

**Manchester
Metropolitan
University**



Being a Co-Researcher

Evaluation report of the GM GOLD project 2018 to 2020

**by Dr Sue Caton
from Manchester Metropolitan University**



Our funders and partners





Introduction

GM GOLD stands for Greater Manchester Growing Older with Learning Disabilities.

The project ran from June 2018 to March 2020. It looked if people with a learning disability who are over 50 years of age can do things they enjoy, see people they like, and feel part of their community.

This report is about the experiences of the 15 Co-Researchers who took part in the project.

It was written by Dr Sue Caton from the Centre for Health, Psychology, and Communities at the Manchester Metropolitan University.

This is a short easy read copy of the report, there is also a full version.

GM GOLD have written a report which tells you all about the project.



The Co-Researchers

The project included a team of 15 people called Co-Researchers. They came from different parts of Greater Manchester and were all people who have a learning disability and were over 50 years old.

Co-production

Co-production is when people with learning disabilities and people without learning disabilities work together on a project.





What we wanted to find out

1. Why the Co-Researchers wanted to be part of the project.
2. What it was like to be a Co-Researcher.

How we did it

A focus group is where you meet a group of people to talk about what they think about something.



We did a focus group with the Co-Researchers in November 2018 when the project started.

We talked about what they thought they would do and why they wanted to do it.

We did 2 more focus groups at the end of the project.



We talked about what the project had been like they thought it would be, what benefits they had got out of taking part and how if there were things that could have been done better.

The way we did things



We tried to make the meetings accessible. We used easy read written information and forms. We read things out and we let people work in the way they thought was best for them.



Manchester Metropolitan University checked we did things in a good way.



We followed advice on the best way to involve people in doing research from INVOLVE, which is part of the National Institute for Health Research.



What we found out in the focus group before the project started

We asked the Co-Researchers

What is a Co-Researcher?

People said: "Someone talking to people to see what they know and see what they'll tell you"

"It is about information gathering"



"Someone that supports someone like if they've got a disability you can work with them to do research"

"I think it's partnership research as well, working with someone who's got the same knowledge as you have"

We asked the Co-Researchers

What jobs in the project would you like to do?

People said: "I'll be the person asking the questions to other people"

"I like to listen to people and talk to people and listen to people about jobs"



We asked the Co-Researchers

Why do you want to be a Co-Researcher?

People said: "Learn new things"

"Promote the organisation they were from"

"Meet new people from other self advocacy groups"





What we found out in the focus group after the project ended

We asked the Co-Researchers

What was the GM GOLD project about?

People said: "People who are aging with a learning disability"

"To get people's views about what it's like being over 50"

"Looking at isolation and loneliness"



We asked the Co-Researchers

What is a Co-Researcher?

People said: "It's finding out things that people do and don't do"

"We ask the questions and write the answers down"

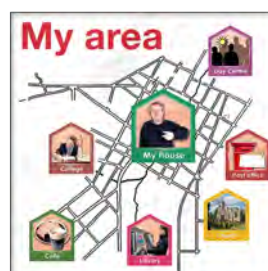


We asked the Co-Researchers


What jobs have you done as a Co-Researcher?

People said: "I've been talking to people ... I find it interesting really, what they were saying"

"We looked at the issues, what are the causes of isolation and loneliness, one of them was the area you live"




We asked the Co-Researchers



Did you have the power to make decisions?

People said: "Yes"

We asked the Co-Researchers



What support has been helpful?

People said: "Being sent minutes and agendas before meetings"

"Sensory props"

We asked the Co-Researchers



Has anything been difficult?

People said: "Not knowing if what they found out would be used to change things for the better"

"We've done all this sort of before when they've given promises, promises, and people have asked - 'what is your report?' but nothing came out of it."

"When there were technical problems at meetings, such as videos not working"

We asked the Co-Researchers

What has been important to you in being in the project?

People said: "Mixing with other people, talking to different people, making new friends. I enjoyed it"

"Social part of the project"



"Being more self-confident"

"Learning new skills"

We asked the Co-Researchers

Have you made friends with anyone in the group?

People said: "Not outside of the meetings"

Conclusions



At the start of the project, the Co-Researchers wanted to be part of the project for reasons, such as to

- Make new friends
- Share their own experiences
- Learn research skills
- Become more confident



After the project, the Co-Researchers said they:

- Felt more confident, so better able to speak up
- Felt valued and part of a team

The social side of the project such as building relationships was important. They were able to be friends with each other in the meetings, but at the moment no one was seeing people outside of meetings.