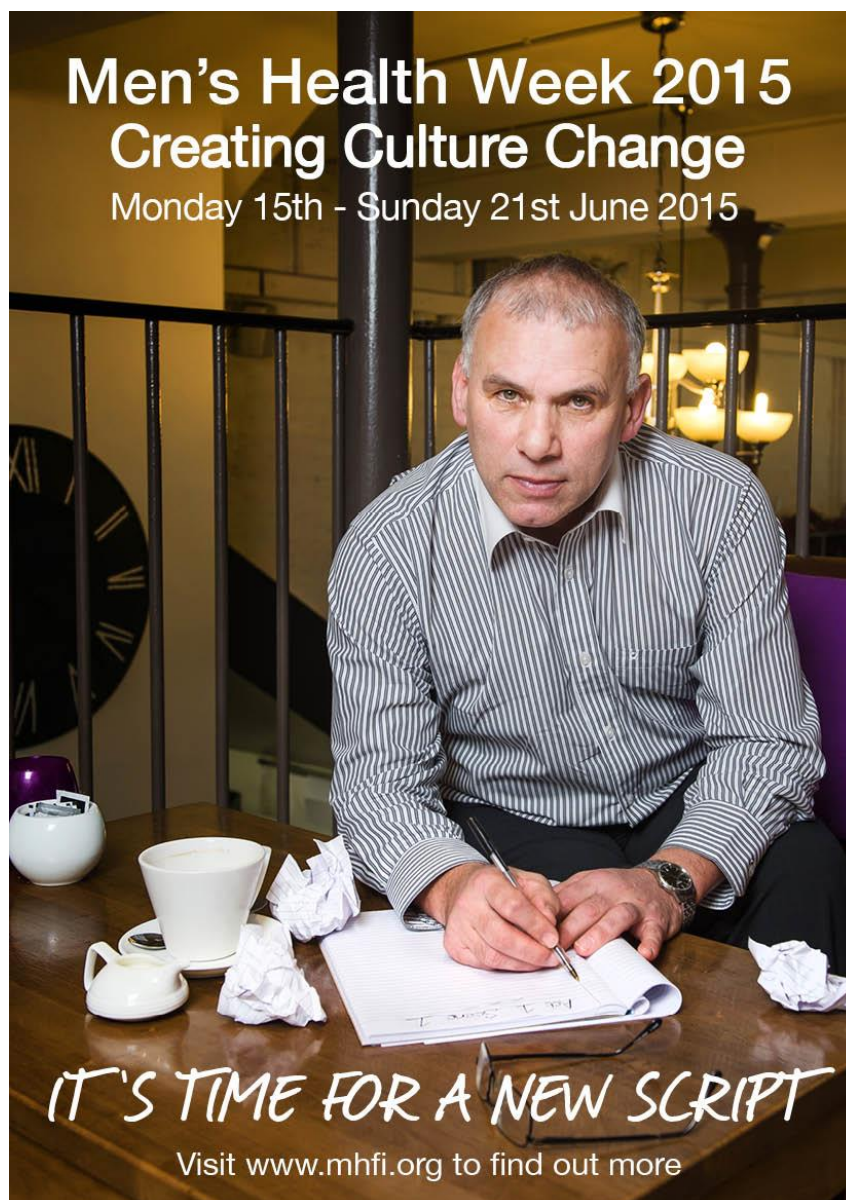


Men's Health Week 2015 in Ireland



Report on MHFI Activity

*- collated for the Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI) by
Colin Fowler, Director of 'Know How - Working with Men'*

Foreword

Males constitute almost 50% of the population on the island of Ireland and, therefore, deserve to have a gender lens focused upon their specific health needs. Research shows that these 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 ...

Indeed, while many of these conditions are preventable, their prevalence amongst men may, in fact, rise in the future. However, this is not a lost cause. Much can be / is being done to improve this situation.

International Men's Health Week (MHW) offers an annual opportunity to focus upon the specific health and wellbeing needs of men and boys. The week always begins on the Monday before Father's Day and ends on Father's Day itself. During 2015, it ran from Monday 15th until Sunday 21st June. MHW is celebrated in many European countries, as well as in the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and a number of other places worldwide.

Since 2002, groups throughout Ireland have organised local activity to mark this week. It was first celebrated on an all-island basis in 2005 - when the Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI) took on the coordinating role. This work continues to be a key annual focus for MHFI.

Every year, each country decides to pursue an overall theme for MHW which reflects their local concerns and priorities. The theme for 2015 on the island of Ireland was: *'Creating Culture Change - it's time for a new script'*.

The success of MHW in Ireland is heavily reliant upon the input of volunteers, the goodwill of organisations, offers of 'in-kind' and mutual support, and the creativity of contributors. Once again, many bodies throughout the island of Ireland were involved in this process during 2015. This report seeks to highlight the extent of this input and what was achieved.

MHFI would especially like to thank:

- **Health Service Executive (HSE)** - who provided a grant of €15,000 to support the promotion and celebration of MHW and the publication of the *'Challenges and Choices'* manual for men in the Republic of Ireland.
- **Public Health Agency (PHA)** - who provided a grant of £2,950 to support the promotion and celebration of MHW and the publication of the *'Challenges and Choices'* manual for men in Northern Ireland.
- **Institute of Public Health in Ireland** - for the regular use of their meeting rooms and video-conference facilities.
- **MHW Planning Group Members** - who freely gave their time and expertise to make MHW 2015 a success.

For more information on MHW 2015 - and what took place in previous years - please visit: www.mhfi.org/mhw/about-mhw.html

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Executive Summary

The Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI) is a diverse network of individuals and organisations, men and women, from both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. MHFI has operated since 1999, with the core aim of promoting and enhancing all aspects of the health and wellbeing of males on the island of Ireland.

MHFI first celebrated Men's Health Week (MHW) in 2005. Since that time, the coordination of MHW activity on the island of Ireland has become one of the Forum's core areas of work.

The overarching aims of MHW 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 and activities.
- Encourage the early detection and treatment of health difficulties in males.

During 2015, MHW ran from Monday 15th until Sunday 21st June. In Ireland, the theme centred upon: *'Creating Culture Change - it's time for a new script'*. This week provides an opportunity for men to think about new ways to improve their health, and for those around them to offer support and encouragement to do so. As such, the following groups were targeted:

- Males themselves
- Policy / decision-makers
- Service providers
- Public awareness and preconceptions

The MHFI Board of Trustees appointed a MHW 2015 Planning Sub-Group to coordinate developments in Ireland. This body was supported by a temporary worker - Colin Fowler. The Sub-Group determined that MHFI should act in the roles of promoter, coordinator, educator, animateur, convenor, prompter, signposter and quartermaster. Thus the Forum's role focused upon kick-starting the engagement process for others, rather than acting as a direct service delivery body for men.

The Forum's Planning Sub-Group determined a set of twelve realistic objectives for MHFI during MHW 2015. These were ...

- i. **Establish, convene and administer an all-island Planning Group:** This body included 46 diverse organisations from across the whole of Ireland who met four times (as well as conducting ongoing business via email) to help to shape MHW 2015. Members also used their own agency's networks / resources to promote MHW, disseminate promotional materials, develop on-the-ground activity, and work in partnership with each other outside of the formal scheduled meetings.
- ii. **Design and produce promotional materials:** MHFI oversaw the design and production of a range of new MHW graphics and promotional materials (logos, banners, web images, posters and postcards). These were offered in both hard copy and online (for free and in a variety of sizes and formats to suit all media) to anyone who wished to raise awareness of the week or to be associated with it. These resources provided a 'brand' for MHW 2015 and were widely utilised. The QR Code on the posters proved, once again, to be a very successful means to direct viewers to further information.

- iii. **Research, collate and disseminate a briefing paper:** MHFI prepared and circulated a Briefing Paper to everyone on its mailing list (including media outlets), as well as making this available for online downloading. This document (titled '*The Toolbox for Action*') provided answers to the most common questions that anyone might ask about MHW 2015. It offered a shared understanding of the week to all partners, and the key information to help media outlets to provide informed coverage of the week.
- iv. **Collate a document on 'what can I do to mark this week':** A short paper was produced which offered simple and practical suggestions on how to get involved in MHW 2015. This was circulated to everyone on the MHFI mailing list, and was made available online. The paper highlighted realistic ways that organisations can make MHW fit with their own work, and helped them to visualise how they might be able to get involved.
- v. **Produce a 'Challenges and Choices' Man Manual:** Ten thousand free hard copies of this booklet were printed and disseminated, and it was also made available for online downloading as a Portable Document Format (PDF) file. This 32 page booklet highlighted a range of key challenges to men's health, and offered three practical choices for dealing with each condition. The stock of hard copies was exhausted three weeks after their launch, and a further 1,364 electronic copies of the booklet were downloaded from the MHFI website before the end of the year. Many male-dominated workplaces sought copies of the Manual to distribute to their employees.
- vi. **Increase awareness of MHW 2015:** MHFI updated and consolidated its media and organisational mailing lists; utilised its social and electronic media (Facebook and Twitter); encouraged Planning Group partners to use their contacts and dissemination mechanisms to amplify exposure; circulated updates via the '*E-Male Matters*' newsletter; adopted the hashtag #CreatingCultureChange; ensured a high level of media coverage for the week; arranged a launch photo-shoot with Minister for Health Leo Varadkar ... Additional support from the HSE's Communications Team helped to increase exposure to and awareness of MHW - both inside and outside the HSE family.
- vii. **Provide a free, easy to access, online information hub:** MHFI created and maintained a new MHW 2015 section on its website, and used the Home Page, News Page and Latest News scrolling banner on this site to raise awareness of the most recent developments. The website witnessed a steady increase in traffic in the lead-up to MHW, and peaked during the week itself.
- viii. **Promote the details of MHW activity and events:** MHFI invited organisations throughout Ireland to submit details of their MHW activities for inclusion in an e-booklet. This content was regularly promoted in the '*E-Male Matters*' newsletter, as well as via other online communications media. To ensure maximum accessibility, there were three mechanisms for submission of information. These ranged from an online registration form, to emailing a Word attachment, to traditional 'snail mail'.
- ix. **Offer a signposting service to sources of support, information and resources:** In the lead-up to MHW, MHFI offered a signposting service to organisations looking for ideas / resources / information / contacts ... to facilitate their involvement in the week. In total, 113 requests were dealt with.

