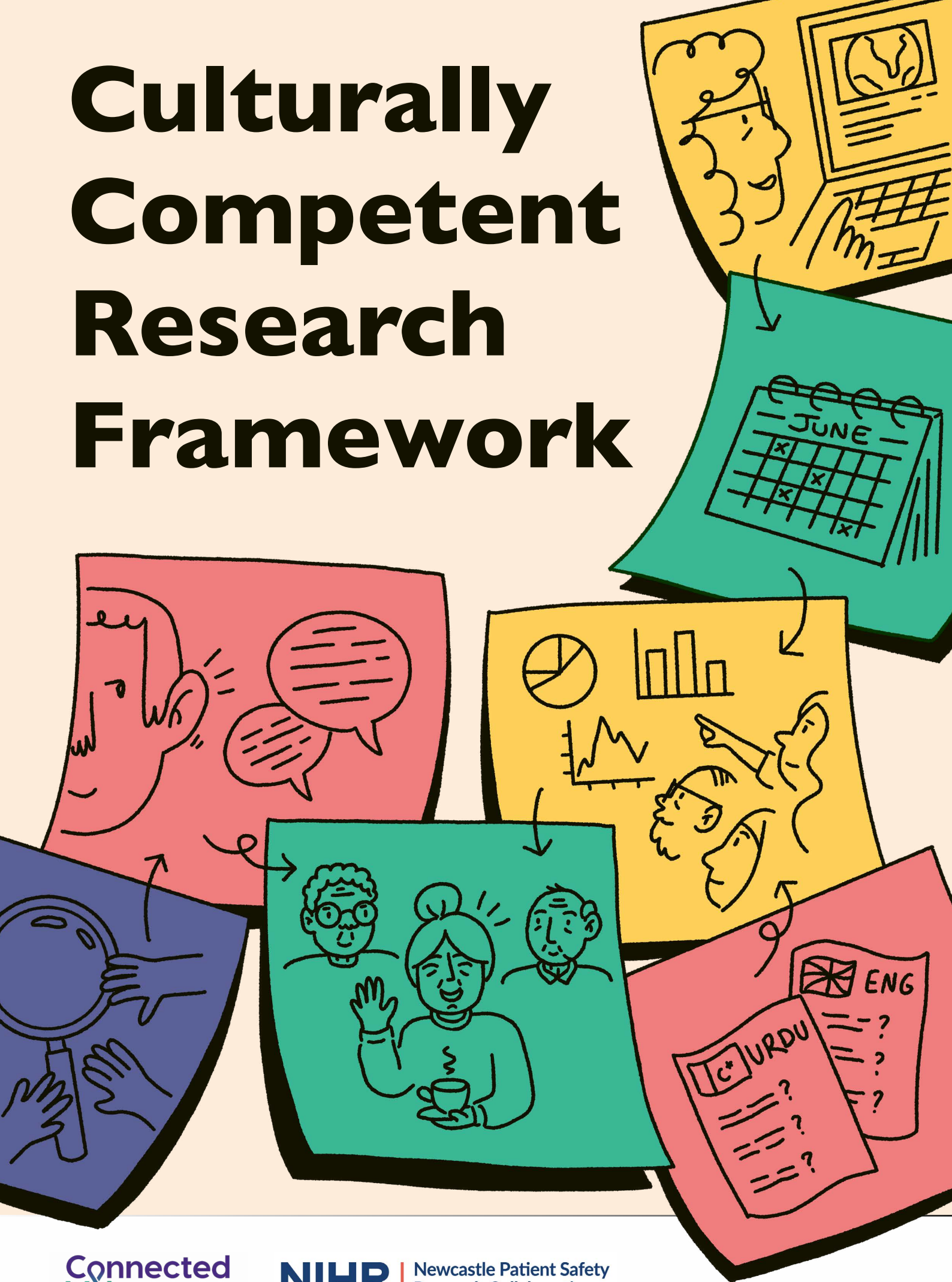


Culturally Competent Research Framework



About this toolkit

This toolkit provides a step-by-step guide to planning, designing, undertaking and reporting on research. The framework provides practical, measurable, and adaptable guidance to embed cultural competence throughout the research lifecycle. It aims to ensure inclusivity, equity, and meaningful community involvement is embedded within research involving culturally and linguistically diverse populations. The toolkit is theory-based [1] and was co-developed with researchers, policy makers, community leads, interpreters and translators. Culturally competent research evidence and tools are integrated into an easy-to-use process. The toolkit is intended to be used in conjunction with the [CCRF worksheet](#).

