

Research and the voluntary sector

Gudrun Limbrick, WordWorks

Examples of topics in recent WordWorks research

- Young people who had run away from children's homes and family homes
- Parents of children with disabilities
- Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people
- Minority ethnic populations
- People with experience of domestic violence

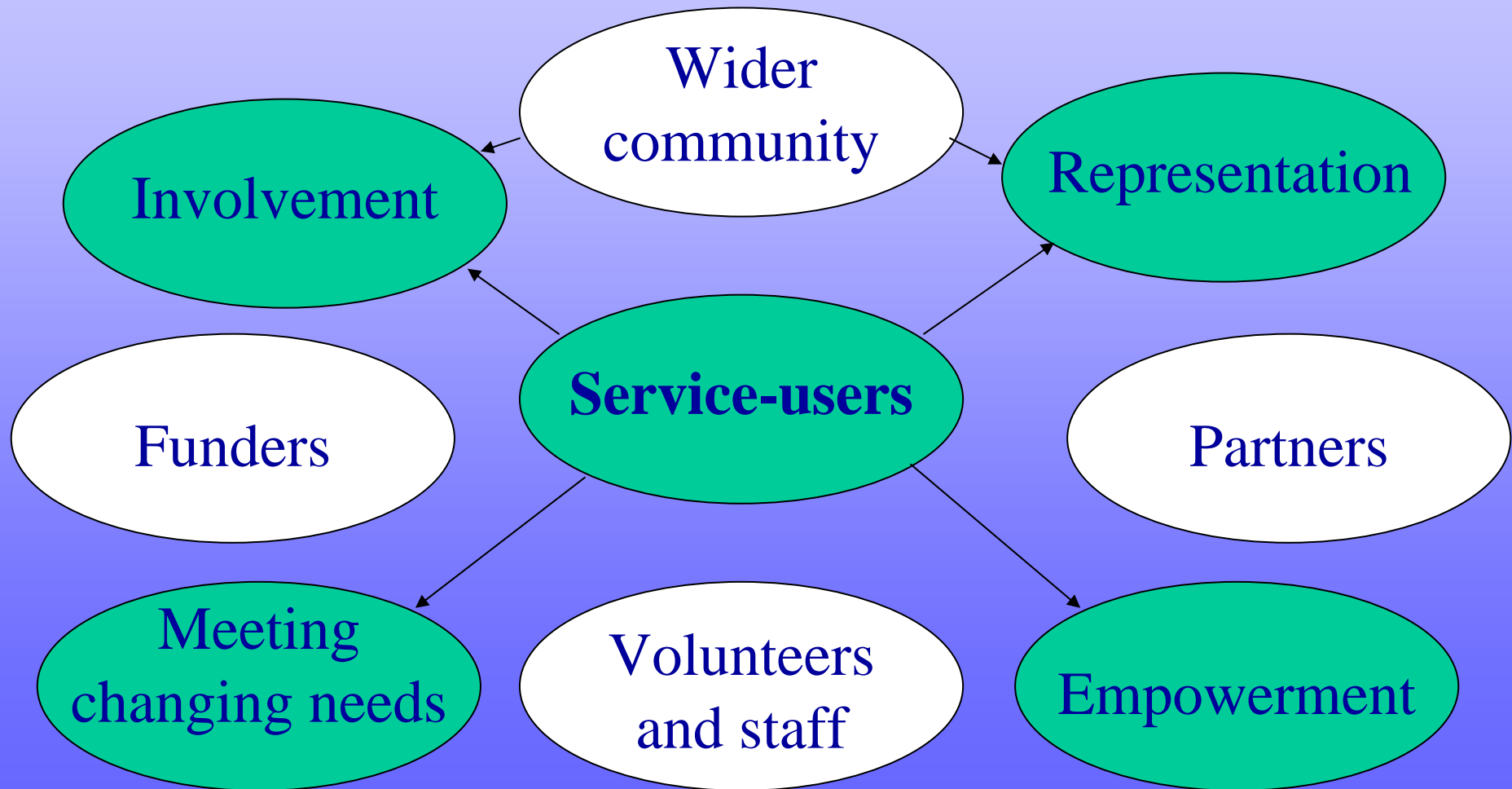
Motivational factors

- Research is the means by which voluntary organisations internal progress and external developments
- Research is a necessary part of the funding relationship
- Research is a tool in lobbying and promoting change

Recent developments

- Growing recognition by funders of the need to fund research
- Partnerships in research between voluntary organisations and others
- Outsourcing of research to consultancies and partner organisations