- x. **Support for other small scale actions:** MHFI sought to support (where possible) small scale actions which could promote or add value to MHW 2015. The Forum did this via: soliciting support for MHW from regional bodies; directing local groups to available resources; helping organisations to network with similar projects; recruiting participants for MHW events being organised by external agencies; acting as a 'sounding board' for project ideas; working in partnership to plan and deliver a range of events and activities.
- xi. **Engage with young men:** During MHW 2014, MHFI successfully worked with the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) to promote the week before the students left college, and assisted students in Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) to undertake two research projects into young men's health knowledge and behaviours. This work was built upon in 2015. USI, once again, helped to spread the word about MHW throughout third level education, while MHFI worked alongside Visual Communication and Geomatics students in DIT to develop projects which: (a) produced graphics to highlight the health needs of young men, and (b) spatially mapped health assets for men living in Dublin 7.
- xii. **Highlight male mental health:** MHFI ensured that male mental health featured prominently in MHW 2015 coverage - especially via online exposure. This included linking to online mental health check tools, signposting to 'top tips', promoting sources of help and support, and highlighting relevant mental health and wellbeing research.

During this year, MHFI was able to draw upon the support of Irish sporting legend, and prostate cancer sufferer, Tony Ward. Tony acted as the 'face' of MHW 2015 in Ireland by starring in the nationwide poster campaign and on the cover of the free, 32 page, *'Challenges and Choices'* Man Manual. This contact with Tony was arranged via the Marie Keating Foundation - who played a central role as a partner in the all-island Planning Group.

All of the stated objectives for MHW 2015 were fully met and, in most cases exceeded. In addition, individual members of MHFI were also actively involved in the planning of locally-based MHW initiatives.



Minister for Health Leo Varadkar with Sporting Legend Tony Ward at the launch of Men's Health Week 2015

1. The Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI)

The Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI) is a diverse network of individuals and organisations, men and women, from both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The Forum was established in 1999, and operates on an all-island basis. At present, it has one temporary self-employed worker, but is, primarily, structured, organised and run using the expertise, resources and enthusiasm of volunteers.

MHFI is a small charitable organisation (accepted as a charity by the Revenue under Reference Number: CHY19591) which is registered in the Republic of Ireland as a Company Limited by Guarantee (Reference Number: 491368). The Forum seeks to promote all aspects of the health and wellbeing of men and boys on the island of Ireland through research, training, networking, practical health initiatives and advocacy. It is managed by a Board of Trustees.

Anyone - individual or organisation - who can agree with the mission, value base, and aims of MHFI can ask to be included on the Forum's mailing list to receive the free monthly electronic newsletter (*'E-Male Matters'*) - as well as other updates, briefings, announcements and invitations in the field of work with men and boys.

2. Aims and Objectives of MHFI

The Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI) seeks to promote and enhance all aspects of the health and wellbeing of males on the island of Ireland.

The principal objectives of MHFI are:

- The advancement of the education of the population in Ireland in all aspects of the health and wellbeing of men and boys and, in particular, but not exclusively, by providing information, commissioning and disseminating research, offering training programmes, piloting practical health initiatives, facilitating networks, and promoting debate on key issues with policy makers, service providers and the general public.
- The preservation and protection of men's health.

3. MHFI's Value Base

The Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI) works on an all-island basis to enhance the health of men and boys. The Forum recognises the right of everyone to good health regardless of age, sex, disability, race, sexual orientation, marital status, domestic circumstances, religious or political affiliations.

MHFI believes that all men and boys have the right to:

- The best possible health.
- Gender-specific information and education on how to keep themselves healthy.
- Equity of access to available, affordable and gender-sensitive services.
- Have their issues recognised and properly addressed - in a way that is not at the expense of women's or children's health, but seen as beneficial to society as a whole.
- Call for greater emphasis on a partnership approach in developing future strategies and initiatives on men's health. This includes consultation between policy-makers, healthcare providers, statutory and voluntary groups working on behalf of men, employers, and men themselves.

4. Origins of International Men's Health Week (MHW)

At the Second World Congress on Men's Health in Vienna, Austria, in 2002, representatives from men's health organisations from across the world decided to work together to launch International Men's Health Week (although such a week had been celebrated in the USA since the government passed a resolution in 1994). Their simple aim was to increase awareness of male health issues, and to encourage the development of health policies and services that meet men's specific needs. It was hoped that this would have an impact at international, national, regional and local levels.

Since 2002, groups throughout Ireland have organised local activity to mark this week. However, it was first celebrated on an all-island basis in 2005 - when the Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI) took on the coordinating role. This work continues to be a key focus for MHFI each year.

Men's Health Week (MHW) is now celebrated in many European countries, as well as in the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and a number of other places worldwide. MHFI cooperates with other Men's Health Fora across Europe to mark this occasion annually.

5. Aims of MHW

The overall aims of Men's Health Week (MHW) 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.

However, all initiatives to celebrate MHW (in whatever form) are encouraged - as the simple rationale behind this week is to highlight men's health and wellbeing needs and issues.

6. Date of MHW 2015

Men's Health Week (MHW) always begins on the Monday before Father's Day and ends on Father's Day itself. In 2015, it ran from Monday 15th until Sunday 21st June.

7. Theme of MHW 2015

Each year, Men's Health Week (MHW) focuses upon a specific theme. Previous MHWs in Ireland have focused upon:

- 2005 - Obesity
- 2006 - Mental Wellbeing
- 2007 - Long-term Conditions
- 2008 - Workplace Health
- 2009 - Access to Services
- 2010 - Physical Activity
- 2011 - These are Challenging Times. It's No Joke. Let's Talk.
- 2012 - What's Your First Instinct ... Fight? Flight? Find Out?
- 2013 - Action Men: Turning Words into Actions
- 2014 - Challenges, Choices and Celebrations: What's Your Aim?

The theme for 2015 in Ireland was: *'Creating Culture Change - it's time for a new script'*.

In recent years, a broad range of research has highlighted the health challenges which face men in Ireland and further afield. For example ...

- Men's Health in Ireland (www.mhfi.org/fullreport.pdf)
- Getting Inside Men's Health (www.mhfi.org/gettinginsidemenshealth.pdf)
- Men's Health in Northern Ireland: Tackling the Root Causes of Men's [ill] Health (www.mhfi.org/manmattersbriefing1.pdf)
- A Report on the all-Ireland Young Men and Suicide Project (www.mhfi.org/ymspfullreport.pdf)
- Facing the Challenge - The Impact of Recession and Unemployment on Men's Health in Ireland (www.mhfi.org/IPHreport2011.pdf)
- A Report on the Excess Burden of Cancer among Men in the Republic of Ireland (www.mhfi.org/ICSreport2013.pdf)
- The State of Men's Health in Europe (www.mhfi.org/menshealtheuropa.pdf) ...

Although the health of men in Ireland is poor, it can be improved in many significant ways. Work has already been done to support the health needs of men and boys: Ireland was the first country in the world to have a National Men's Health Policy; the 'Engage' men's health training programme has influenced how services and structures support males; new innovative and pioneering initiatives have been developed which provide a model for improving aspects of men's health ... Much has been achieved, but there is room for more.

Men's health is not just an issue for individual men. While it is crucial for men to take responsibility for looking after themselves, their health can often be determined by other factors outside of their personal control. Thus, there is also a need for policy-makers, service providers, and society as a whole to recognise the role that they need to play, and to do something practical about it.

'It's time for a new script' which re-defines how men look after their health, as well as how they can be actively supported to do so. This requires focusing upon *'creating culture change'* in Ireland which views men's health as being everyone's business. MHW 2015 offered a launch pad to do this.

8. Target Audience

The purpose of Men's Health Week (MHW) each year is to draw attention to the health and wellbeing issues affecting men and boys, and to encourage personal, structural and systemic change where possible. This, therefore, implies that any messages and engagement needs to target:

- Males themselves
- Policy / decision-makers
- Service providers
- Public awareness and preconceptions

MHW provides a focal point for men's health issues in Ireland, and gives everyone (health professionals, service providers, youth groups, sporting bodies, community organisations, employers, policy makers, pharmacists, church groups, family workers, the media, parents, individuals etc.) an opportunity to support and encourage men and boys to take better care of their health and to seek help or treatment at an early stage.

9. MHFI Planning Sub-Group for MHW 2015

As in previous years, volunteers were sought from the Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI) Management Committee to form a Men's Health Week (MHW) Planning Sub-Group. This body was tasked with:

- Proposing appropriate aims and objectives for MHFI's involvement in MHW 2015.
- Identifying potential members for an all-island, inter-agency Planning Group.
- Working with the inter-agency Planning Group to develop the overarching theme for MHW 2015 in Ireland.
- Participating in, inputting to, and acting as the executive agent of the all-island MHW 2015 Planning Group.
- Designing and delivering realistic actions on behalf of MHFI to support the celebration of MHW 2015.
- Overseeing and steering developments on behalf of MHFI.
- Reporting back to the MHFI Board of Trustees.

