



## Southampton Clinical Trials Unit

# Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy: 2026-2030



# CONTENTS



Introduction .....	3
Our Vision .....	4
Our Commitment to EDI .....	4
Legal and funder requirements for inclusive research .....	5
Timescale .....	6
Our Progress .....	6
Key Priorities and Action Plan for 2026-2030 .....	7
Priority 1: Developing Knowledge .....	7
Priority 2: Improving Access .....	8
Priority 3: Ensuring Accessibility .....	9
Priority 4: Providing Support .....	10
Priority 5: Measuring Success .....	10
Appendices .....	12



# INTRODUCTION

The Southampton Clinical Trials Unit (SCTU) is a UKCRC registered and Cancer Research UK (CRUK) core funded CTU with expertise in the design, conduct and analysis of multicentre interventional clinical trials. We work in partnership with investigators to deliver high quality trials that will directly influence routine clinical practice ([SCTU website](#)).

The UK population is made up of a wide range of communities, groups, and individuals from different backgrounds. The results of clinical trials and other well-designed studies conducted by SCTU need to be generalisable and so there is a need to try and ensure the participants of our studies reflect the UK population. We also need to support our staff and the investigators we work with by providing an inclusive research environment.

In setting out our EDI strategy for 2026-2030, we have looked back at the objectives outlined in our 2022-2026 strategy and reflected on what has already been achieved and where we need to focus our resources. We have also listened to our staff and our public contributors' views on how we work as a unit in this area.

This strategy builds on our progress and looks to strengthen our commitment to inclusion across the SCTU.

Many of our key objectives from the previous strategy period have been successfully met and now form the basis of our future vision for inclusive health research. But we acknowledge that reducing health inequalities is an ongoing process where much work still needs to be done across the whole health sector, and we recognise the responsibility we all have to ensure that this progress continues. As a unit, we are committed to continued engagement with our patients, staff, local communities and collaborators to achieve these aims.



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## OUR VISION

**Working together to provide inclusive clinical research for everyone:** through improved practices, training, data collection, trial methodology and engagement, and monitoring progress to evaluate impact.

## OUR COMMITMENT TO EDI

The Southampton Clinical Trials Unit is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion in everything we do, and to making health research inclusive to all.

We will work to provide equal opportunities to our staff, collaborators, trial participants/patients, and public members. We will drive change to ensure that we are protecting against discrimination, ensuring that everyone feels valued, and embedding EDI values of equity and accessibility in our governance, practice and behaviours.

### Equality

Ensuring we contribute to a fairer society where no one faces discrimination, and everyone is treated with dignity and respect. Providing equal opportunities and working to remove barriers to facilities, resources and access to ensure equity for everyone involved in health research.