Who is this toolkit for?

Anyone who is involved in any stage of the research cycle, i.e., the formulation of research problems (conception), the recruitment of participants, the measurement, analysis and interpretation of findings, and the reporting and dissemination. The CCRF toolkit is designed to support researchers (e.g., based in research centres and Universities) and people involved in conducting research that could influence the designing and developing health and care services, including stakeholders working in public and policy organisations (e.g., local authorities and charities). It supports users with varying levels of expertise in thinking and employing strategies for culturally competent research.

This toolkit aims to:

Support users with the planning, delivery and reporting of effective culturally competent research. It is designed to support activities across all stages of the research cycle. We recommend you work closely with your stakeholders to follow the framework principles and capture and measure your success. Start here, start now!

For more information about the CCRF toolkit, please contact Prof Hamde Nazar (hamde.nazar@newcastle.ac.uk), National Institute of Health and care (NIHR) Newcastle Patient Safety Research Collaboration, Newcastle University.

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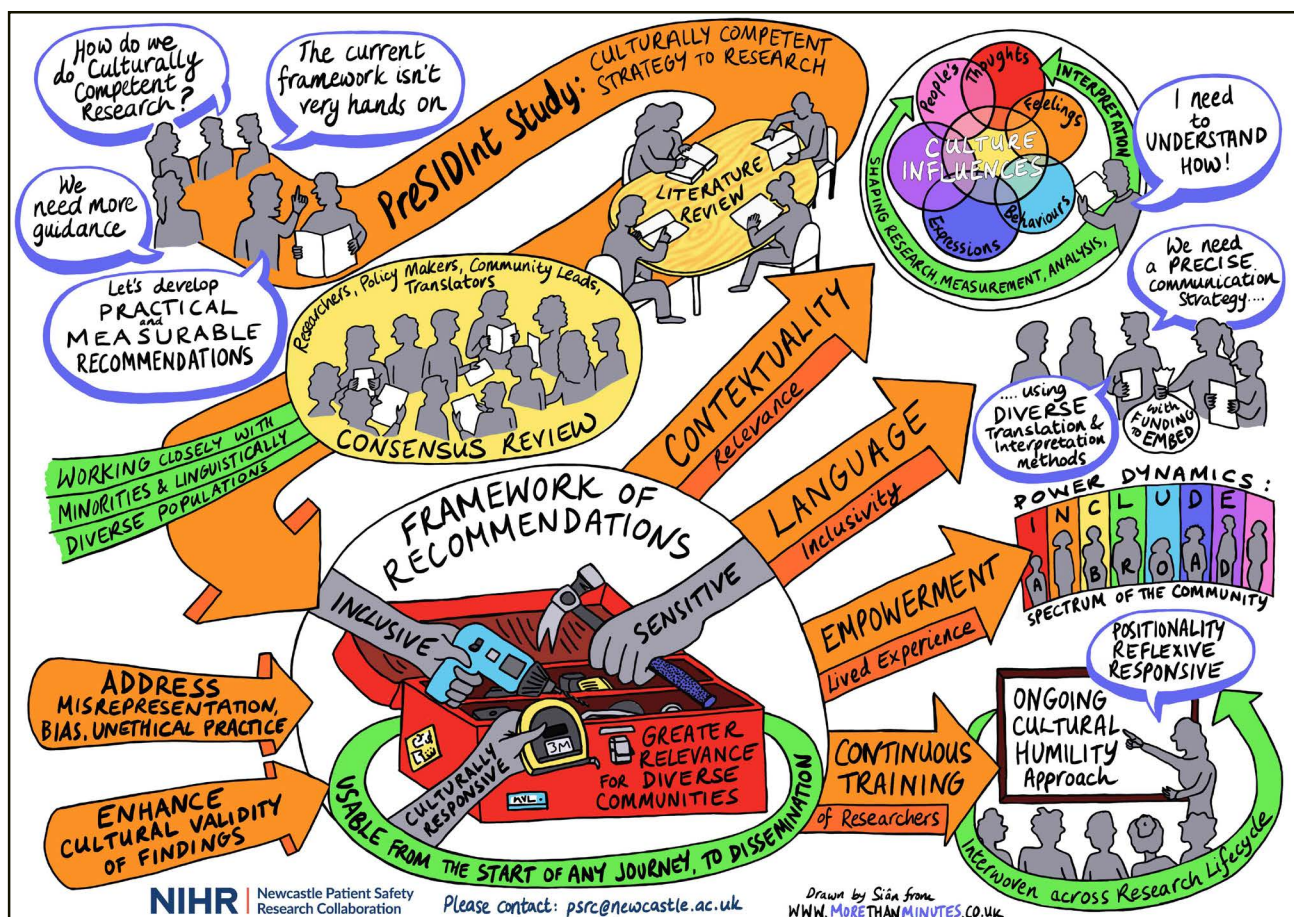
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CCRF Toolkit Approach

