SPCR Masterclass:
Designing Inclusive and Accessible Research

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Learning Objectives

Understand	Identify	Apply	Adapt
Understand why inclusive research recruitment matters.	Identify common barriers in research recruitment and participation for autistic people.	Apply practical guidelines for inclusive research materials (adverts, participant information sheets, consent).	Adapt communication and research processes to improve accessibility and trust.

Session structure

1. Barriers to research participation
2. How we developed the guidance
3. General design principles
4. Recruitment materials
5. Communication practices
6. Key takeaways

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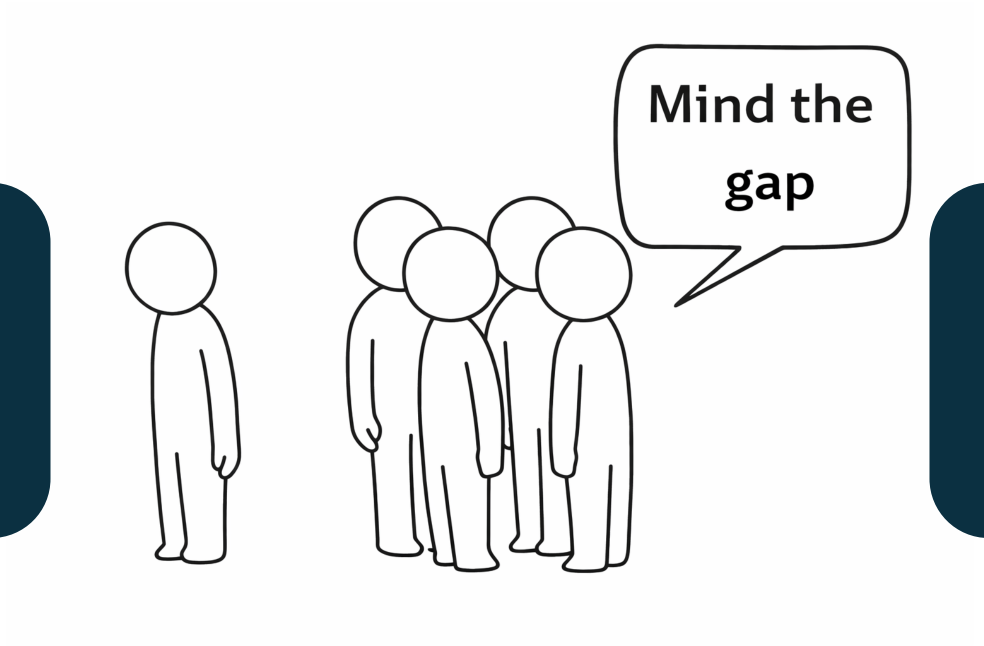
What happens when up to 20% of the population are excluded from health research?