The Planning Sub-Group was comprised of:

- Lorcan Brennan - Men's Development Network, Waterford
- Sandra Gordon - Cancer Focus NI, Belfast
- Michael Lynch - Men's Action Network, Derry / Londonderry
- Finian Murray - Health Service Executive, Dublin / North East

During this period, Colin Fowler (from *'Know How - Working with Men'*) was paid as MHFI's temporary, self-employed, Director of Operations. He was asked to join this body, and acted as convenor, administrator and executive officer of the Sub-Group.

The Sub-Group held their initial discussions via teleconference in September and October 2014. Further ongoing business was conducted via meetings before and after the all-island Planning Group events, as well as by regular telephone and email communications.

10. Role of MHFI in MHW 2015

It was agreed by the Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI) Planning Sub-Group that the Forum should - as in previous years - be realistic about what it can do / offer during the week, and how it can play a unique role within the constraints of its own limited assets.

It was accepted by the Planning Sub-Group that MHFI can never, on its own, engage with a huge number of men in Ireland or those who work with them. From the outset it was, therefore, acknowledged that MHFI is best positioned to kick-start the engagement process for others, rather than being a direct service delivery body for men.

Subsequently, it was agreed that during MHW 2015, MHFI should act as:

- *Promoter* - raising awareness of what the week is and when it will happen.
- *Coordinator* - acting as the central contact point for and hub of activity in Ireland.
- *Educator* - making the case for MHW and men's health needs.
- *Animateur* - encouraging others to grasp the vision and do something about it.
- *Convenor* - bringing interested groups together to work in partnership.
- *Prompter* - reminding decision-makers / service providers / general public about men's health needs.
- *Signposter* - offering direction to resources, research, support and activities.

- *Quartermaster* - supplying the basic information / resources / tools (e.g. statistics, logos, posters, communication mechanisms) to support the celebration of MHW throughout Ireland.

11. MHFI's Objectives for MHW 2015

The Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI) Planning Sub-Group determined a set of twelve realistic objectives for Men's Health Week (MHW) 2015. These were ...

- i. **Establish, convene and administer an all-island inter-agency Planning Group** (consisting of health related organisations and other bodies who have contact with men) to contribute to shaping MHW, and to develop mutually beneficial partnership work with and between groups.
- ii. **Design and produce promotional materials** to add a common brand to this week, and offer these free to all organisations and groups who wish to promote MHW 2015 via online download and in hard copy.
- iii. **Research, collate and disseminate a briefing paper** which provides the context of MHW, the rationale for the theme selected in Ireland and an overview of what is planned, in order to offer a core understanding of what MHW is / seeks to achieve, and to help to ensure a consistent approach across Ireland.
- iv. **Collate a document on 'what can I do to mark this week'** to encourage individuals and groups to envisage realistic and practical ways that they can celebrate MHW 2015.
- v. **Produce a 'Challenges and Choices' Man Manual** (in both hard copy and as a Portable Document Format file) which highlights a number of key challenges to men's health, offers three practical choices for dealing with each condition, and directs the reader to qualified sources of help and advice.
- vi. **Increase awareness of MHW 2015** amongst the general public, service providers, decision-makers and men, themselves - especially through the media, and by circulating updates / materials to the MHFI mailing database.
- vii. **Provide a free, easy to access, online information hub** on MHW 2015.
- viii. **Promote the details of MHW activity and events** on the MHFI website and in MHFI publications.
- ix. **Offer a signposting service to sources of support, information and resources** - by telephone, email and online.
- x. **Support (where possible) other practical actions / projects** which promote or add value to MHW 2015.
- xi. **Explore possible means to engage young men** in men's health issues / MHW.
- xii. **Highlight male mental health** as a specific issue during MHW 2015.

12. How MHFI met the Objectives for MHW 2015

12.1 All-Island Inter-Agency Planning Group

Ever since 2005 - when the Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI) first marked Men's Health Week (MHW) in Ireland - the Forum recognised that there are a lot of organisations and groups throughout the island who can contribute to the health and wellbeing of men and boys. This work is not solely applicable only to those who work directly in the health field. Indeed, the overall aims of MHW each year offer an ideal opportunity for a very wide range of agencies to actively participate.

To further the aims of MHW 2015, MHFI identified and convened an all-island, inter-agency, MHW Planning Group. All members of the MHW 2014 Planning Group were, once again, invited to participate. However, since last year, some people had moved jobs or were unable to input due to resource shortages within their own organisations.

Before the first meeting took place, a range of additional agencies were identified by the MHFI Planning Sub-Group and asked to join the development process. At the first meeting, group members were also reminded that this is an open forum which welcomes the input of anyone who is willing to contribute. Subsequently, a number of other possible participants were suggested by group members and invited to join.

During MHW 2015, the Planning Group drew upon the insight, expertise, support and contacts of 46 diverse organisations. However, some organisations appointed more than one person to input to the group. Therefore, in total, 63 individuals contributed to the planning process at some stage. The partner organisations were ...

Action Cancer	Alcohol Action Ireland
Amen	ARK (QUB and University of Ulster)
Belfast Comm Sports Development Network	Belfast Health & Social Care Trust
British Medical Association (NI)	Belfast Men's Health Group
Cancer Focus Northern Ireland	Closing the Gap Project
Colin Neighbourhood Partnership	Fir Le Chéile (Men Together)
Gaelic Athletic Association	Headstrong
Health Service Executive	Inspire Ireland
Irish Cancer Society	Irish Heart Foundation
Irish Men's Sheds Association	Lewis Fertility Testing
MALEs Ireland	Man Alive
Marian House Nursing Home	Marie Keating Foundation
Men Alone in No-man's-land	Men's Action Network
Men's Development Network	Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI)
Men's Health West	National Youth Council of Ireland
Northern Health & Social Care Trust	NUI Maynooth
Relate NI	Samaritans Ireland
See Change	Shoot Positive
South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust	Southern Area Men's Health Group
Southern Health & Social Care Trust	The Mankind Project
The Rainbow Project	Union of Students in Ireland
Waterford Institute of Technology	Western Health & Social Care Trust
YouthAction NI - Work with Young Men	3fivetwo Training Academy

The all-island MHW Planning Group met four times between November 2014 and April 2015 ...

- Monday 3rd November 2014
- Monday 12th January 2015
- Monday 9th February 2015
- Thursday 2nd April 2015

All of these meetings were face-to-face, and were held in the Armagh Diocesan Pastoral Centre, Dundalk, Co. Louth. Each gathering lasted approximately three hours. This included both business and social networking time. They were convened, coordinated, minuted and administered by Colin Fowler (on behalf of MHFI). Additional business was conducted via email and telephone in the interim periods between meetings.

It was impossible for all members of the Planning Group to attend every meeting. However, everyone was kept up-to-date via the minutes of meetings, and there was substantial ongoing communication between all parties - who were asked to help with practical tasks (such as collating research and field-testing poster ideas) on a rolling basis.

One of the issues raised in feedback from the 2014 Planning Group members was that that they would like to have more input into determining the theme for MHW; rather than merely focusing upon how to develop and roll it out. Subsequently, at the first meeting of the 2015 Planning Group, participants were offered a completely blank canvas to create the concept for the year from scratch. A few members of the group later commented that they really enjoyed this experience / role. However, the majority of feedback stressed that, although this was a useful exercise, it was both very time-intensive and, often, frustrating. They felt that it would be better to return to the original model, wherein MHFI pitched a broad concept to the Planning Group members and let them refine it.

As well as advising on the shape and structure of MHW 2015, members of the Planning Group were asked to use their own agency's networks and resources to promote MHW and to develop on-the-ground activity. This was realised in practical terms by ...

- Disseminating hard copies of the MHW 2015 posters, postcards and Man Manuals.
- Promoting MHW on their own websites, Facebook pages and Twitter feeds.
- Arranging regular update mailings within their own agencies.
- Developing in-house campaigns / projects to coincide with MHW.
- Highlighting MHW in their local media.
- Organising events and activities ...

Additionally, many members also collaborated on joint practical projects outside of the formal Planning Group meetings.

12.2 Promotional Materials

It was agreed by the Planning Group that it would be important to create a unique identity and common brand for Men's Health Week (MHW) again this year. They felt that this would ensure that it could be owned by everyone, and be independent of any specific organisation. As in previous years, they felt that this would:


- Help to unify and simplify the concept of MHW.
- Encourage 'buy-in' from a broad range of agencies.

- Offer groups who do not have the time or resources to run an event for MHW the opportunity to show their support.
- Increase publicity.

To achieve this aim, the Men’s Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI) oversaw the design and production of a range of MHW 2015 graphics and promotional materials. These were then offered online (for free and in a variety of sizes and formats to suit all media) and, in some cases, in hard copy, to anyone who wished to raise awareness of the week or to be associated with it. All of these materials can be viewed at: www.mhfi.org/mhw/mhw-image-pack.html

Three generic MHW images (logo, ‘We Support Men’s Health Week’ badge and a Facebook Cover Photo), were also included in the portfolio of images on offer ...


Generic MHW Logo

 <p>The image shows a stylized blue and grey logo consisting of a circle with a swoosh, and the text 'MEN'S HEALTH WEEK' below it.</p>	<p>A generic MHW logo which does not have a date attached - so that it can be used anywhere at any time.</p>
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This image was produced as:

- Large JPG - good for general use
- Small JPG - good for general use and websites
- Large TIF - best for high resolution professional print jobs
- Large Transparent PNG - for use against a coloured or textured background
- Small Transparent PNG - for use against a coloured or textured background on websites
- Large Whiteout PNG - white image of the logo when on a coloured background
- Small Whiteout PNG - white image of the logo when on a coloured background
- Small Square JPG - for use as a Facebook profile picture

Generic ‘We Support MHW’ Logo

 <p>The image shows a logo with the text 'WE SUPPORT' at the top, a stylized blue and grey logo in the middle, and 'MEN'S HEALTH WEEK' at the bottom.</p>	<p>A ‘We Support Men’s Health Week’ logo - deliberately not dated to ensure that it can be used in the future to identify / promote this week.</p>
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This image was produced as:

- Large PNG - good for general use
- Small PNG - good for general use and, especially, on websites
- Large Whiteout PNG - produces a white image of the logo when placed on a coloured background

MHW Facebook Cover Photo



This image was in JPG format.