Introduction

Cultural considerations in research are often treated as afterthoughts, leading to the exclusion of minoritised groups and reinforcing inequities. While cultural competence has been well developed in clinical and educational practice, its integration into research, and all steps within the research lifecycle, has lacked practical, actionable tools. To address this gap, a new Culturally Competent Research Framework was co-designed with researchers, policy makers, community leads, and translators. This was funded by the National Institute for Health and Social Care Research.

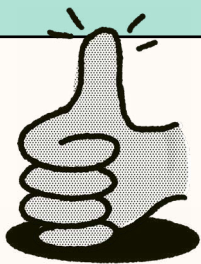


The illustration was created by Sian McArthur from More than Minutes

Framework Overview

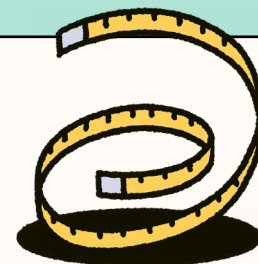
The framework comprises 25 recommendations paired with 25 measures, structured across five stages of the research lifecycle. Each stage is underpinned by Meleis’ cultural competence criteria—augmented with Language as a new criterion—and reframed with emphasis on cultural humility, reflexivity, and reciprocity.

How to Use the Framework



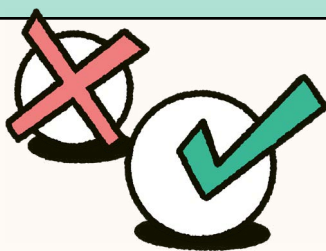
Actionable guidance

Each recommendation is paired with a measure, making the framework practice-ready.



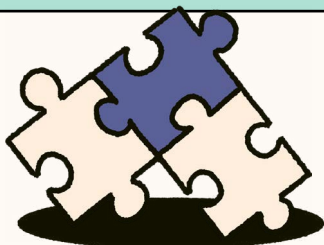
Flexibility

Adaptable across disciplines, populations, and study types.



Accountability

Measures provide indicators to monitor and evaluate cultural competence.



Integration

Can be applied in grant-writing, ethics review, research conduct, and dissemination stages.



Compulsory standard

Recommendations were reframed as “should,” emphasising they are not optional but essential for culturally competent research.

