



Training for Trainers

Unit 7: 'Men in the Middle'

Now Open for Applications



Background

The Republic of Ireland was the first country in the world to adopt a National Men's Health Policy (www.mhfi.org/menshealthpolicy.pdf). This policy highlighted the broad range of health and wellbeing issues facing men, and outlined frameworks and strategies to address these needs. In 2017, this Policy was succeeded by the 'Healthy Ireland - Men' Action Plan (www.mhfi.org/Hi-M.pdf).

The Policy recognised the important role played by service providers and local practitioners in improving the health of men and boys, and acknowledged that these stakeholders also have training and support needs. The 'Engage' training programme was developed to address the deficit in gender sensitive service provision for men, and to assist people on the ground to effectively build relationships with / meet the health and wellbeing needs of males of all ages.

What is Engage?

Engage was developed in response to the growing demand from service providers for support to improve their engagement and work with men. It was created via a partnership between the [Institute of Technology Carlow](#), the [Men's Development Network](#), [Waterford Institute of Technology](#), the [Health Service Executive's Health Promotion and Improvement Department](#) and the [Men's Health Forum in Ireland](#) (MHFI).

The content is based upon the partners' experience, evidence from academic and evaluation literature, an initial 24 month pilot phase, and extensive evaluation of the materials developed.

Initially, five 'Units' were developed. These focus upon:

1. What is men's health, how does gender affect it, and what impact does social determinants have?
2. Practitioner values and support.
3. Guiding health consultations with men.
4. The rules of engagement.
5. Establishing a men's group and sustaining engagement.

Later, in 2015, Unit 6 was added to the programme. This specifically looks at 'Connecting with Young Men' - especially in relation to their mental health.

A new Unit 7 ('Men in the Middle') has recently been developed which focuses upon how to engage middle-aged men in order to improve their mental health. The Engage Partners are seeking to recruit a team of experienced facilitators to be part of a Training for Trainers programme to ensure that the learning from this Unit can be cascaded across the country.

'Engage' was developed by IT Carlow, Men's Development Network, Waterford IT, HSE and Men's Health Forum in Ireland



Engage Unit 7: Men in the Middle

In March 2018, a landmark report titled '*Middle-Aged Men and Suicide in Ireland*' (www.mhfi.org/MAMRMreport.pdf) was launched. This was commissioned / coordinated by the Men's Health Forum in Ireland, funded by the National Office for Suicide Prevention, and researched by the National Centre for Men's Health in the Institute of Technology in Carlow.

The aim of this qualitative study was to explore the factors underpinning the high suicide rate among middle-aged men (40-59 years old) in the Republic of Ireland, with a view to providing more effective and gender specific programmes, services, and resources that can support their mental health and wellbeing.

The report highlighted that ...

- Over the past ten years, the suicide rate among middle-aged men in the Republic of Ireland has been the highest of all age cohorts.
- Suicide and suicidal behaviour is more prevalent among certain 'at risk' groups'.
- A range of mid-life transitions are associated with challenges for these men.
- Reaching a crisis point is the most common trigger to seeking help for many men.
- There is a diverse range of barriers and enablers which influence the dynamics of engaging with middle-aged men in relation to their mental health.

To meet the need from practitioners to develop meaningful relationships with this target group, the Engage National Men's Health Training Programme developed a new workshop titled '*Men in the Middle*'.

Types of Engage Training

There are two types of Engage training:

- a) **Training for Trainers** - an intensive, mostly residential course, designed to give a small number of key facilitators the knowledge, skills, experience and support to deliver Engage workshops to others.
- b) **Engage Workshops** - sessions delivered by Engage facilitators (i.e. graduates from the Training for Trainers programme) to front-line service providers and practitioners. These workshops seek to: help participants to increase their understanding of the world of men; enhance their capacity to build relationships with them; and explore what models of effective practice might look like in local situations.

Goal of the Men in the Middle Training for Trainers Programme

We are, currently, recruiting participants for the Unit 7: Men in the Middle Training for Trainers programme. The overarching goal of this initiative is to create a knowledgeable, confident and experienced team of people who are willing and able to cascade their learning throughout the Republic of Ireland via the delivery of workshops.

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What will be Explored?

The Training for Trainers programme will explore themes such as ...

- Creating a 'safe space' for middle-aged men.
- Why we need to work with middle-aged men around mental health issues.
- Our own value base, experience, attitudes towards and expectations of middle-aged men, and how this impacts upon our interactions.
- Empathising with the world of middle-aged men, the key issues that they face, and the specific pressures upon / difficulties facing them.
- Protective factors for good mental health and wellbeing in middle-age, as well as the signs of poor mental health.
- Examples of what works in practice / what a male-friendly service might look like.
- Sources of help, advice, guidance and support.

Aim of Men in the Middle Workshops

The aim of the Unit 7: Men in the Middle workshops is to assist a broad range of practitioners and service providers to develop practical strategies for effectively engaging with middle-aged men around mental health and wellbeing issues.

Focus upon Why and How

It is not possible for either the Training for Trainers or the workshops for practitioners to cover every aspect of men's health or health service provision. Thus, the key focus is upon the engagement process - that is ...