Principles of voluntary sector work



Principles of voluntary sector research

- User-involvement / user-led
- Flexibility
- Inclusion
- Grass roots approach

- Trust and credibility

Myths

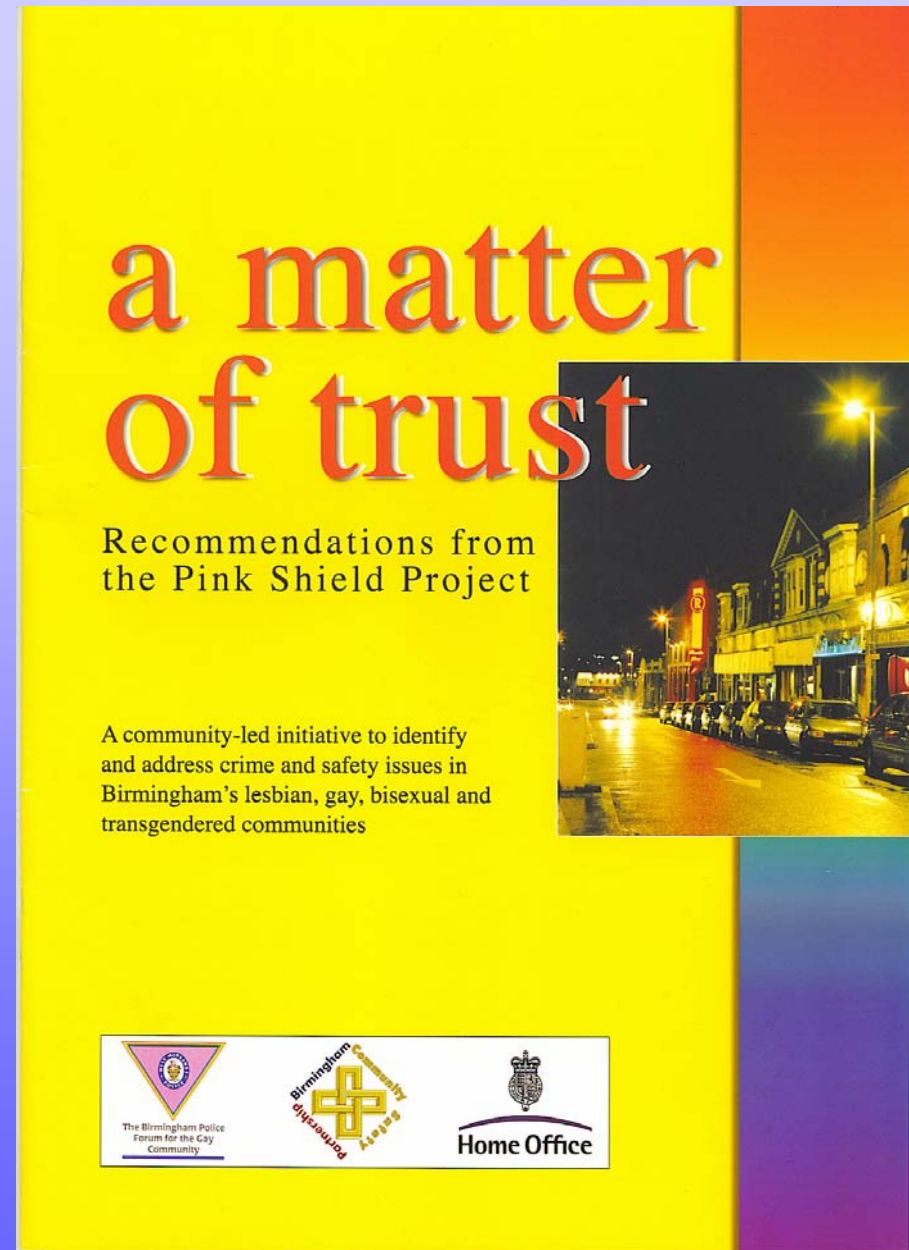
about voluntary sector research

- Amateurish
- Limited in scope / non-transferable
- Not rigorous
- Low budget

Researching a hard-to- reach group

A community-led initiative to identify and address crime and safety issues in Birmingham's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered communities