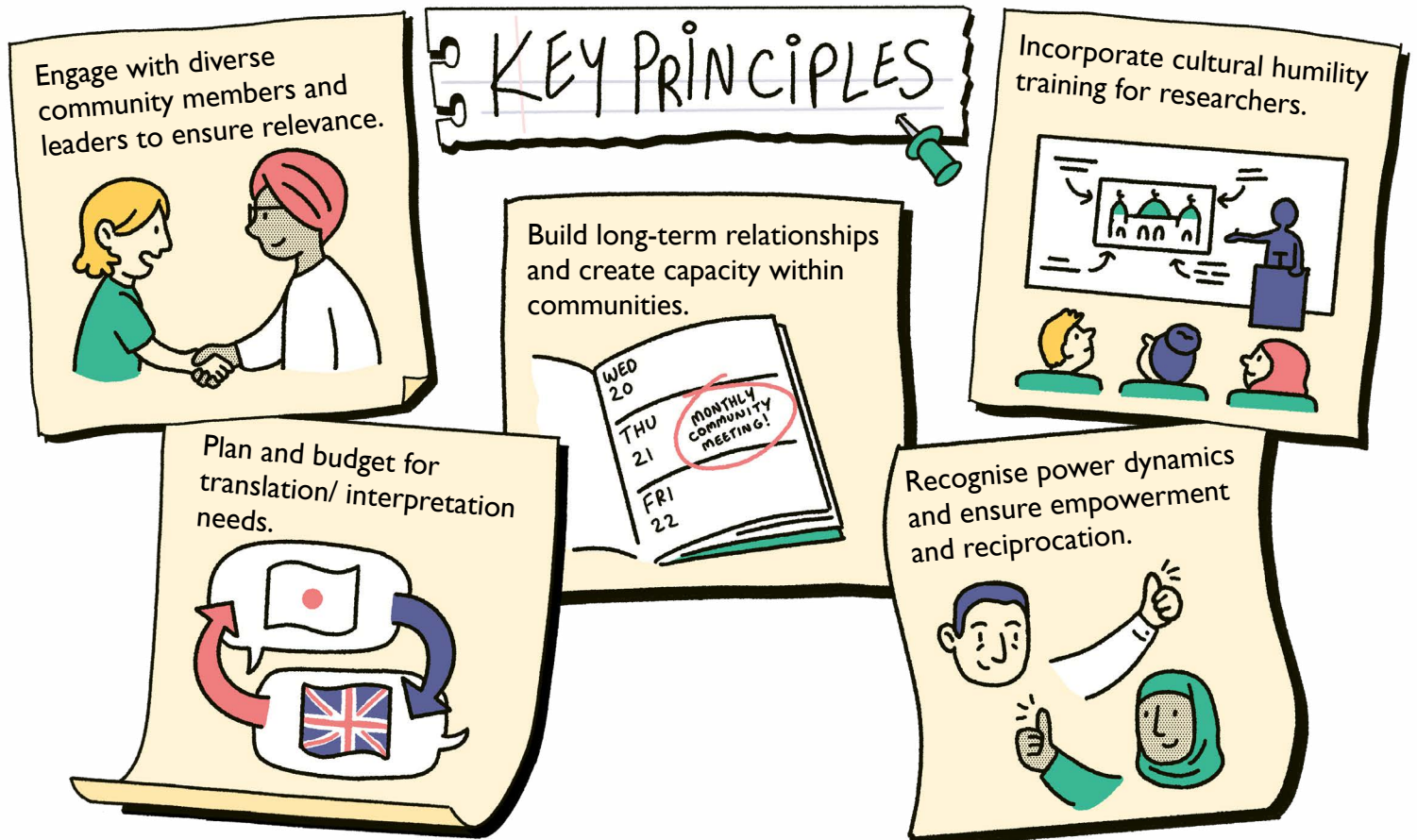


In short: The framework offers a step-by-step, measurable roadmap for embedding cultural competence, cultural humility, equity, and reciprocity across the research lifecycle, ensuring that research is inclusive, ethical, and impactful.

Stage I

Formulating the Research Focus

In this stage, the toolkit user identifies the central problem or question to be explored. It involves reviewing the literature, recognising knowledge gaps, and sometimes aligning the study with a theoretical or conceptual framework. Cultural sensitivity is essential here, ensuring that the research question is relevant to the population of interest and avoids ethnocentric bias.



Stage I: Formulating the Research Focus

Recommendation

Measure

1

Researchers should ensure their research focus is sensitive to the community of interest by considering intersecting factors such as age, generation, sexual orientation, cultural heritage, social class, work conditions, and gender inequality.

Have the researchers aligned their research focus with sensitivity to intersectional factors such as age, generation, sexual orientation, cultural heritage, social class, work conditions, and gender inequality within the community of interest?

2

Researchers should consider creating capacity within community of interest.

Have the researchers explored ways to build capacity within the community of interest through activities beyond the research itself?

3

Researchers should explore how diverse populations experience culture—how they feel, think, express themselves, behave, and practice daily life—and how these experiences shape their perspectives and actions within the area of interest.

Has and in what way has the researcher learned about diverse voices and lived experiences of the community of interest?

