

Brexit is old news. It's now all about HIM **... as the final countdown to Men's Health Week 2017 begins**

It's almost a year since the Brexit Vote took place. Since 23rd June 2016, Northern Ireland has been in the throes of 'Brexit Fever' - what appears to be a new medical condition which is afflicting the whole of Europe and further afield. The symptoms are diverse and include mood swings, irrational thinking, feverish activity, restlessness, irritability, lack of concentration, aversion to consensus, aggressive outbursts, single-mindedness, feelings of hopelessness ... However, this is old news. Monday 12th June 2017 marks the start of International Men's Health Week, when everyone is asked to focus upon real medical conditions facing real local men and boys. During this week, Brexit may still be an important issue, but attention will be firmly focused upon: 'It's all about HIM'.

Today, the 70+ organisations in the inter-agency all-island Men's Health Week Planning Group officially start the countdown to Men's Health Week this year. This week always begins on the Monday before Father's Day and ends on Father's Day itself. This year, it will run from Monday 12th until Sunday 18th June. It is celebrated in most European countries, as well as in the USA, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and a number of other places worldwide. It is coordinated on the island of Ireland by the Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI).



During this week, health professionals, service providers, youth groups, sporting bodies, community organisations, employers, Churches, policy makers, family workers, pharmacists... and men from across Ireland will join with other countries world-wide to highlight the specific health and wellbeing issues facing males of all ages. But why is this needed? ...

Research shows that local men experience a disproportionate burden of ill-health and die too young ...

- Local men die, on average, four and a half years younger than women do.
- Males have higher death rates than women for all of the leading causes of death.
- Poor lifestyles are responsible for a high proportion of chronic diseases.
- Late presentation to health services leads to a large number of problems becoming untreatable ...

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Colin Fowler, Director of Operations for the Men's Health Forum in Ireland, comments:

“This high level of illness and premature mortality amongst men has wide-reaching repercussions which stretch far beyond the life satisfaction of men themselves. It affects not only industry and commerce, but also impacts upon the social and financial positions of families. However, this is not a lost cause. Much can be and is being done to improve this situation”.

Men's Health Week seeks to support men and boys to: engage in healthier lifestyle choices and activities; encourage the early detection and treatment of health issues; and heighten awareness of preventable health problems, including mental health challenges. The focus this year is: *'It's all about HIM'* i.e. everyone needs to give men's health issues their undivided attention and to treat these as a priority concern.

Michael Lynch, Director of Development in Men's Action Network and Chairperson of the Men's Health Forum in Ireland adds:

“The starting point for this year's conversation is to answer the question: ‘How are you doing?’... If the answer is ‘not very well’, then it might be time to think about doing something that will make a positive difference to the health of the men and boys that you have contact with and influence over. Men's Health Week offers an ideal launch pad to do something positive and start this process. Making even very small changes can have a huge impact in the longer-term”.

To support Men's Health Week 2017, the Men's Health Forum in Ireland has produced and distributed over 12,000 copies of a free 32 page 'Challenges and Choices' Man Manual. This publication poses practical challenges and encourages men to make simple lifestyle changes.

Colin Fowler states:

“Evidence clearly shows that there are many challenges to be faced when seeking to improve men's health. However, it also highlights that men's health can be progressed in many significant ways - if men are offered positive choices, and are given the support, encouragement and opportunities to succeed. This Man Manual provides the information and the tools, while Men's Health Week provides the opportunity to make a real change”.

ENDS - followed by Editor's Notes

Editor's Notes:

Further information on Men's Health Week 2017 can be obtained by contacting ...

Northern Ireland:

- Colin Fowler (**Belfast**) | Mobile: 0044 751 9945261 | Email: colin@mhfi.org
- Michael Lynch (**Derry / Londonderry**) | Tel: 0044 2871 377777 | Mobile: 0044 790 3619511 | Email: michael.lynch@man-ni.org

Republic of Ireland:

- Finian Murray (**Navan**) | Tel: 00353 46 9076449 | Mobile: 00353 87 2038790 | Email: finian.murray@hse.ie
 - Lorcan Brennan (**Waterford**) | Tel: 00353 51 844260 | Mobile: 00353 86 3619884 | Email: lorcan@mens-network.net
 - Paul Gillen (**Galway**) | Tel: 00353 91 737261 | Email: paul.gillen@hse.ie
- Men's Health Week always begins on the Monday before Father's Day and ends on Father's Day itself. This year, it will run from Monday 12th until Sunday 18th June. It is celebrated in most European countries, as well as in the USA, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and a number of other places worldwide. It is coordinated on the island of Ireland by the Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI).
 - The Men's Health Forum in Ireland (www.mhfi.org) is a charity which works on an all-island basis to enhance the health of men and boys. It is a voluntary network of individuals and organisations, men and women, which seeks to identify the key concerns relating to male health and to increase understanding of these issues.
 - The core aims of Men's Health Week each year are to:
 - Heighten awareness of preventable health problems for males of all ages.
 - Support men and boys to engage in healthier lifestyle choices / activities.
 - Encourage the early detection and treatment of health difficulties in males.
 - Each year, individual countries focus upon a specific theme. The theme for 2017 on the island of Ireland is *'It's all about HIM'*, and the key question that everyone is being asked to answer is *'how are you doing?'* If the answer is *'not very well'*, then they are invited to do something that will make a positive difference to the health of the men and boys that they have contact with and influence over.
 - Men's Health Week 2017 in Ireland has been planned by a broad range of partners who contributed to an inter-agency, all-island Planning Group.
 - The celebration of Men's Health Week has been supported by the Public Health Agency in Northern Ireland, and the Health Service Executive's Health Promotion and Improvement Department and the National Office for Suicide Prevention in the Republic of Ireland.

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- Key information on Men's Health Week on the island of Ireland is available online ...
 - Full overview of Men's Health Week 2017: www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-2017.html
 - Briefing paper which answers all the most common questions: www.mhfi.org/mhw2017toolbox.pdf
 - Men's Health Week posters and images: www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-image-pack.html
 - Practical suggestions for organisations on how they can get involved: www.mhfi.org/mhw2017celebrateit.pdf
 - Latest developments: www.facebook.com/MensHealthWeek and www.twitter.com/MensHealthIRL
- Copies of the 'Challenges and Choices' Man Manual have been given out to men across Ireland. This booklet was written by Co. Down based internationally recognised author on men's health, Dr Ian Banks, and issues ten simple and practical challenges to men. After each challenge, there is a reason why it is important to think about this issue. It then offers three choices for action (Do Nothing, DIY, Find an Expert), and explains the consequences of each option.
- Production of the 'Challenges and Choices' manual was funded by the Public Health Agency in Northern Ireland and the Health Service Executive in the Republic of Ireland.
- A low resolution PDF preview copy of the 'Challenges and Choices' Man Manual can be accessed online at: www.mhfi.org/challenges2017.pdf
- The total number of resources distributed throughout the island of Ireland for Men's Health Week 2017 was ...
 - 12,200 'Challenges and Choices' Man Manuals
 - 6,000 posters
 - 10,000 postcards

