Defining a question and eligibility criteria

Complete the following table, describing in detail all the elements you would like to explore within your review. Consider the prompt questions on the following page to help you. When you have finished, consider which of the elements you have listed will form your eligibility criteria to include/exclude studies from your review.

Population	
Intervention(s) and comparison(s)	
Outcomes	
Study design(s)	

Prompt questions to develop your eligibility criteria

Population	• How is the disease/condition defined? • What are the most important characteristics that describe these people (participants)? • Are there any relevant demographic factors (e.g. age, sex, ethnicity)? • What is the setting (e.g. hospital, community, etc)? • Who should make the diagnosis? • Are there other types of people who should be excluded from the review (because they are likely to react to the intervention in a different way)? • How will studies involving only a subset of relevant participants be handled?
Intervention(s) and comparison(s)	• What are the experimental and control (comparator) interventions of interest? • Does the intervention have variations (e.g. dosage/intensity, mode of delivery, personnel who deliver it, frequency, duration or timing of delivery)? • Are all variations to be included (for example, is there a dose below which the intervention may not be clinically appropriate, will all providers be included)? • Will studies including only part of the intervention be included? • Will studies including the intervention of interest combined with another intervention (co-intervention) be included? • Have the different meanings of phrases such as 'control', 'placebo', 'no intervention' or 'usual care' been considered?
Outcomes	• Consider outcomes relevant to all potential decision makers. • Critical outcomes are those that are essential for decision making, and should usually have an emphasis on patient-important outcomes and be determined by core outcomes sets. • Additional outcomes important to decision makers may also be included in the review. Any outcomes not considered important to decision makers should be excluded from the review. • Up to seven critical and important outcomes should be selected for inclusion in summary versions of the review, including 'Summary of findings' tables, Abstracts and Plain Language Summaries. Remember that summaries may be read alone, and should include the most important outcomes for decision makers. • Ensure that outcomes cover potential as well as actual adverse effects.
Study design(s)	• Most Cochrane reviews include randomised controlled trials as the most appropriate design to answer questions about the effects of interventions. Do you plan to include other study designs (e.g. quasi-randomised studies, non-randomised studies)? • If so, which designs will you include, and what is your rationale?

Based on McKenzie JE, Brennan SE, Ryan RE, Thomson HJ, Johnston RV, Thomas J. Chapter 3: Defining the criteria for including studies and how they will be grouped for the synthesis. In: Higgins JPT, Thomas J, Chandler J, Cumpston M, Li T, Page MJ, Welch VA (editors). *Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions* version 6.3 (updated February 2022). Cochrane, 2022. Available from www.training.cochrane.org/handbook.