- **WHY** it is important for service providers to focus on men's mental health.
- **HOW** they can review their practice through a male gendered lens and, subsequently, make their work more relevant and welcoming to men.

While Men in the Middle will touch upon examples and models of **WHAT** has been tried already, the purpose of this is simply to help participants to see that 'it can be done'.

Overview of Engage Unit 7: Men in the Middle Training for Trainers

In Autumn 2019, up to 18 individuals will be selected to train to be part of the Men in the Middle Facilitation Team in the Republic of Ireland. They will be selected on the basis that they represent the broadest possible range of men's work experience, geographic locations, workplace settings and interest groups. On completion of the course, each person will be expected to deliver a minimum of three workshops to front-line practitioners in the following twelve months - initially with the support of an experienced Engage Mentor.

There are two parts to the Training for Trainers course ...

- i. A two day residential in 'Teach Bhride', Tullow, Co. Carlow. One of the main reasons for holding the training on a residential basis is to give participants the opportunity to build a sense of trust and team spirit with each other. This is crucial for the longevity of the initiative, and to ensure that all members of the team are comfortable about working in partnership with every other member of the team.

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- ii. A full day to practice delivering the programme to other members of the team. This will be held in Dublin.

The two days on residential are both intense and demanding. However, the evening spent together allows participants to have a more relaxed inter-personal experience, and to find out about each other in a less structured setting. This aspect has been rated by those people who have already completed other Engage Units as being one of the contributory factors to building a sense of common purpose, strong inter-personal relationships, and nurturing professional confidence in colleagues.

One of the most successful aspects when creating Engage Unit 6 was leaving room for participants in the Training for Trainers residential to help to shape the final content and feel of the workshop developed. This co-design / co-production approach will once again be utilised in Unit 7.

Each participant will receive an Engage Unit 7: Men in the Middle Resource Pack at the end of the training period, as well as electronic versions of all resource materials (including videos, audio tracks and PowerPoints) associated with the programme.

Engage Unit 7: Men in the Middle is designed as a standalone programme, which can be used independently of the rest of the Engage Units. However, if the facilitator is not already 'qualified' in Engage Units 1-6, they will be asked to participate in an additional one day workshop in order to increase their understanding of the whole Engage package before they go out into the field to deliver the Men in the Middle workshops.

Date, Time and Place

The Engage Training for Trainers programme will take place over three full days: two days on residential and one day to practice the delivery of materials. These are ...

- Tuesday 15th and Wednesday 16th October 2019 (including an overnight stay) in the Teach Bhríde Centre, Tullow, Co. Carlow. The arrival time on the first day will be 9.00am (9.30am start) and the departure time will be 4.30pm on the following day.
- Wednesday 13th November 2019 in the Young Social Innovators office, DCU Alpha Campus, Dublin 11. The day will run from 9.30am - 4.30pm.

Please Note:

Applicants for this programme must be able to commit, in full, to all parts of the training and to the follow-on delivery phase.

Cost

The Engage Training for Trainers programme is free for successful applicants. The cost of the single room accommodation, all meals, refreshments and supporting resource materials is being underwritten by the Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI) via a grant from the HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP).

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Eligibility

To be eligible for a place on this Training for Trainers programme, you must ...

- Have regular contact with men in either a paid or voluntary capacity.
- Have the permission and support of your employer / line manager to attend the training and any follow-up commitments.
- Have substantial group facilitation experience.
- Be experienced and/or knowledgeable in the field of men's health.
- Be willing and able to fully participate in all elements of the programme.
- Give a commitment to deliver at least three Engage workshops to service providers in the twelve month period following the end of training, and have agreement from your own organisation to do so.
- Be able to commit to a Facilitators' Team Review Day during 2020.
- Be prepared to work in partnership with another facilitator during the delivery phase - with support from an experienced support mentor.

Applications are welcomed from both men and women, and from people working in all sectors (e.g. voluntary, community, statutory, business, medical, farming, justice, ethnic minorities, academic, family work etc.). It is hoped to recruit applicants from diverse workplace settings.

Application Process

Anyone who wishes to apply for a place on the Engage Training for Trainers programme must fully complete the application form (see: www.mhfi.org/Engage7Application.doc) and return it before the closing date. To ensure fairness to all interested parties, applications will only be accepted on this form and within the time limit set.

All application forms must be returned by no later than Noon on Friday 13th September 2019. It is expected that all applicants will be informed of the outcome by Friday 20th September 2019.

There are a maximum of eighteen places available on this Training for Trainers course, and it is expected that there will be a lot more interest than there are places available. After all the places have been allocated, the selection panel will create a 'Reserve List'.

PLEASE NOTE:

Places for this training will be in high demand, and there are no plans (in the foreseeable future) to re-run it. Therefore, **successful applicants MUST be willing, able and prepared to be involved in all elements of the training and the subsequent delivery of workshops, as well as have the full support of their employer to do so.**

If a successful applicant defaults on any element of this commitment, they will be asked to pay the full cost of the training (i.e. €400 per person) to the organisers.

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Further Information

For further information on the Engage Unit 7: Men in the Middle Training for Trainers programme, please contact:

Colin Fowler
Director of Operations
Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI)
Tel: 0044 751 9945261
Email: colin@mhfi.org

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