

PEER REVIEW HISTORY

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ARTICLE DETAILS

TITLE (PROVISIONAL)	A qualitative study investigating the commissioning process for older people's services provided by third sector organisations: SOPRANO study protocol
AUTHORS	Sands, Gina; Chadborn, Neil; Craig, Christopher; Gladman, John

VERSION 1 - REVIEW

REVIEWER	Lesley Wye University of Bristol UK
REVIEW RETURNED	14-Dec-2015

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>Comments on Sands et al qualitative protocol paper</p> <p>General comments This is a well written, clear paper outlining the protocol for an interesting study.</p> <p>Abstract The focus of this study is clearly stated as exploring the processes of commissioning services for older people from the third sector. It would be good to know if the authors are only interested in healthcare commissioning or if social care commissioning will also be included. I can appreciate the intention to keep the study focused, but in my experience there is masses of joint commissioning between health and social care commissioners with third sector providers so it would be useful to include social care. Moreover, with the policy push towards integrated health and social care commissioning, by understanding the processes from both, the authors are much more likely to identify findings of longer-term applicability.</p> <p>Introduction In continuing with point above, only healthcare commissioning structures and funding approaches discussed, although local authorities are mentioned. If the authors take my suggestion to include social care, then some discussion of social care commissioning would be helpful.</p> <p>P 3 line 69 "...by which the priority could be approached" doesn't sound quite right. How about realised or conceptualised?</p>
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	<p>p. 4 line 91 – funding models instead of types?</p> <p>p. 4 line 95 – response instead of opinion?</p> <p>Methods</p> <p>p.5 line 116 explicitly states that local authority commissioners will be included. If this is the case, then it would be helpful to re-write the abstract and introduction so they are more proportionately include background about social care commissioning.</p> <p>How will the team get hold of commissioners' e-mail addresses to send targeted e-mails? We've done this recently and it required an admin assistant calling all commissioning organisations. Sometimes Freedom of Information requests were necessary. Answers to this question does not need to be included in the paper.</p> <p>What criteria will be used to select survey respondents for interview?</p> <p>Discussion</p> <p>The authors mainly talk about dissemination. Given that the researchers have already developed networks with the target users of commissioners and third sector organisations, it would be really interesting to learn how these target users would like findings fed back to them. The authors mention 'dissemination activities' but no further information is included.</p> <p>Other comments</p> <p>Note that the authors reference our paper on commissioning with private sector providers. We've also recently published a paper on the 'art of commissioning' and how healthcare commissioners access knowledge and information. This might be of use (or not!). http://www.biomedcentral.com/1472-6963/15/430 Kath Checkland's papers on healthcare commissioning are also really useful.</p>
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REVIEWER	Robin Miller HSMC, University of Birmingham, UK
REVIEW RETURNED	19-Dec-2015

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>This research is well explained with methods that are appropriate for its aims and the context in which it is being undertaken. It can be strengthened by providing greater clarity on what it provides in addition to the previous studies looking at the commissioning of third sector services for older people; how the sample of commissioners etc will be selected - you state that is purposive but on what basis?; how the views of older people will be meaningfully connected with that of third sector and commissioners; The basics are there, but there needs to be more detail to be confident that it will add to what we already know.</p>
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VERSION 1 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

Reviewer 1

General comments

This is a well written, clear paper outlining the protocol for an interesting study.

- Thank you for the helpful comments below to improve this paper, I hope you will find our changes satisfy these issues.

Abstract

The focus of this study is clearly stated as exploring the processes of commissioning services for older people from the third sector. It would be good to know if the authors are only interested in healthcare commissioning or if social care commissioning will also be included. I can appreciate the intention to keep the study focused, but in my experience there is masses of joint commissioning between health and social care commissioners with third sector providers so it would be useful to include social care. Moreover, with the policy push towards integrated health and social care commissioning, by understanding the processes from both, the authors are much more likely to identify findings of longer-term applicability.

Introduction

In continuing with point above, only healthcare commissioning structures and funding approaches discussed, although local authorities are mentioned. If the authors take my suggestion to include social care, then some discussion of social care commissioning would be helpful.

