**Researcher's perspective and background**

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I was drawn to this area of research from a professional and personal perspective. In my professional experience prior to my clinical psychology doctoral training, I had worked with socially excluded groups with physical and intellectual disabilities and had seen the benefit of various inclusion projects. From a personal perspective, I have held a lifelong interest in football and have a wider interest in playing sport in a group setting. To understand and reflect on the possible influence of these perspectives on the data collection and analysis, I used a reflective diary following the interviews. This helped me to become as aware as possible of my own biases. These reflections were discussed in research supervision on a regular basis.

**Research methodology**

A thematic qualitative approach was chosen to approach the data collection and analysis as it allows understandings to be developed from respondents' interviews in the absence of prior hypotheses. The aim of our approach was to reveal the predominant themes that people use to make sense of their experiences. We take the point of view that knowledge is socially constructed; that individuals bring their own meanings and interpretations to social interactions.[1] A further reason why a qualitative approach was chosen is the limited knowledge about the topic of this research. We aimed to ensure a systematic and rigorous set of procedures for the collection and analysis of data so as to develop appropriately rich themes that reflect the diversity of participants' views. We drew on many of the techniques from grounded theory approaches to try and ensure this.

**Data collection/interviews**

Semi-structured interview schedules were devised using a series of open-ended questions and piloted on a psychology colleague. As a consequence, some of the questions were reworked. The interview schedules were also presented to the

steering group of the project to ensure appropriateness and sensitivity. In accordance with grounded theory methodology, the interview schedules were refined throughout the interview process in light of new themes emerging. Interviews with participants were conducted in a private room within the two sports centres where the football sessions were held. In the case of the facilitators, four of the interviews were also carried out at the sports centres and three at their place of work (an NHS setting). Following each interview, respondents were thanked and offered an opportunity to ask any questions that had arisen out of their participation. Nineteen interviews (twelve with service users and seven with facilitators) were conducted ranging from 18 to 65 minutes and were later fully transcribed. Interviews were carried out in two stages. The first stage involved interviewing the service users and spanned several months. The second stage, with the facilitators, was undertaken over about a month. Transcription was obtained from a professional service with confidentiality assured and transcripts were subsequently checked for accuracy and, occasionally, amended.

**Data analysis**

Interview transcripts were analysed using several 'analytic tools',[1,2] including coding stages and memo writing. Strauss & Corbin[2] (1998) suggest that researchers analyse data following each interview as this allows for emerging themes to be explored further in subsequent interviews. Where possible, therefore, data were collected and analysed simultaneously.

Data collection stopped when the research team judged that no new categories and concepts emerged. However, because of the limitations of the sample size, theoretical sufficiency (p. 257),[3] as opposed to saturation, was aimed for. Theoretical sufficiency was achieved as the categories provided a sufficient explanatory framework for the interview data. However, it is possible that new data may have emerged if further interviews were conducted. The following analytic steps were undertaken.

1. **Line-by-line coding**: this involved labelling the phenomena by line-by-line examination of the data.

2. **Focused coding**: the line- by- line codes were then collapsed to form focus codes, which were then considered alongside the existing data. Throughout the data collection process, the method of 'constant comparative analysis' was used[1] to look for similarities and differences between the codes.

3. **Axial coding**: this stage of the coding involved examining patterns between the coding categories and conceptualising the data more broadly. For example, at this stage of the process, the 13 subcategories became 6 categories.

4. **Memo writing:** memo writing formed an important part of the analytic process and provided the means by which reflections on the interviews and hypotheses through the process of data collection and analysis were made. Memos were written after each interview where practical. These were then used to construct themes and highlight areas that required further exploration in subsequent interviews and facilitate category development.

**Analytical rigour**

Techniques to enhance the integrity of this study included prolonged engagement with the material and monitoring of the researcher's personal responses to the text and the research process using a reflective diary. Data from facilitators were used as a method of triangulating[4] the data from the participants, allowing for a more valid and comprehensive understanding of the participant experience. A validity check was provided by a psychology colleague who independently coded two of the transcripts. As the themes were generated, the categories were discussed with a research supervisor. The overall model was discussed with two independent researchers.

**References**

1. Charmaz K. *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis.* Sage, 2006.
2. Strauss A, Corbin J. *Basics of Qualitative Research Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. Sage, 1998.
3. Dey I. *Grounding Grounded Theory Guidelines for Qualitative Inquiry,* Academic Press. 1999.
4. Denzin N K. *The Research Act* (3rd edn). Prentice Hall. 1989.