4

Researchers should engage in ongoing cultural humility training that encourages self-reflection on their attitudes, positionality, and openness to cultural differences, alongside cultural competency training focused on the specific community of interest

Have the researchers engaged in ongoing cultural humility training—focusing on their attitudes, positionality, and openness to cultural differences—along with cultural competency training specific to the community of interest?

Stage I: Formulating the Research Focus

Recommendation

Measure

5

Researchers should have a strategy to capture and monitor impact and value of patient and public involvement.

Have researchers developed a strategy to capture and monitor impact and value of patient and public involvement?

6

Researchers should equally engage with diverse members, leaders and experts in the community of interest who can provide culturally sensitive information to support research problem formulation.

How have diverse members, leaders and experts in the community of interest participated in/contributed to the formulation of the area of research focus and interest?

7

Researchers should include members of the community/ public members in the research team to guide culturally sensitive problem formulation.

Does the research team include members of the community /public members in the research team to guide culturally sensitive problem formulation?

8

Researchers should consider costs and benefits of using a variety of translation and interpretation services (such as transcription of interviews or parts of it in original language, using lay research services etc).

Have researchers considered costs and benefits of using a variety of translation and interpretation services (such as transcription of interviews or parts of it in original language, using lay research services etc)?

Stage I: Formulating the Research Focus

Recommendation

Measure

9

Researchers should enquire about the need for using a variety of translation and interpretation services (such as transcription of interviews or parts of it in original language, using lay research services etc) as well as transcription for people with accessibility needs.

How did the researchers use interpretation and translation services, and how did they ensure accessibility when transcribing and interpreting data, including for participants with specific accessibility needs?

10

Researchers should show evidence to demonstrate their appreciation of power dynamics between them and different groups and communities involved.

Have the researchers provided an opportunity for participants to freely share their ideas in relation to formulating the area of research focus and interest?

11

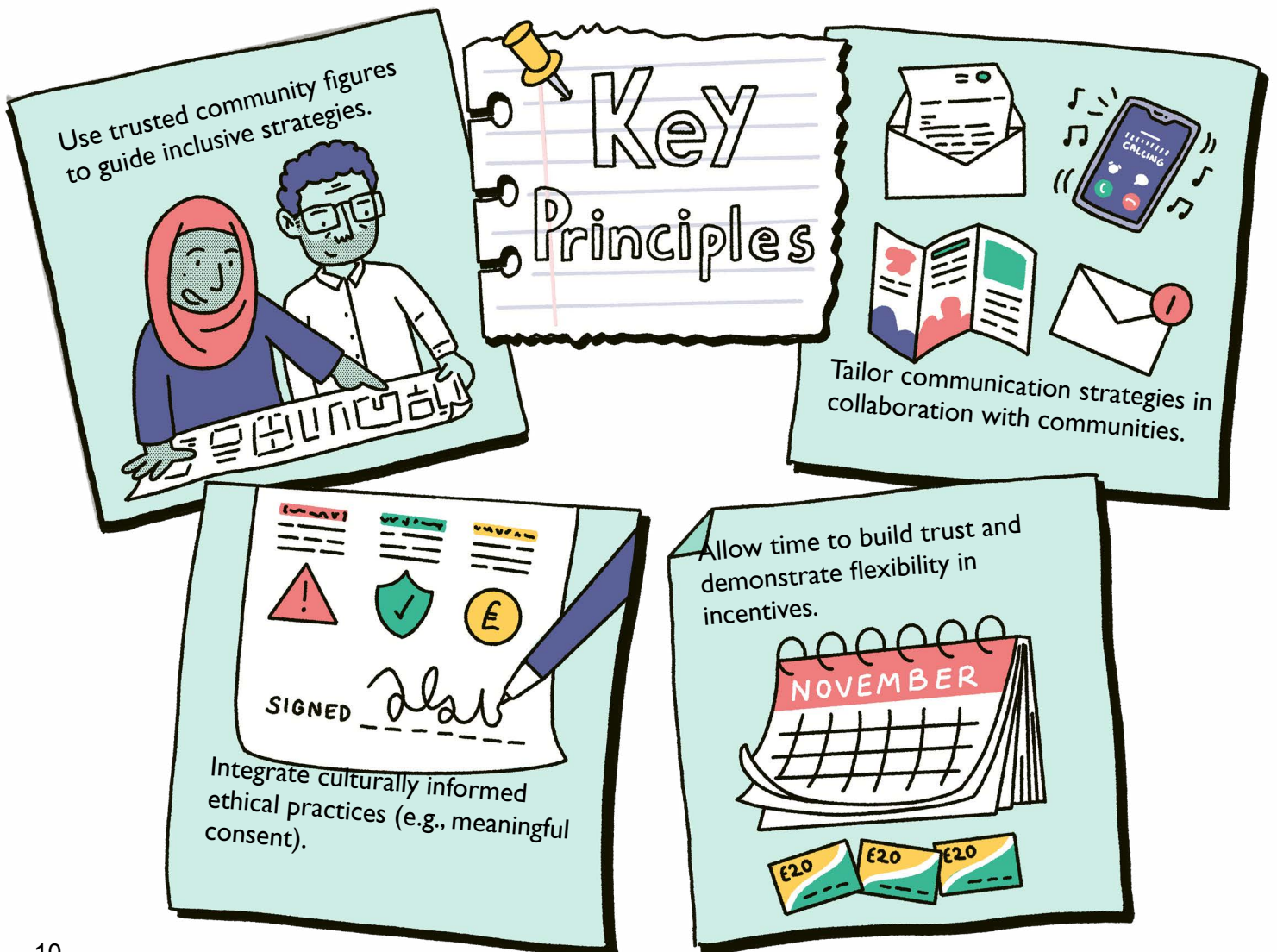
Researchers should work with members of the diverse community of interest to discuss and agree on fair compensation strategies for participants' involvement in the research.

