



Logo knitted by Betty

Fiona Henderson, Researcher,  
Yunus Centre for Social Business & Health



*Focus 50+ Team:* Rachel Baker,  
Catherine Docherty, Fiona Henderson,  
Artur Steiner, Micaela Mazzei

# Introduction

- Aims
- Approach
- Our partners & participants
- Key findings
- Summary of recommendations
- Being over 50 in the future...



# Why Focus 50+?

“Here, we are thinking of social enterprise in a much-wider role of acting on broader determinants of health...In seeking to fulfil a social mission...it could be claimed that almost *all* social enterprises act upon social factors which comprise broader determinants of health and may be able to do this in ways that traditional service delivery organisations are unable to do...”

(Donaldson et al, 2014, p.2)

# Focus 50+ Aims

1. Explore, qualitatively, the experiences of people over 50 participating in social enterprise activities, and the effect of those experiences on their health and wellbeing;
2. Explore, qualitatively, how design thinking impacts on the ability of social enterprises working with over 50s to achieve their mission and the experience of those involved in the process.

# Focus 50+ - Research approach

- Spent time with the organisation observing activities
- Conducted interviews with clients/customers, carers, volunteers and staff
- Co-produced design thinking workshops in 2 organisations, facilitating 5 workshops in total
- Interviewed design thinking workshop participants

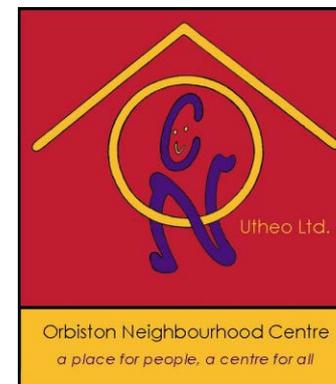
# Focus 50+ research partners



10 Participants



30 Participants



48 Participants

In total, 88 people participated in Focus 50+



*“LifeCare’s Philosophy – How extra years of zest makes us the best*  
Our philosophy is extra years of zest. This means extra years of independence as much as possible. Extra years of engaging with those around you, regardless of age.”

- Origins began in 1941
- Owns their Centre
- 60+ employees.



<http://www.lifecare-edinburgh.org.uk/>

## Services & Activities



<http://www.lifecare-edinburgh.org.uk/>

- Help at Home service
- Outreach Direct registered care service
- Vintage Vibes - Befriending
- Day Centre for frail and/or isolated older people
- Café Life
- Venue hire

# Orbiston Neighbourhood Centre



<http://www.oncbellshill.org>

## *A Place For People, A Centre For All*

Orbiston Neighbourhood Centre maintains a range of services and activities for the communities around Bellshill, North Lanarkshire, providing opportunities for learning, leisure and self-improvement in an open, friendly and caring environment where everyone is welcome and all are treated equally.

- Formed in 1993
- Do not own their premises
- 20+ employees

commonhealth 

FOCUS 50+

# Orbiston Neighbourhood Centre



- Day Centre for frail and/or isolated older people
- BeFriend in Bellshill
- Men's Group
- Food Co-op
- Theo's Café
- Venue hire



<http://www.oncbellshill.org/index.html>

commonhealth 

FOCUS 50+



# Lingo Flamingo

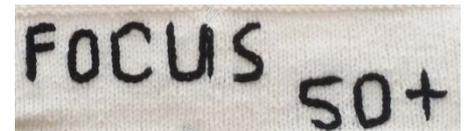
## *Mission statement:*

To bring people together and to provide dynamic, interactive language workshops to empower older adults to delay the effects of dementia and brain ageing.



- Launched 12 December 2015
- No premises for service delivery
- One member of staff

<http://lingoflamingo.org/>





# Focus 50+ Results



Two emergent themes were:

1. Self-Identity: Being 'old'
2. Shared Identity: 'Us' & 'Them'

# 'The social problems of ageing' (Pollak, 1948, p.35)

- Older people are stigmatised by society and by each other
- Stigma has been conceptualised as a social determinant of health causing inequality
- Individuals are exposed from birth to negative stereotypes about ageing
- Stereotypes affect behaviour and are difficult to override
- Feeling your 'subjective age' is younger than your chronological (actual) age is linked to positive subjective wellbeing

**In this study we found no-one described themselves as old**

# Older people & service design

How do clients reconcile their positive subjective age with participating in activities presented as being for old people or the elderly?

