Reviewer's report

Title: Protocol for a two arm feasibility RCT of lifestyle information and commercial weight management groups to support postnatal maternal weight management and positive lifestyle behaviour: The SWAN feasibility trial

Version: 0 Date: 21 Mar 2019

Reviewer: Jill Haszard

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review 'Protocol for a two arm feasibility RCT of lifestyle information and commercial weight management groups to support postnatal maternal weight management and positive lifestyle behaviour: The SWAN feasibility trial'. This is a protocol paper and as such describes the background and methodology for an RCT to determine whether a larger RCT is feasible, but also to test the effectiveness of an intervention to reduce excessive weight gain in mothers after birth.

I commend the researchers on their desire to provide a real world solution to a population in need of support. The postnatal period provides an ideal time for a weight management intervention for many reasons, but these are not mentioned in the introduction, which is an important oversight, and the reason for choosing this population is not highlighted. Justification for the study is weak - the results of irrelevant studies are reported in great detail but the overall rationale for the study is patchy. Current evidence should back up your argument, not be described in detail with no critical input.

The primary objectives, outcomes and endpoints do not align. In particular, the study is powered to detect a difference in weight change - which turns this study into an RCT to detect the effectiveness of the intervention, not a feasibility study. For a definition of a feasibility study please see: https://www.nihr.ac.uk/funding-and-support/documents/funding-for-research-studies/research-programmes/PGfAR/Feasibility%20and%20Pilot%20studies.pdf

The term 'weight management' is misused in places, and consideration should be given to the use of the term 'healthy BMI' rather than 'normal BMI', given the population of interest.

I advise revisiting the design of this study, first making sure that the objectives are clear and well-justified. Then design and power the study for these objectives.

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