

Qualitative Research Forum: May 2017

**Jenni Burt**

## **Flying Without Wings: doing great applied qualitative research in HSR**

As Westlife famously said in their delightful number one hit, 'Flying Without Wings':

"Everybody's looking for that something, One thing that makes it all complete"

For applied health services researchers without formal sociology training, trying to reach the heights of great qualitative research without having got used to Foucault as bedtime reading can be an un-nerving experience. Often, researchers grope around for "that something", hear a bit about grounded theory, and rush off to collect data before the funding runs out. We're aware that complicated words get bandied around, like "epistemology", "ontology" and "interpretive phenomenological analysis", but we're embarrassed to admit we don't really know what they are, and anyway we'd just like to understand what GPs feel about patients with athlete's foot, and get something good published in the BJGP. In this session (potentially more of a brainstorm and group therapy outing than a long lecture), Jenni will set out what the key challenges are in trying to think about – and do – qualitative methodology in applied health services research. She'll try to outline what "the ologies" really are (hoping that she isn't too wrong about this), and talk through how these influence – or should influence – what we do on the ground. Sociologists who understand Foucault are especially welcome, and there will no doubt be numerous references to boy bands and catchy pop songs.