Have the researchers engaged with the diverse community of interest to discuss and agree the strategy of compensation for participants' involvement in the research?

Stage 2

Recruitment

This stage centres on identifying and enrolling participants. Effective recruitment requires culturally respectful strategies, building trust with communities, and ensuring authentic inclusivity of underrepresented groups. Ethical and cultural considerations, informed consent, and awareness of potential power imbalances between researcher and participant are emphasised.



Stage 2: Recruitment

Recommendation

Measure

12

Researchers should spend time building trust with communities of interest and participants to promote engagement with the study.

Have researchers developed a strategy of building trust with communities of interest and participants to promote engagement with the study?

13

Researchers should engage with a group of trusted/respected people within the community of interest who can provide culturally sensitive information to support study recruitment.

Have researchers engaged with a group of trusted/respected people within the community of interest who can provide culturally sensitive information to support study recruitment?

14

Researchers should demonstrate how they have tailored recruitment and facilitated a diverse representation of the community of interest

Have the researchers demonstrated how their recruitment strategy has facilitated a diverse insight of the community of interest?

15

Ethics should be addressed through the lens of ethnicity and culture by: (i) ensuring ethics committees receive cultural training, (ii) providing culturally appropriate explanations of the study, (iii) assessing cultural barriers to achieving truly informed consent, and (iv) evaluating the risk–benefit ratio from the cultural perspective of potential participants.

Has ethics been considered and applied through the lens of ethnicity and culture, including: (i) cultural training for the ethics committee, (ii) provision of culturally appropriate study explanations, (iii) assessment of cultural barriers to achieving truly informed consent, and (iv) evaluation of the risk–benefit ratio from the cultural perspective of potential participants?

Stage 2: Recruitment

Recommendation

Measure

16

Researchers should consider costs and benefits of using a variety of translation and interpretation services (such as transcription of interviews or parts of it in original language, using lay research services etc)

Have the researchers considered costs and benefits of using a variety of translation and interpretation services (such as transcription of interviews or parts of it in original language, using lay research services etc)?

17

Researchers should develop a tailored communication strategy with the community of interest.

Has a tailored communication strategy been described, implemented, undertaken and assessed?

Stage 3

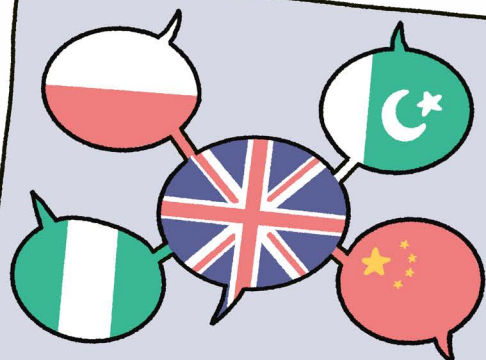
Measurement

Researchers need to select or develop instruments and procedures to collect data. The focus is on ensuring that tools are valid, reliable, and culturally appropriate, so they capture the intended meanings without distortion. Attention is given to language, literacy levels, and cultural norms to avoid misinterpretation.

