

Top tips for including lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer (LGBTQ+) people in your PPI group (by Suzanna Hopwood)

1. Build trust through safety, respect, and clarity

Many LGBTQ+ people (especially trans participants) have experienced discrimination and may be wary of institutions. Be transparent about the purpose of the research, how insights will be used, and what participants can expect. Make it clear that the space is respectful, confidential, and non-judgemental.

2. Avoid assumptions and centre lived experience

LGBTQ+ identities and experiences are diverse. Don't assume what people need or what issues matter to them. Ask, listen, and adapt. Recognise that lived experiences, including transition journeys, family dynamics, or interactions with healthcare, shape how people engage in PPI.

3. Consider privilege and structural inequalities

Some LGBTQ+ people face intersecting barriers such as economic inequality, racism, exclusion from family, or lack of access to healthcare. Practical supports like flexible meeting times, online options, or reimbursement clarity help reduce these barriers and ensure more equitable participation.

4. Use community-led and partnership approaches

Engagement is most effective when it is done with communities, not to them. Work with LGBTQ+ organisations, community groups, and peer networks. Involving LGBTQ+ facilitators, or co-designing activities with community members, helps build trust and avoids extractive "researcher-knows-best" dynamics.

5. Show active allyship and follow through

People participate fully when they feel seen and supported. Use correct names and pronouns, challenge discriminatory comments, and intervene constructively if conflict arises. Importantly, show how their input leads to real change demonstrating that involvement is meaningful, not tokenistic.

Key learnings from Suzanna's session:

The role privilege can have in experience of transitioning emphasised the importance of time, trust, respect and care when engaging with communities - knowing what you are doing and how it will benefit the trans community.

I got insights on developing research with trans communities and what being a trans ally can look like.