Unsuitable treatments, pathways and services



Poorer health and shorter life span

Widens health inequalities

Challenges for autistic people participating in research

Communication differences

Societal stigma and misconceptions about autism

Reliance on written information

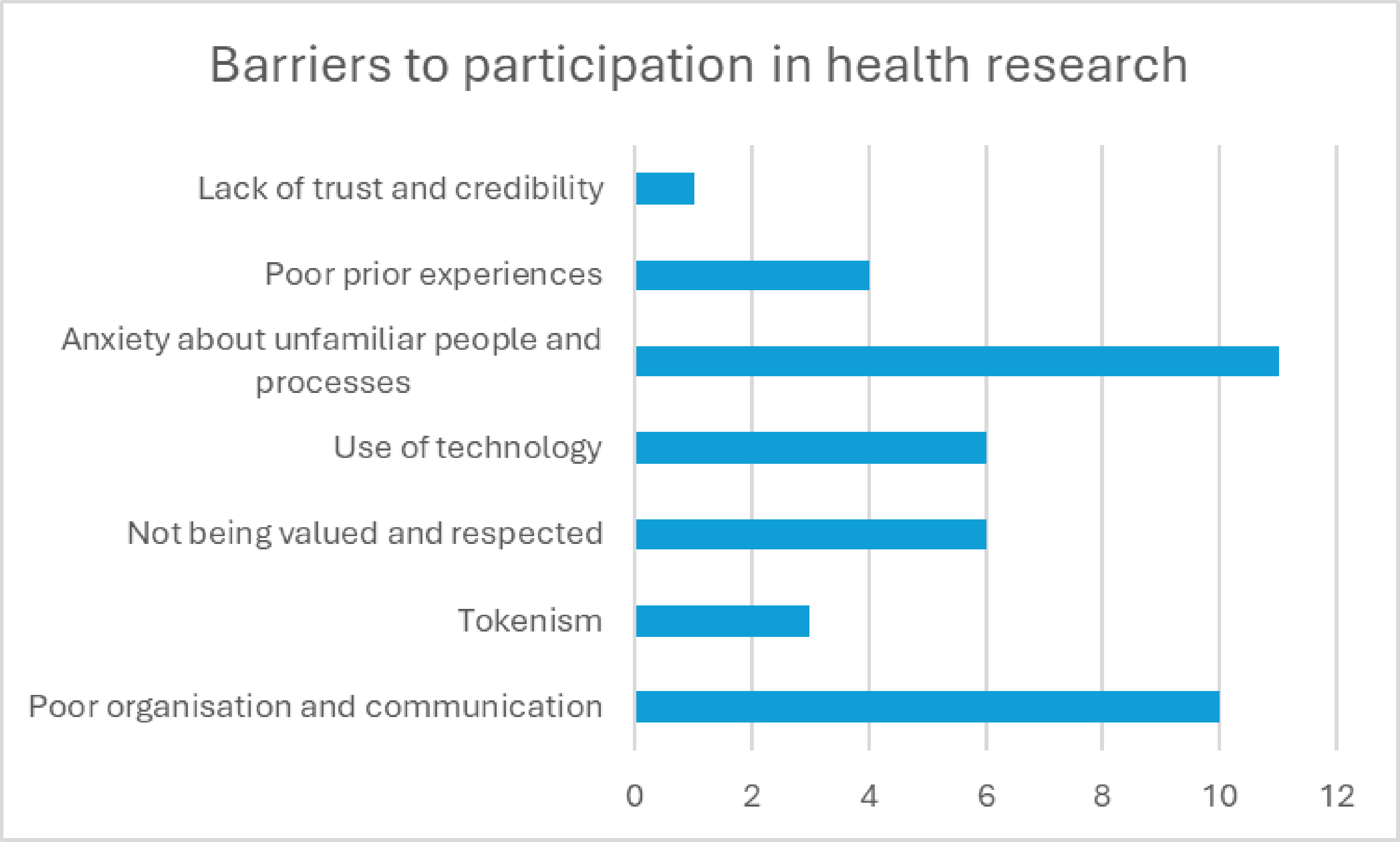
Complex processes

Rigid schedules and protocols

Barriers to research for Autistic individuals

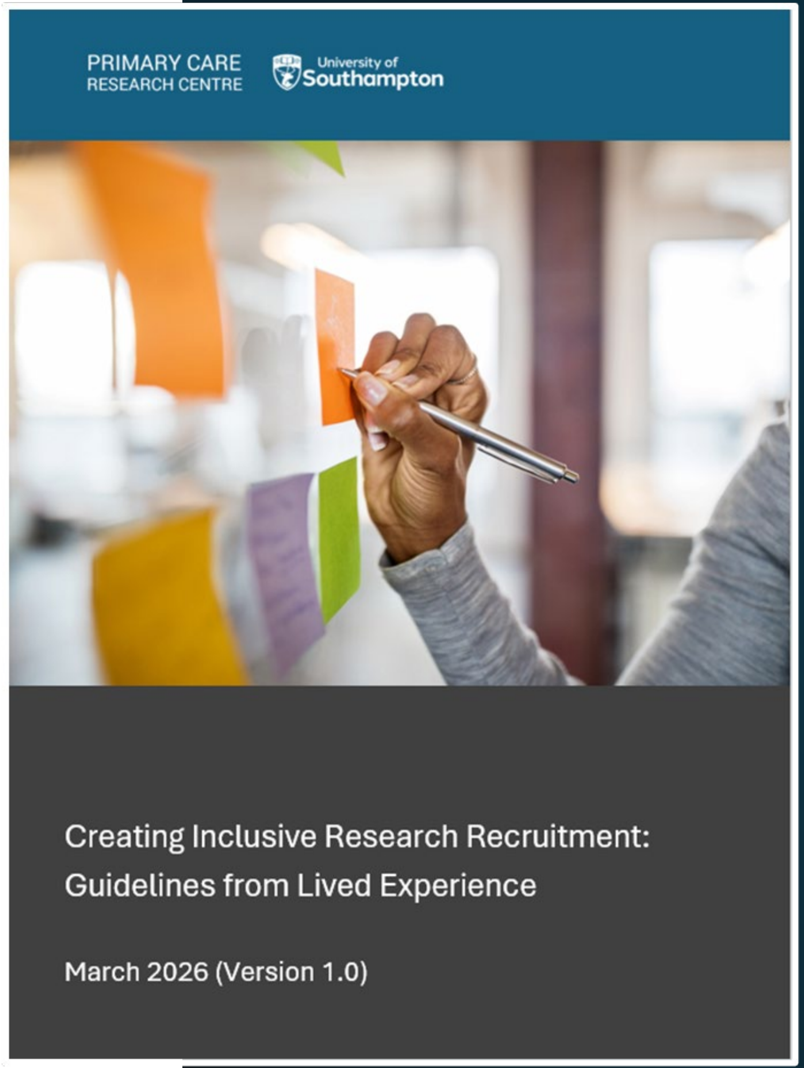
What do you think the biggest barriers are for autistic individuals to participate in research?