Key Principles



Ensure data collection methods are culturally valid and accessible.



Provide diverse interpretation and translation strategies.



Adapt communication styles to participants' linguistic and cultural needs.



Collaborate with stakeholders to reflect cultural experiences in data.

Stage 3: Measurement

Recommendation

Measure

18

Researchers should consider participants experiences of culture in relation to how they feel, think, express and behave and how this may influence data being collected in collaboration with appropriate stakeholders.

Has and in what way have the researcher learned about diverse voices and lived experiences of the community in focus?

19

Researchers should consider costs and benefits of using a variety of translation and interpretation services (such as transcription of interviews or parts of it in original language, using lay research services etc)

Have the researchers considered costs and benefits of using a variety of translation and interpretation services (such as transcription of interviews or parts of it in original language, using lay research services etc)?

20


Researchers should consider how they engage with non-native speakers to ensure their involvement is facilitated in the research process.

Have the researchers considered how they engage with non-native speakers to engage them throughout the research process?

Stage 4


Analysis & Interpretation

Data are processed and examined using qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-method approaches. Beyond technical rigour, cultural perspectives must be integrated into the interpretation of findings. Specifically, suggestions to involve community members through co-analysis approaches may prevent misrepresentation of findings and ensures that results reflect participants' lived realities and values.

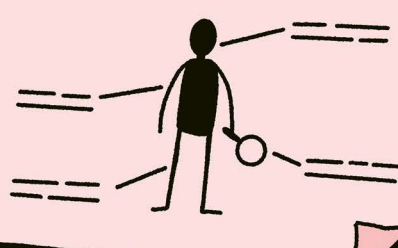


Analyse data with attention to cultural context and practices.

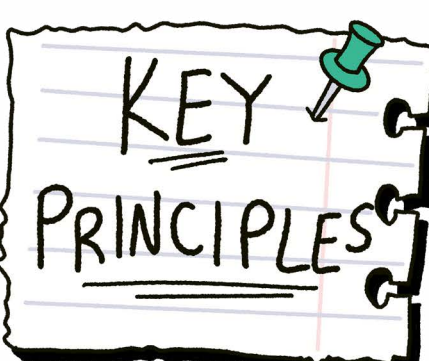
Co-analyse findings with community members, reimbursing their time.



Include reflexivity statements on how researchers' identities shape interpretation.



KEY
PRINCIPLES



Validate findings with participants and communities.



Stage 4: Analysis & Interpretation

Recommendation

Measure

21

Researchers should explore how diverse populations experience culture—how they feel, think, express themselves, behave, and carry out daily practices—and how these experiences shape their perspectives and actions within the area of interest

Has and in what way have the researcher learned about diverse voices and lived experiences of the community in focus?