**We found no evidence suggesting participating in activities designed for older people undermines people's subjective age**

So what is going on?  
It may be a matter of identity...



# What is Identity?

## Self-Identity:

How people see themselves

## Social Identity:

Created through relationships with others

## Shared Identity:

Sharing *self-perceived* characteristics with others or a group (i.e. we/us)



# Age & Self-Identity

“You listen to old people’s life stories. I mean, I like reading. So therefore I like listening to people’s life stories...”

(Theresa, 85, client)

“I don’t really feel old though. But I don’t look in the mirrors, Fiona, so you’ve got a clue there! (laughter)”

(Theresa, 85, client)

# Age & Self-Identity

“I used to say that, you know. “This is only for old people.” But it’s not really. It’s good.”

(Evelyn, 72, client)

**Clients developed strategies to disassociate themselves from an older identity**

“...I actually quite enjoyed old people’s company. I actually found...I could talk to them. I could play games with them...I found I got on really well with these old people.”

(Marilyn, 70, volunteer)

# Age & Self-Identity

Older people employed strategies to disassociate themselves from an older self-identity

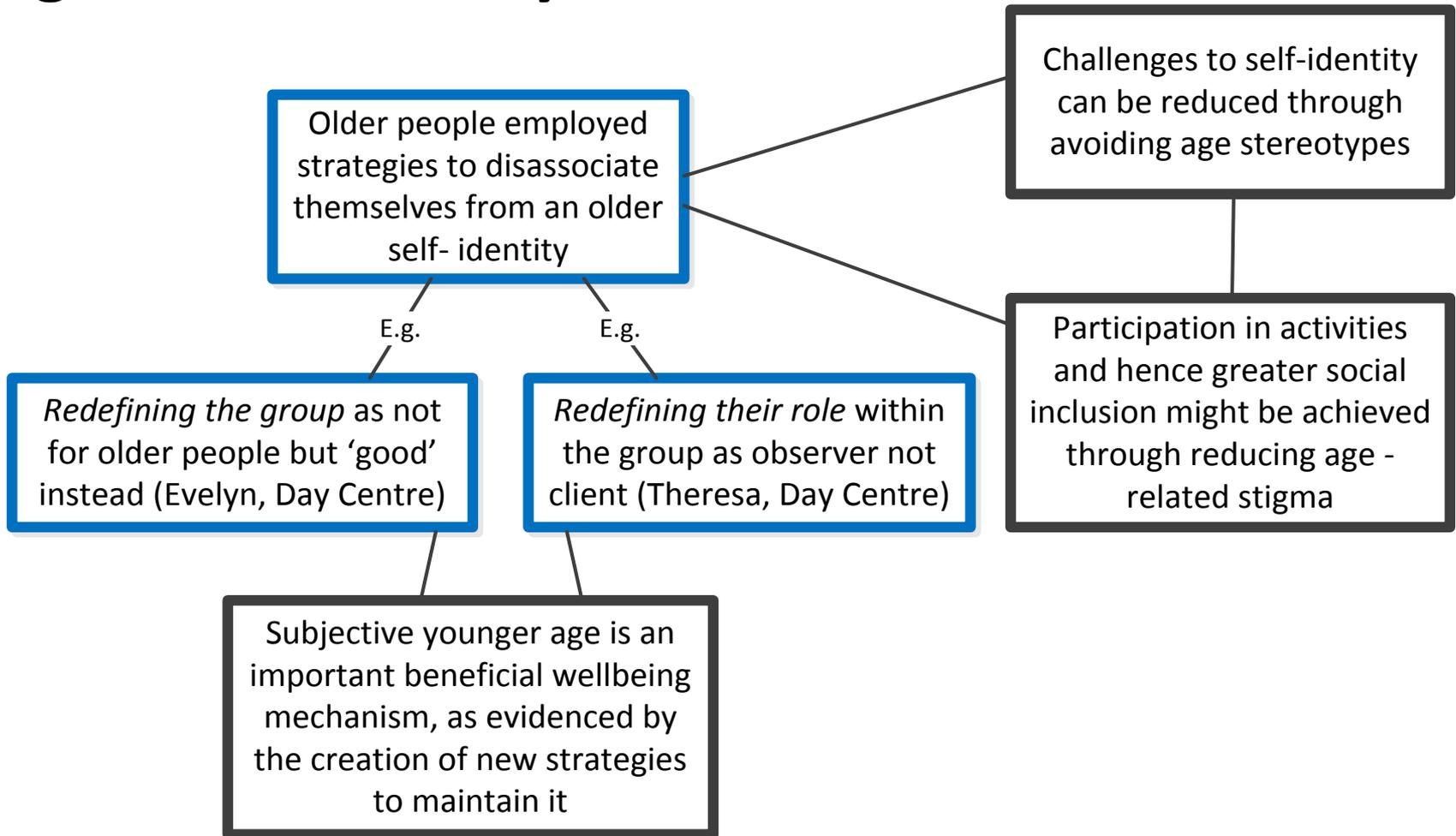
E.g.

