Self-Building Belonging: A research project

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Self-Build Social Care

E·S·R·C ECONOMIC & SOCIAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

University of Dundee

UNIVERSITY OF Southampton

THE ADVOCACY PROJECT

Project overview

Background

- Idea for this project came from SPIRIT
- This stands for Southampton Platform for Inclusive Research and Ideas Together!
- More people with learning disabilities are now living independently.
- Social care provision is becoming more personalised
- <u>BUT</u> large cuts to local authority budgets.
- Day centres, adult education centres and other services closing or limiting availability.

Project aims

- We wanted to find out about how people with learning disabilities and their supporters are building support and groups of friends in new ways (e.g. friendship clubs or 'getting out' groups).

- We also wanted to find out how this support can help people to participate more in the community. This is how we define **belonging**.

What we did

What and who

For our project we used different methods to find out the answers to our questions.

Repeat focus groups

Photo-voice

Interview

Participant observation (watching a group in action)

During our research we spoke to:
- 39 people from 27 different support provider organisation
- 7 Local authority representatives
- 46 adults with learning disabilities

Where

Our research was carried out in four 'case study' areas, including:
- 2 in England (one rural and one urban area)
- 2 in Scotland (one rural and one urban area)

Data Analysis

- This research poster is a joint presentation between one of the University researchers and three members of the Scottish advisory group.
- Together, we have been working on analysing the research data.

What we found

<u>The importance of local groups and networks</u>

- Locally based support organisations and community groups – offer an important source of belonging.
- *"It makes you feel a part of it [...] it makes you feel a part of what's going on. You know, watching other people doing the work while you sit back and watch them. You actually attend, you're actually involved"*
- Being part of a supportive network of people was also identified as important (peer support)
- *"It's good when you're with your peers, so that's what it is, because they know what you're talking about, we all understand each other [...] And also they've got similar experiences I guess, so it's something that you can share"*

<u>Places (and times!) of belonging</u>

- People can also find belonging in 'everyday' spaces (Inc. favourite shops, local sports centres and at church).

Researcher: And where would you say your favourite place is? Gary: Hiking shop. Researcher: So is that where you spend a lot of your time? Gary: Yeah. Researcher: And why is that? Gary: I like the clothes [...] staff are friendly and nice

- Not everyone likes to spend time in their communities in the evening because of fears around safety.
- Holiday periods can be difficult – because there is less going on at these times. This can leave people feeling isolated.

<u>Not belonging</u>

- The impact of cutbacks – closures and lack of funds, mean that people often lack the support they need to find belonging in their local communities

"I used to volunteer for this charity, but then it closed down [...] I think cause they had no money, so they told me I had to find a different placement" (Sarah, Participant)

- People are often reliant on one group or network – if this closed down they would feel lost (sustainability)
- Not being given information about what is going on in the community – or meaningful choice about what to do, can make people feel like they are not part of the community and don't belong.

Dorset Advocacy

think local act personal

SCLD

Choices Advocacy

People First DORSET