Reviewer’s report

Title: Maximising the impact of qualitative research in feasibility studies for randomised controlled trials: guidance for researchers

Version: Date: 8 May 2015

Reviewer: Bridie Evans

Reviewer’s report:

This is a well written paper which clearly presents and justifies its arguments.

Compulsory revision

My main comment relates to the observations concerning public and patient involvement in research teams undertaking feasibility studies. Section 2d (p15-16) is useful and necessary since the team correctly observes that there are examples of confusion between qualitative research and public involvement. I suggest this section could be expanded a little. Could the authors provide a fuller description of the involvement role, referencing how this is defined (INVOLVE’s definition of active involvement) and noting some published guidance about the public and patient involvement in trials (e.g. Evans et al. Trials 2013, 14:219; INVOLVE (2012) Public involvement in clinical trials). The final sentence of para 1, p16, needs clarifying to clearly distinguish between public involvement and qualitative research.

The role of public members and patients in research teams can also be noted at other points in the paper concerning decisions about intervention design, data collection, interpretation of findings etc. For example, p12, line 2, trial designers will include patients, public members and also stakeholders from clinical/practitioner/policy perspectives (as relevant) in the collaboration; p14, para 1, patients and public members of a trial team could contribute to discussions about best data collection methods to gain a range of participant perspectives; In this way, opportunities presented by public and patient involvement in trial teams during feasibility studies would be better integrated into the whole content of this paper.

Discretionary revision

Section 4: reporting. Could the authors consider the COREQ guidelines for reporting qualitative data in their observations about reporting.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.
Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.