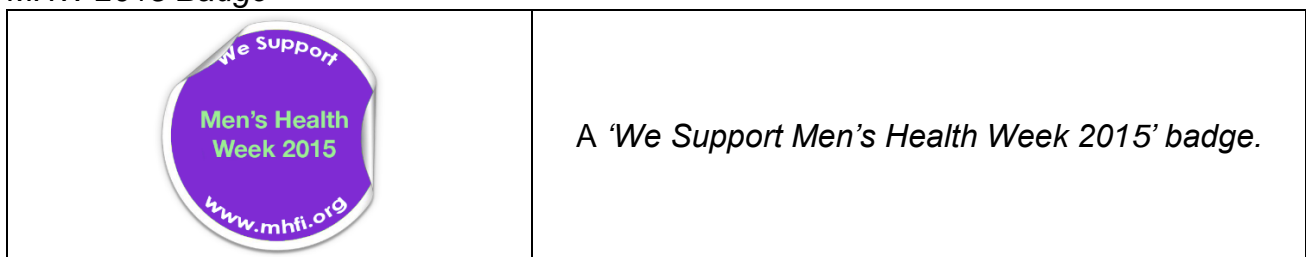
However, a broad range of dedicated images for MHW 2015 were also designed and made available on the MHFI website ...

MHW 2015 Banner



This image was produced as a small JPG - for use on websites, emails and as a letterhead.

MHW 2015 Badge

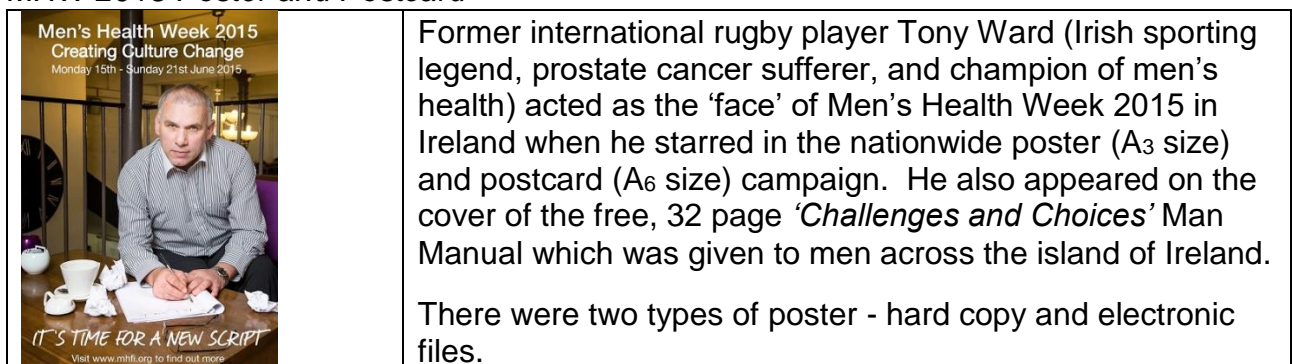


This image was produced in three sizes:

- Large PNG - good for higher quality printing
- Medium PNG - good for general use
- Small PNG - good for websites and emails

The large PNG was a transparent background image - so it could be used on a coloured or textured background without showing a white frame / box around it.

MHW 2015 Poster and Postcard



Colin coordinated the distribution of posters and postcards to all members of the MHW Planning Group who, in turn, disseminated them to their own networks. He also acted as the central contact point for all requests for promotional materials and arranged for their dispersal.

In total, 3,000 hard copies of the A₃ poster and 10,000 postcards were circulated to organisations throughout the island of Ireland.

Electronic versions of the poster were made available in a range of formats:

- Portable Document Format (PDF) - to print the poster at either A₃ or A₄ size.
- Poster with Blank Box (PDF) - to print the poster at either A₃ or A₄ size, but with a blank box to handwrite the details of local events into.
- Poster with type-your-details Blank Box (Word Document) - to print the poster at A₄ size, but with a blank box to type the details of local events into.
- Large JPG - original A₃ size image, best for high resolution print jobs and large posters (there was also a version with a blank box for local event details).
- Medium JPG - A₄ image, useful for high resolution print jobs at this size (there was also a version with a blank box for local event details).
- Small JPG - small, lower resolution image, useful for websites and inclusion in emails / Word documents.
- Thumbnail JPG - small, fairly low resolution image, useful for websites and inclusion in emails.
- Square JPG - for use as a Facebook profile picture.

This range of options proved useful to many groups who were encouraged to 'piggy-back' on the official poster, and to include their local event details without needing their own graphic designer.

The MHW 2015 poster had a unique QR (Quick Response) Code inserted into it. This allowed Smart Phone users to scan the bar code and to be instantly directed to the MHW 2015 web page at:
www.mhfi.org/mhw/previous-years/mhw-2015.html



The promotional materials produced for MHW proved to be very popular, and were downloaded frequently in the period leading up and during MHW 2015. By Monday 22nd June 2015, the ...

- MHW 2015 poster had been downloaded 6,632 times.
- Banner specific to MHW 2015 had been downloaded 2,601 times.
- *'We Support Men's Health Week 2015'* badge had been downloaded 1,112 times.
- Facebook Cover Photo had been downloaded 255 times.
- Generic MHW logo had been downloaded 2,796 times.
- Generic *'We Support Men's Health Week'* logo had been downloaded 210 times.
- Poster QR Code directed 1,813 visitors to the MHW 2015 web page.



Text side of MHW 2015 Postcard

12.3 Briefing Paper

During previous Men's Health Weeks (MHW), the Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI) learned the value of producing a comprehensive overview document on the origins, focus and structure of the week. Subsequently, when preparing for MHW 2015, MHFI researched, collated and widely disseminated a Briefing Paper to everyone on the mailing list (including media outlets). This was done via a Portable Document Format file, which was also made available for online downloading.

This Briefing Paper (see www.mhfi.org/mhw2015toolbox.pdf for a copy) provided answers to the most common questions that anyone might ask about MHW 2015, and it was called: *'The Toolbox for Action'*.

The 'Toolbox' Q&A included ...

- Why do we need to focus upon men's health issues and needs?
- When is Men's Health Week (MHW)?
- Where is Men's Health Week celebrated?
- What are the aims of Men's Health Week?
- Is there a specific theme this year?
- Why choose the theme 'Creating Culture Change' for 2015?
- What were the themes for Men's Health Week in previous years?
- Who is the target audience?
- Who can be involved in this week?
- How can my organisation get involved?
- Are there any ways that I can promote the week?
- What is the 'Challenges and Choices' Man Manual?
- Who is the Men's Health Week 'Poster Boy' for 2015?
- Who has planned Men's Health Week 2015 in Ireland?
- What is the Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI)?
- How can I find out more about Men's Health Week?

This document helped to provide clarity about MHW, and to ensure that members of the MHW 2015 Planning Group (and others) had a coherent idea of what they were working towards. This paper was also circulated to all the media outlets in Ireland to increase their understanding of the week, and was widely utilised in coverage by these bodies.

12.4 What can I do to mark this week?

Men's Health Week (MHW) provides an opportunity for everyone to contribute to improving the health and wellbeing of men and boys. Indeed, the theme for 2015 (*'Creating Culture Change - it's time for a new script'*) lent itself to a wide range of ways to mark this occasion.

In the lead-up to the week, the Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI) also emphasised that groups did not have to stick rigidly to this particular theme. The core message was that anything which encourages men and boys to lead healthier lifestyles, to be more aware of preventable health problems, and to seek early detection and treatment for health difficulties would be welcome.

MHFI recognised that some organisations have time, energy and resources to plan a large-scale event for MHW. Others have to fit-in MHW activities around an already tight schedule and limited budget. Yet others, want to show their support for the week, but cannot commit to doing an actual 'thing' during the week. To try to accommodate all of these circumstances, MHFI produced a short paper which offered simple, practical and realistic suggestions on '*what can I do to mark this week?*' (for a copy, visit: www.mhfi.org/mhw2015celebrateit.pdf) This was circulated to everyone on the MHFI mailing list, and was made available for free online downloading.

The main purpose of this document was to encourage a broad range of individuals and groups to envisage ways that they could get involved - based upon the premise that many people realise why they should engage in MHW, but are not fully aware of how to go about doing it. Consequently, this resource also contributed to the signposting role of MHFI.

This document emphasised that ...

- Everyone can do something to support and celebrate Men's Health Week 2015.
- Even if you don't have a lot of time, energy or resources to give, there are still some really easy (and free) ways that you can show your support.
- With a bit of forward planning, amazing things are possible.
- Doing something is always better than doing nothing.

12.5 Challenges and Choices Man Manual

Research 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 improved in many significant ways - if we make the right choices. Men, themselves, have a key role to play in this process.

One of the most successful and sought after elements of Men's Health Week (MHW) 2014 was the '*Challenges and Choices*' Man Manual which was distributed free-of-charge to males throughout the whole island of Ireland. Almost all of the 10,000 hard copies of this booklet were given out within a week of their release.

During MHW 2015, the Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI) once again produced an Irish edition of this highly successful publication - an updated version of the 2014 booklet.

'*Challenges and Choices*' is a male-friendly, 32 page publication, which highlights ten key men's health issues ...

