



# Developing a peer support intervention with older veterans to meet their unmet social support needs

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## Aims

- Explore the acceptability of peer support for older veterans
- Develop service provision in the community

"Empathy rather than sympathy"  
Veteran consultant, male, 71 yrs, 30 years service, RN

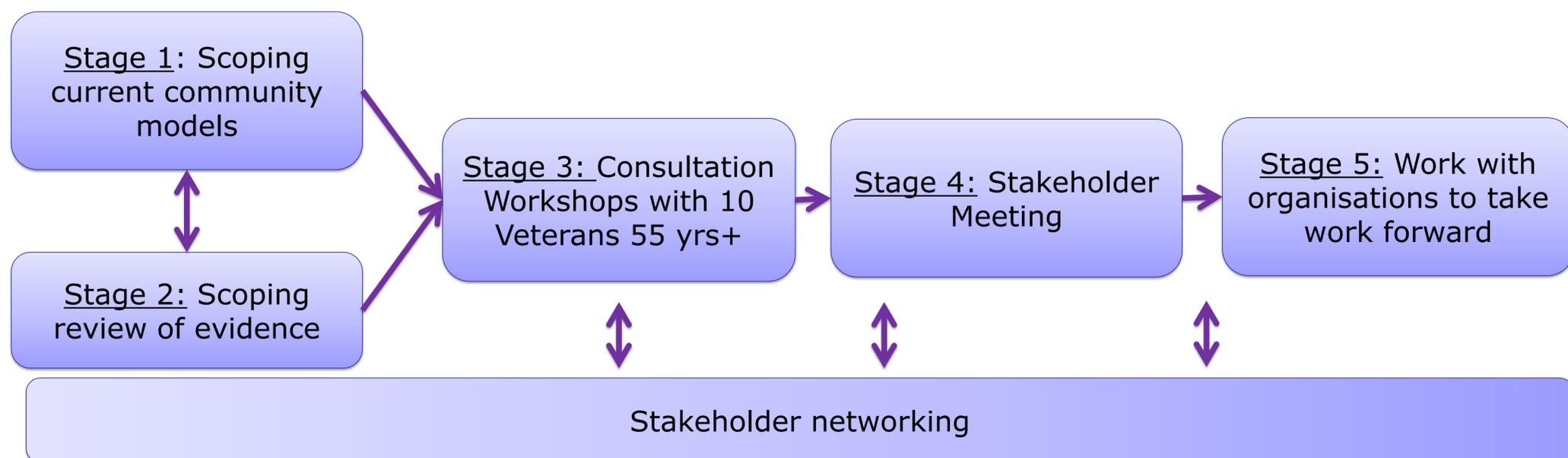
## Rationale

- Likely to reflect on earlier life as we age (Life review and Reminiscence)
- Likely to reflect on experiences from when we were 18-30 years old (memory bump)
- Presence of unresolved trauma can cause difficulties in later life
- Difficulties in transition
- Sharing positive memories can reduce loneliness and isolation
- **\*\*Naturally occurring social support\*\***:
  - May have been lost due to changes in social resources
  - May support avoidance of difficult memories / negative coping strategies

## Why Peer Support?

- A low intensity intervention to provide a listening ear and signposting
- Based on *Homophily Theory*: most likely to accept support from someone who has been through similar experiences
- Overseen and monitored to ensure peer support is appropriate and helpful

## Method



## Findings

- 2 organisations offering 'peer support'
- Scarcity of research specifically for peer support for veterans (ongoing systematic review)
- Peer Support is appealing and preferred model is similar to existing, tested models from other contexts
- No need to establish a new organisation: Concentrate on improving existing models

## Where next?

- Exploring opportunities to implement findings within a national organisation and local services.

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