Feedback from our community group



Aim of the Guidelines

To ensure research recruitment processes are clear, accessible, and inclusive so autistic people are not unintentionally excluded from health research.



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Creating Inclusive Research Recruitment:
Guidelines from Lived Experience

March 2026 (Version 1.0)

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How we developed the guidelines

10 Listening Cafés with autistic adults

- Open, informal discussions in a safe environment

5 online with a group of 6 people recruited through local networks

5 in a community group of 30 people run by the National Autistic Society

Introductory sessions to establish co-production activities

Listening Café activities: Online

- Worked on 1 document each session
- Sent out 1 week before with suggested areas for feedback
- Feedback in discussion during session, including comments, or email

Listening Café activities: Community group

- Existing social group
- Included people who also had other types of neurodivergent conditions and learning disabilities
- Varied communication and processing styles

Listening Café activities: Community Group

- This or that?
- Health card game (Holt et al., 2026)
- Yes/no/maybe cards
- Ideas tree

Listening Café activities: Community Group

Example Scenarios:

Tom is 56 years old and has recently seen his doctor about his cough.

His doctor gave him antibiotics.

He saw an advert from the University of Southampton asking to interview people about taking antibiotics for infections.

Tom contacted the researcher and was sent a "participant information sheet" by email.

We will now look at sections of the information sheet and talk about what information Tom might need to help him decide whether to take part.

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Written information

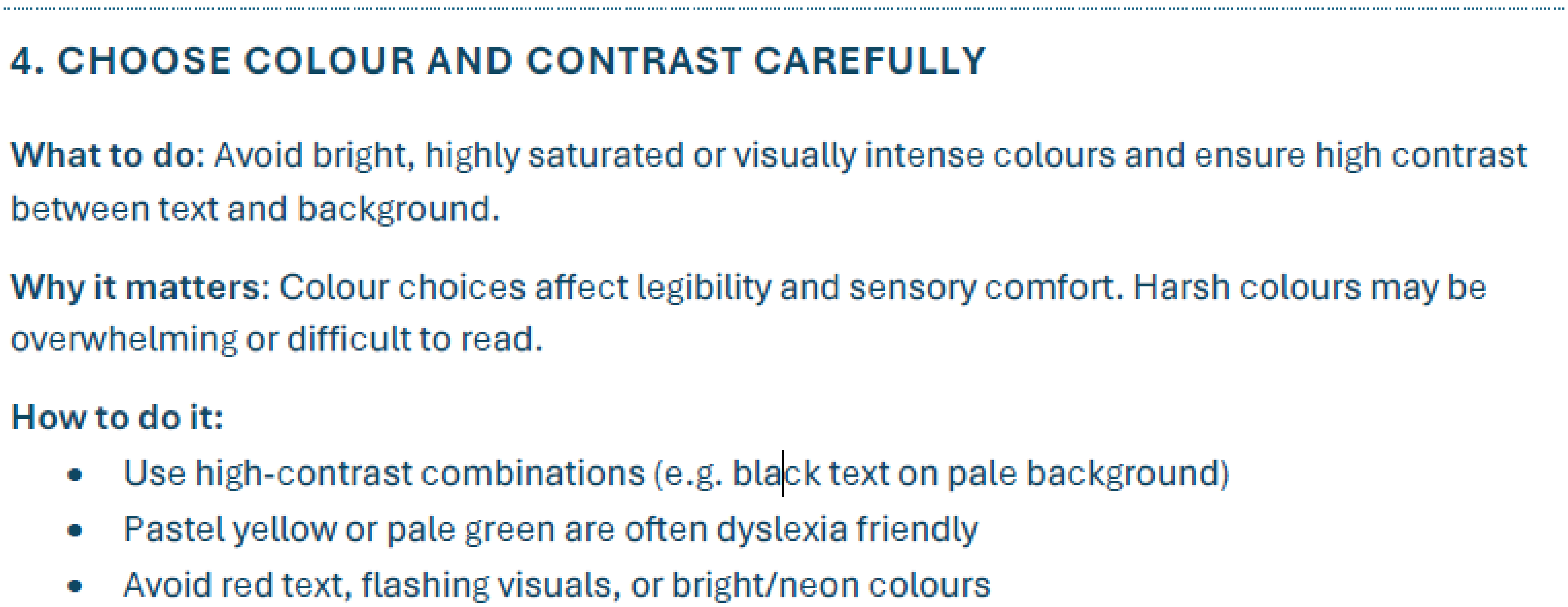
PLAIN ENGLISH

BREAK UP TEXT

FONTS AND FORMATTING

COLOUR AND CONTRAST

Example from the guidelines



4. CHOOSE COLOUR AND CONTRAST CAREFULLY

What to do: Avoid bright, highly saturated or visually intense colours and ensure high contrast between text and background.

Why it matters: Colour choices affect legibility and sensory comfort. Harsh colours may be overwhelming or difficult to read.

