Author's response to reviews

Title: Evaluating an online support package delivered within a disability unemployment service: Protocol for a randomised controlled feasibility study.

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Version: 6  
Date: 16 March 2015

Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editors,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the editor’s and reviewers’ comments regarding the manuscript: MS: 1406164217148438, “Evaluating an online support package delivered within a disability unemployment service: Study protocol for a randomised controlled feasibility study”. We have responded to each point in turn and amended the manuscript accordingly.

1. There are incomplete sentences on page 6 (‘The aim is to be inclusive ...who we are being...’), page 7 (first sentence of methods), page 8 (in several places in the Participants subsection). Please ensure full sentences.

   Many thanks, these have been corrected.

2. Page 7 - primary research question (d) does not mention efficacy, which is listed in the abstract as an objective. Please make it clear that the interest in efficacy is in obtaining data for future sample size estimation, which includes assessing whether change in patient-centred outcome data can be detected for each group at 3 or 6 months.

   This has now been clarified.

3. Page 9 'randomly mixed envelopes' is a little misleading - please make clearer e.g. 'sequentially ordered envelopes containing the random allocation.'

   We have removed ‘randomly mixed envelopes’ and adapted the sentence. We cannot state that the envelopes are sequentially ordered as they are put in a box and will not stay in order.

4. Page 13 "Two-sample t-tests and Fisher's exact tests will be used to compare the two treatment groups and confirm that participants had been effectively randomised.” It is not
usually necessary to perform significance tests on baseline characteristics. I would prefer this sentence was removed.

This sentence has been removed as requested.

5. A reference is missing to a pilot study in the Discussion on page 16. Please add the reference and provide some explanation of what was piloted (as this study is a feasibility study also, so what has the former contributed?).

Thank you, the reference number has been added.

6. It would also be helpful to have some discussion about why the focus is on Remploy. There have been many closures of Remploy factories and so are these employees not a minority group to study, who may actually be in a better position than most? How can the results be generalised to other disabled groups? Or if this is successful, will future studies address a wider disabled population?"

Thank you for this comment. As you say, Remploy previously directly employed individuals with disabilities to work in factories owned by Remploy. Remploy has withdrawn from part of that previous business, but continues as a large multi million pound company helping people with disability into work. Although research on non disabled populations is important, we disagree that the focus here makes the results not generalizable. The focus of Remploy now is on its employment programme that aims to assist individuals with disabilities in gaining employment in mainstream companies. We chose to work with Remploy because we have an existing relationship with the company and we want to test our resources with an unemployment service that is keen to utilise guided self-help materials in order to facilitate employability in this population. Remploy has offices across the UK, and though we are planning to work with two offices in Scotland, the model could be extended significantly for a future substantive study.

I look forward to hearing your final decision.

Yours sincerely

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