### Diversity

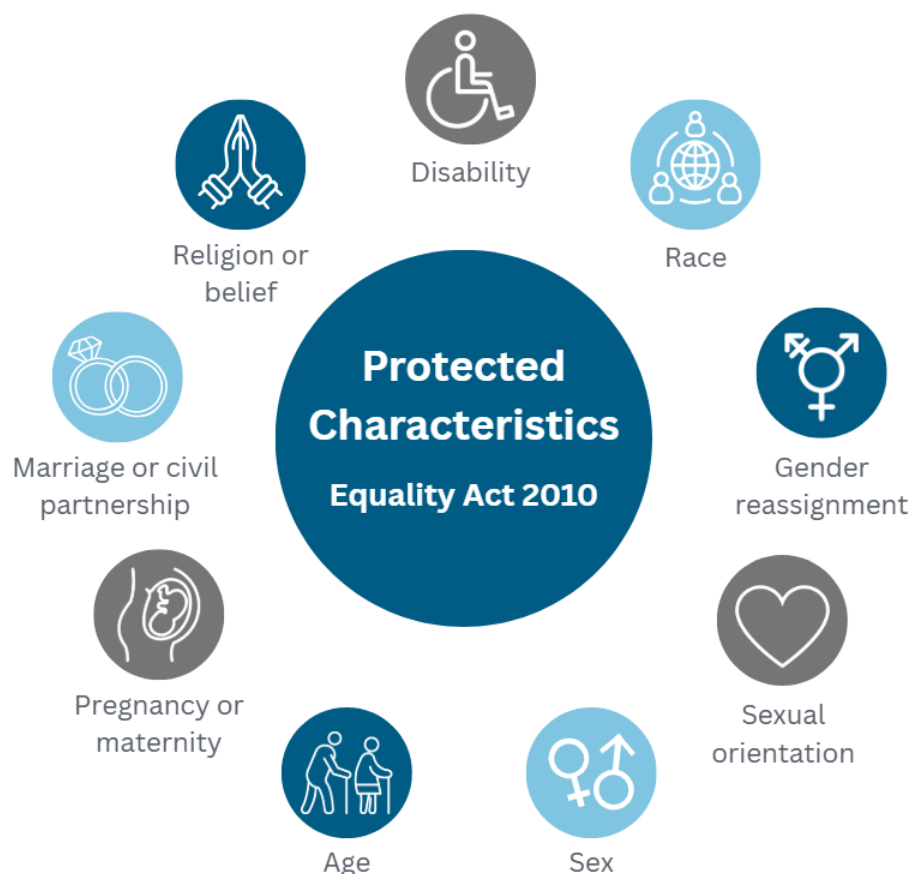
Recognising the diverse experiences, skills and abilities that people from different communities and demographics bring to health research – both those conducting the research and those participating in it. Understanding the barriers some people face in accessing research and healthcare settings and working as an organisation to overcome these.

### Inclusion

Creating a culture where everyone feels they belong, and that their opinions, experiences and contributions are valued. Ensuring accessibility for all and driving forward change to make our organisation and practices truly inclusive.

## LEGAL AND FUNDER REQUIREMENTS

The [Equality Act \(2010\)](#) states that all organisations, including those in health and social care, must take steps to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity for people in protected characteristics groups.



As an organisation working alongside NHS and healthcare organisations to run clinical trials, our aim is to help facilitate equitable access to health research through our processes and actions.

Our funders, including Cancer Research UK (CRUK) and the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), require our research to demonstrate inclusivity and innovation in EDI practices. We are committed to working with our investigators, research teams, collaborators and patient and public members to improve inclusivity and accessibility in the design, recruitment, conduct and dissemination of our trials. We also work closely with our host institutions and main trial sponsors, the University of Southampton (UoS) and University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust (UHS), to ensure that our strategies for inclusive research and working practices are aligned.

## TIMESCALE

This document sets out our EDI strategy from April 2026 to April 2030, outlining our key priorities and action plan for the strategy period. This strategy will be reviewed regularly to ensure we are meeting our goals, updating them and rescrutinising where needed.

## OUR PROGRESS

We have assessed our progress against the action plan set out in the 2022-26 strategy. Here we provide a summary of successful outcomes that are helping us achieve our vision for EDI at the SCTU. *(A full breakdown of our progress on our defined projects, initiatives and ways of working can be found in Appendix 1: 'End of Strategy report', page XX)*

- We successfully embedded our 2022-26 EDI strategy across the SCTU and have met the aims and objectives outlined for the strategy period. Where work is ongoing and projects are continuing, this has been reflected in the new strategy for 2026-30.
- We have established the SCTU Methodology EDI Working Group which reviews the EDI needs and priorities for the unit, implements recommendations, coordinates EDI projects, looks at future areas of work, and identifies funding for EDI research.
- Several members of the SCTU team represent the unit on national and regional EDI committees and working groups (including those run by CRUK, UKCRC and NIHR), feeding into the national agenda for EDI in research and sharing project outcomes and best practice.
- SCTU staff receive mandatory EDI training through the University and wider SCTU training (e.g., PPIE training) and we use all-staff meetings and Lunch and Learn sessions to update staff on EDI requirement, projects, and recommendations.
- We have increased links with our local community and built relationships with underrepresented groups through our project work, events, and committees and group our staff are involved with.

