



The VOCALS project

The aim of the **VOCALS** (Voluntary Organisations, Community Groups And Local Networks of Support) study was to explore the role of voluntary and community organisations in supporting individuals to manage long term vascular conditions.

What we did in the research

We conducted telephone interviews with 98 community groups and voluntary organisations from four areas of Greater Manchester. From this we sampled 33 groups to conduct interviews with organisation leaders. In addition, we observed group sessions with and conducted interviews with 20 members of different groups.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the voluntary and community groups' organisers and members for taking part and for sharing their experiences.

Managing Your Health Together

Developing a Resource Booklet for Community Groups

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Aims of the booklet

1. To provide a resource for the voluntary and community groups involved in the research.
2. To disseminate some of the findings of the research to the groups who had taken part
3. To contextualise the research for those who had taken part, situating their involvement in the wider aspects of the project.

Developing the booklet

- ❖ We read and re-read the telephone interview responses around the description of the group activities.
- ❖ Seven themes were developed around the ways people with long term vascular conditions were helped by group participation.
- ❖ Transcripts of interviews with both organisation leaders and members were coded against these themes.
- ❖ Extracts and themes were discussed between the two authors at all stages in the process of analysis.
- ❖ The text of the booklet was written around these themes but designed for a lay audience.

Themes

Information and Advice:- Sharing experiences and passing on information to members helped people to understand and manage their own condition.

Getting Support and Gaining Confidence:- Going to a group helped build confidence and self-esteem. Members offered emotional support to one another.

Being Active:- People who attend groups get involved in community sports, leisure activities and exercise to keep fit and active:

"...we have a guy who does [the run] who, who's 80-something, and he runs with a crash helmet on, he runs there and he runs back, Nigel, he's always last [...] it's that sort of community feel for a lot of the stuff that we do..." [Max, Paid Employee]

"It's a really friendly group":- People felt comfortable discussing their health problems but also enjoyed socialising in the group and often 'have a laugh':

"I have a laugh with them, [...] the banter is delightful...and we used to get there 20 minutes early to sit around on chairs just bantering with each other...and I love that. So I was going for the banter..." [Agnes, Member]



Doing Something Different:- People might be taking up a new hobby; participating in different activities was seen as good for health.

Connecting to Other Groups:- We found the groups have formed good connections with a variety of services. Groups were able to signpost people onto different organisations.

Getting Out and About:- We found that groups offered people a break, to get away from their health problems and concerns.

Conclusions

- Research can be implemented by providing participants with a resource to use in their work.
- Research findings can be presented to participants in an accessible format that is tailored to that audience.
- There should be a PPI element in the implementation of research.