Reviewer’s report

Title: The Maudsley Biomedical Research Centre (BRC) Data Linkage Service User and Carer Advisory Group: Creating and Sustaining a Successful Patient and Public Involvement Group to Guide Research in a Complex Area

Version: 0 Date: 25 Feb 2019

Reviewer: Mari James

Reviewer's report:

This manuscript is well written in good clear English throughout. It is a straightforward case study of PPI involvement in healthcare research. However, to anyone involved in PPI either as a patient/carer or a researcher it is unlikely to add anything to their knowledge or insights and will be familiar. There are no insights drawn from the experience described or any particular challenges or problems highlighted. It's only value to the PPI literature, apart from being another case study that says PPI benefits research and researchers, is that it involves the sometimes complex data linkage area and yet why this might be more difficult for PPI is not drawn out sufficiently.

The statement: "Evaluation after a trial period of 12 months revealed that the group succeeded in breaking down barriers between service users/carers and researchers" is rather too bland, even for good news. What exactly was 'revealed'?

With further thought given by the authors to insights and challenges and inclusion of these in a revised article, then publication would be worthwhile as it is well written and appears to show the advantage of PPI in data linkage.

There is no reference to the National UK Standards and whether or not an audit of the project and its use of PPI was audited against the Standards.

Avoid the use of words, and concepts, such as "believe", especially as in the last sentence of the article. Research should be more about proof than belief and there is more assertion than proof in this article.

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I receive honoraria for PPI contributions to a range of research projects and Boards.

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