- We have secured funding for several successful EDI methodology projects which have been conducted over the last strategy period and presented at meetings, conferences and have papers currently in write-up. These include:
  - Widening Participation in PPIE at Southampton Clinical Trials Unit - this led to the co-development and sharing of resources for researchers working with underrepresented communities.
  - Diversity in Clinical Trials (the ‘Safe Space’ project) – this has increased links with our local ethnic minority communities and led to the development of the Participant Information Sheet (PIS) EDI Framework and the ongoing co-production of the Safe Space website.
  - EQUATE - Barriers and facilitators to equitable participation and engagement in research using digital methods
  - Assessing the accuracy and acceptability of AI vs human translation of patient-facing clinical trial documentation.

*(see further links to these projects in Appendix 2: Links and Resources, page 18)*

- We continually monitor our trial and external communications to improve accessibility and inclusive language.

## KEY PRIORITIES AND ACTION PLAN FOR 2026-2030

The SCTU EDI Lead and Methodology EDI Working Group will use this action plan to set EDI objectives and share processes with staff

Key Priorities	Action Plan 2026-2030
<b>Priority 1: Developing knowledge</b>	
Staff training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to identify staff EDI training needs.</li> <li>• Identify and signpost external resources.</li> <li>• Aim for 10% of SCTU staff to have undertaken Cultural Competency training.</li> </ul>
Developing and providing resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with staff and trial teams to create and pilot new resources, e.g., the PIS EDI Framework.</li> <li>• Ensure staff are given the space to share resources developed through EDI initiatives.</li> <li>• Develop collaborations with other CTUs and researchers to work on jointly develop EDI resources, e.g. the DISCTINCT pilot.</li> </ul>

<p>Communications and sharing best practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing project outcomes, resources and best practice with SCTU staff through staff engagement, e.g., Lunch and Learns, all-staff meetings.</li> <li>• Sharing project outcomes, resources and best practice with stakeholders, funders and across the CTU network through the CRUK and UKCRC EDI Working Groups and wider CTU Director networks.</li> <li>• Sharing project outcomes and resources with EDI partners and contributors, e.g., community groups, VCSEs, EDI networks.</li> <li>• Present our EDI methodology research at conferences and in peer-reviewed publications, aiming for at least one EDI paper and one conference presentation/poster per year (e.g. Safe Space and AI Translation projects both due to be written up in Q4 2026 and submitted as abstracts for the International Clinical Trials Methodology Conference (ICTMC) in September 2026)</li> </ul>
<p>Methodology research into inclusive trial practices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify priority areas for EDI research projects and initiatives.</li> <li>• Identify funding streams and apply for grants for EDI/PPI project work (aim for one successfully funded EDI/PPI project per year.)</li> <li>• Report on EDI methodology research and projects to the SCTU Directors, funders and stakeholders, and at research conferences and in peer-reviewed publications.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Priority 2: Improving access:</b></p>	
<p>Reflecting the communities we represent</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with VCSEs, EDI networks, community partners to widen participation in our patient and public involvement and trial activities.</li> <li>• Working in partnership to build new relationships with communities and VCSEs.</li> <li>• Engage with communities that are underrepresented and disadvantaged in health research.</li> <li>• Work with researchers and patients to implement initiatives that make trial participation more diverse and inclusive.</li> </ul>
<p>Encouraging diversity in research applications and PPI</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewing all applications for SCTU support for appropriate measures to ensure inclusivity and accessibility for trial participants.</li> <li>• Working with investigators to make sure trial protocols, procedures and materials are inclusive and accessible.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carry out further EDI monitoring of our CIs and public contributors and compare to baseline metrics from 2022.</li> <li>• Ensuring no one is discriminated against for any reason to do with their demographics, background, sexuality or beliefs.</li> <li>• Implement reasonable adjustments for researchers, public contributors and trial participants where possible to enable full and inclusive participation.</li> <li>• Submit application to recruit an intern within the SCTU bioinformatics team through the Health Data Research UK Black Internship Programme</li> </ul>
Promoting a culture of inclusivity and equality in the SCTU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the values and actions of inclusivity and equality in the working environment at SCTU.</li> <li>• Promote UoS EDI initiatives, e.g., EDI staff groups and networks.</li> </ul>
<b>Priority 3: Ensuring accessibility:</b>	
Making SCTU communications accessible, inclusive and easy to understand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to review the SCTU website to ensure accessibility.</li> <li>• Improving the public-facing content of our trial pages as they are moved over to the new UoS website (2026/7).</li> <li>• Ensure accessibility of external communications, e.g., accessible document versions, subtitles on videos, alt text on images.</li> </ul>
Making patient-facing materials accessible, inclusive and easy to understand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement the PIS EDI Framework in more SCTU trials to improve accessibility for underrepresented communities.</li> <li>• Continue to review all patient-facing materials with public contributors for readability and accessibility.</li> <li>• Assess the impact of AI for translating trial documents through the funder AI Translation project and if successful oversee implementation in SCTU trials.</li> </ul>
Working to make our trials and public activities accessible and inclusive for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement reasonable adjustments where possible within trials to enable full and inclusive participation.</li> <li>• Design our trials and public engagement activities with accessibility in mind.</li> <li>• Ensure consistent data collection in our trials to monitor the demographics of trial participants and evaluate this to measure impact.</li> <li>• Identify public and community engagement events where we can increase our visibility and engagement with underrepresented communities.</li> </ul>