1. Alcohol
2. Smoking
3. Diet and obesity
4. Exercise and fitness
5. Stress and mental health
6. Blood pressure
7. Sexually transmitted diseases
8. Skin cancers
9. Back care
10. Help-seeking behaviour

It was written by leading men's health expert Dr Ian Banks (internationally acclaimed men's health author, President of the European Men's Health Forum, the British Medical Association's Spokesperson on Men's Health, and a resident of Northern Ireland).

This Manual ...

- Issues a realistic and practical challenge to improve the reader's health in each area of concern.
- Provides evidence and a rationale for why it is important to consider taking action in relation to each issue.
- Offers three possible choices for what actions can be taken to combat each condition.
- Signposts the reader to local sources of help and support.

'*Challenges and Choices*' is part of the highly successful Haynes Men's Health Manuals series. For many years now, association with the Haynes Car Manual brand has proven to be a very effective means to engage men, and to offer them health information in a humorous, user-friendly, car workshop format i.e. step-by-step guides using a technical logic. The content and style of all of the Haynes Man Manuals is extensively field-tested and evaluated before they are released.

MHFI worked with Ian Banks and Haynes Publishing to update both the content and signposting to advice and support contained in the 2014 edition. This updating work was undertaken by Finian Murray (from the HSE Dublin / North East) and Colin Fowler (working on behalf of MHFI).

During MHW 2015, 10,000 hard copies of the '*Challenges and Choices*' Man Manual (see www.mhfi.org/challenges2015.pdf) were distributed free-of-charge to males throughout the whole island of Ireland. This proved to be one of the most successful and sought after elements of MHW, and all of the hard copies of this booklet were given out within three weeks of their launch. These were distributed to every part of Ireland, and were often used as 'give-aways' at events to celebrate the week. A further 1,364 electronic copies of the booklet were downloaded from the MHFI website before the end of the year.

Thanks to the support of the all-island Planning Group partners, a large number of links were made with male-dominated workplaces (e.g. building sites, transport companies, manufacturing plants), and they were very keen to distribute these materials to their workforce. Promotion of the booklet via the HSE Intranet also led to a high level of demand from HSE staff throughout Ireland.

12.6 Awareness Raising

One of the key objectives for the Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI) during Men's Health Week (MHW) 2015 was to increase awareness of the issues facing / needs of males, and the support available to them. This objective targeted service providers, decision-makers / formers, and the general public (including men, themselves).

There were four key mechanisms adopted to achieve this goal:

(a) Mailing List Updates

MHFI has a substantial sign-up-to-join e-distribution mailing list of over 3,500 people. From December 2014 onwards, MHFI regularly (at least monthly) updated these people about MHW 2015. This included sending a 'Season's Greetings' card, regular MHW 2015 features in 'E-Male Matters' (the MHFI e-newsletter - see www.mhfi.org/newsletters/about-e-male-matters.html), and arranging single issue MHW mailouts as appropriate.

This distribution list includes TDs, MLAs, MEPs, Government Equality Leads, statutory health service staff, academics, a broad range of voluntary sector organisations, service providers, community groups and men themselves. Contacts in the women's sector were also kept informed, and encouraged to circulate information to the men in their lives.

(b) Social and Electronic Media

A new MHW 2015 section was established on the MHFI website (www.mhfi.org/mhw/previous-years/mhw-2015.html), and the three social media outlets administered by MHFI were regularly updated throughout 2015. These were:

- www.facebook.com/MensHealthWeek - MHW Facebook page
- www.facebook.com/MensHealthForumIreland - MHFI Facebook page
- www.twitter.com/MensHealthIRL - MHFI Twitter feed

The frequency of updates increased as MHW drew closer, and these were uploaded at least once per day during the week itself. A common hashtag (#CreatingCultureChange) was also adopted by the Planning Group members.

During MHW 2015, the dedicated MHW Facebook page experienced a peak of popularity - with Monday 15th June 2015 being the most visited day. Throughout this week, the page:

- Had 321 core 'Fans'.
- Was visited by 3,798 different people - with 34% of these aged 25-34; 23% aged 35-44; 18% aged 45-54; 14% aged 55 and over; 11% aged 18-24.
- Got 90% of all its visitors from Ireland (both Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland), with a further 8.5% from English speaking countries), and 1.5% from other countries.
- Benefitted from visitors arriving at the page after being specifically directed to it by other organisations' and individuals' web and social media postings. The majority of these recommendations came from MHW 2015 Planning Group partners.
- Received 82% of all its page views from males.

Between April and June 2015 (inclusive), there were 17,097 views of posts on this page.



Screen-shot of a post on the MHW Facebook page during MHW 2015

To improve the visual impact of the MHW Facebook page, a dedicated 'Cover Photo' (designed and created by Colin Fowler) for MHW was uploaded to this site ...



MHW 2015 Facebook Cover Photo

The popularity of MHFI's own Facebook Page also peaked during MHW. This page (www.facebook.com/MensHealthForumIreland) displayed the same information about MHW 2015 as the MHW Facebook page. Saturday 13th June 2015 was the most visited day. Throughout MHW 2015, this page:

- Had 330 core 'Fans'.
- Was visited by 3,916 different people - with 31% of these aged 25-34; 25% aged 45-54 years; 23% aged 35-44 years; 13% aged 55 years and over; 8% aged 18-24 years.
- Got 86% of all its visitors from Ireland (both Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland), with a further 10.5% from English speaking countries, and 3.5% from (mostly) other European countries.
- Received 69% of all page views from males.

Between April and June 2015 (inclusive), there were 18,129 views of posts on this page.

By MHW 2015, the MHFI Twitter feed had attracted 759 'Followers', and the content of the Twitter feed was regularly 're-tweeted' by other partners in the MHW inter-agency Planning Group, as well as a range of other health-related bodies ...



Screen-shot of some items on the MHFI Twitter feed during MHW 2015

MHFI was also able to utilise the e-communication systems of other Planning Group partners to promote MHW 2015. This ensured that the key messages about MHW were disseminated to a diverse range of people from the statutory, voluntary, community, academic, governmental, medical and policy sectors throughout Ireland, as well as to individual men.

The Forum is especially grateful for the support of the HSE Communications Department, which disseminated e-information about MHW 2015 and the resources available to the wider HSE family. This proved to be successful in raising awareness beyond MHFI's own network of contacts.

(c) Planning Group Partner Contacts and Dissemination Mechanisms

All members of the MHW 2015 Planning Group were asked to raise awareness of the week through their own networks and communication channels such as websites, social media outlets, newsletters, hard copy mail-outs, by displaying posters etc. As in previous years, this proved to be a very cost effective means to publicise the week, as well as offering a practical way for partners to actively contribute to the process. For example ...

The screenshot shows the HSE website interface. At the top, there is a search bar and navigation links like 'A to Z', 'Links', 'Contact Us', and 'Skip to Content'. Below the HSE logo, there are tabs for 'Health Services', 'Health A-Z', 'Staff & Careers', and 'About Us'. A secondary navigation bar includes 'All Health Services', 'Services Near You', 'You and Your Health Service', 'News', 'Publications', 'Feedback', and 'Gaeilge'. The main content area features a news article with the headline 'Health Minister and Irish Rugby Legend Call for a 'New Script' for Men's Health in Ireland'. The article text reads: 'Today, Minister for Health Leo Varadkar will join with Irish Rugby legend Tony Ward to begin the final countdown to Men's Health Week in Ireland. To kick-start the week, Minister Varadkar has invited Tony - this year's 'face' of Men's Health Week - to Government Buildings for a health check-up. Together, they are calling upon everyone in Ireland to create culture change in relation to men's health. Tony knows the importance of this message only too well following his own personal battle with prostate cancer.' Below the text, there is a photo of the Minister and the legend, and a 'Related Attachments' section with a link to 'Men's Health Week 2015 Poster (.jpg - 38 KB)'. Social media sharing options and a print icon are also visible.

HSE Website

The screenshot shows the Alcohol Action Ireland website. The header includes the logo and the tagline 'The national charity for alcohol-related issues'. There is a search bar and navigation tabs for 'Home', 'About Us', 'Alcohol Facts', 'Policy', 'Campaigns', and 'Alcohol News'. The main content area is titled 'Men And Alcohol' and features an 'Overview Of Alcohol Related Issues' section with a sub-heading 'One in four deaths of young men aged 15-39 in Ireland is due to alcohol'. Below this, there is a 'Latest News' section with several headlines, including 'NGOs resign from Health Forum as European Commission ignores Member State and European Parliament calls for Alcohol Strategy'. A sidebar on the left contains various links such as 'Alcohol And Costs', 'Alcohol And Crime', 'Children Impacted By Problem Drinking Parents', 'Alcohol And Health', 'How Much Do We Drink?', 'Alcohol And Cancer', and 'Alcohol, Children And...'

Alcohol Action Ireland

The screenshot shows a social media post from the ARK Ageing Programme. The post is dated '17 June at 08:30'. The text of the post reads: 'It's Men's Health Week! See our factsheet 'Older men: health and wellbeing' http://www.ark.ac.uk/services/MINI10.pdf'. The post includes a small image of a purple circular logo with the text 'We Support Men's Health Week 2015 www.mhfi.org'.

ARK





Rugby hero tackles cancer

Posted on: 10/06/15 in: Campaigns, Conferences / Seminars, Men's Health, Prevention
 Irish international rugby legend and TV commentator Tony Ward was a guest speaker at our 2015 Men and Cancer Conference.

The annual event, held in Antrim, highlighted Men's Health Week, which runs from June 15-21, and was attended by more than 100 health professionals and others with an interest in men's health and cancer issues.

