

# Improving Inclusive Recruitment

Supporting Guidance for Managers

**Draft** 23.09.2025

**NIHR** | Health Determinants  
Research Collaboration  
Somerset



**SPARK  
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Inspiring communities

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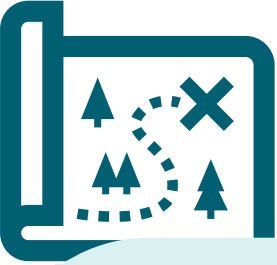
## The origins of this guidance

This guide is based on the experience of the Somerset Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC) in recruiting Community Co-Researchers. These roles were created to make sure that the voices and lived experiences of local people help to shape the Breaking Barriers project. The project aims to better understand the work-related barriers and enablers experienced by people in Somerset who live with long-term health conditions and/or disabilities.

### **This guidance brings together insights from several sources involved in the recruitment process:**

- Suggestions from the Lived Experience Advisory Partnership (LEAP) and the Community Organisations Advisory Partnership (COAP) of the Breaking Barriers project.
- Reflections and recommendations from Community Co-Researchers based on their own recruitment experiences.
- Feedback from Somerset HDRC team members who supported and managed the recruitment process.

# Background (Cont)



## The purpose and structure of this guidance

### **Purpose of this document**

This document offers practical guidance to help make recruitment more inclusive – from advertising the role, through to interviews and final appointments. The aim is to support inclusive recruitment becoming standard practice. We understand that some of the recommendations may not be fully achievable under current employment legislation. However, they are included to encourage reflection and progress towards more equitable recruitment processes.

### **Structure of this document**

- Each recommendation sits in an aqua blue bubble, like on this slide.
- A short rationale for each recommendation is written in smaller dark blue text.
- Extra points appear in light grey bubbles, separate from the main recommendations.
- This practical guidance aim to help shape future policy and practice, making the application and interview process more accessible, fair, and welcoming for everyone.

# 1. Job Specification and Advert - General



## Recommendations

**Consider or add the following statements in the advert:**

a) We encourage applications from individuals with a wide range of experiences. If you're interested in the role but are concerned that you don't meet every requirement, we still encourage you to apply. You're also welcome to contact the person named in the advert for an informal discussion. This promotes inclusivity, encouraging diverse applications – it acknowledges that some potential applicants may opt out of applying if they don't meet all criteria, even if they have relevant skills or experience.

b) You can contact the named person via email (insert email address) or phone (insert phone number). Your named person's working hours are (insert working hours). They will aim to respond to any emails within (insert number) working days. This encourages applicants to ask personal questions and provides an indication of when to expect a response.

## 2. Application Form - General



### Recommendations

**Add the following statements at the top of the application form:**

- a) If you need more information or any adjustments to help you apply for this role, please get in touch with the person named in the advert. *This encourages the applicant to raise any questions that would help them.*
  
- b) If you would like to learn more about reasonable adjustments, please click here – *(link to the gov.uk website for reasonable adjustments)* *This would reassure applicants about available support and increase understanding of the support available.*

## 3. Application Form - Personal Information



### Recommendations

#### Consider including the following:

- a) Provide a basic explanation of how personal information will be used and protected (i.e. data processing outside EEA) – this could incorporate a hyperlink to your information processing policy for more detailed information. This will reassure applicants about data use and security.
  
- b) If asking for the title of the applicant, make this field optional. If interviewers see applicants' full names and titles before the interview, this could unintentionally introduce bias. Collecting this information later in the process, such as on a personal details form after shortlisting, may help reduce this risk.

#### Additional considerations:

Just as a point of observation, might it be possible to integrate a “?” or some sort of drop-down feature where the user can hover over or click for more information?

## 4. Application form – Email Address



### Recommendations

**For requesting an email address, adopt the following text:**

- a) Email address (*if available*): \_\_\_\_\_  
This recognises that not all applicants have email addresses.



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## 5. Application form – Address



### Recommendations

**For requesting an address, adopt the following text:**

Current Address (Where we can contact you)

- a) If you live between two addresses, please choose the address that you spend the most time at. This change acknowledges that not everyone has a fixed or permanent address. The additional statement also helps reduce confusion for applicants who live between multiple addresses.

#### **Additional considerations:**

1. Alternatively, add an option to input a postcode rather than provide a full address.
2. Provide an explanation as to why an address is needed at this stage.

## 6. Application Form – Questionnaire



### Recommendations

**To provide an applicant with multiple options to complete an application, adopt the following text:**

- a) Would you like to complete the online application, or will you be uploading a CV and an optional supporting statement? You'll find the option to upload, deliver, or post your CV and supporting statement further down the page. (Required)" The term "standard" may suggest that other methods are less valid or discouraged. Updating the language and providing clear guidance helps reassure applicants that any alternative formats offered are equally acceptable.

