COMMUNITY FUND

Reducing Social Isolation in LGBT+ Communities Aged 50+

Ageing Better is a test and learn programme funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.

We collect information and insights from across 14 partnerships and use this learning to support service deliverers, funders and policy makers working to reduce social isolation in people aged 50+.

This learning snapshot details key findings and recommendations relevant to reducing social isolation with people aged over 50 in the LGBT+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) community.

You can use it as a summary of the full learning report, to share practical tools with colleagues and in teams, or include in your own presentations and briefings.

1. Why focus on LGBT+ communities?
- Research suggests that LGBT+ people aged 50+ can suffer disproportionately from social isolation and loneliness.
- 1% of over 50s identify as LGBT+ but the true figure is likely to be greater.
- LGBT+ people are five times less likely to access health and social care services.
- People aged 50+ may be reluctant to self identify as LGBT+ because of a shared history of discrimination and prejudice.
- Generally, there is a lack of mental health and other specialist support aimed at LGBT+ people aged 50+ beyond that provided by established LGBT+ networks.

2. What are the challenges?
- LGBT+ people are less likely to seek out services tackling loneliness and isolation because of prejudice and discrimination from peers and professionals.
- There is a real fear of homophobia and transphobia based on the experiences of LGBT+ people. This creates specific challenges when accessing support groups or care settings for people aged 50+.
- People aged 50+ who've lost a long term partner and/or are coming out later in life are more likely to find themselves with no links to LGBT+ networks and may feel nervous attending LGBT+ branded events.

4. So what can we do with this learning?
It takes trust, time, safe spaces and a good understanding of the lived experience, to connect with LGBT+ people aged 50+.
Test and learn from services in your area:
- Raise awareness/engagement of support through 'drop in' and 'taster sessions'.
- Challenge discrimination and actively promote understanding within non LGBT+ groups/settings to improve accessibility.
- Give people extended time to trust in the services and networks on offer.
- Raise awareness of the challenges people face and share best practice directly with professionals working in the ecosystem.

3. How can we improve LGBT+ support?
- Personal friendships and trusted internet communities provide reassurance; key to engaging with LGBT+ people aged 50+.
- Use a wide variety of 'engagement tools' (buddies, newsletters, flyers, social media, phone and email) and co-designed activities to build trusted connections.
- Model services using a balance of both staff and volunteers to leverage the full range of skills, insight and experience.
- LGBT+ specific groups play an important role in reducing social isolation for people aged 50+ and time should be taken to connect LGBT+ people to these networks.