The theme for the conference was 'Time to write a new script', looking at how to create change to support the health and wellbeing of men.

Mr Ward (pictured left with Gerry McElwee, Cancer Focus NI) was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2012 and shared his experiences with delegates.

Cancer Focus NI

ReachOut.com

This weekend hundreds and thousands of people the length and breadth of the country have been admiring some of the nation's finest male athletes do what they do best - put their bodies and souls on the line for the clubs and counties. What could be healthier?

But what men - including sportsmen - often fail to do well is look after their general health. The reasons are manifold and complex, (the Irish manny being one of them, far too long these earth-bound angels have tried to insulate their precious boys from the ills of the modern world. As a result we of the less fair sex have come to depend on the women in our lives to look after us.) So damnning is our inability to book regular GP appointments, cook anything other than pasta, get that lump checked out, or wear sunscreen even when rocks are spitting that the powers that be have instigated an International Men's Health week.

"From tomorrow (Monday) through to Friday, we will be publishing a daily article compiled by a specifically chosen"

GAA

16 June at 01:39

We could not let International Men's Week pass without celebrating that the Jigsaw service in 10 communities around Ireland has been particularly successful at welcoming young men.

Have a look at our pie chart which shows that 43.7% of people who used our service were male. #InternationalMensWeek



Headstrong

Like · Comment · Share

Irish Cancer Society

National Youth Council of Ireland

Your Mental Health

Public Health Agency



The Tweet '*Join Tony Ward and support Men's Health Week 2015*' accompanied by picture of Tony Ward getting a health check from Minister Leo Varadkar was the top tweet on @HSElive in June. It earned 8,475 impressions.

The Men's Development Network (MDN) was especially supportive in the area of using their contacts and dissemination mechanisms to promote the week. MDN included full details about MHW 2015 in the pre-week hard copy mail-out that they sent to Family Resource Centres, Community Development Projects, men's groups, and MDN staff, volunteers and committee members throughout Ireland.

(d) Media Coverage

It was agreed by the Planning Group, that MHFI should play the coordinating role in making the media aware of MHW 2015, raising awareness of the key messages for this week, and linking media outlets to activity in their local catchment area. Subsequently, MHFI was given the task of issuing all the advance notice / preliminary media releases, and acting as the 'gatekeeper' for information on MHW.

It was also agreed that MHFI should issue an overview press release at the start of MHW 2015, and seek to ensure that the media releases of Planning Group members were evenly spaced out during the week - thus helping to minimise competition between partners and to maximise the publicity received.

In March 2015, MHFI spent a considerable amount of time updating the contacts on its media database in preparation for the forthcoming campaign. This database covered all media outlets in Ireland - both North and South - that were known to MHFI and included:

- 9 Republic of Ireland | 6 Northern Ireland daily newspapers
- 4 Republic of Ireland | 4 Northern Ireland Sunday newspapers
- 3 Republic of Ireland | 7 Northern Ireland magazines
- 65 Republic of Ireland | 46 Northern Ireland weekly newspapers
- 69 Republic of Ireland | 21 Northern Ireland TV and radio stations
- 7 Irish language broadcasting bodies
- 37 miscellaneous media outlets / contacts
- 8 health correspondents
- 8 letters to the editor contacts

MHFI sent six mail-outs to contacts on this media database. These were:

- **Thursday 2nd April 2015** ... a date-for-your-diary email.
- **Tuesday 5th May 2015** ... an advance notice email informing them of the dates for MHW 2015, the theme of the week, and where to find out more information online.
- **Monday 1st June 2015** ... an email giving them a copy of the MHW 2015 '*Toolbox for Action*'. This also included background information on MHW 2015, how to access posters / images, details of events planned, where to find updates on the latest developments, and an offer of support from MHFI to plan their coverage of the week.
- **Thursday 11th June 2015** ... three MHW Press Releases, embargoed until the 12th of June - one for the Republic of Ireland, one for Northern Ireland and one for Irish Language media outlets (see www.mhfi.org/mhw/previous-years/mhw-2015.html).
- **Monday 15th June 2015** ... a reminder email that MHW 2015 had begun.
- **Tuesday 16th June 2015** ... letters to the editors of all the major daily newspapers in Ireland.

MHFI would especially like to thank Simon O’Cronin from the HSE for his help with translating the Press Release into Irish and conducting Irish language interviews with the media.

To maximise uptake, the two English language Press Releases gave contact details for five MHFI spokespeople based throughout Ireland (based in Galway, Navan, Waterford, Belfast and Derry/Londonderry). This proved to be successful - as local media outlets seemed to prefer to speak to the contact person nearest to their area.

A very high level of radio, newsprint and online coverage for MHW was achieved. This was, at least in part, due to the generous involvement of Tony Ward as the public face of MHW 2015. However, as in previous years, the volume of TV coverage was more limited. This outcome was expected by the MHW Planning Group - who had agreed, in advance, that the most useful media strategy would be to seek to engage meaningful and in-depth coverage by radio, newspaper and online outlets, rather than manufacturing a sensational headline story for the visual media.

The level of media exposure achieved was monitored via the reporting of MHW Planning Group members / MHFI Management Committee, the creation of daily ‘Google Alerts’, as well as by online searches for key words / phrases ...

- Using the Google, Bing, Yahoo, Lycos, Ask.com, AOL, Gigablast, Dogpile and DuckDuckGo search engines.
- Looking for the terms: Men’s Health Week in Ireland 2015; Men’s Health Week Ireland 2015; Men’s Health Week Ireland; Men’s Health Week; men’s health; MHW; MHW 2015; Men’s Health Forum in Ireland; Men’s Health Forum Ireland; MHFI; Creating Culture Change; time for a new script; Challenges and Choices; Man Manual; Tony Ward; Leo Varadkar; #CreatingCultureChange
- Examining and recording the first 10 pages of links generated by each search engine.
- Up until Monday 29th June 2015.

The coverage recorded included ...

- 39 newspaper articles - including some of the main dailies / Sundays e.g. Irish Examiner, Irish Times, Belfast Telegraph, Irish News, Irish Daily Mirror, Sunday Life, The Herald, Sunday Independent, The Newsletter ...
- 9 journal / magazine features i.e. HSE Health Matters magazine, Irish Farmers’ Journal, Irish Pharmacy News, Irish Pharmacy Assistant, Irish Pharmacy Journal, Life and Fitness Magazine, The Journal, Urology Review and Irish Health Foundation magazine.
- 3 Letters to the Editor - published in the Belfast Telegraph, Irish Independent and Irish Times.
- 66 slots (news items or interviews) on the radio - these included national, regional, local, community, and Irish medium stations. Some stations (e.g. NewsTalk, Radio Ulster and Life FM) requested multiple interviews throughout the week.
- 5 TV slots - Ireland AM, TV3 News, Nuacht TG4, NVTV and UTV Live.
- 92 ‘shout-out requests’ on a diverse range of radio stations / programmes throughout Ireland.
- 229 features on ‘quality’ local websites - including those of MHW Planning Group partners. The websites of statutory bodies in Ireland (e.g. HSE, Public Health Agency, Health and Social Care Trusts and the DHSSPS) carried features on the

Limerick hosts successful Men's Health Week

10 November 2015 10:25 AM



Hundreds of Limerick men of all ages took part in a series of events marking International Men's Health Week, which came to a close at the weekend.

Celebrated in most European countries, as well as in the USA, Australia, New Zealand and a number of other places worldwide, Men's Health Week aims to heighten awareness of preventable health problems for males of all ages.

Clare Herald

Men's Health Week

Get active and feel the difference

For more information about the Health Development and Education programme, please get in touch with the FECTA Health team: Linda Whiting, Health Development Team for understanding. Kaiti Whiting, Health Development Coordinator also@shull.org. Claire Jones, Health Coordinator. Email: c.jones@shull.org. Alternatively please FECTA on 0181 504 1102. Photo: © 2015 FECTA Health Development and Education team. All rights reserved and used on the FECTA website www.ecta.org.uk, Facebook or Twitter: @ECTAHealth

East Belfast News

12.7 Online Information Hub

The Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI) sought to provide a free, easy to access, online information hub for Men's Health Week (MHW) 2015. To achieve this, the Forum created a new section on its website at: www.mhfi.org/mhw/previous-years/mhw-2015.html

This webpage acted as the focal point for the week, and offered visitors access to a central repository of all available information. In addition, the Home Page, News Page and Latest News scrolling banner on the website raised awareness of the most recent developments.

MHFI utilised the 'AWStats' web traffic analysis tool to monitor activity on the Forum's website in the lead up to and during MHW 2015. The AWStats data* shows that site traffic increased steadily from February 2015 to June 2015 ...

- In February 2015, there were: 1,838 unique visitors; 3,341 site visits; 29,361 web pages viewed; 89,920 site hits. 7.93 GB bandwidth was used.
- By June 2015, there were: 3,529 unique visitors; 6,317 site visits; 23,976 web pages viewed; 212,984 site hits. 11.36GB of bandwidth was used.

[* These figures represent actual people visiting the site, and exclude traffic generated by search engine robots and spiders]

During MHW 2015, the vast majority of website visitors came from Ireland (both North and South). The next largest group came from England, Scotland and Wales; followed by people from the United States of America. This was similar to the experience of the Facebook pages and Twitter feed both during MHW 2015 and in the lead-up to it.

In terms of file downloads, the most frequently accessed (in order of popularity) were the:

- 'Challenges and Choices' Man Manual.
- 'Men's Health Week 2015 - Events and activities taking place on the island of Ireland'.
- MHW posters and image pack.
- 'The Toolbox for Action'.
- 'Men's Health Week 2015 - What can I do to Mark this Week?'



