

IncludeAge

Inclusion of **diverse older people** in community and public places and virtual spaces

Towards inclusive age-friendly communities with and for older LGBT+ individuals and individuals with intellectual and development disability

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www.includeage.co.uk



Economic
and Social
Research Council

The Call: Inclusive Ageing

Six projects commissioned:

- **Learning disabilities/LGBT+ populations: Intersectional Perspectives for Community Inclusion: IncludeAge**
- Age, Place, Disability: Intersectional Stigma of Place-based Ageing (ISPA)
- Loneliness: Socially inclusive ageing across the lifecourse (SIAL) – for people from minority ethnic communities, LGBTQ+ people and people living with lifelong disabilities
- Frailty and Ethnicity: Understanding the varied experiences of frailty in older age with respect to ethnicity
- Black, Asian and Minoritised Ethnic and Refugee (BAMER) populations: Storying Life Courses for Intersectional Inclusion: Ethnicity and Wellbeing Across Time and Place
- Minority ethnic communities: Promoting inclusivity in pension protection and saving among men and women from UK black and minority ethnic communities

The IncludeAge Project

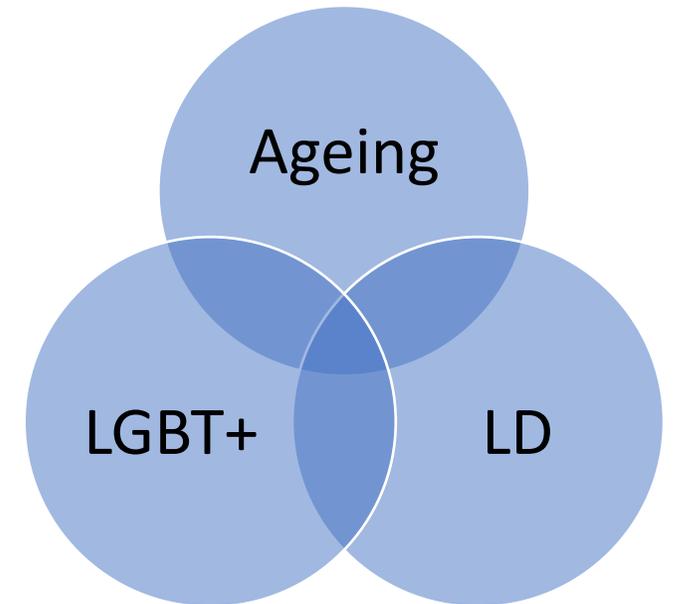
Exploring the challenges of community inclusion of mid-older people (40+) who:

- identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans (LGBT) or who otherwise don't identify as heterosexual or cisgender (LGBT+)
- have Learning Disabilities (LD)
- identify as LGBT+ and have a learning disability

Asking:

- What does community inclusion/exclusion mean?
- How are inclusive and exclusionary places and spaces perceived?
- What are experiences of physical and online spaces and places?

Exploring these questions across time and in real time



Community-Based Participatory Research

- Co-researchers
- Experts by experience on our advisory groups
- Expert-by-experience stakeholders
- Sectoral stakeholders
- International Reference Groups

Brings experiential knowledge and resources

Empowerment

Opportunity for positive, relevant social change



LGBT+ co-researcher training

sleeping
GIANTS
Regard :)

