

A model for streamlining Cochrane Review production: Year one of an NIHR programme grant

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Background

To meet Goal 1 of Cochrane's Strategy to 2020, review groups must identify the most relevant reviews for production, and find and support dedicated and skilled authors to complete them to a high standard and in a timely manner.

Author teams often have multiple commitments and sometimes take longer to prepare their protocol and full review than is agreed at title registration. We have used our model for an NIHR programme grant with one full time Cochrane Systematic Reviewer and another Systematic Reviewer funded for one day per week to identify common delays and show how we streamline review production.

Objective

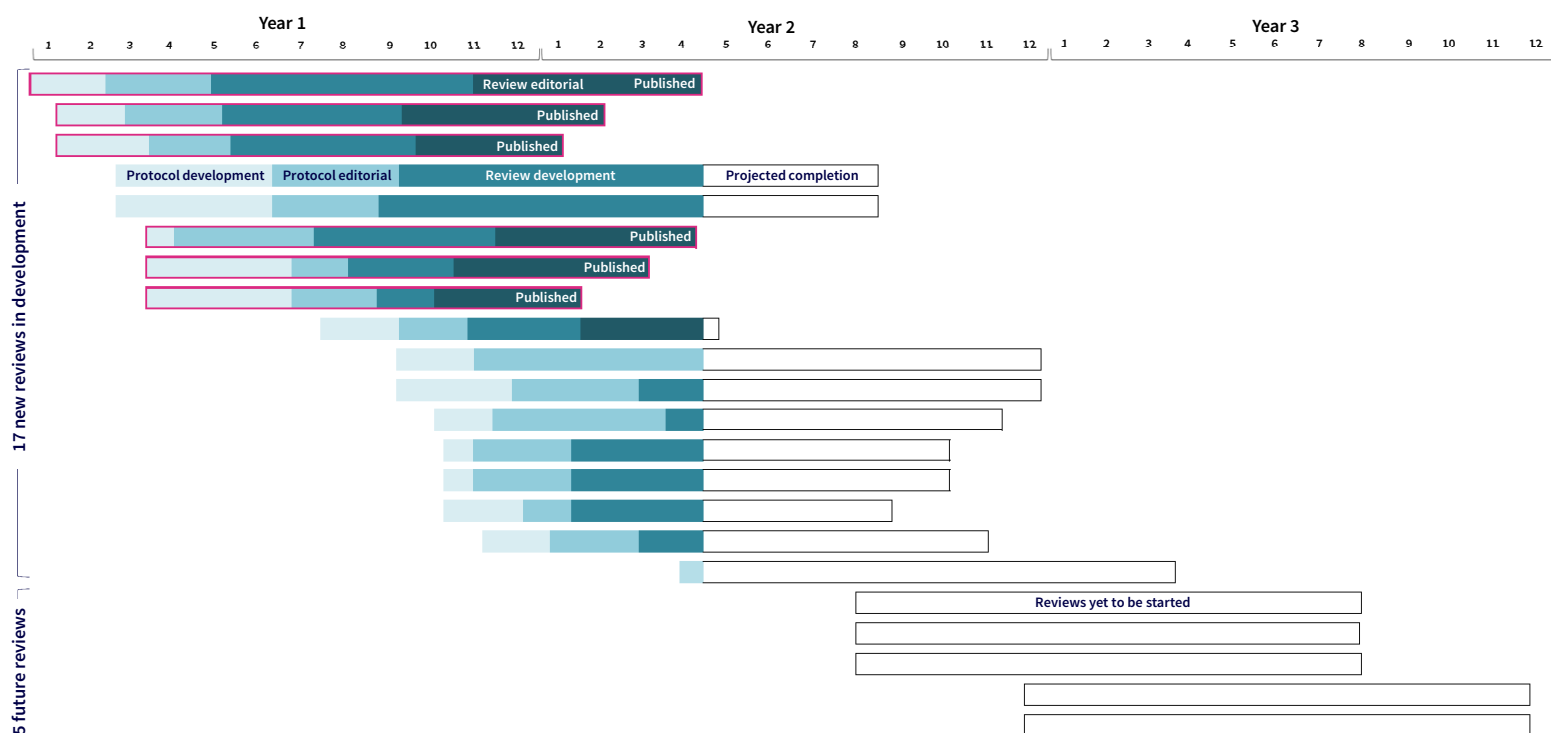
To analyse time taken to reach key review milestones in the first year of an NIHR programme grant, and identify common factors that speed up or delay review production.

Methods

The sample consisted of all new programme grant reviews in progress from May 2014 to August 2015 (n=17). We developed a Gantt chart to track review progress and analysed the median time taken from title registration to protocol submission, protocol submission to protocol publication, protocol publication to review submission, and review submission to review publication. We compared our results to recent data published by the Cochrane Editorial Unit (CEU).

Results and conclusion

Median protocol and review editorial times were 74% and 63% shorter than times published by the CEU. Protocols spent 10.3 weeks in editorial (IQR 8.4 to 13.0) compared with 39 weeks (IQR 29 to 47) and reviews spent 18.3 weeks in editorial (IQR 15.3 to 20.6) compared with 50 weeks (IQR 36 to 64). Medians for total production time and time spent in development are also shown below, but we are not aware of any Cochrane-wide data with which to compare these. Factors that commonly sped up or slowed down reviews are listed at the bottom left of the poster.



6 completed reviews took a median **54.4 weeks** from title registration to publication

Protocol and review editorial times were **reduced by 74% and 63%***

16 protocols took a median **8 weeks** to prepare and submit after registration

From submission, it took a median **10.3 weeks** to edit and publish protocols

7 submitted reviews took a median **18.9 weeks** to draft after protocol publication

Once submitted, it took a median **18.3 weeks** to edit and publish reviews

*Compared with data for median times spent in editorial published by the Cochrane Editorial Unit

- Speeds up**
- Full-time reviewer leading review in-house
 - Co-authors with dedicated research time
 - Familiarity with the editorial process
 - Related reviews produced in parallel
 - Short monthly meetings and shared Gantt chart

- Slows down**
- External co-authors' lack of time
 - Delay in trial author/company replies
 - Missing licence for publication forms
 - Copy-editing backlog
 - Dissemination embargos