

Top 5 tips for inclusive PPI with LGBTQ+ disabled communities (by Isaac Samuels)

1. See the whole person, not a single label

People are never just LGBTQ+, disabled, HIV-positive, or any one identity. Start with the person and with what matters to them, how they see themselves, and what helps them thrive. Avoid reducing individuals to the identity most visible or most convenient for the service. Labels are for jars, not for people.

2. Be curious, not cautious

The biggest barrier is people being afraid of getting it wrong. Ask respectful questions, invite conversation, and allow space for people to share openly. Curiosity builds trust, while silence or assumptions create distance.

3. Recognise intersecting experiences of discrimination

LGBTQ+ people who are also disabled, racialised, or navigating poverty may face overlapping barriers that shape how they engage with PPI. Acknowledge how racism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, and classism can compound, and adapt your approach to reduce these pressures.

Use relational, not tokenistic, co-production

Involvement isn't about recruiting "one person from each group". It's about building genuine relationships, offering flexible and accessible engagement, and sharing power in decision-making. Meaningful PPI comes from dialogue and partnership, not box-ticking.

5. Create spaces where identities can coexist comfortably

Don't force participants to fragment themselves. Design PPI environments that welcome all parts of someone's identity – spiritual, cultural, sexual, social, health-related, and emotional. This includes being open to varied communication styles, respecting pronouns, and adjusting support to meet each person's broader life context.

Key learnings from Isaac's session:

It's difficult to avoid tick box diversity efforts (focus on equity, and diversity will follow!). We need to be working at the speed of trust.

Insights into some of the barriers one can face. Don't make assumptions and ask questions; develop the relationship and try to establish a wider understanding.

Turning differences into dialogue and taking things at the speed of trust.