outside the box

NDTi
National Development Team for Inclusion

**OPENING
DOORS**

INN
Intergenerational National Network

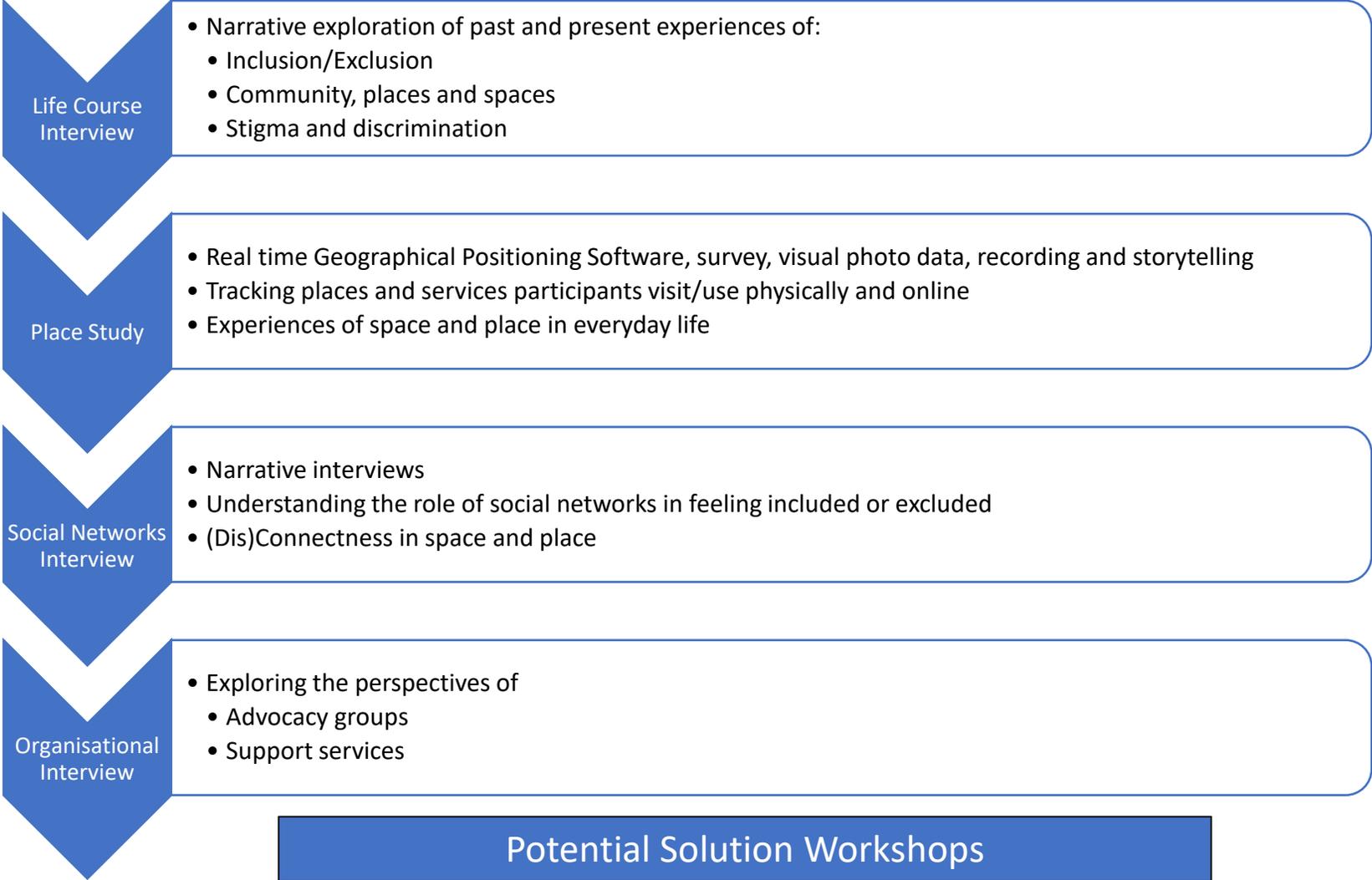
SCLD

IncludeAge Inclusion of diverse older people in community
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Dudley Voices for Choice