How to do it:

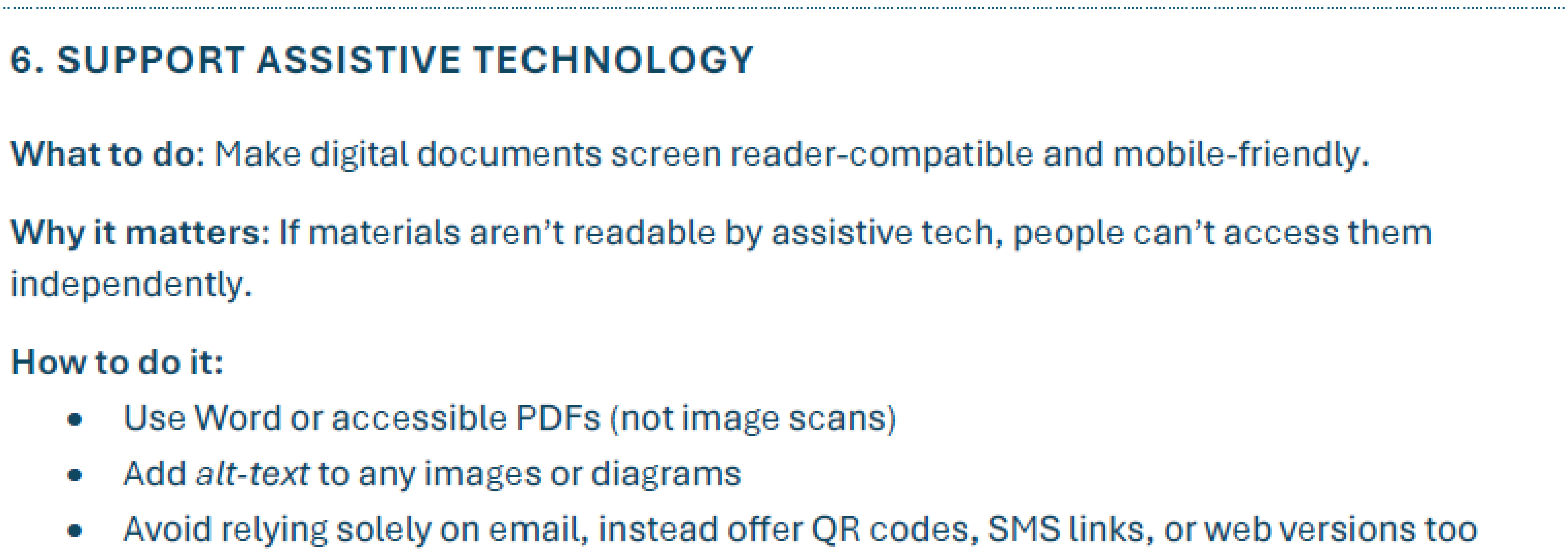
- Use high-contrast combinations (e.g. black text on pale background)
- Pastel yellow or pale green are often dyslexia friendly
- Avoid red text, flashing visuals, or bright/neon colours

Accessible options

Multiple formats

Assistive technology

Example from the guidelines



6. SUPPORT ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

What to do: Make digital documents screen reader-compatible and mobile-friendly.

Why it matters: If materials aren't readable by assistive tech, people can't access them independently.

How to do it:

- Use Word or accessible PDFs (not image scans)
- Add *alt-text* to any images or diagrams
- Avoid relying solely on email, instead offer QR codes, SMS links, or web versions too

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Adverts

Help improve information about antibiotics

We want to make information for patients about antibiotics clearer and more useful.

We'd like to hear your experiences of being prescribed antibiotics (or wanting them) for common infections.

Who can take part?

- **Adults** (18+) or **parents/carers of children**
- Who have been **prescribed antibiotics, or wanted them**
- For **infections** (cold, flu, cough, ear, eye, sinuses, skin)

We welcome **anybody and everybody.** Reasonable adjustments can be made so everyone can take part.

What's involved?

- **30-45 minute chat** by phone or online (Teams, Zoom)
- Talk about your experiences and what information would help patients
- Conversations will be friendly, respectful, and flexible

What will you get?

- **£15 shopping voucher**
- Your views will help improve patient care and advice

Interested? You can either:

- Scan the **QR code**
- **Email:** Sascha Miller at the University of Southampton: stopamr@soton.ac.uk
- **Phone**: 023 8059 0715 (Mon–Fri, 9am–5pm). If I'm not available, please leave a message and I'll call you back.