- We have added social care commissioning to the introduction, also the abstract and manuscript in general has been altered to make it clear that we are focusing on both health and social care commissioning.

P 3 line 69 “....by which the priority could be approached” doesn’t sound quite right. How about realised or conceptualised?

- This sentence has been adapted to be clearer.

p. 4 line 91 – funding models instead of types?

- This has been changed as suggested.

p. 4 line 95 – response instead of opinion?

- This has been changed as suggested.

Methods

p.5 line 116 explicitly states that local authority commissioners will be included. If this is the case, then it would be helpful to re-write the abstract and introduction so they are more proportionately include background about social care commissioning.

- We have added social care commissioning to the introduction, also the abstract and manuscript in general has been altered to make it clear that we are focusing on both health and social care commissioning.

How will the team get hold of commissioners’ e-mail addresses to send targeted e-mails? We’ve done this recently and it required an admin assistant calling all commissioning organisations. Sometimes Freedom of Information requests were necessary. Answers to this question does not need to be included in the paper.

- We will use publically available lists of commissioners that have been collated by an east midlands organisation along with existing contacts, but we appreciate the advice of how best to do this based on your experiences.

What criteria will be used to select survey respondents for interview?

- Added sentence pg 7 line 161 to further explain how participants will be selected.

Discussion

The authors mainly talk about dissemination. Given that the researchers have already developed networks with the target users of commissioners and third sector organisations, it would be really interesting to learn how these target users would like findings fed back to them. The authors mention 'dissemination activities' but no further information is included.

- Thanks for this useful point. This is something we expect to be able to explain further after the dissemination activities have started as we can gain feedback as we continue with the study and ask participants how they would like to be kept informed. Through our existing networks and experience we have found that CLAHRC BITEs (half page summaries) have been a useful tool to present research to commissioners and third sector organisations. They seem to be well received by stakeholders therefore we have stated that they will be used as one of the methods of dissemination.

Other comments

Note that the authors reference our paper on commissioning with private sector providers. We've also recently published a paper on the 'art of commissioning' and how healthcare commissioners access knowledge and information. This might be of use (or not!). <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1472-6963/15/430> Kath Checkland's papers on healthcare commissioning are also really useful.

- Thank you for highlighting these papers, we will certainly keep them in mind for the future.

Reviewer: 2

This research is well explained with methods that are appropriate for its aims and the context in which it is being undertaken. It can be strengthened by providing greater clarity on what it provides in addition to the previous studies looking at the commissioning of third sector services for older people; how the sample of commissioners etc will be selected - you state that is purposive but on what basis?; how the views of older people will be meaningfully connected with that of third sector and commissioners; The basics are there, but there needs to be more detail to be confident that it will add to what we already know.

- Thank you for these useful points to improve our paper. We have added further detail on the sampling techniques in the recruitment and sampling section, and also how we will connect the views of older people to the other sample groups adding an extra dimension to the study and literature (in the analysis section). I hope these additions will make the protocol clearer to readers.

VERSION 2 – REVIEW

REVIEWER	Lesley Wye Univ of Bristol, UK
REVIEW RETURNED	20-Jan-2016

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>p. 4 lines 84-88 I would give a general definition for commissioning, not just NHS commissioning. Would add the sentence about social care commissioning after the sentence ending "CCGs" line 88 as tagging the social care commissioning line at the end of the paragraph means it gets lost. It wasn't until I read the marked copy that I noticed any info on social care commissioning had been included. I still think this para is too heavy on NHS commissioning and social care is overlooked. think the authors can be trusted to go back to this para, and create greater balance.</p> <p>p. 5 lines 111-112 local authority needs to be in plural to match NHS bodies.</p>
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REVIEWER	Robin Miller University of birmingham, UK
REVIEW RETURNED	30-Jan-2016

GENERAL COMMENTS	Thanks for responding to the previous queries and clarifying the issue of social care involvement in particular.
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VERSION 2 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

We have now adapted the paper as requested by reviewer 1 and have added information to make the paragraph more balanced between health and social care. The comments have all been satisfied and the alterations can be viewed in tracked changes.