

CO-DESIGNING A HEALTH-PROMOTION PROGRAMME WITH VULNERABLE WOMEN

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Background

AIM: *Shoulder to Shoulder: Walk and Talk* seeks to determine the feasibility of group health-walks to increase health literacy among women with experience of the criminal justice system.

PRESENTATION FOCUS: The women's involvement in workshops to co-design health-walks where cancer awareness could be discussed to promote health-seeking behaviours among their peers is our focus here.



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Interaction with women before the inclusive workshops

Building on the PI's previous study¹, *Walk and Talk* began in April 2019. In the first three months, the researcher built rapport and trust with clients attending a women's community rehabilitation centre as a condition of their probation, joining their walking groups in two locations. She described the study and outlined what participation in workshops entailed: attending one to three workshops (their choice), each 60-90 minutes, at the women's centre; collaboratively developing a programme that reflected their input on how to discuss health and cancer while walking. Their views on how best to start talking with their peers about cancer and health was each workshop's focus, in order that the programme felt genuine and realistic for women going through community rehabilitation. Five women in one site and three women in the second site consented to participate in 6 workshops which were held on three successive weeks in July, co-facilitated by the PI and the researcher.

Co-designing the health-walks programme

INCLUSIVE APPROACH

- at the first workshop, ground rules were developed with the women: respect viewpoints, differences and sensitivities; keep confidentiality within the room
- key topics were introduced without pre-conceptions; facilitation was responsive to directions suggested by the women's input and thoughts

VALUING EVERYONE'S CONTRIBUTIONS

- echoed back points arising in workshops; e.g., "is this what you mean?", and stated what is being learned from all collaborators
- asked participants what words and terms to use or avoid in *Walk and Talk*

A VARIETY OF APPROACHES TO ENGAGE PARTICIPATION

- discussion, vignettes, drawing and creative activities (see image below) helped to engage, stimulate and enhance participation among all workshop participants

SUPPORTIVE, SAFE ENVIRONMENT

- a support worker from the women's centre, known to all participants, attended the workshops to assist anyone who found the talks distressing
- a Time-Out card was placed by each women's chair: anyone not wanting to talk or wishing to leave the room could push the card to the centre of the table and everyone would respect her choice (Time-Out was never used)

MINIMISING POWER RELATIONSHIPS / HIERARCHIES

- facilitators remained attuned to their presentation style and body language
- they respected and safeguarded the participants' privacy and choices

Key Insights

Relationship-building, trust, humour and mutual respect underpinned the methods of involving women in the workshops.

We created an environment on the women's terms where they felt safe. Women's agency was demonstrated when they reported, unprompted, that they felt "listened to, not judged, we are being heard".



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