were pleased to incorporate them. The revisions are as follows:

1. Title: consider replacing "story" with "case" to improve the visibility and discoverability of this opinion piece. Although "story" aptly describes the rich and beautifully flowing narrative, its logic is not dissimilar to the logic of business case studies (which is further alluded to by a reference to the Cranfield and so it might be usefully included in the curricular of the Cranfield, Ashridge, and other business schools).

   RESPONSE: Agreed and changed

2. Abstract: consider replacing "Main body" with "Discussion".

   RESPONSE: Agreed and changed
3. Some of the decision-makers mentioned in the text are co-authors, consider adding "(one of the co-authors of this paper)" or similar the first time they are mentioned in the text.

RESPONSE: Agreed and changed


RESPONSE: We agree with this helpful suggestion have included this reference in the text (lines 139-141).

5. Consider adding a textbox with bullet points summarising key lessons.

RESPONSE: Agreed, this would be a useful at-a-glance summary for the reader and we appreciated the suggestion. Content for text box (Box 2):

- The NIHR began an activity of continuous improvement. Its initial goal was to reduce the amount of time it took for research to transition from an early concept to evidence that changes lives.
- As the activity of Push the Pace was underway, we realised further improvements were possible:
  - Increased transparency and simplification of our research management processes
  - Improved customer and stakeholder experience
  - Commitment to a culture of consistency and unity amongst NIHR staff and procedures

6. An apparent paucity of references to other health research funders signifies the novelty and importance of this paper in terms of leading the way in sharing best practice across the global community of health research funders. The authors might want to add a paragraph reflecting on how their experience and lessons might be generalised beyond the NIHR to inform similar programmes in other health research funding organisations, e.g. members of the UK's Association of Medical Research Charities, Irish Health Research Board, NIH, CIHR, etc.

RESPONSE: Agreed and changed. We felt this would be a useful addition and have drafted a paragraph immediately before the conclusion, highlighted in the attached text.
In addition to the changes in response to peer review, a few minor changes for improved clarity have been made. Each change is highlighted in the manuscript.

Please do let me know if you need further clarification on any of the above.

Rebecca Moran