# 7. Application Form – Employer



## Recommendations

**When requesting employment status, adopt the following text:**

- a) Please select the option that best describes your current situation.” (e.g. Employed, Self-employed, Unemployed, Volunteering, Student, Retired, Other). This helps make the form more inclusive and less intimidating for applicants who are not currently in paid employment – this rationale also applies to the questions on the following page.

**Include the following statement below:**

We encourage applications from people with a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences. If you would prefer to detail any relevant experiences (such as volunteering experience or lived experience) that you feel would be applicable for the role, please include them here (*text box*). This statement acknowledges that a wider range of life and work situations are equally applicable.

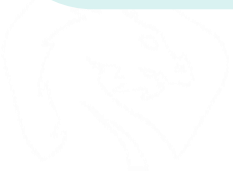
# 7. Application Form – Employer (Cont)



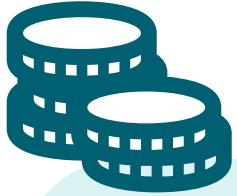
## Recommendations

**When requesting employment status, adopt the following text:**

- a) If you are currently employed and/or doing voluntary work, who is your employer? (Please provide the name of the organisation.) (Required).
- b) If you are currently employed, what is your job title? (Required).



## 8. Application Form – Salary



### Recommendations

**If there is a need to request salary information, adopt the following text:**

- a) *Salary (optional):*
- b) Or remove the requirement for applicants to stipulate their salary. This change ensures that individuals who have not been in paid employment or who have low income are not excluded from applying. It also helps to reduce bias during selection – especially in situations where there is a salary range.



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# 9. Application Form – Previous Job & Duties



## Recommendations

**When requesting employment history, adopt the following text:**

- a) If you're currently or were previously employed (voluntary or paid) please enter the start date: (Required).
- b) If you're currently or were previously employed (voluntary or paid), what are or were your main duties? (Required)". These changes clarify that the fields apply not only to individuals with paid employment but also to those with voluntary experience. It promotes fairness and acknowledges the value of all types of work experience.

# 10. Application Form – Reason for Leaving



## Recommendations

**When requesting a reason for leaving, adopt the following text:**

- a) Reason for Leaving and explain any gaps (if applicable)
- a) We understand that there may be a variety of reasons for a gap in employment (e.g., caring responsibilities, illness). Your explanation can be as brief or detailed as you like and will not affect the interview or selection process.“ This change demonstrates sensitivity to the diverse personal circumstances that may lead to employment gaps or job changes. It reassures applicants and encourages transparency. This helps reduce stigma and supports a fairer recruitment process.

### **Additional considerations:**

1. Alternatively, provide the applicant with an option to disclose this information at a later stage. Any disclosures during this phase could influence decision making (even if unconsciously). This choice could be filtered through a drop-down list, including: “Caring responsibilities, illness, education, career break, other”.

# 11. Application Form – Personal Statement & Qualifications



## Recommendations

**When requesting a personal statement and qualifications, adopt the following text:**

- a) Personal Statement - please provide examples of relevant skills, qualifications, or experience that you feel are most applicable for the role (please refer to the job specification for guidance). This may also include any transferrable skills or lived experience that you wish to include. Please include your motivation for applying, relevant experience, and interest in the role). If you need more space, there is an option to attach additional information at the end of the form.” The encourages applicants to articulate how their experience - including professional, voluntary, and lived experience—aligns with the role’s requirements. It promotes a more inclusive and strengths-based approach and recognises the value of informal learning.
- b) Clearly specify the maximum word length for the supporting statement. This provides clarity on what is expected and reduces ambiguity for neurodiverse applicants.

# 11. Application Form – Personal Statement & Qualifications (Cont)



## Recommendations

**Add a brief statement explaining what is meant by lived experience and transferrable skills.**

- a) Transferrable skills refer to abilities or qualities that can be applied in various environments and situations. Examples of transferrable skills include communication, teamwork and problem solving. Lived experience refers to knowledge and understanding gained from personal experience with a situation, issue or condition. Examples of lived experience include (but are not limited to) personal experience of a health condition, mental health challenges, the justice system, caring, poverty, discrimination, immigration, marginalisation or homelessness”. This clarifying statement will support applicants who may not know what lived experience or transferrable skills means.
- b) Add resources: e.g. Click here (or hover over question mark) for [information about job requirements](#) and steps on how to meet them The link will provide a resource for candidates to provide clarity on how to meet job requirement criteria and provide some examples of what to include. This will help prevent neurodivergent applicants from feeling confused by questions open to interpretation.

