Hypothesis / aims of study
Incontinence associated dermatitis (IAD) is a condition that commonly affects users of absorbent continence products, it may develop anywhere in the pad area, but is mainly seen in the groins and buttocks. Establishing aetiology in the buttocks can be complicated as these areas are subject to pressure forces as well as moisture and it is likely that skin damage in this area could be multi-causational. Studies reporting on the prevalence rate of IAD give varied results (33-94%) (1,2), depending on the definition of dermatitis and the method used for data collection. The lack of a commonly used, validated outcome measure makes it difficult to compare across studies. This study aimed to develop and pilot two methods for monitoring skin health suitable for use in intervention trials.

Study design, materials and methods
All participants were currently taking part in a large randomised multiple crossover trial of four designs of continence products in 10 nursing homes. Two methods of measuring skin health were used, a) carer-observed at every pad change b) researcher-observed at two-weekly intervals. Method A: carers noted at every pad change the presence/absence of a skin problem and where applicable, the severity (none, mild, moderate, severe). Method B: researcher-observation of the participants’ skin fortnightly over an 8 week period (4 observations) using a form to note the location, type, size, and severity of any skin problems. This was based on two scores reported in the literature which had been used in a previous study by the authors.

Results
Data for method A are available from 109 participants (10,928 pad changes) of whom a subset of 78 also have data from method B. Participants had a mean age of 82 years and approximately 75% were female. Over 60% were categorised as highly dependent using the Barthel score and more than half were classed as very high or high risk by the Braden scale. There were no significant differences in participant characteristics between the main group and the subset.

Method A
Interpretation of results
Data from method A revealed that at around 10% of pad changes skin problems were recorded. Eighty-six percent of participants had at least one skin problem recorded during the 8 week period and that 64% had a maximum severity of moderate or severe. Method B showed that 96% had at least one skin problem recorded during the 8 week period and that 64% had a maximum severity of moderate or severe. Whilst 12% of skin problems were recorded with only 1% having a problem on all four observations, there was little evidence of rashes, vesicles and other signs of dermatitis commonly seen in IAD tools.

Concluding message
Skin problems were common in this sample of incontinent nursing home residents. Although there was little evidence of rashes, vesicles and other signs of dermatitis commonly seen in IAD tools, it is important to continue monitoring skin health across the population of incontinent nursing home residents. Further work is needed to establish the aetiology of skin problems seen in this group of patients.

References
2. J Am geriatric society 45 10 1182-8
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specify Name of Ethics Committee</th>
<th>North London MREC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Was the Declaration of Helsinki followed?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was informed consent obtained from the patients?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>