<b>Priority 4: Providing support:</b>	
Supporting trial participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing resources and materials that are suitable and accessible to all.</li> <li>• Where possible, implement reasonable adjustments for trial participants who need support due to protected or recognised characteristics.</li> </ul>
Supporting research staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with trial sites to make EDI a standard part of the recruitment process, e.g., through SIVs.</li> <li>• Providing research staff and trial sites with resources and support to help them make recruitment and trial processes as inclusive as possible.</li> <li>• Collect relevant demographic data for trial participants to allow us to monitor EDI as trials recruit and make adjustments where necessary.</li> </ul>
Supporting our SCTU staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure our staff have the tools and training to incorporate EDI in our day-to-day activities.</li> <li>• Ensure staff know how to access health and wellbeing support.</li> <li>• Prevent and report discrimination of any kind and support staff who have concerns.</li> <li>• Implement reasonable adjustments for staff members who need support due to protected or recognised characteristics.</li> </ul>
<b>Priority 5: Measuring success:</b>	
Monitoring our progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Methodology EDI Working Group will regularly review our progress against this EDI strategy (next formal full review in March 2028) and make adjustments and recommendations as needed.</li> <li>• Report to the SCTU Directors on our progress against our action plan.</li> <li>• Report to our funders on EDI projects and initiatives.</li> <li>• Aim for at least one EDI publication and one conference presentation/poster per year (e.g. Safe Space and AI Translation projects both due to be written up in Q4 2026 and submitted as abstracts for the International Clinical Trials Methodology Conference (ICTMC) in September 2026)</li> </ul>
Obtaining feedback on our processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gather feedback on EDI processes and projects through our CTU networks (CRUK EDI Working Group and UKCRC Research Inclusion Working Group)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to gather feedback from staff, collaborators, public contributors and trial participants on inclusion and accessibility.</li> </ul>
<p>Demonstrating leadership and accountability at all levels</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embedding of the EDI strategy and action plan into SCTU governance and with SCTU Director and Senior Management support.</li> <li>• SCTU leadership to continue to champion and be involved in EDI projects and initiatives, e.g., the Safe Space and AI Translation projects.</li> <li>• SCTU leadership to uphold the values of equality, inclusion and accessibility across our research portfolio and SCTU working environment.</li> </ul>

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1: EDI STRATEGY 2022-2026 - END OF STRATEGY REPORT, MARCH 2026

The below report sets out the outcomes of the previous strategy period (2022-2026) against the aims and objectives of that strategy.

Action from 2022-26 strategy	Successes and progress
<b>Year 1:</b> Launch and embed our EDI strategy and action plan to staff and stakeholders.	Successfully embedded the EDI strategy into our unit.
<b>Years 1-3:</b> Support the delivery of the strategy and review progress.	The strategy was reviewed in early 2025 to ensure it was still fit for purpose and that progress was being made against our objectives. Two surveys sent to staff and public contributors in early 2025 as part of our PPIE strategy also included feedback on EDI which has helped to inform the new EDI strategy going forwards.
<b>Year 1:</b> Establish regular meetings of the SCTU EDI working group and set objectives	The Methodology EDI Working Group meets fortnightly. This comprises of a core group including SCTU's Head of Methodology, Communications and Engagement Manager and EDI lead, and methodological Doctoral Research Fellow. Other staff are invited as required or for specific projects.