This study is run by researchers at the **University of Southampton**, funded by the **National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR)**. IRAS number 316695

Please get in touch **before 25th October 2025.**

University of Southampton

Explain what the study is about and why it matters

Describe what they will be asked to do – bullet points and short sentences

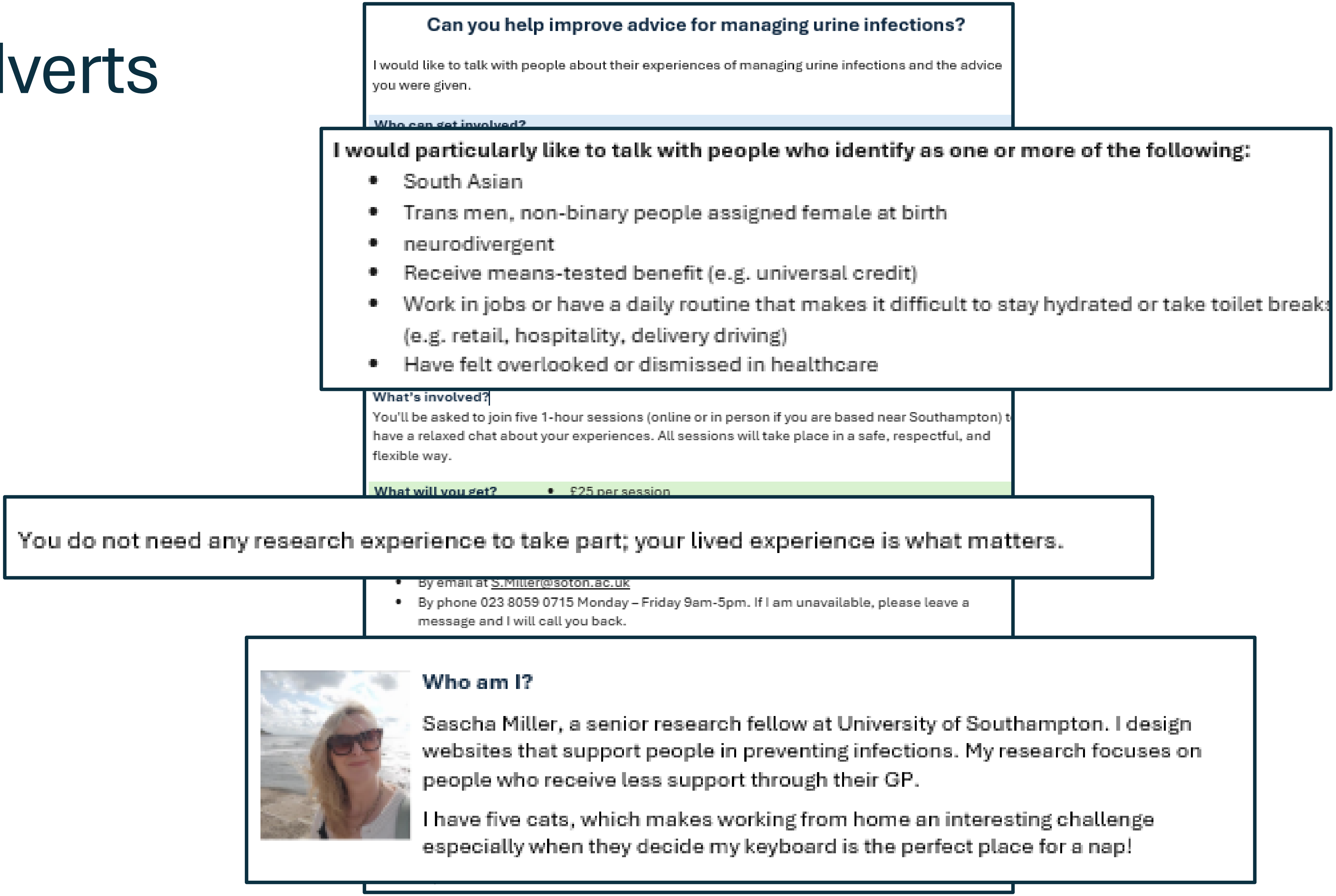
Explain what happens next. Give multiple contact options

Explain who is running it

Be explicitly welcoming

Add website link and/or QR code

Adverts



Can you help improve advice for managing urine infections?

I would like to talk with people about their experiences of managing urine infections and the advice you were given.

Who can get involved?

I would particularly like to talk with people who identify as one or more of the following:

- South Asian
- Trans men, non-binary people assigned female at birth
- neurodivergent
- Receive means-tested benefit (e.g. universal credit)
- Work in jobs or have a daily routine that makes it difficult to stay hydrated or take toilet breaks (e.g. retail, hospitality, delivery driving)
- Have felt overlooked or dismissed in healthcare

What's involved?

You'll be asked to join five 1-hour sessions (online or in person if you are based near Southampton) t have a relaxed chat about your experiences. All sessions will take place in a safe, respectful, and flexible way.

What will you get?
- £25 per session

You do not need any research experience to take part; your lived experience is what matters.

- By email at S.Miller@soton.ac.uk
- By phone 023 8059 0715 Monday – Friday 9am-5pm. If I am unavailable, please leave a message and I will call you back.

Who am I?

Sascha Miller, a senior research fellow at University of Southampton. I design websites that support people in preventing infections. My research focuses on people who receive less support through their GP.

I have five cats, which makes working from home an interesting challenge especially when they decide my keyboard is the perfect place for a nap!