*Redefining the group as not for older people but 'good' instead (Evelyn, Day Centre)*

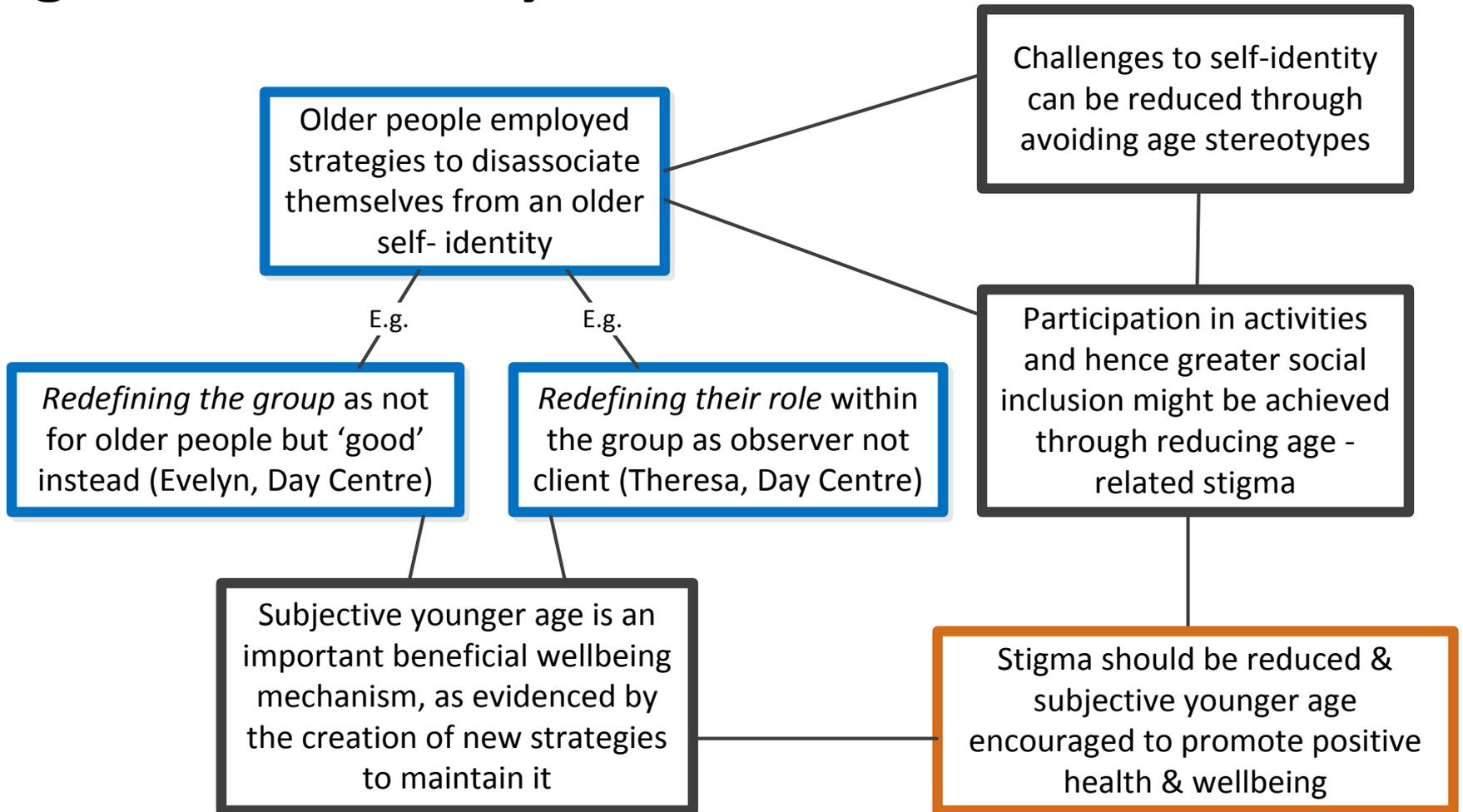
E.g.