<p><b>Years 1-3:</b> Review any evolving needs and priorities of the EDI working group and implement recommendations</p>	<p>This group reviews the evolving needs and priorities of the SCTU’s EDI work, implements recommendations, coordinates EDI projects, looks at future areas of work, and identifies funding for EDI research.</p> <p>Members of this group represent SCTU on national EDI working groups, including the CRUK CTU EDI Working Group, the national and regional NIHR Research Support Service (RSS) EDI Groups, and the recently formed UKCRC Research Inclusion Thematic Working Group, where they feed into the national EDI agenda for research and healthcare. We also collaborate with our host organisations, UoS and UHS, and the regional NIHR infrastructure through our Directors and other senior staff, where EDI themes and projects are discussed and presented.</p>
<p><b>Years 1-3:</b> Establish a regular programme of EDI support and training for staff</p>	<p>We have held several staff training sessions to highlight current projects, research outcomes and new resources. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <a href="#">Widening Participation in PPI</a> resources were presented to all staff in the annual PPI mandatory training and are available on the SCTU website and shared folders.</li> <li>• The Methodology EDI Working Group presented the outcomes of phase one of the <a href="#">Diversity in Clinical Trials</a> (‘Safe Space’) project through which we are co-producing resources to increase and plans to implement the PIS EDI Framework to staff during a Lunch and Learn session.</li> <li>• Doctoral Fellow Cherish Boxall presented the <a href="#">EQUATE project</a> on digital inclusion during a Lunch and Learn session with resources for staff and at the SCTU Conference in March 2026.</li> <li>• Sharing successful EDI initiatives and projects through staff meetings, e.g. the PPI partnerships session at the SCTU Conference in March 2026.</li> </ul> <p>All SCTU staff are required to complete mandatory EDI training provided by UoS while EDI forms a major part of the units annual mandatory PPIE training. Staff are also encouraged to undertake further learning, e.g. attending EDI webinars and courses that are relevant to their roles.</p>

<p><b>Years 1-3:</b> Develop a calendar of EDI activities and events to help widen participation.</p> <p><b>Years 2-3:</b> Increase opportunities to network with others working in the EDI space, share best practice and collaborate.</p>	<p>Initiatives such as the Widening Participation and Safe Space projects have allowed staff to engage directly with local communities and build relationships with underserved groups.</p> <p>Staff have taken part in public engagement events such as the 2025 Southampton Mela (south Asian festival), the Universities Science and Engineering Day 2024, 2025 and 2026, the Raising Voices in Research Collaborative events in 2024-26, UoS Health and Wellbeing Hub events, and LifeLab which are all about bringing health research to a wider audience and encouraging communities to find out about trials.</p> <p>SCTU’s Communications and Engagement Manager and EDI lead sits on the CRUK EDI Working Group and is now Chair of the recently formed UKCRC Research Inclusion Thematic Working Group, both of which aim to share best practice in EDI and collaborate on cross-CTU projects to help staff embed inclusive research practices in trials.</p> <p>SCTU’s Head of Trial Management is part of the RSS national and regional EDI Groups.</p> <p>SCTU’s Communications and Engagement Manager and EDI lead co-chaired the EDI sessions at the 2025 CRUK CTU Conference where best practice and projects were shared and discussed.</p> <p>The Methodology EDI Working Group met with Leeds CTU in 2025 to discuss possible collaborations on community research projects. Discussions are ongoing.</p> <p>We have signed up to the CRUK-supported DISTINCT pilot, run by ICR and QMUL, to look at standardising demographic data collection in trials.</p>