22

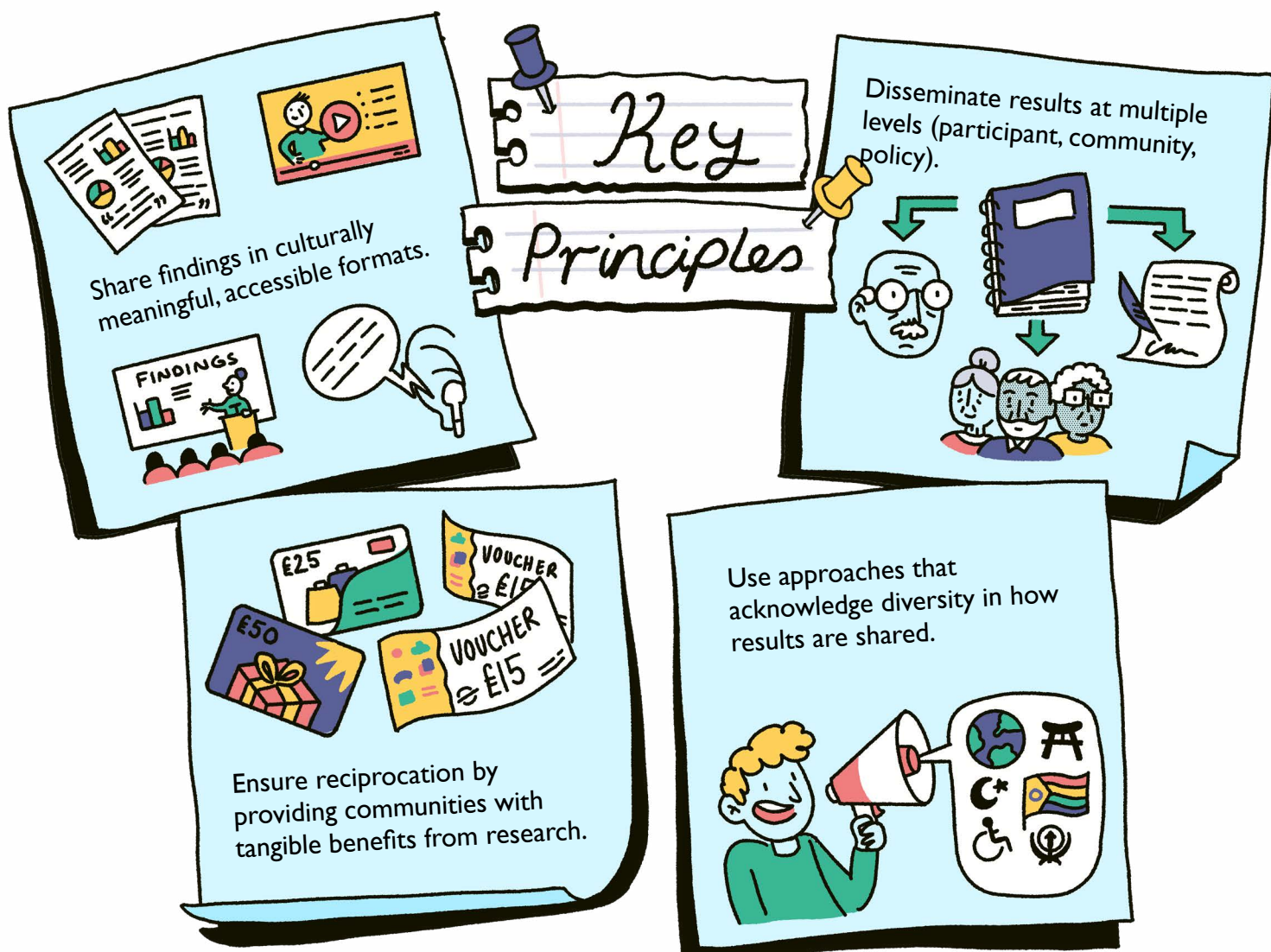
Researchers should consider co-analysis of data together with the community of interest and reimburse them for their time and input.

Have researchers considered co-analysis of data together with the community of interest followed by reimbursement for their time and input?

Stage 5

Dissemination

In the final stage, results are communicated to participants, academic and community audiences. Dissemination should be accessible, culturally respectful, and transparent, with findings translated into practice, policy, or future research. The goal is not only to advance knowledge but also to empower the communities involved.



Stage 5: Dissemination

Recommendation

Measure

23

Researchers should disseminate findings in an understandable, meaningful way to participants so that the study population benefits from it and the research results work for the community of interest.

Have the researchers considered meaningful and understandable ways of disseminating the research results so that it works for people and in a way that works for them?

24

Researchers should report on how diverse populations experience culture—how they feel, think, express themselves, behave, and carry out daily practices—and how these experiences shape their perspectives and actions within the area of interest.

Has and in what way the researcher learned about and reported on diverse voices and lived experiences of the community in focus?

25

Study findings should be shared with all levels of involvement—from individual participants to the broader community of interest—as well as with diverse audiences

Have the researchers developed and included the dissemination plan agreed with the community of interest, participants, and patient and public involvement members?

Acknowledgements

Research team involved in the development and refinement of the CCRF toolkit

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Prof Hamde Nazar, NIHR Newcastle PSRC

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Reference

[1] Meleis AI. Culturally Competent Scholarship: Substance and Rigour. *Advances in Nursing Science*. 1996 December 1;19(2):1-6.

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