*Redefining their role within the group as observer not client (Theresa, Day Centre)*

# Age & Self-Identity



# Age & Self-Identity



# Developing a shared identity

- Shared identity benefits health & wellbeing
- Group membership can benefit health and wellbeing
- BUT group membership alone does always not lead to quality social connections
- Targeted groupings of participants e.g. by age, condition or gender, can benefit health & wellbeing

# Developing a shared identity

“...I keep asking...for my P45 and she keeps saying, “Five years you need to put in! Five years before I can give you it. Another five.” I’m going to be here when I’m ninety!” (Laughter)

(Sylvia, 79, volunteer)

“I believe that the elderly enjoy coming in. They get the banter...”

(Sylvia, 79, volunteer)

# Developing a shared identity

“...we still managed to get about, and then his eyesight deteriorated, so we just had to sit in in the last year of his life...He died a year past January this year. But oh, it’s broke my heart. I was really close to him.”

(Joyce, 76, Volunteer)

“...we went shopping. Jimmy loves shopping, he just loves shopping. And we went to Costco’s, then we went to Lidl’s and then we went to Asda for all his shopping. And he made me my dinner....his chilli’s lovely.”

(Thomas, 60, Volunteer)

“...you feel sorry for them, you know?”

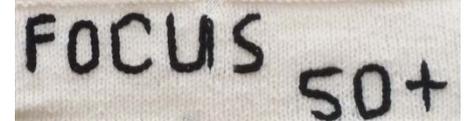
(Shirley, 59, Befriender)

# Developing a shared identity

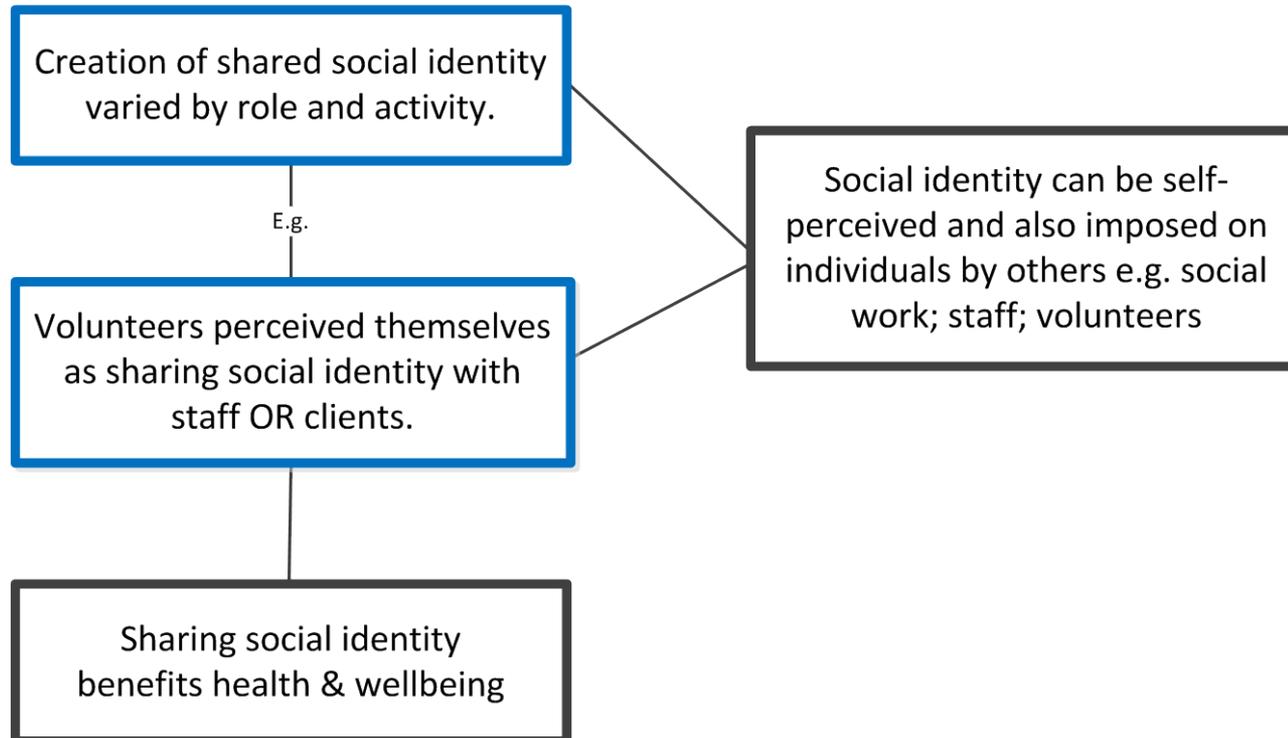
Creation of shared social identity  
varied by role and activity.