Information sheets

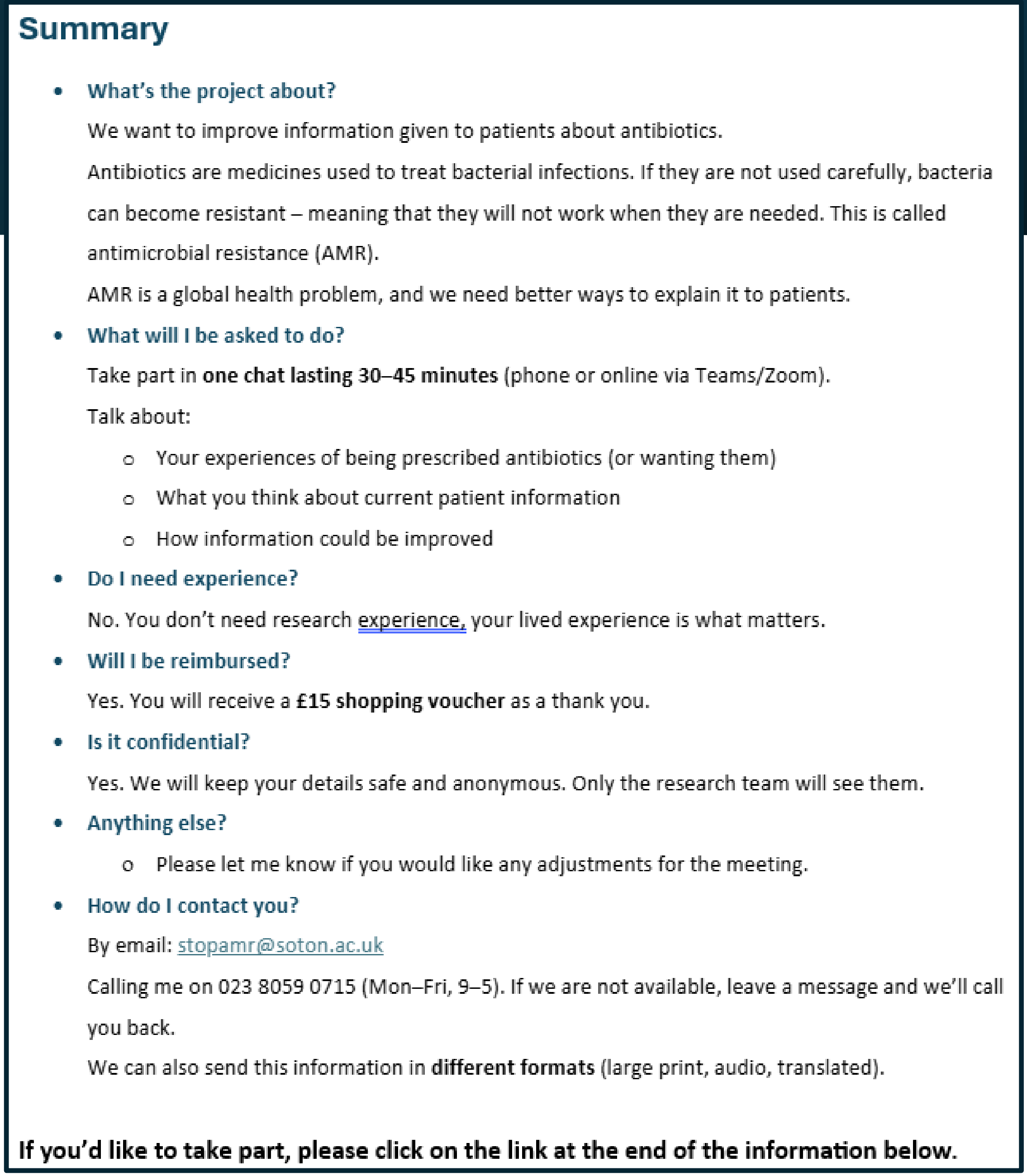
START WITH A SUMMARY SECTION

What to do: Include a brief summary at the top of the leaflet or on the front page.

Why it matters: Many people don't read the full leaflet unless the opening feels clear and manageable. A summary helps people decide quickly whether the study might be relevant to them.

How to do it:

- Use a box or bullet list
- Include:
  - What the research is about and what it involves
  - Who can take part
  - Time commitment
  - What happens next



Summary

- **What's the project about?**

  We want to improve information given to patients about antibiotics.

  Antibiotics are medicines used to treat bacterial infections. If they are not used carefully, bacteria can become resistant – meaning that they will not work when they are needed. This is called antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

  AMR is a global health problem, and we need better ways to explain it to patients.
- **What will I be asked to do?**

  Take part in **one chat lasting 30–45 minutes** (phone or online via Teams/Zoom).