Interestingly, July 2015 saw an even bigger surge in the website's popularity, and there were: 12,018 unique visitors; 17,973 site visits; 104,843 web pages viewed; 149,463 site hits. 12.68GB of bandwidth was used. During this month, local Irish traffic to the site focused, primarily, upon accessing the '*Challenges and Choices*' Man Manual, but the majority of visitors came from outside of Ireland and Britain.

As hoped for, the MHW 2015 webpage (www.mhfi.org/mhw/previous-years/mhw-2015.html) was the most viewed page on the MHFI site and - during June - was also the most frequent entry point to the entire website after the Home page.

These statistics clearly indicate that the MHFI website experienced an increase in traffic in the lead-up to and during MHW 2015. This website - in conjunction with the Facebook pages and Twitter feed - did, therefore, effectively act as an information hub which could offer an overview of the week, promote events and activities, recruit participants, and provide the latest updates on developments.

12.8 Promotion of Activity and Events

'*E-Male Matters*' (www.mhfi.org/newsletters/about-e-male-matters.html) is the monthly electronic newsletter of the Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI). Each edition is, currently, circulated to over 3,500 organisations / individuals - many of whom then forward it to other colleagues and contacts.

This publication - and the covering letter on the email it was attached to - regularly invited recipients to forward details of their Men's Health Week (MHW) activities to MHFI. This invitation was also issued on the MHFI website, Facebook pages and Twitter feed.

The purpose of the invitation was to gather information on MHW 2015 events and initiatives in Ireland, and to create a central inventory of at least some activities happening during the week, where they would take place, and how to join in. It was hoped that this would give recognition to, and increase the profile of, those groups that were doing something for and with men - especially those organisations that do not have their own online presence.

Subscribers were invited to send details of any endeavour related to MHW 2015 to MHFI. This could, for example, include health checks, conferences, launches, games, seminars, competitions, workshops, courses, displays, health fairs ...

To make the submission process as easy and accessible as possible, three mechanisms for registration of activities and events were utilised. It was hoped that these diverse systems would accommodate the needs of all interested parties:

- An online registration form was created for the submission of details at: www.mhfi.org/mhw/promote-an-event.html (this was taken down after MHW to avoid spamming).
- A registration form, in Microsoft Word format, was available for downloading at: www.mhfi.org/mhw2015project.doc Organisations were invited to save a copy of this document to their computer, type in their details, and email it back to MHFI.
- A registration form, in Portable Document Format (PDF), was available for downloading at: www.mhfi.org/mhw2015project.pdf Organisations could print this file, handwrite their details, and post it back to MHFI.

However, those without access to the Internet were invited to phone MHFI, and have a hard copy of the form sent to them in the post. This could then be completed in pen and returned to the Forum.

The registration template ensured consistency in the format of the information received. The information submitted was edited by MHFI, and then inserted into a cumulative publication titled: *'Men's Health Week 2015 - Events and activities taking place on the island of Ireland'*. This booklet (which had an internal hyperlink format) was made available on the MHFI website at: www.mhfi.org/mhw2015events.pdf

This publication - and the individual entries contained within it - were regularly promoted in *'E-Male Matters'* and via MHFI's other online communications media. Entries were continuously added to it in the period leading up to MHW 2015.

12.9 Signposting Service

In the lead-up to Men's Health Week (MHW) 2015, the Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI) offered a signposting service to organisations looking for ideas / resources / information / contacts / research ... to facilitate their involvement in MHW. This 'helpline' service was coordinated by Colin Fowler.

In total, 113 requests were dealt with. The vast majority of these were conducted via telephone calls and email correspondence. However, a small number required on-site visits / meetings.

12.10 Practical Action / Projects

Although, from the outset, the Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI) Sub-Group for Men's Health Week (MHW) acknowledged that the Forum needed to be realistic about what it could achieve, it also sought to support (where possible) small scale and affordable actions / projects which could promote or add value to MHW 2015.

MHFI did this via ...

- Soliciting support for MHW from regional bodies.
- Directing local groups to available funding / resources.
- Helping organisations to connect / network with similar projects, and to create partnerships.
- Recruiting participants for MHW events being organised by external agencies.
- Acting as a 'sounding board' for project ideas.
- Providing advice on men's work action plans.
- Working in partnership with other organisations to plan and deliver on-the-ground activities ...

12.11 Engage with Young Men

Historically, Men's Health Week (MHW) has been quite successful at engaging middle-aged and older men - both in recognising the key messages and in responding to them / joining activities. However, there is a lot of evidence to suggest that younger men (especially those under the age of 25 years) have remained unaware of and, possibly, disengaged from the week. Indeed, a survey of male students in the University of Limerick in 2011 showed that only 2% of respondents were able to correctly identify when MHW takes place.

MHW always happens at a fixed date in June each year. It begins on the Monday before Father's Day, and Father's Day is always the third Sunday in June. This timing means that MHW (as it stands) can only have a limited impact upon young men - especially those in third level education - as MHW falls at a time when this target group has either left college or is in the middle of doing exams.

To help to combat this difficulty, the Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI) worked with the Union of Students in Ireland to promote MHW before the students left college in June 2015. This included the distribution of MHW posters and postcards, and the extensive use of social media networks.

MHFI also built upon its previous work with Dublin Institute of Technology and, during 2015, worked alongside ...

- a) Visual Communication students to produce dedicated graphics to highlight the health needs of young men.
- b) Geomatics students to develop a model which spatially mapped health assets for men living in the Dublin 7 area.

12.12 Male Mental Health

The Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI) ensured that male mental health featured prominently in Men's Health Week (MHW) 2015 coverage - especially via online exposure. This included linking to online mental health check tools, signposting to 'top tips', promoting sources of help and support, and highlighting relevant mental health and wellbeing research.

Readers / viewers of MHW material were, ultimately, always directed towards the '*Your Mental Health*' and '*Minding Your Head*' websites.

13. Conclusions and Recommendations

International Men's Health Week (MHW) offers an annual opportunity to focus upon the specific health and wellbeing needs of men and boys. The Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI) - as a network body - is well placed to play the coordinating role in this week.

The celebration of MHW in Ireland is always conducted on a financial shoe-string. Indeed, the success of this week relies very heavily upon the input of volunteers, the good will of organisations, offers of 'in-kind' and mutual support, and the creativity of contributors. All of these elements were present during MHW 2015. However, special thanks are due to:

- Health Service Executive - who funded the promotion / celebration of MHW and the publication of the '*Challenges and Choices*' Man Manual in the Republic of Ireland.
- Public Health Agency - who supported the promotion / celebration of MHW and the publication of the '*Challenges and Choices*' Man Manual in Northern Ireland.
- Institute of Public Health in Ireland - for the regular use of their meeting rooms and video-conference facilities.
- MHW Planning Group Members - who freely gave their time and expertise to make MHW 2015 such a success.

During MHW 2015, the local focus was upon ‘*Creating Culture Change - it’s time for a new script*’. This theme was developed by the all-island MHW Planning Group, and was felt to be inclusive enough to secure the interest and engagement of a diverse range of organisations in MHW activity.

Overall, MHW 2015 proved to be very successful ...

- There was, once again, a broad base of engagement from across the whole island of Ireland. This was a very positive aspect of the week and entailed a vast amount of voluntary input from many individuals and organisations.
- The MHFI Planning Sub-Group worked effectively together and fulfilled all of the tasks set for it, including: setting appropriate aims and objectives; identifying potential members for an all-island Planning Group; helping to determine the theme for 2015; participating in the Planning Group; acting as the executive of this body; designing and delivering realistic actions on behalf of MHFI; steering developments on behalf of the Forum; reporting back to the MHFI Board of Trustees. Members of the Sub-Group also took turns at leading the discussion on agenda items during meetings of the all-island Planning Group.
- MHFI set itself clearly defined roles for MHW 2015 (i.e. promoter, coordinator, educator, animateur, convenor, prompter, signposter and quartermaster), and sought to kick start the engagement process for others - rather than acting as a direct service delivery body for men. As in previous MHWs, this proved to be a realistic, sustainable and appropriate strategy, which allowed MHFI to play a unique role within the constraints of its own limited assets and capabilities.
- The involvement of the temporary MHFI Director of Operations was important to the overall success of the week. This person acted as the hands-on coordinator, convenor, administrator, executive officer, policy worker, webmaster, media liaison person, development officer and contact point for MHW 2015.
- The key messages for MHW 2015 were seen as clear and concise, and targeted / reached policy makers, opinion formers, service providers, community activists, the general public, and males themselves.

All of the twelve objectives that the MHFI Planning Sub-Group determined for MHW 2015 were met and, in many cases, exceeded. For example ...

- i. **Establish, convene and administer an all-island Planning Group:** This body included 46 diverse organisations from across the whole of Ireland who met four times (as well as conducting ongoing business via email) to help to shape MHW 2015. Members also used their own agency’s networks / resources to promote MHW, disseminate promotional materials, develop on-the-ground activity, and work in partnership with each other outside of the formal scheduled meetings.
- ii. **Design and produce promotional materials:** MHFI oversaw the design and production of a range of new MHW graphics and promotional materials (logos, banners, web images, posters and postcards). These were offered in both hard copy and online (for free and in a variety of sizes and formats to suit all media) to anyone who wished to raise awareness of the week or to be associated with it. These resources provided a ‘brand’ for MHW 2015 and were widely utilised. The QR Code on the posters proved, once again, to be a very successful means to direct viewers to further information.