E.g.

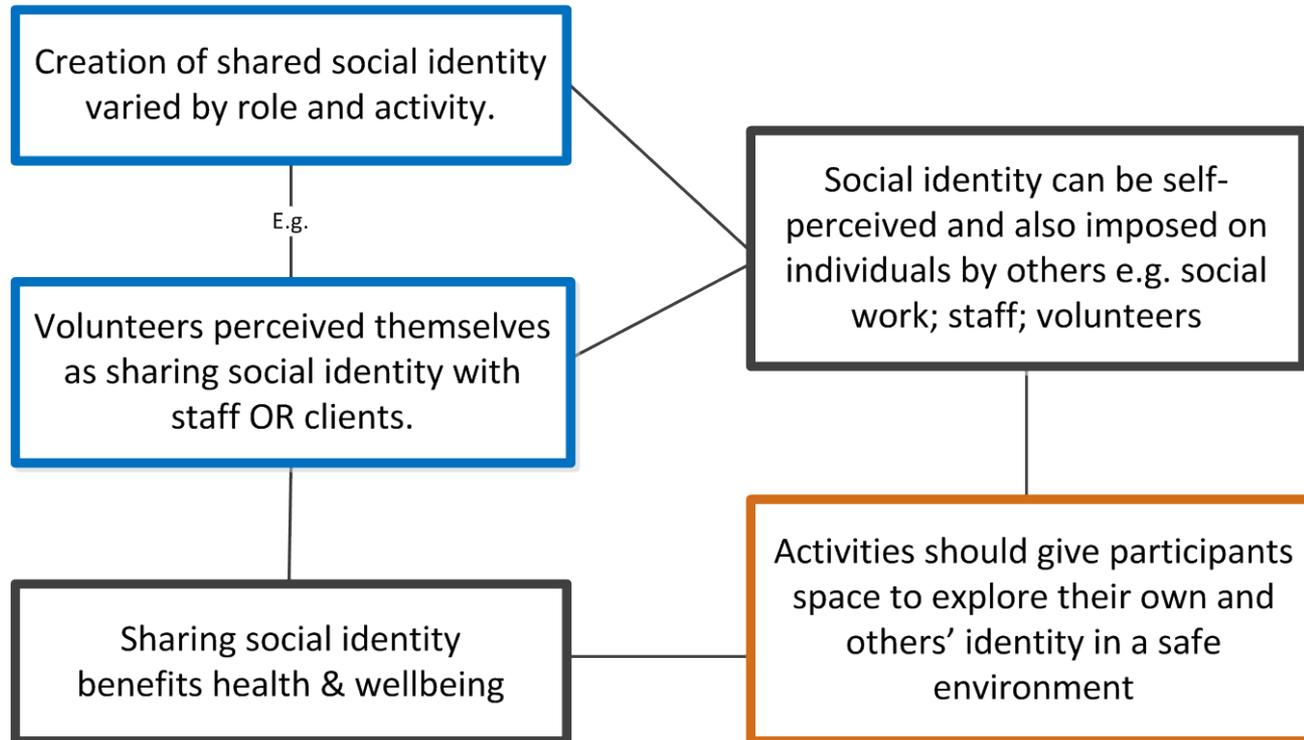
Volunteers perceived themselves  
as sharing social identity with  
staff OR clients.



# Developing a shared identity



# Developing a shared identity



# Groups and identity

“...you realise that what’s happening to their husbands is happening to my husband, and we just talk about these things...how you cope...”

“...you feel you’re not on your own when you are in a group like this.”

(Audrey 77, Carer)

“...all of the people here...understand the situation. They know what you’re going through. They (*partners*) are similar in so many ways.”