The Integrated Research Design

Community Based Participatory Research

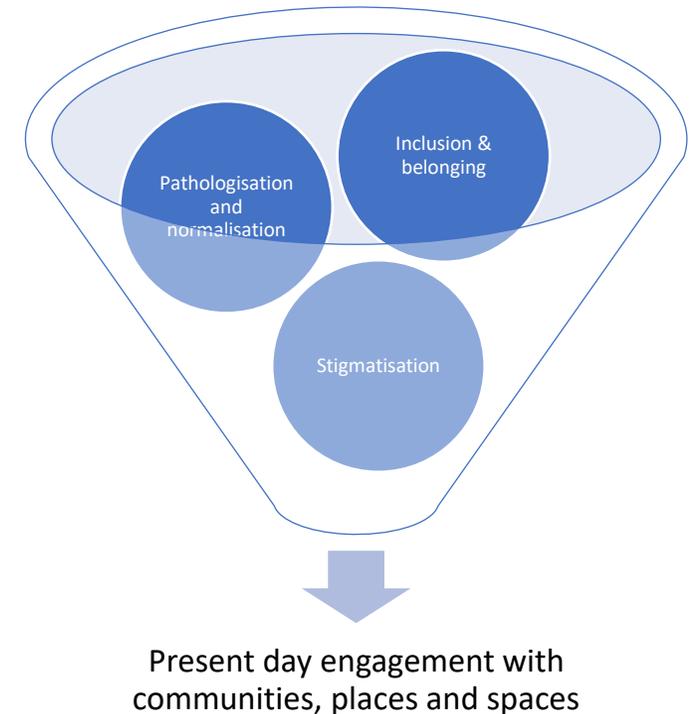


Integrated Knowledge Translation

The Life Course Interview

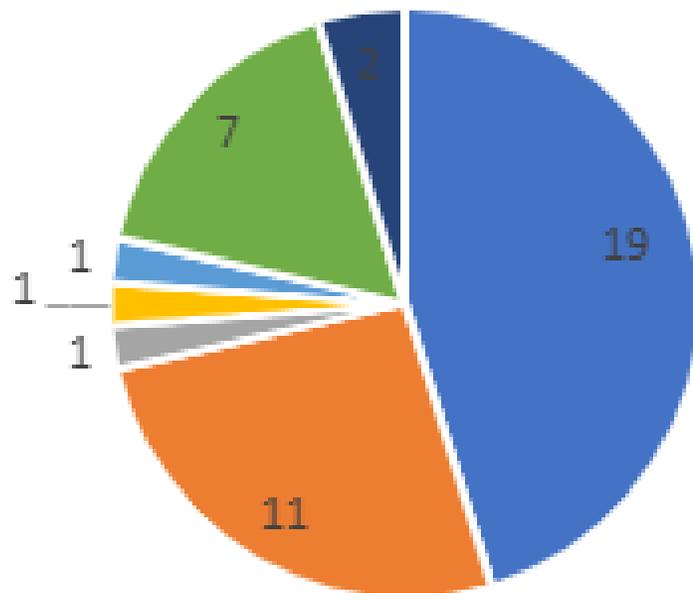
Undertaking up to 80 LGBT+/80 LD narrative interviews

- Understanding diverse histories
 - Interlacing personal & societal past and present
 - Situated belonging
 - Objects with meaning
 - Paper timelines
- Tracing inequalities to understand cumulative disadvantage
- Experience and identity
 - Past traumas and fears
 - Positive experiences
 - Intersubjective and shared learning



Recruitment up to mid-June 2024:

LGBT+ Participants



■ Gay man

■ Lesbian

■ Bisexual man

■ Bisexual woman

■ Trans man

■ Trans woman

■ Non-binary

Dynamics of networks

Christian (gay man, 55-59) asserts the importance of networking ... and perhaps especially as one gets older

... it's important to have networks, people to build on. There's a lot of the community that are older that probably stopped doing the networks, I would think. I'm not sure LGBT organisations reach everybody, especially rural areas. We're semi-rural just on the edge of Glasgow.

He reflects that his networking has always been more face to face and that younger people may network more online – when he was younger his networks were formed through gay bars and clubs.

Cameron (gay man, 55-59) similarly found gay bars in London a good place to network and to be 'authentically' himself. Being gay was the motivation to move to London. However, as an older person, he now likes living in a smaller community (in rural Wales):

I mean, we were very struck by the fact you're going to local pub, you know, the barman recognised us and remembered what we drank from about our third visit, and yet there are pubs that I've been going into London for 10 years and they don't remember you

It's important for him however, that he can outreach through Pride in his current community to develop a broader set of connections

Navigating public spaces

Older LGBT+ individuals may struggle with feeling comfortable in public spaces. They might avoid places where they feel unwelcome or uncomfortable or adapt their behaviour.

One time we were on a bus, and we was holding hands and the woman leant over and said 'that's disgusting'. My then partner took her hand out of mine but I said 'no, I'm proud to be with you'.