Word 
→ Works 



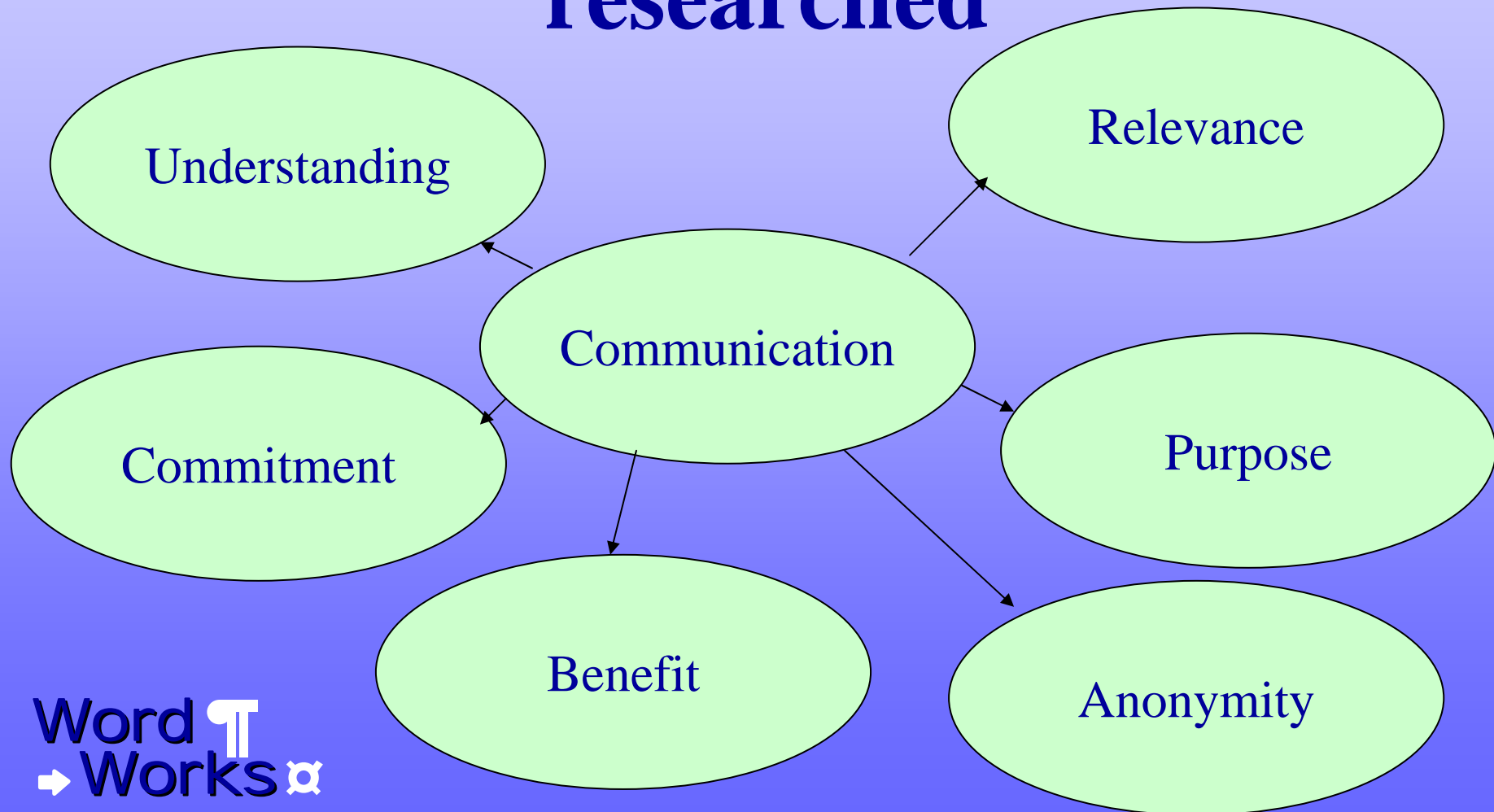
A hard-to reach group

- Lack of trust with statutory bodies
- Invisible
- No membership organisations
- Sensitive issue
- A diverse group of people

Reaching research subjects: the process

- Communication
- Talk to the agencies that are already in contact
- Consultation / involvement
- Emphasise community benefits
- Employ appropriate / flexible / varied methods
- Involve participants in the results

The perspective of those researched



Simple examples:

- Appropriate language
- Appropriate image / appearance
- Rigorous piloting / discussion
- Acknowledge and work with the heterogeneity of any hard-to-reach group
- Share resources / added value

The ideal:

The most *effective* research is that in which those who are researched are no longer passive subjects but are active participants with a stake in the process and the results

Existing research

- Enormous wealth of existing research in the voluntary sector:

Community needs analyses

Community mapping

Single issue surveys

Evaluations

Case studies

The best kept secret?

- Contact voluntary services councils for organisations which cover a similar theme
- Google it
- Consult with national charities
- Trawl literature reviews and reference lists

Alternatively...

- Explore partnerships with voluntary organisations
- Share expertise and knowledge

Gudrun Limbrick

WordWorks

www.word-works.org

0121 373 2747

gudrun.limbrick@word-works.org