# 12. Application Form – Memberships

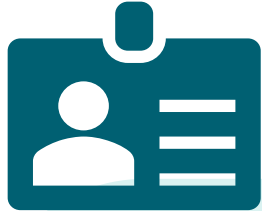


## Recommendations

**If there is a need to request information relating to memberships, adopt the following text:**

- a) If applicable, please provide details of any memberships with professional bodies that are relevant to this role.
- b) *Alternatively, if possible, only include this on the application form if it is applicable to the role. This acknowledges that not all applicants will be members of professional bodies and reassures them that such memberships are not a standard requirement for applying or being considered for a role.*

# 13. Application form – Referee



## Recommendations

**When requesting a personal statement and qualifications, adopt the following text:**

- a) Referee's name - Please provide the details of someone who can give a reference for you. This should be someone who knows you, for example, through training, job coaching, work or a voluntary role. Please note that friends or family members cannot be listed. (Required)" This supports applicants who are not currently in paid work to provide valid references. It broadens the scope of acceptable referees to include those from non-traditional or informal work settings.

**Add the following statement:**

- b) If you are new to the workplace or are returning after an extended period of time, we may consider a character reference in lieu of a traditional reference (examples include mentors, coaches, teachers and community leaders). If you feel that this might be relevant for you, please contact (insert named person from recruitment team) – they would be happy to discuss it with you". This change will make the process more inclusive for applicants who do not have access to someone who can act as their referee.

# 14. Application Form – Declaration of Disability



## Recommendations

### Consider the following wording concerning Equality, Diversity and Inclusion:

- a) We understand that the word ‘disability’ can mean different things to different people. You don’t have to share any details about a health condition, disability, or a form of neurodivergence that might be seen as a disability, unless you choose to. As a ‘Disability Confident’ employer, we guarantee an interview to anyone who identifies as, or is considered to be disabled under the Equality Act and who meets the essential requirements for the job. We’re committed to creating an inclusive workplace and value the unique strengths and experiences that every applicant brings. Under the Equality Act, people with physical or mental conditions that have a substantial and long-term negative effect on their ability to carry out everyday activities are entitled to reasonable adjustments at work. These might include: (a) finding a different way to do a task, (b) making changes to the workplace, (c) adjusting someone’s working hours or duties, and (d) providing equipment, services, or support.

This adjustment uses neuro-affirming and inclusive language, recognising that, for example, a person with ADHD or an autistic person may not identify as disabled but may still benefit from the protections and accommodations provided under the Equality Act. Employers to ensure that the JD specifies all of the essential requirements, including for example: travel involved and social demands. Not asking at the application form stage reduces concern or anxiety about potential bias.

# 15. Application Form – CV & Personal Statement upload option



## Recommendations

### Incorporate the following statements:

- a) If you would like to upload a CV, please make sure it includes contact details, an introduction, your education history, your work history and references. Click here for guidance on writing a great CV (link to BBC bitesize article). The instructions for the CV make it clear to the applicant what is required from them. This helps makes the form more inclusive and less intimidating for applicants who are not currently in paid work.
- b) We encourage applications from people with a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences. If you would prefer to detail any relevant experiences (such as volunteering experience or lived experience) that you feel would be applicable for the role, please include them in your CV". This acknowledges a wider range of life and work situations.
- c) If appropriate, reword 'Attachment' to 'Personal Statement (attachment)' This change would make it clear to applicants that this is the correct space to attach a personal statement. It also serves as a visual reminder for applicants to check they have included everything before submission.

**Please include text from Recommendation 11 with regards to the Personal Statement**

# 17. Interview shortlisting – Declaration of Disability (Cont)



## Recommendations

### **Add the following reaffirming statement when shortlisted:**

- a) We are committed to building an inclusive environment and welcome any requests, suggestions, or ideas to support your application and recruitment process. Should you need any reasonable adjustments for your interview, please contact the named person in the advert (requests for reasonable adjustments can be made and withdrawn at any stage in the process). There will be an opportunity to disclose information about your disability status, including reasonable adjustments within the role if you wish too, at a later stage. We want to ensure that you are supported to work at your best, and any request made will not impact recruiting decisions.” This reinforces the organisations commitment to inclusivity.

### **Additional considerations:**

1. Provide a pre-interview questionnaire for all candidates (regardless of disability) that can act as a guide on how best to support them during interview, e.g. if they prefer written interview questions This would help reduce bias if everyone was able to request adjustments for interview. This could be carried out within a framework that minimises impact on capacity.

# 18. Job offer



## Recommendations

### Consider the following options:

- a) Upon job offer email confirmation - give the successful candidate the option to have a conversation with a future manager, prior to starting in the post to provide another opportunity to declare any disabilities and, if appropriate, discuss reasonable adjustments in work (this could include sign-posting to Access to Work).
- b) In addition, create a 'Working with Me' document whilst onboarding any new starter. Set aside time to discuss work and communication preferences, capturing this within a living document. This allows managers to adapt and plan work, where possible, that aligns with the employee's strengths. Most importantly, by sharing and cascading information to the employee in a way that makes sense to them, individual workflow can be maximised, allowing greater productivity and efficiency in the workplace.

# Thank you



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