

PEER REVIEW HISTORY

BMJ Open publishes all reviews undertaken for accepted manuscripts. Reviewers are asked to complete a checklist review form (<http://bmjopen.bmj.com/site/about/resources/checklist.pdf>) and are provided with free text boxes to elaborate on their assessment. These free text comments are reproduced below.

ARTICLE DETAILS

TITLE (PROVISIONAL)	Exploring Unintended Consequences of Policy Initiatives in Mental Health: The example of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in England
AUTHORS	Foreman, David

VERSION 1 - REVIEW

REVIEWER	Stan Kutcher Dalhousie University Canada
REVIEW RETURNED	23-Jan-2016

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>This is a very nice paper on a very important topic. The findings are not surprising and could likely be similarly described in a variety of areas of the 2008 CAMHS policy.</p> <p>I think that the one possible solution considered by the author is a good one, that of linking prioritization to dedicated funding. This is not so much an incentivization (carrot) approach as it is a consequence approach (stick). I also wonder if there may be some other suggestions considered, such as: independent monitoring at dedicated time points and a detailed analysis (such as that performed in this study) at policy time-frame midpoint. Perhaps the author could consider these or other additional suggestions. The only one other question i have is that of the sensitivity of child and adolescent psychiatrists as valid observers of volume/funding relationships. In my experience they are not the best at this as volumes seem to fill up any funding envelopes provided.</p>
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REVIEWER	Myron L. Belfer, MD Harvard Medical School, Boston Children's Hospital, USA
REVIEW RETURNED	05-Feb-2016

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>This is an interesting paper with an important conclusion. However, the way in which the paper is written obscures the important finding of the relationship between funding, policy priority setting and provider behavior.</p> <p>To start with the term "Freakonomics" in the title while catchy does nothing to inform the potential reader unless they are familiar with the term which is not likely for a potential international audience. If they want to use this term it should be explained in the first paragraph and not wait until the methods section. "Exploring Unintended Consequences of Policy Initiatives in Mental Health" would be an easily understandable title and engage readers who</p>
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	<p>need to know about what the authors have found. The similar confounding of important and relatively simple messages based on sound research are obscured elsewhere. This carries over into a complicated discussion of the statistical analysis and the use of too many graphs.</p> <p>The conclusions section is right on target. So, I think this is a worthy paper in need of simplification and a review going back from the conclusions to see that no extraneous material impedes understanding.</p>
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REVIEWER	Giovanni de Girolamo Saint John of God Clinical Research Centre, Brescia, Italy
REVIEW RETURNED	24-Feb-2016

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>This paper focuses on a specific problem of the British NHS; given the international readership of the BMJ, I am not sure to which extent this paper is of interest for an international audience.</p> <p>Having said this, I should underline that there are several sections of the paper which are hard to read and follow, and in my opinion may benefit from a rewriting to make the all issue more clear.</p> <p>A special problem (which makes the reading and the understanding much more difficult) has to do with the figures: I imagine that the original figures were color figures: however, once printed in B&W, it is almost impossible to notice the differences between different lines or bars. In addition each figure merges up to 6 different sub-figures, with the net result that each individual sub-figure is very difficult to glance and understand. Figure 1 is very messy, and in my opinion needs a total reshaping if the author wants to let the reader understand what is about (and the numbers included). Figure 2 is a collation of six different figures, and is again very difficult to understand. Figure 3 is very difficult to read. Figure 4 is totally incomprehensible, and in my opinion should be dropped and replaced either with a table or with a clear figure.</p> <p>The discussion is very hard to read and understand: in my opinion should be divided in subsections and made more clear. The implications of this analysis should also be made more clear, especially thinking to an international audience.</p> <p>In terms of specific comments, the author states on page 6 that there were 432 respondents to the RCP survey: however, in figure 3 it is stated that the respondents were 279. Moreover, there is no mention of the denominator: 432 (or 279) replied, but how many did receive the questionnaire??</p>
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VERSION 1 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

Reviewer 1

I agree that the approach used was more "stick" than "carrot" and have changed the wording at page 5 line 13. I have referenced the new Mental Health Services Dataset for England, and, as the referee suggested indicated how it may be used to provide independent monitoring and quantitative checking of progress. I of course agree regarding the sensitivity of child and adolescent psychiatrists, as shown in Figure 3 and discussed at page 12, lines 14-16 in the paper. I have now commented on the risks of

using survey-based evaluation in the conclusions.

Reviewer 2

I have changed the title, and modified the "motivation and rationale" section on page 5 accordingly. I hope this reviewer agrees that the modifications I have made to the "conclusions" section now address the point that all material in the draft should clearly relate to, and support the conclusions. I have simplified the graphs and reduced them as follows. Figure 1 now presents simple line graphs to show trend, without colour, with all related information presented or tabulated in the relevant text. In Figure 2, charts 1 through 5 have been replaced by a single chart presenting the data in three dimensions. For consistency, I now present what was chart 6 as a simple multiple line graph, without colour.

Reviewer 3

I agree that the data on which this paper is based has been collected from a single country. I do, however, believe that the difficulties with policy implementation, which the data illustrates, are of international relevance, as shown by the references associated with my discussion at page 5 paragraph 2, and international colleagues might be interested in the solutions the results suggest and justify. I hope that this referee will also be satisfied with the changes I have made to the figures, described in my responses to Reviewer 2 above, in particular the removal of colour, and greater differentiation between the charts' multiple lines. I have added two subheadings to the discussion, as this reviewer requested, and made various minor textual changes, to try to improve clarity.

VERSION 2 – REVIEW

REVIEWER	Myron L Belfer, MD Boston Children's Hospital/Harvard Medical School United States of America
REVIEW RETURNED	07-Apr-2016

GENERAL COMMENTS	The author has been responsive to the original review of the paper. I find the paper much easier to read and the conclusions are stated clearly. While I believe the paper could be streamlined more I do not feel that this is compelling. I do believe the conclusions are important and have implications for service prioritization beyond the UK.
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