

Topics for health and social care research identified by older gay men: A research development project.

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Background:

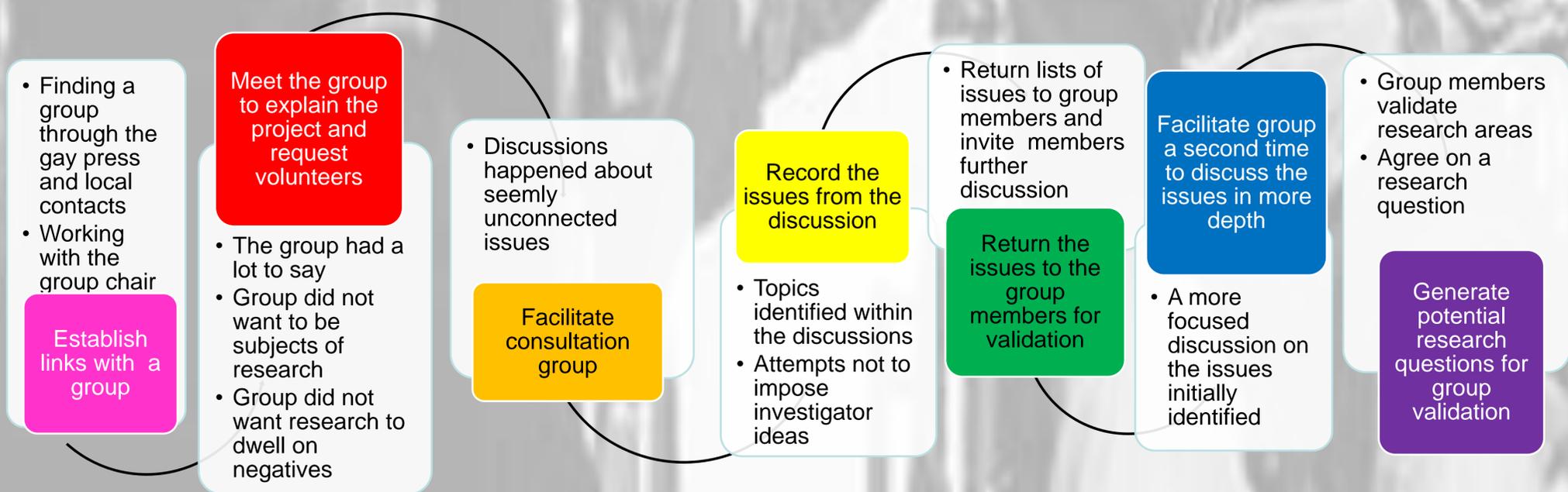
- The older population in the United Kingdom (UK) is increasing. (Office for National Statistics, 2007; NIHR, 2009).
- This will increase demands for health and social care provision from a culturally diverse older population with complex long term health and social care needs (Department of Health, 2001, 2006; HM Government, 2007).
- Age Concern (2002, 2008) highlighted the need to account for cultural and lifestyle issues of ethnicity, gender and sexuality of older people.
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and transsexual (LGBT) people live in a heterosexual normative environment (Pugh, 2005)
- Issues of older LGBT lifestyles and health and social care needs are rarely commented on in current research literature (Turnbull, 2001)
- A heterosexual normative perspective appears to be assumed in health and social care in the UK influencing the appropriateness of support for older LGBT people (Hubbard and Rossington, 1995; Brown, 2002; Kitchen, 2003; Heaphy and Yip, 2008).
- Accounts of older gay men in particular are absent (Age Concern, 2002, 2008)
- The research suggests that these men grew up ostracised by society and often by their families. (Sale 2002)
- Hetero-normative services may cause gay men, when vulnerable, to conceal their sexuality to avoid discrimination and prejudice (Fish, 2007)

The project:

- Older gay men appear difficult to identify and engage in research studies (Lee, 2005).
- Consequently our understanding of the lifestyles and needs of older gay men is poor.
- It is important that experiences of older gay men are represented if recent health and social care policy and social and cultural change is to be enacted and discrimination avoided (Lavin, 2004).
- To help address this a consultation project inviting older gay men to consider their health and social care needs was proposed.

The aims: To engage members of the older gay male population in participatory research; forming a research agenda, shaping research questions and becoming active partners in the research process.

The consultation process



Interim Findings:

- Concerns about isolation from family of choice (friends) if having to go into hospital or residential care
- Concerns about intolerance of health and social care staff
- Cultural differences not being recognised
- Needing to see a friendly face (recognising LGBT staff), because these staff will take care of me
- Too late to 'come out' what do I do?
- Want to be heard by younger gay men
- Wanting to have lifestyle accepted
- Older gay people's views and experiences are under represented
- Separate or mixed (LGBT/ heterosexual) care homes?
- Forty years of fighting for gay rights means I never want to give up my lifestyle
- If I am vulnerable and alone will 'they' switch off the machine?

What next?

To refine the questions and form a research team