- iii. **Research, collate and disseminate a briefing paper:** MHFI prepared and circulated a Briefing Paper to everyone on its mailing list (including media outlets), as well as making this available for online downloading. This document (titled '*The Toolbox for Action*') provided answers to the most common questions that anyone might ask about MHW 2015. It offered a shared understanding of the week to all partners, and the key information to help media outlets to provide informed coverage of the week.
- iv. **Collate a document on 'what can I do to mark this week':** A short paper was produced which offered simple and practical suggestions on how to get involved in MHW 2015. This was circulated to everyone on the MHFI mailing list, and was made available online. The paper highlighted realistic ways that organisations can make MHW fit with their own work, and helped them to visualise how they might be able to get involved.
- v. **Produce a 'Challenges and Choices' Man Manual:** Ten thousand free hard copies of this booklet were printed and disseminated, and it was also made available for online downloading as a Portable Document Format (PDF) file. This 32 page booklet highlighted a range of key challenges to men's health, and offered three practical choices for dealing with each condition. The stock of hard copies was exhausted three weeks after their launch, and a further 1,364 electronic copies of the booklet were downloaded from the MHFI website before the end of the year. Many male-dominated workplaces sought copies of the Manual to distribute to their employees.
- vi. **Increase awareness of MHW 2015:** MHFI updated and consolidated its media and organisational mailing lists; utilised its social and electronic media (Facebook and Twitter); encouraged Planning Group partners to use their contacts and dissemination mechanisms to amplify exposure; circulated updates via the '*E-Male Matters*' newsletter; adopted the hashtag #CreatingCultureChange; ensured a high level of media coverage for the week; arranged a launch photo-shoot with Minister for Health Leo Varadkar ... Additional support from the HSE's Communications Team helped to increase exposure to and awareness of MHW - both inside and outside the HSE family.
- vii. **Provide a free, easy to access, online information hub:** MHFI created and maintained a new MHW 2015 section on its website, and used the Home Page, News Page and Latest News scrolling banner on this site to raise awareness of the most recent developments. The website witnessed a steady increase in traffic in the lead-up to MHW, and peaked during the week itself.
- viii. **Promote the details of MHW activity and events:** MHFI invited organisations throughout Ireland to submit details of their MHW activities for inclusion in an e-booklet. This content was regularly promoted in the '*E-Male Matters*' newsletter, as well as via other online communications media. To ensure maximum accessibility, there were three main mechanisms for submission of information. These ranged from an online registration form, to emailing a Word attachment, to 'snail mail'.
- ix. **Offer a signposting service to sources of support, information and resources:** In the lead-up to MHW, MHFI offered a signposting service to organisations looking for ideas / resources / information / contacts ... to facilitate their involvement in the week. In total, 113 requests were dealt with.

- x. **Support for other small scale actions:** MHFI sought to support (where possible) small scale actions which could promote or add value to MHW 2015. The Forum did this via: soliciting support for MHW from regional bodies; directing local groups to available resources; helping organisations to network with similar projects; recruiting participants for MHW events being organised by external agencies; acting as a 'sounding board' for project ideas; working in partnership to plan and deliver a range of events and activities.
- xi. **Engage with young men:** During MHW 2014, MHFI successfully worked with the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) to promote the week before the students left college, and assisted students in Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) to undertake two research projects into young men's health knowledge and behaviours. This work was built upon in 2015. USI, once again, helped to spread the word about MHW throughout third level education, while MHFI worked alongside Visual Communication and Geomatics students in DIT to develop projects which: (a) produced graphics to highlight the health needs of young men, and (b) spatially mapped health assets for men living in Dublin 7.
- xii. **Highlight male mental health:** MHFI ensured that male mental health featured prominently in MHW 2015 coverage - especially via online exposure. This included linking to online mental health check tools, signposting to 'top tips', promoting sources of help and support, and highlighting relevant mental health and wellbeing research.

Based upon this review of activity and achievements during MHW 2015, the following recommendations are made for future weeks ...

1. MHW is an important annual all-island celebration of men's health. MHFI is well placed to support, promote and coordinate this week, and should continue to do so.
2. Although a lot of MHW activity relies on volunteering and contributions in-kind, funding is also required to ensure that MHW can have the maximum impact. An application to support MHW 2016 should be submitted to the HSE (to pay for Republic of Ireland work) and the Public Health Agency (to underwrite work in Northern Ireland).
3. During 2015, MHFI engaged a self-employed worker to coordinate MHW partnerships, on-the-ground activity, communication and publicity. This post had administrative, executive, advice, guidance, reporting and developmental functions. It also provided a focal / reference point for the diverse range of interested parties throughout Ireland. This role is crucial to the success of MHW - as no one else has the time or a remit to oversee these tasks - and needs to continue in the future.
4. MHFI should, once again, appoint a Planning Sub-Group to oversee MHW 2016. Such an active body of committed people adds collective ownership to the development process.
5. The clearly defined roles that MHFI played during MHW 2015 were both realistic and appropriate, and should be adopted next year.

6. Following feedback from the 2014 MHW Planning Group members that they would like to have more input into determining the theme for MHW, this was offered during 2015. At the first meeting of the 2015 Planning Group, participants were offered a completely blank canvas to create the concept for the year from scratch. While a small number of people enjoyed this experience, the majority found it to be both time-intensive and, often, frustrating. There was, therefore, general consensus that it would be better to return to the original model; wherein MHFI pitched a broad concept to the Planning Group members and let them refine it.
7. Although having a specific theme (e.g. men and chronic illness) would provide a clearer focus for MHW, it could also exclude many potential partners - who may not see it as relevant to them. Adopting a broader concept (as in recent years) encourages maximum buy-in from a diverse range of organisations.
8. The wide-ranging membership of the all-island Planning Group is a major asset to MHW. Subsequently, the number and breadth of participants should be constantly reviewed and expanded. Representation from local pharmacies in the planning process would be particularly useful.
9. Holding face-to-face meetings of the all-island Planning Group had the benefit of helping participants to feel more connection to and ownership of the process. It also assisted in the creation of working partnerships between members outside of the meetings. However, many interested individuals could not participate in this way because their organisations would not permit them to travel beyond their own catchment area, while other individuals could not afford to give up the extra time required to travel to a venue such as Dundalk. It is proposed that the Diocesan Pastoral Centre should be used for (at least) the first 2016 Planning Group encounter. After this, participants can determine if the pattern should move to video-conferencing between the Dublin and Belfast offices of the Institute of Public Health in Ireland (if this option continues to be available).
10. The range of MHW graphics (e.g. logo, banner, badge) and promotional materials (e.g. poster and postcard) produced each year creates a strong brand and identity for the week. However, determining the concept for these graphics requires a lot of negotiation with Planning Group members, and the design is often changed many times before final sign-off is achieved. The deadline for final agreement should be no later than mid-April - to allow enough time for printing and dissemination. The QR Code on the poster has proved to be very successful, and should be maintained in the future.
11. Making as much as possible of the MHW information / materials available online saves money, reduces wastage, and meets the electronic expectations of many users. This is an important dimension to MHW activity.
12. This (2015) was the first year that there was a printed message on the MHW 'postcards'. It proved to be very popular and should be continued. Organisations sent the postcards to the men they worked with, and they were also useful as MHW fliers to leave on counters in shops / libraries / community centres / bars etc.
13. '*The Toolbox for Action*' Briefing Paper offers a common script for partners, media and the public to find out essential information about the week. This should be updated and reproduced for 2016.

14. While an increasing number of organisations now know about MHW, many still need to be convinced that it is something that they can easily fit into their existing priorities and work plan. The *'What can I do to mark this week?'* paper offers realistic and practical suggestions to these people and should be updated next year. The use of more graphics and less text might also help to make it more user-friendly.
15. The *'Challenges and Choices'* Man Manual was immensely popular during MHW 2015 and acted as a main focal point of the week. If funding can be accessed, a similar publication should be made available in 2016.
16. Workplaces proved to be a useful access point for getting health information to men. The potential for expanding interventions in this area should be exploited in the future.
17. Media databases need to be updated regularly to ensure their accuracy and relevance. Even in the few months leading-up to MHW, MHFI's contacts for several agencies changed. This, therefore, requires substantial ongoing input.
18. Having Tony Ward as the 'face' of MHW proved to be a hook for both the media and many men (and women) across Ireland. As such, this association generated a lot of personal interest and media coverage. It might be worth seeking a similar high profile 'poster boy(s)' for MHW 2016.
19. In this age of social media, having a distinct hashtag for MHW 2015 (i.e. #CreatingCultureChange) was crucial. This needs to be continued in later years.
20. The involvement of, and support offered by, the HSE Communications Department during MHW 2015 ensured that the wider HSE family was exposed to both the key messages and the resources on offer. This assistance should be sought again during 2016. The Public Health Agency / Health Trusts in Northern Ireland should also be approached to enlist their input.
21. Minister for Health Leo Varadkar's photo-call to launch MHW helped to raise the profile of the week in the media and to officially endorse the main messages. During 2016, it would be useful to engage the Health Ministers in both political jurisdictions on the island of Ireland.
22. As in previous years, it was extremely difficult (and very time consuming) to get organisations to submit the details of their MHW 2015 events and activities for publication. However, although only a relatively small number of initiatives were documented, this in no way reflected the extent or diversity of activity on the island of Ireland. This issue needs to be raised in the initial all-island Planning Group meetings for 2016.
23. The ongoing 'signposting' and 'hand-holding' roles performed by MHFI are often unseen and unrecognised. However, they are crucially important to those who are unsure of how to get men's health initiatives started. Thus, these aspects of MHW need to be maintained.

24. The relationship established with the Union of Students in Ireland and the Students Learning with Communities initiative in Dublin Institute of Technology has continued to be very valuable, and should be built upon during 2016. This will help to ensure that the line of communication with young men in third level education is maintained.
25. Mental health is often intimately linked to physical health, and poor mental health can restrict health-seeking behaviours. Therefore, it is important for MHFI to maintain a specific focus upon this area during MHW next year.

