Reviewer's report

Title: Involving seldom-heard groups in a PPI process to inform the design of a proposed trial on the use of probiotics to prevent preterm birth: a case study

Version: 0 Date: 09 Feb 2017

Reviewer: Sue Pavitt

Reviewer's report:

This is an article with some interesting potential but the authors seem unclear if their focus is on using PPI to improve their trial design or reaching out to gain involvement of BME population. They have perhaps underplayed their approach to reach the 'seldom heard' community [e.g. 126 - "hard to reach"; 263 'difficult to access' have become less popular terminology].

3 I consider that they would increase their citations if they modified their title to reflect the reach to the seldom heard community - an important consideration. However if they do this then it needs to be followed through into the article where they describe 'how they have approached this' in more detail so that other can knowledge transfer and learn from their techniques. To achieve this there needs to be a balance on reporting some of the PPI recommendations to the research design but I do consider more would be interested if this perspective was covered in greater detail.

54-55 would include a sentence on how they improved reach to ethnic groups-

158 - Reference number 7 is incorrectly cited - should be number 6 - please recheck all citations are in correct order

166 - Providing some indication of how representative their participants are compared to the constituent local community might be helpful although acknowledge they are trying to target West African higher risk group too.

193- The authors don not describe any allowances for inclusion of non-English speakers.
234 - what is the ethnicity mix of Katie's team as a comparison.

239 - "These women…" Can they be quantified?

335-6 "reaching and engaging women from diverse background" - Providing some indication of diversity as they have only describes ethnicity no other parameters.

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Quality of written English
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Acceptable

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