  Talk about:
  - Your experiences of being prescribed antibiotics (or wanting them)
  - What you think about current patient information
  - How information could be improved
- **Do I need experience?**

  No. You don't need research experience, your lived experience is what matters.
- **Will I be reimbursed?**

  Yes. You will receive a **£15 shopping voucher** as a thank you.
- **Is it confidential?**

  Yes. We will keep your details safe and anonymous. Only the research team will see them.
- **Anything else?**
  - Please let me know if you would like any adjustments for the meeting.
- **How do I contact you?**

  By email: stopamr@soton.ac.uk

  Calling me on 023 8059 0715 (Mon–Fri, 9–5). If we are not available, leave a message and we'll call you back.

  We can also send this information in **different formats** (large print, audio, translated).

If you'd like to take part, please click on the link at the end of the information below.

Information sheets - more examples

Expectations

- Clarify expectations – say exactly what’s involved in participation
  - Ambiguity creates anxiety

Preview

- Offer preview of participation – include example interview questions
  - Knowing what will be asked reduces anxiety and is likely to improve quality of responses

Consent

- Explain what someone should do if they want to take part and what giving consent means
  - Unclear instructions causes people to drop out. People want to know how to formally “join” the study

Receiving consent - examples

USE SHORT, CLEAR CONSENT STATEMENTS

What to do: Break consent into single, clearly worded statements, each with its own tick box.

Why it matters: Contributors told us that long, complex sentences were hard to process and made them unsure what they were agreeing to.

How to do it:

- One statement per line
- Examples:
  - I understand what the study is about
  - I know what I’m being asked to do
  - I know how my data will be used

Receiving consent - examples

ALLOW PARTICIPANTS TO CHOOSE WHICH ELEMENTS THEY CONSENT TO

What to do: Use a flexible consent structure that allows participants to opt in to different parts of the study.

Why it matters: People may want to contribute in some ways but not others, for example, participating in an interview but not having their data reused.

How to do it:

- Include multiple optional items:
    - I consent to my interview being audio recorded
    - I consent to anonymous quotes being used in publications
    - I consent to my data being used in future related studies
- Make it clear that people can say no to some items and still take part

Challenges

Content: comprehensive vs cognitive overload

PPI co-design recruitment materials

NHS ethics standardised formats

Citing guidelines may help over time!

Designing inclusive recruitment materials

What do you see as the main problems with implementing these design features in your research?

