

RAMESES II reporting standards for realist evaluations: checklist

Title: Protocol for a mixed-methods realist evaluation of regional District Health Board groupings in New Zealand

| TITLE | | | Reported in document Y/N/Unclear/ Not applicable | Page(s) in document | Comment |
|----------------------------|--|--|--|---------------------|---|
| 1 | | In the title, identify the document as a realist evaluation | Y | 1 | |
| SUMMARY OR ABSTRACT | | | | | |
| 2 | | Journal articles will usually require an abstract, while reports and other forms of publication will usually benefit from a short summary. The abstract or summary should include brief details on: the policy, programme or initiative under evaluation; programme setting; purpose of the evaluation; evaluation question(s) and/or objective(s); evaluation | Y | 2 | Abstract presented in study protocol format |

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| | <p>strategy; data collection, documentation and analysis methods; key findings and conclusions</p> <p>Where journals require it and the nature of the study is appropriate, brief details of respondents to the evaluation and recruitment and sampling processes may also be included</p> <p>Sufficient detail should be provided to identify that a realist approach was used and that realist programme theory was developed and/or refined</p> | | | |

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| INTRODUCTION | | | | | |
| 3 | Rationale for evaluation | Explain the purpose of the evaluation and the implications for its focus and design | Y | 4-6 | |
| 4 | Programme theory | Describe the initial programme theory (or theories) that underpin the programme, policy or initiative | Y | 6-7 | We state explicitly these will be developed. As this is a study protocol these cannot be described in detail at this point. |
| 5 | Evaluation questions, objectives and focus | State the evaluation question(s) and specify the objectives for the evaluation. Describe whether and how the programme theory was used to define the scope and focus of the evaluation | Y | 6-8 | As above |
| 6 | Ethical approval | State whether the realist evaluation required and has gained ethical approval from the relevant authorities, providing details as | Y | 15 | |

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| | | appropriate. If ethical approval was deemed unnecessary, explain why | | | |
| METHODS | | | | | |
| 7 | Rationale for using realist evaluation | Explain why a realist evaluation approach was chosen and (if relevant) adapted | Y | 6-8 | |
| 8 | Environment surrounding the evaluation | Describe the environment in which the evaluation took place | Y | 4-6 | |
| 9 | Describe the programme policy, initiative or product evaluated | Provide relevant details on the programme, policy or initiative evaluated | Y | 4-6 | |
| 10 | Describe and justify the evaluation design | A description and justification of the evaluation design (i.e. the account of what was planned, done and why) should be included, | Y | 7-15 | |

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| | | at least in summary form or as an appendix, in the document which presents the main findings. If this is not done, the omission should be justified and a reference or link to the evaluation design given. It may also be useful to publish or make freely available (e.g. online on a website) any original evaluation design document or protocol, where they exist | | | |
| 11 | Data collection methods | Describe and justify the data collection methods – which ones were used, why and how they fed into developing, supporting, refuting or refining programme theory | Y | 7-15 | |

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| | | Provide details of the steps taken to enhance the trustworthiness of data collection and documentation | | | We do not specifically report these in the protocol due to space considerations. |
| 12 | Recruitment process and sampling strategy | Describe how respondents to the evaluation were recruited or engaged and how the sample contributed to the development, support, refutation or refinement of programme theory | Y | 9-11 | |
| 13 | Data analysis | Describe in detail how data were analysed. This section should include information on the constructs that were identified, the process of analysis, how the programme theory was further developed, supported, refuted and refined, and (where relevant) how analysis changed as the evaluation unfolded | Y | 8-14 | As it is a study a protocol we outline our analysis plan |

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| RESULTS | | | | | |
| 14 | Details of participants | Report (if applicable) who took part in the evaluation, the details of the data they provided and how the data was used to develop, support, refute or refine programme theory | Not applicable | | Study protocol |
| 15 | Main findings | Present the key findings, linking them to contexts, mechanisms and outcome configurations. Show how they were used to further develop, test or refine the programme theory | Not applicable | | Study protocol |
| DISCUSSION | | | | | |
| 16 | Summary of findings | Summarise the main findings with attention to the evaluation questions, purpose of the evaluation, programme theory and intended audience | Not applicable | | Study protocol |

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| 17 | Strengths, limitations and future directions | Not applicable | | Study protocol |

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| 18 | Comparison with existing literature | Where appropriate, compare and contrast the evaluation's findings with the existing literature on similar programmes, policies or initiatives | Not applicable | | Study protocol |
| 19 | Conclusion and recommendations | List the main conclusions that are justified by the analyses of the data. If appropriate, offer recommendations consistent with a realist approach | Not applicable | | Study protocol |
| 20 | Funding and conflict of interest | State the funding source (if any) for the evaluation, the role played by the funder (if any) and any conflicts of interests of the evaluators | Y | | 17 |

Adapted from table 1 in:

Wong G, Westthorp G, Manzano A, *et al.* RAMESES II reporting standards for realist evaluations. *BMC Med* 2016;14:96.