# The Value of Small Community-Led Equalities Research
## Evaluation of the shorter Ageing Equally? research projects

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Simpler summary report

This is an easier to read summary of the evaluation report about the shorter "Ageing Equally?" research projects which were carried out by Equalities Board member organisations.

It explains why we did the evaluation report, and our main findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

We have written it to help people understand the full report more easily.

**Glossary**

**Ambition for Ageing (AfA)** = a Greater Manchester programme that aims to make communities more age-friendly and improve older people's quality of life

**Commissioners** = organisations or people that fund someone else to do something (e.g. fund a community-based organisation to do research)

**Communities of identity or experience** = a group of people who share a common identity or experience (e.g. Bangladeshi people, LGBT people, or people living with dementia)

**Data** = information

**Disseminate** = spread about or share

**Equalities Board (EB)** = the group responsible for making AfA inclusive and accessible for everyone

**Evaluation** = a process of looking at something to find out what you have learned, what is good or bad, or what has worked or needs to be done differently

**Facilitator** = the person who runs a meeting, and makes sure that the space is safe enough and respectful for all, and everyone is able to contribute

**GMCVO** = Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisations, the organisation that is responsible for managing the Ambition for Ageing programme

**Identity** = your sense of your self

**Inclusion** = working in such a way that marginalised and minority groups are involved and able to participate in or benefit from a programme.

**Intergenerational** = mixing age groups, e.g. mixing old and young people

**Interviewee** = someone who is interviewed for a research project

**Marginalised** = the result of being pushed to the margins of society: excluded or ignored

**Micro funding** = providing small amounts of money (e.g. up to £2,000) to groups of people or organisations

**Minority** = a group of people who are different in some way from the majority of the population

**Participant** = someone who takes part in a project

# 1. Introduction and Aims of the evaluation report

## About the "Ageing Equally?" programme

Ambition for Ageing funded the "Ageing Equally?" research programme Ambition for Ageing to find out: "What makes a good place to grow older for people who belong to minority communities?"

There were 15 research projects. GMCVO managed 10 longer projects. The Equalities Board managed five shorter projects by organisations that are members of the EB. These each received £2,000 to research specific communities in specific areas. They did the research between March and September 2019.

- **Ethnic Health Forum** researched barriers to accessing services for older people in the Kuwaiti Bedoun community in Central Manchester.

- **Europia** researched the assets and skills of Polish people aged 50+ in Greater Manchester.

- **St George's Centre** researched what makes an age-friendly neighbourhood for older people with long term mental illness who live in the BL1 postcode area of Bolton.

- **Visible Outcomes** researched what makes an age-friendly neighbourhood for refugees over 50 years old who live in Salford.

- **Wai Yin** researched how Chinese older people, especially disabled people and those who speak different community languages, can grow old and happy.

You can read all the research reports here: https://lgbt.foundation/ambition-for-ageing/publications.

## Aims of the evaluation report

The report shares what we learned about the challenges and benefits of funding and carrying out the shorter "Ageing Equally?" research projects.

**How we researched the report**

The organisations doing research kept diaries recording their successes and challenges, and other things they learned. We analysed the information in these diaries and we interviewed one person from each organisation about their experience of doing the research.

## 2. Findings Part One: What we learned about micro-funding community organisations to carry out research

The report findings are in two sections. The first section is about what we learned about the benefits and challenges of community-based organisations doing research. In this section the report lists our recommendations for funders and community organisations in subsections for each stage of the research process: planning and designing research, fieldwork, analysis and reporting, dissemination. We found that the strengths of the community organisations were more in fieldwork, or in gathering information, and dissemination, or sharing findings. They needed most help with the planning the research analysing data, and writing reports.

a) Benefits

Community organisations are often led by people from the community, and involve people with direct experience of discrimination or marginalisation are in co-designing the research. They have specialist knowledge about their own communities. Community-based organisations can be culturally sensitive and may understand barriers in using certain research methods. They may also be trusted more by their communities. When community-based organisations write reports their style of writing is likely to be more in tune with their communities. They are able to disseminate findings widely through community networks. They often put their findings into practice straight away in their work.

b) Challenges

Community-based organisations often do not have enough experience or skills in doing research. They may need practical help and guidance with technical aspects of research, such as help with the planning stage, writing research questionnaires, analysing data, and writing recommendations. Community-

based organisations may also need more time and flexibility so they can take risks and try new methods, or try to reach more marginalised people in their community. They may also need extra time and funding for interpreting if community members do not speak English.  Although they can disseminate findings widely in the community, they may need support from funders and commissioners to share research findings at more strategic levels.

## 3. Findings Part Two: What we learned about the benefits of being involved in community-based research

The report also shares what we learned about the specific benefits for community-based organisations that took part in "Ageing Equally?", the research participants and their communities.

Organisations benefited by improving their research skills so they can do further research, showing how their work is needed by their community, increasing their reputation, and involving new people in their organisations.

Individuals benefited from taking part by feeling heard and learning new skills. The wider community benefited from having increased knowledge available about community members' needs.

## 4. Discussion

It is important to support community-based organisations at every stage of the research process. It is important to accept that it is difficult to research marginalised communities, for lots of reasons. Community-based organisations need to be able to be flexible and have support to change their methods or try new methods.

The opportunity to carry out research was so important that the community-based organisations did it even though it took up a lot of staff and volunteer time. Many times staff at community-based organisations volunteered their free time to complete the research. The organisations felt it was a valuable experience because they gained the opportunity to prove how important their work is and highlight the needs of marginalised people in their communities.

**Recommendations**

There are lots of detailed recommendations for commissioners and community organisations in the full report. There are also some more general recommendations for people who want to micro-fund community-based organisations to do research, and for community organisations.

Recommendations for commissioners:
- Don't only measure success by whether the research is completed but also by whether things have changed for organisations, individuals and communities involved.
- Take a "test and learn" approach and allow researchers to take risks, and learn from problems and challenges.
- Recognise that the costs of community researchers and translation into community languages need extra time and money.
- Provide access to technical and research skills support throughout the research project, especially in data analysis and reporting

Recommendations for community organisations:
- Be realistic about what you can achieve with micro-financing – be realistic about how big your research project is and what skills you have in your organisation and community
- Think about both how the research will benefit your organisation and individuals involved, and how to keep focused on the research question

## 5. What we learned from these research projects about "what makes a good place to grow older for people in minority communities"

The report also lists some key learning that relates to all marginalised groups, that the Equalities Board identified from individual research projects. They are about: Supporting feelings of safety and security, Iintegration and belonging, Ensuring people can participate, Creating community resources, Providing information that people understand, and Accessible transport and facilities.

You can find out more about the whole "Ageing Equally?" research programme here: https://www.ambitionforageing.org.uk/ageing-equally.

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