(Yvonne, 80, Carer)

# Groups and identity

“All your pals are here. The same crowd of us play at that table every week. Other ones want to come and play at our table but we don’t let them. No. This is the top table, you don’t get to play here!” (laughs)

(Douglas, 80, client)

“...there’s six guys at that table and we’ve all got our own problems...all get on well together...I couldn’t tell you the names of the other guys on the other tables (laughs).”

(Hamish, 69, client)

# Groups and identity

“I go to my bed and I lie there at night greeting...You’ve no idea what goes through my mind...And that’s why I say, it’s great when I get a day out... a couple of hours, I’m alright. It’s when you come back to an empty house again...”

“I kept telling the boys that. I kept telling them that. ‘If it weren’t for you men in here, I probably wouldn’t be here today.’”

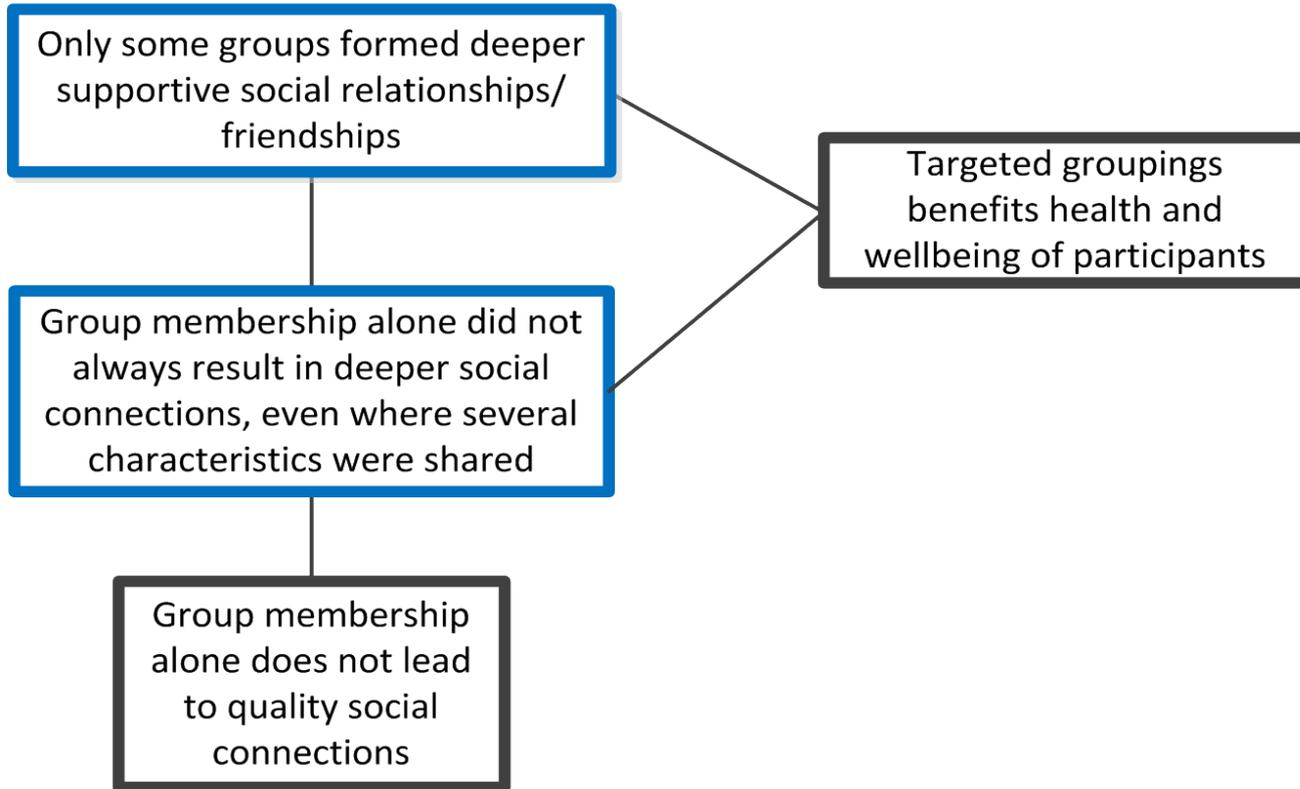
(Alan, 78, client)

