Reviewers report

Title: Obstacles and opportunities to using research evidence in local public health decision-making in England

Version: 0 Date: 18 Dec 2018

Reviewer: Diana Dulf

Reviewer's report:

The paper is well written however some aspects of the methods and results need to be clarified. The title mentions obstacles and opportunities, but mostly obstacles are presented in the article. It was hard to identify opportunities in the results and discussion section therefore I would like to recommend addition/restructuring to include more clear values of opportunities. Starting with rephrasing the last phrase of page 5, line 23, where again, only challenges are mentioned, the article lacks this clear understanding of both obstacles and opportunities.

The title should include "local" before public health decision-making as the article only focused on local actions.

After going through the whole article it was clear to me that the decision-makers are politicians. Therefore I would recommend in the abstract, line 57, in "to better meet political decision-making needs" or decision-makings needs of politicians. The conclusion of the abstract is hard to follow as it is a long phrase, I recommend restructuring or reducing the conclusion, here is an example that might be used: "To better meet political decision-making needs a shift in the scope of public health evidence is required. Particularly at a systematic review level, evidence should move from broad global generalisations to narrow simple forms of evidence with applicability at local level. This will lead to local policy decisions supported by public health evidence."

Additional recommendations to shorten the phrases and make them specific:

page 3 line 15 - responsibilities instead of responsibility

page 3 lines 32-37 - please split this into two different sentences.

page 3 line 45 - referral to "newly-created Health and Wellbeing Boards" should be make in the first phrase of the Background. Readers outside the English public health system should be able to fully understand the background of how the public health work is re-organized from the beginning of the article.
Page 4, lines 16-19: for the aims of the study, please mention again the reorganization from which system to which system (i) similar for the (iii) changing patterns, from which patterns?

Page 4, line 40: you use the acronym PHPs, you might want to replace it here as well

Page 5, lines 19-20: including in the use "of" qualitative research

Page 15, lines 47-48 [...] evidence needs "in local patterns" that are unmet from [...]
I declare that I have no competing interests

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