	<p>SCTU’s Communications and Engagement Manager and EDI lead is part of the <a href="#">Raising Voices in Research Collaborative</a>, an initiative led by Action Hampshire and HIOW ICB to link communities and VCSEs with research and increase inclusive research practices.</p> <p>SCTU’s Communications and Engagement Manager and EDI lead is part of the UoS Health and Wellbeing Community Hub which organises networking events for local community groups, VSCEs and researchers.</p> <p>EDI was part of several presentations at the SCTU Conference in March 2026 (EQUATE flash talk by Cherish Boxall, PPIE ‘Creating Public Partnerships’ talk by Liz Allaway and community partners Anne Cato, PPIE MODERNISED talk by Hannah Warming and PPIE partners Irene Soulsby and Julie Hooper)</p>
<p><b>Year 1:</b> Apply for UoS Public Engagement with Research Unit seed funding for a community project around widening participation and diversity in trial PPI.</p> <p><b>Years 2-3:</b> Explore further funding to expand EDI project work.</p>	<p>PERU funding was successfully secured and the <a href="#">Widening Participation in PPI</a> project ran in 2022/2023 leading to the development of co-produced resources for researchers.</p> <p>Several more funding grants have been secured by members of The Methodology EDI Group, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2024-25: Research England funding for the <a href="#">Safe Space project to increase ethnic diversity in clinical trials</a>.</li> <li>• 2025-26: SCTU CRUK core funding for phase 2 of the Safe Space project, with collaborations from UHS and Wessex Health Partners.</li> <li>• 2024-25: UoS Web Science Institute funding for the AI Translation project</li> <li>• 2025-27: Wessex Health Partners Small Grant Scheme funding was secured for phase two of the AI Translation project.</li> </ul>

**Years 2-3:** Explore further community projects to increase EDI in trial PPI and research participation

- 2025-6: UoS Research Culture funding (UoS) to carry out interviews across the Faculty of Medicine to explore barriers and facilitators to inclusion conditions set by NIHR.

The group continues to look for future funding opportunities for EDI projects.

The MODERNISED study team worked closely with their public partners to create pharmacy bags printed with early diagnosis and trial information, that were sent to pharmacies in areas of socioeconomic deprivation and high ethnicity populations across Southampton.



**Year 1:** Review and update our external brand and communications

We have reviewed the SCTU website and social media and tried to ensure accessibility is built in where possible, e.g.

- Ensuring videos have subtitles.
- Ensuring images have alt text.
- Where possible, having links to open text/accessible versions of PDF documents, e.g. our strategies.

<p><b>Years 2-3:</b> Review all wider SCTU trial documentation to identify EDI needs and gain feedback</p>	<p>The Participant Information Sheet (PIS) EDI Framework, developed through the Safe Space project to increase accessibility and inclusivity of patient-facing trial documents, has been introduced to staff and is being piloted in some SCTU trials.</p> <p>The AI Translation project is looking at whether AI can be used to provide patient-facing trial documents in other languages. Currently Polish, Chinese and Punjabi</p>
<p><b>Year 1:</b> Set up EDI monitoring for our researcher partners and PPI contributors.</p> <p><b>Years 2-3:</b> Review our monitoring and data collected</p>	<p>EDI monitoring was carried out in year 1 to get baseline figures for representation across our Chief Investigators and public contributors.</p> <p>This data is used to monitor EDI across our stakeholders and partners. A further survey will be carried out to assess changes to baseline figures in the next strategy period.</p>

## APPENDIX 2: LINKS AND RESOURCES

1. Southampton Clinical Trials Unit [website](#)
2. Widening Participation in PPI - [Widening participation in patient and public involvement \(PPI\) for trials being conducted at Southampton Clinical Trials Unit: A Community Study](#)
3. Widening participation in PPI – [Co-produced prompt cards for researchers working with underrepresented communities](#)
4. Widening participation in PPI – [Co-produced video for researchers working with underrepresented communities](#)
5. Diversity in clinical trials - [Co-designing patient-facing resources to increase ethnic representation in clinical trials](#)
6. The EQUATE study - [Barriers and facilitators to \*\*EQU\*\*itable p\*\*AR\*\*ticipation and engagement in research using digi\*\*Tal\*\* m\*\*ETH\*\*ods: A qualitative exploration with the public, patients, and staff](#)
7. [Raising Voices in Research – Research Collaborative](#)