**Appendix 2**

Participant Information Sheet

## Title of research

Experiences of which specific types of alternative communication are perceived as most effective by individuals with selective mutism (SM)?

## Invitation to research

I am Sarah Moss, an undergraduate Speech and language therapy student at Manchester Metropolitan University conducting this study as part of my dissertation on selective mutism. The project is supervised by Becky Hildred from Manchester Metropolitan University.

**Why have I been invited?**

You have been invited to participate in this research because you are an individual who is 18 years or older and has or has had selective mutism (SM). This includes individuals who have received a formal medical diagnosis of SM or have self-diagnosed. Participants may also have additional diagnoses. You were selected to participate because you showed interest after seeing an advertisement posted in relevant Facebook groups, which you have joined. Your perspectives will be valuable in helping us understand which alternative communication methods are perceived as most effective.

## Do I have to take part?

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you can withdraw your data up to 2 weeks after completion of the questionnaire or interview without providing a reason.

## What will I be asked to do?

## If you agree to participate, you will be asked to either complete a questionnaire or participate in an interview (if you feel comfortable doing so) with questions about your experiences and perceptions of different alternative communication methods.

## The questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes to complete and the interview approximately 30 minutes. All participation is remote and flexible to your schedule.

## Are there any risks if I participate?

There are minimal risks associated with participating in this study. Some questions may ask about personal experiences, which could be emotionally sensitive. You are encouraged to skip any question or stop participating at any point if you feel uncomfortable. Support resources will be provided if needed.

## Are there any advantages if I participate?

This research benefits the researcher, as by carrying out this research project they will complete their degree. Additionally, participating may provide an opportunity for you to reflect on and discuss your experiences, which could help you feel more comfortable talking about your own experiences with selective mutism.

## Informed consent

Your consent is required before participation. If you agree, you will sign a consent form outlining your rights as a participant. If recordings or notes are taken during interviews, this will also be explicitly stated in the consent process. Recordings will only be used for transcription and analysis purposes.

## What information about me will you collect and why?

The study will collect information such as:

* Your experience with selective mutism
* Your experiences and perceptions of alternative communication methods.

This information is essential to analyse patterns and insights related to communication strategies in selective mutism.

## How will my information be stored and how will you look after it?

All project data will be securely stored on a password-protected university server (student OneDrive). To ensure anonymity, participants will be asked to create a unique five-digit identification number as the first question of the questionnaire/interview.

## How will you use my information?

Your anonymized data will be analysed to identify themes and insights related to alternative communication methods in selective mutism. The findings will be used in the researcher's dissertation project, ensuring your identity remains confidential.

## Will my data be sent anywhere else, or shared with other people or organisations?

Your data will not be shared with other people or organizations. It will only be used for the researcher's dissertation project, ensuring your identity remains confidential. No data will be transferred outside of the UK or European Union.

## When will you destroy my information?

Personally-identifiable information e.g. email addresses, names and anything that would make a person identifiable will be destroyed by 31st September 2025.

Non-identifiable information will be kept for 5 years from the end of the study.

## Data Protection Law

Data protection legislation requires that we state the ‘legal basis’ for processing information about you. In the case of research, this is ‘a task in the public interest.’ If we use more sensitive information about you, such as information about your health, religion, or ethnicity (called ‘special category’ information), our basis lies in research in the public interest. Manchester Metropolitan is the Controller for this information and is responsible for looking after your data and using it in line with the requirements of the data protection legislation applicable in the UK.

You have the right to make choices about your information under the data protection legislation, such as the right of access and the right to object, although in some circumstances these rights are not absolute. If you have any questions, or would like to exercise these rights, please contact the researcher or the University Data Protection Officer using the details below.

You can stop being a part of the study at any time, without giving a reason. You can ask us to delete your data at any time, but it might not always be possible. If you ask us to delete information1st April 2025***,*** we will make sure this is done. If you ask us to delete data after this point, we might not be able to. If your data is anonymised, we will not be able to withdraw it, because we will not know which data is yours.

## What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results will be published in the findings of the dissertation project.

## Who has reviewed this research project?

This research has been reviewed by the researcher’s supervisor Becky Hildred from Manchester Metropolitan University

## Who do I contact if I have concerns about this study or I wish to complain?

1. Researcher: Sarah moss (19090537@stu.mmu.ac.uk**)**
2. Researchers supervisor: Becky Hildred (R.Hildred@mmu.ac.uk)
3. MMU Faculty of Health and Education Head of Research Ethics and Governance: Dr Robert Dempsey, r.dempsey@mmu.ac.uk; Brooks Building, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, M15 6GX, UK.

**THANK YOU FOR CONSIDERING PARTICIPATING IN THIS PROJECT**