# Groups and identity

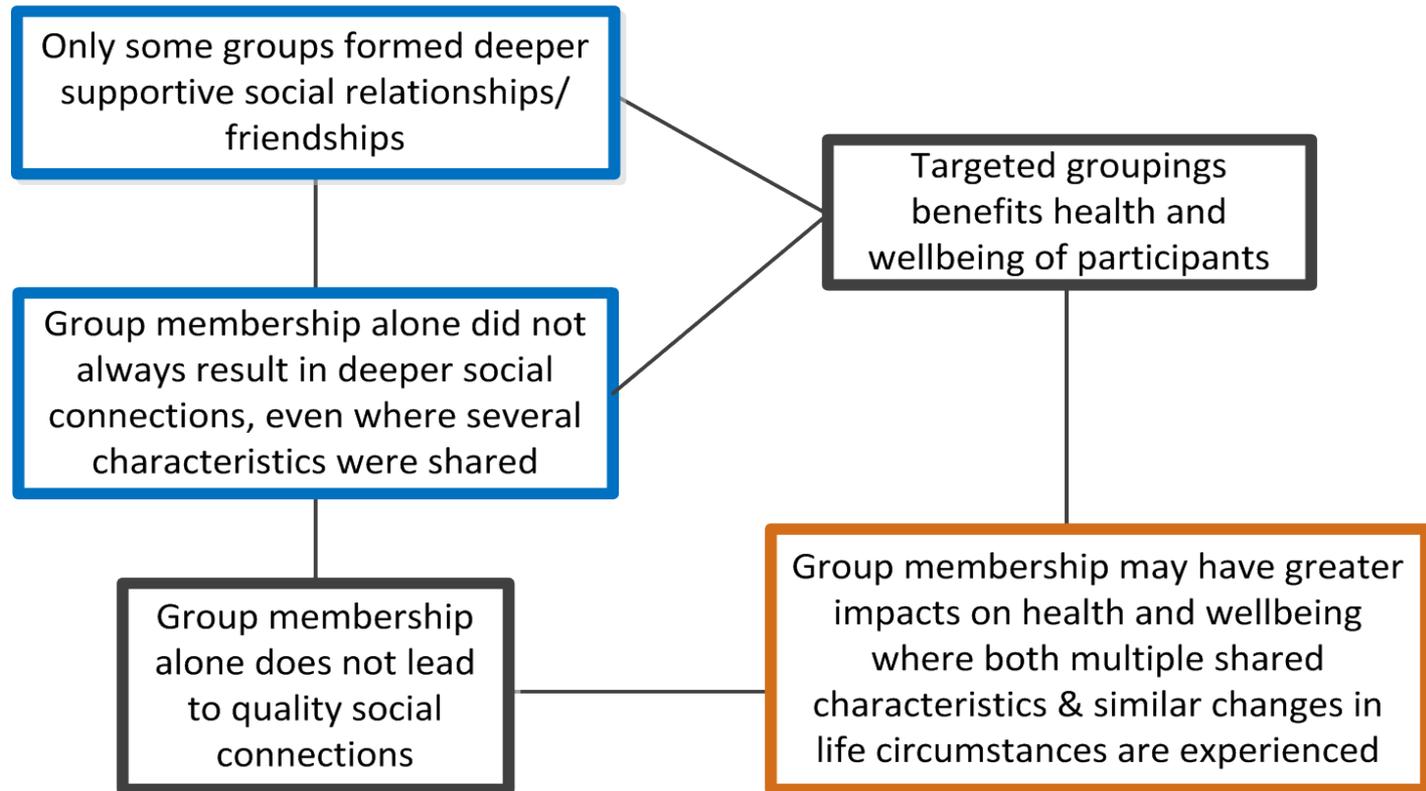
Only some groups formed deeper supportive social relationships/ friendships

Group membership alone did not always result in deeper social connections, even where several characteristics were shared

# Groups and identity



# Groups and identity



# Summary of recommendations

- Everyone should be mindful of ageism and stigma
- Subjective younger age should be encouraged

Activities should if possible:

- Give participants space to explore their own and others' identity in a safe environment
- Connect people with multiple shared characteristics and similar changes in life circumstances

# Being over 50 in the future...

1. How effective are social enterprise activities currently at generating groups and shared identities?
2. How can services facilitate groups and shared identities both between and amongst clients, carers and volunteers?
3. How do we design these services to ensure they promote individuals' younger subjective age?

FOCUS 50+

**Thank you**