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Communication practices

Clear communication

Instructions in advance

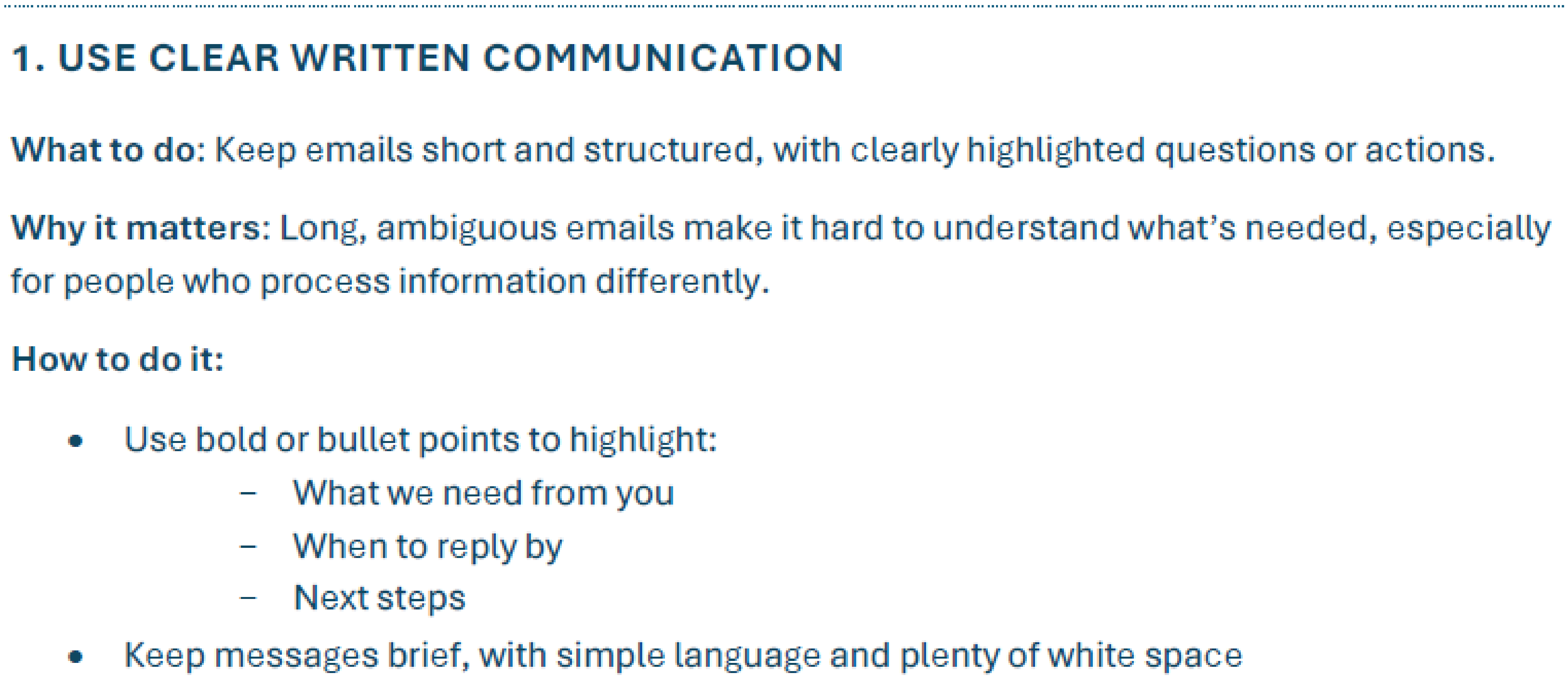
Set expectations

Reminders

Flexible feedback options

Accessible summaries

Example from the guidance



1. USE CLEAR WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

What to do: Keep emails short and structured, with clearly highlighted questions or actions.

Why it matters: Long, ambiguous emails make it hard to understand what's needed, especially for people who process information differently.

How to do it:

- Use bold or bullet points to highlight:
    - What we need from you
    - When to reply by
    - Next steps
- Keep messages brief, with simple language and plenty of white space

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Key takeaways

Guidelines provide full details of all feedback for recruitment materials

Most of the changes are likely to be helpful for other underserved communities

Already seeing anecdotal evidence

Next stage is to gain evidence

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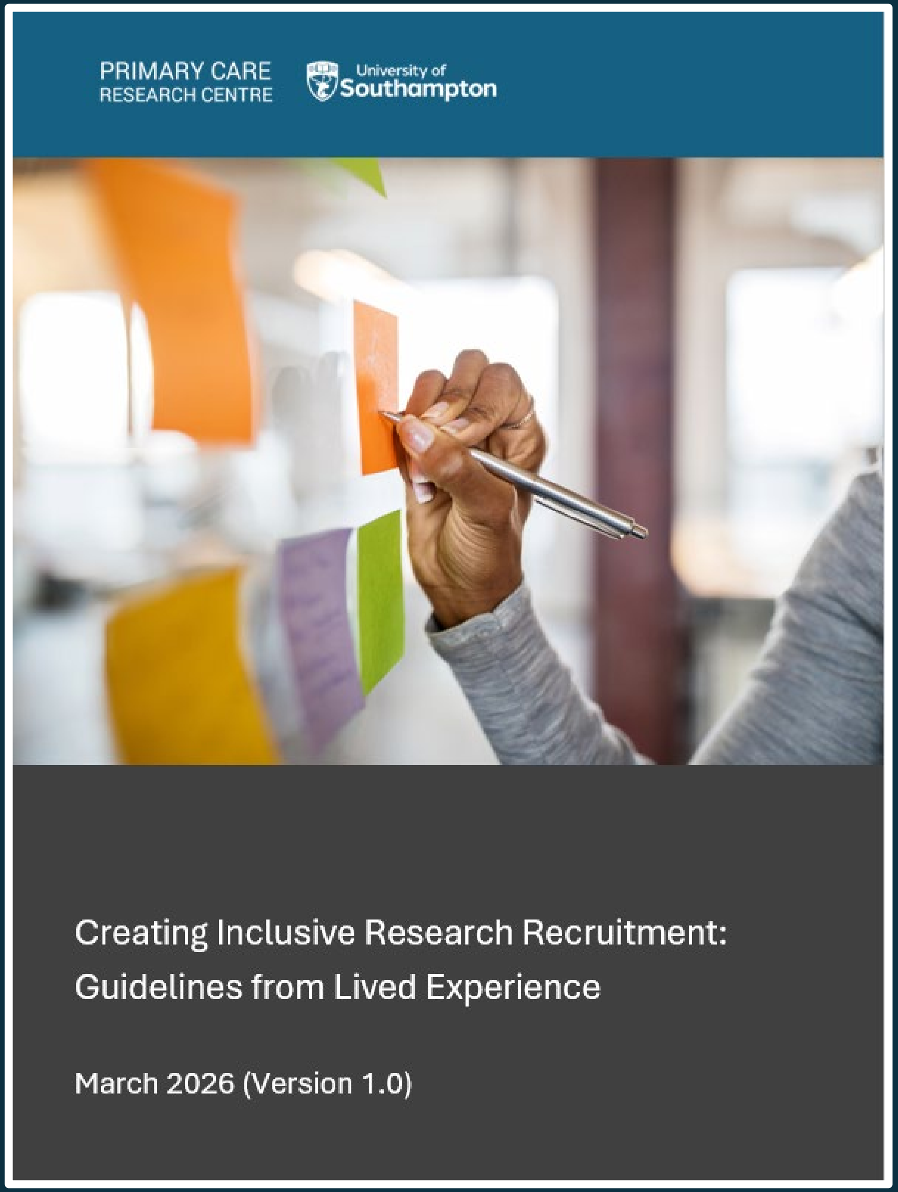

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