GUIDANCE: How to include diversity in research in older people

Recruitment and early stages of the research process

1. Consider utilising community assets and knowledge. You could ask for support with recruitment or making further connections directly from the community support organisation as this is where the expertise lies.

2. Consult your community support organisation as to the best way(s) to recruit your target participant group. This might be placing posters for your research in places that are accessed frequently by your participant group. For example, the local community centre, places of worship, GP surgeries, or community pharmacies. Alternatively, some communities (e.g. Somali) may prefer for you to provide information in a different format, such as a WhatsApp text, or invitation that can be translated, recorded and sent out via voice note, or read out at that organisation's events.

3. Be aware of research fatigue. Try to find out from community members if the work you are doing, or similar work, has already been done with them. It can be frustrating for participants to have to keep repeating the same stories and may lead to research fatigue.

4. Participants can sometimes feel that research is being done 'on' them as opposed to 'with' them. Ensure participants are a part of the research process from the start through to the end of the project, including informing the research question as well as with developing the research design and methodology.
   a. If time is a barrier to including participants in every aspect of the research process, consider prioritising and choosing a couple of aspects that you know you need participant feedback on, for example the plain English summary for your project.

5. Participants can sometimes feel frustration at the lack of change after they have taken part in research projects that hold meaning to them. This can result in disengagement from research and a lack of enthusiasm to get involved again.
   a. Take some time out to speak with potential participants and inform them on the research process and timelines, particularly that changing practice can take time (many years) meaning that they may not see any direct impact in the short to medium term, also highlighting that if they are not in the "research room" then their views will not be included.

6. It is important that participants can see the benefit of taking part in your research. Ensure that you let them know how the research that you are doing is relevant to them and their lives.

7. Take time out to obtain participant views on research – do they have negative opinions or any previous experiences that shape their thoughts on getting involved? Obtaining views early on can help to clear up any misunderstandings and can also provide the opportunity to inform on the nature of the research process and the importance of involving all communities.

Translation:

1. Start off by exploring if there are any translation needs within your participant groups. When translating research material for participants, don't always assume that people can easily read the language that they use for day-to-day speech. Options include:
   a. Consider asking a translator based within the community support organisation or team to read the participant information sheet to participants.
   b. Remember that translation may be challenging when there is not always an exact translation for certain words from English to another language. It is worth keeping your research documents as simple as you can to avoid difficulties in translating.
   c. A younger relative may be able to relay information to an older relative but be aware of the limitations and potential issues with this approach.

2. When translating participant information sheets, remember that a language can have multiple dialects. In some communities, words may have different meanings depending on the dialect (e.g., different dialects in the Indian sub-continent may be as different as Italian and Spanish).
   a. Ensure you get to know your research participant group and the dialect they speak before translating research material.

3. Ensure you consider translation needs for all of your research documents. This includes the documents required at the start of the project, such as your consent form and participant information sheet, all the way through to the summary of findings at the end of your project.

4. Consider intersectionality and that there may be additional needs in your target population in addition to a language barrier. These might include older age, hearing and/or visual impairment, neurodiversity, cognitive impairment/dementia or others.

Where to conduct meetings

1. It is a good idea to keep options open for participants to decide their preferred medium for interviews/meetings e.g. online, face-to-face.
   a. Face-to-face can sometimes be preferred as it helps with building trust, but conversely online meetings can be easier in terms of logistics and may be more efficient.
   b. Consider your participants age and their knowledge on how to use technology (e.g. some participants may not know how to use platforms such as zoom/teams so may prefer to meet in person). If holding meetings online, offer support for participants.

c. Try to be flexible and provide options to choose from. For example, meetings could be open with both the option of attending face-to-face or online. Note that this approach may bring its own facilitation challenges which you will need to plan for.
   d. Keep in mind the digital divide amongst a variety of groups.

2. If holding meetings face-to-face, consider participant preferences with regards to the venue.
   a. It is important to consider a variety of options. For example, some communities may prefer to meet in a local place of worship or perhaps the local community centre.
   b. Choose a venue that is comfortable and easily accessible to your participants (including those with mobility issues and/or carers) with the facilities they need.
   c. If you are conducting a mix of face-to-face and online meetings, consider having a number (e.g., two) of initial face-to-face or online meetings focussed on getting to know your participant group rather than just one. This can help the group to feel more comfortable to share their views, build trust and build long term relationships with you. Consider asking for support in getting to know your participant population directly from the community support organisation as this is where the expertise lies.

Cultural appropriateness:

1. Check if participants have a preference on how they would like to be addressed (e.g., in some communities, elders prefer to be addressed as Mr rather than their first name).

2. If possible, address specific ethnic groups by name (e.g. Indian, Bengali, Pakistani) as opposed to generalising (e.g. underserved communities).

3. Keep an open mind regarding levels of literacy within cultural groups – e.g., some people, even if fluent verbally, may struggle with reading both English and other languages. Be mindful and sensitive with your approach in these situations.

4. Participants can feel frustrated when not understood due to their accent – again be sensitive in your approach in these situations.

5. Consider investing in cultural sensitivity training if you can. This can not only enhance your skills and confidence in interacting with people from diverse cultures and backgrounds but can help to build trust and connections with your target participants.

Compensating

1. It is important that participants feel valued for the time they put in to supporting the research. Consider offering a variety of means to compensate and gift participants for their time. This could be financial, for example via gift vouchers, or could be educational, for example offering to upskill community members via training in research methods or training to become research volunteers.
2. Compensation needs to be accessible. For example, online gift vouchers may not be a preference for everyone. Ensure you offer options to your participants, for example, paper vouchers as well as online vouchers.

3. For some participants, receipt of gift vouchers could be problematic if they receive benefits due to their income. Consider including a disclaimer such as 'Please be aware that there may be potential tax implications' on your research documents and ensure this is highlighted to those participating in your research.

<u>Keeping in touch</u>

1. Stay in touch with your participants; this can be as simple as email updates regarding the progress of your work. Follow up with participants should always be maintained with clear and transparent communication. Ensure that you use a variety of methods to stay in touch such as phone, email, social media etc. to ensure participants with different needs are catered for. If appropriate, you could also consider arranging a follow up event to inform people on the progress or outcomes of your work.

2. It is important that participants know their voice has been heard. Once research is complete, ensure participants have access to the report you have produced so they can see the contributions they have made to the work.
   a. You should ask participants during consent if they would like to receive details on the outputs of the work or a summary of your findings; this could be done by including a space on the consent form with this question, along with a question on their preferred method of contact to receive this information.
   b. It is important to give participants the option of access to outputs even if you feel no obvious change has come about from the research.
   c. If no obvious change comes about directly from your research, it could be worth discussing how your work could have an impact if your recommendations were implemented. This provides the space for discussions with your participant group on impact and dissemination.
   d. Consider asking your participants what research THEY would be interested to see / support in the future. Be clear that you can't promise anything, but you will be showing your participants the respect they deserve, and the conversation may open up new and unexpected avenues.

3. To avoid saturating communities with the same set of questions, there should be a proper mechanism of sharing the learning and dissemination of reports. This will help prevent duplicating work and exhausting resources to get the same sets of data.