Later in the interview:

It's only since I've met Susan though that I have truly come into my full self. She's not ashamed to be who she is in public. Adele (lesbian, 50-54)

For Tara (trans woman, 60-64), moving about in public spaces impacts on how she dresses:

I would dress comfortably indoors when I was on my own ... but outside I would dress, er, in terms of undergarments that kind of thing, er, comfortably, but not my outer clothing My transness is a key element, but it was something I kept squeezing inside.

Eric (gay man, 70-74) was sexually assaulted as a young man living in London and he said:

It makes me (feel) intimidated ... even now ... and when I lived in Brighton, I never sought out gay areas because it made me fearful. I lived with my partner and we never visited the gay scene.

Belonging through & with different aspects of identity

*... that one of the things that I want to celebrate is intersectionality. That you cannot separate- for me personally you cannot separate the Asian and the gay. They come in a package, and they are **these two define who I am as a person**. So, there are times when I did feel excluded, but I am not sure whether I was excluded because I was Asian or whether I was gay. (Tokunaga, Gay man, 40-44)*

*And also, as a woman I'm lots of other things. It seeps into being a social worker and a family person, and that retiring person that I am as well. Seeps into all of that ... Tara allows me, when I don't overthink it, and **I just accept myself as Tara**, suddenly I can find myself just accepting myself.' (Tara, Trans woman, 60-64)*

Some further preliminary Insights from the LGBT+ interviews

Navigating Social Spaces and Community Support: Clubs and social spaces play a crucial role in the lives of LGBT+ individuals, providing a place to meet new people and feel a sense of belonging. These environments are essential for forming connections and fostering a sense of community and support.

Perception of Marginalization and the Need for Support: There is a perception among older LGBT+ individuals that support is only available to those who are visibly or clearly marginalized, leading to feelings of neglect among those whose needs are not immediately apparent. This theme highlights the ongoing debate about the necessity and appropriateness of support systems specifically for LGBT+ individuals.

Challenges of Visibility and Acceptance: Older LGBT+ individuals face unique challenges related to visibility and acceptance. Age-related disabilities that are not immediately visible can lead to misunderstandings and a lack of support within the community. Many have normalized blending in and not being visibly different to avoid negative attention or discrimination.

Ageism in the LGBT+ Community: Ageism within the LGBT+ community can be just as challenging as ageism in the broader society. Younger members often overlook or exclude older individuals, leading to feelings of invisibility and neglect.

Technology and Changing Social Dynamics: Technology has transformed how LGBT+ individuals connect and build communities, offering new platforms for support and social interaction. This theme underscores the positive impact of technology in fostering connections and providing support.

Health and Fitness: Maintaining health and fitness is crucial for older LGBT+ individuals, both for physical well-being and as a means of social interaction and mental health support. Engaging in regular exercise and maintaining a healthy lifestyle are seen as important factors in aging well.

Commercialization of Pride: The commercialization of Pride and corporate involvement can sometimes feel disingenuous, focusing more on profit rather than genuine support for the community. This theme addresses the mixed feelings older LGBT+ individuals have about the commercial aspects of Pride.

Limited Engagement with Public Spaces: Older LGBT+ individuals may engage less with public spaces, preferring to stay at home or avoid places where they feel unwelcome or uncomfortable. This theme highlights the preference for safe, familiar environments over public ones.

Some themes we are exploring

- How cis-heteronormativity is embedded in socio-cultural norms, and how the power of these normativities can shape and constrain the lives of LGBT+ people.
- How LGBT+ people respond to, incorporate and **resist** these normativities - responses are informed by cultural and historical dynamics of experienced stigma and discrimination as well as other intersectional facets such as gender and religion.
- Thinking about factors about where one lives, place of employment and previous environments (e.g. living with family of origin) can have profound impacts that contribute to how a person experiences life as an LGBT+ individual.
- The idea of place within intersectionality, particularly the physical, social and cultural components of place, informed by experiences of inequity, power, and privilege across the life course and into older age.

Through this work, we aim to contribute to wider debates that may be useful in developing a critical examination of the multifaceted aspects of age-friendly communities in different geopolitical contexts, with a specific focus on belonging, identity, cultural experiences, and life course perspectives.



Project Team

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- Prof Ben Thomas, Opening Doors
- Ruth Callander, Scottish Commission for Learning Disabilities
- Grace Cardoza & Annie Wild, Sleeping Giants

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