Reviewer's report

Title: The last one heard: The importance of an early stage participatory evaluation for programme implementation

Version: 3  Date: 1 August 2014

Reviewer: Joanna Reynolds

Reviewer's report:

Minor essential revisions:

1. Authors’ response to my first comment on major compulsory revisions: the paragraph you state is now the revised first paragraph of the paper is different to the first paragraph of the revised manuscript - I'm not sure which is the correct version. This should be clarified.

2. There is still some confusion in your paragraph describing your analytical approach: you state that you used a 'top-down' analytical approach which was 'deductive', but also state that you had no thematic groups prior to analysis, so it's unclear how you used a top-down, deductive approach if you didn't have any pre-existing coding framework. If you used a pre-developed framework to analyse the data, this would be top-down and deductive, but if you had no framework and built up the coding from the data itself, this would be bottom-up and inductive. Please clarify!

Discretionary revisions:

1. Response to second major compulsory revision: paragraph 4, beginning 'Evidence-based, cost-effective interventions....': this is improved, but for me there's still some confusion around the difference between women and children's uptake of particular health behaviours and the uptake of interventions addressing these. To me they are different things: there may be good uptake of an intervention, but this may not result in lots of behaviour change, ie it may be a popular, but ineffective intervention. In this paragraph, the sentence beginning 'One of the key factors..' seems to suggest that low adoption of practices and poor uptake of the interventions are the same thing.

2. In this same paragraph, I'm still rather unconvinced by your use of 'accountability' and how this might relate to uptake of services or programmes - could be strengthened.

3. Your response to my fourth comment says that you align your work with the principles of the Alma Ata Declaration - it would be beneficial for the reader if you could state this explicitly in the paper to clarify your position in relation to 'community engagement', for example in the sentence beginning 'Though several challenges for its practice exist...', in the para beginning 'Understanding how positive and negative feedback...'.


4. It would be helpful to indicate which FGD each quotation has come from (especially given the addition of table 1), so the reader can get a feeling for the spread of quotations across the different sites.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

None