
Minutes:

First Meeting of the Men's Health Week 2013 Planning Group

Date: Wednesday 30th January 2013
Time: 10.30am - 1.30pm (including lunch)
Venue: Armagh Diocesan Pastoral Centre, Dundalk, Co. Louth

Present:

Scott Ahearn - See Change
Kealan Barrett - NI Medical Students' Committee (NIMSC)
Alison Bell - NI Medical Students' Committee (NIMSC)
Lorcan Brennan - Men's Development Network (MDN)
John Cantwell - Fír Le Cheile (Men Together)
Colin Fowler - Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI)
Sandra Gordon - Man Alive, Cancer Focus NI
Siobhán Harding - Man Matters
Kate Markey - Amen
Darach Murphy - Men Alone in No-mans-land (MAIN)
Finian Murray - Health Service Executive Dublin / North East
Paul O'Kane - Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT)
Ann Scanlon - Irish Heart Foundation (IHF)
Gary Smyth - Man Matters
Joanne Vance - Irish Cancer Society (ICS)

Apologies:

Angela Corr - Southern Health and Social Care Trust (SHSCT)
Paula Devine - ARK
Emmet Haughian - GAA
Marita Hennessy - Men's Health Researcher
Andrew Kerr - LINKS (St. John's Ambulance)
Michael Lynch - Men's Action Network (MAN)
Keith McAdam - Sure Start Fathers Network
Geraldine McDonnell - Northern Health and Social Care Trust (NHSCT)
Michael McKenna - YouthAction Northern Ireland
Sonia Montgomery - Western Health and Social Care Trust (WHSCT)
John News - Sport NI
Nigel O'Callaghan - Inspire Ireland Foundation
Lisa Rickett - Irish Football Association (IFA)
Umberto (Scap) Scappaticci - Colin Men's Group
Peter Shaw - Belfast Community Sports Development Network (BCSDN)
Ted Tierney - Mental Health Ireland

Minute Taker: Colin Fowler

AGENDA ITEMS ...

1. Welcome

Colin welcomed everyone to the meeting - especially those people who had to make a considerable journey to be here.

In the early years of holding all-island meetings of the Men's Health Week (MHW) Planning Group, the gatherings were alternated between Dublin and Belfast venues. This helped the members to build relationships - as they met in person - but meant that they had to commit a lot of time to travelling to meetings. Last year, all business was conducted via video-link between Dublin and Belfast. This cut down on the amount of travel, but many members had expressed a feeling that it had become quite impersonal, and it was hard to engage with others in the room as well as the people on the TV screen. To try to bridge this gap, it was agreed to hold today's meeting at a mid-way point between Belfast and Dublin, and to allow participants a chance (at least for this first meeting) to talk to each other face-to-face.

Apologies were tendered from a broad range of organisations. This was due to the date not suiting everyone, and restrictions upon their freedom to travel outside of their work catchment area. These people do, however, still wish to be involved in the process of looking at what can be done to mark and celebrate Men's Health Week (MHW) this year. A few organisations have still to reply to confirm their participation.

Invitees to this meeting comprised individuals and organisations who had either contributed to past MHWs or who had asked to join the group since last year. Colin reminded everyone that this is an open forum which welcomes the input of anyone who is willing to participate.

The partnership approach adopted in the past few years has proved to be very beneficial to MHW, and it is hoped that each participant's own area of work will also benefit from the contacts established in this and future meetings. It was acknowledged that there will, inevitably, be times when it is impossible for group members to attend meetings or contribute to the ongoing e-discussions. A pragmatic approach will be adopted.

2. Introductions

Lorcan invited everyone to introduce themselves - by way of helping to get to know each other and to understand the work that each person is involved in. Individuals were asked to: give their name; say which organisation they represent and what it does; briefly outline any experience / knowledge of men's work that they already have.

This session highlighted the vast range of experience / areas of interest in the room including: cancer, stigma, smoking cessation, primary care, education, family work, mental health, counselling, training, social isolation, policy development, help-seeking behaviour, domestic abuse and violence, suicide, personal development, online support, heart health, diet and nutrition, spirituality and rites of passage, advocacy, medical conditions, students, men's support groups, service provision ...

3. Overview of MHFI and MHW

Finian gave a short PowerPoint presentation on: what the Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI) is / does, the aim of International Men's Health Week (MHW) each year, and what has previously been organised to mark this week. He also outlined the focus, theme and key message for 2013. This presentation is attached to the end of these minutes.

4. Vision / 'Blue Skies' Thinking for MHW 2013

Finian invited everyone to think about what MHW 2013 would look like this year, and asked everyone to specifically consider the following range of questions:

- Was there anything which worked well last year which we should repeat?
- What should / could / ought to happen to ensure that Men's Health Week has the maximum impact this year?
- What might the common poster for 2013 look like?
- How can we widely promote the week on an extremely limited budget?

Miscellaneous Issues Raised ...

- In many ways, it's easier to promote / get attention for a specific illness or issue (e.g. cancer or mental health). However, if MHW is to have a more universal appeal, it needs to stick with a generic inclusive theme.
- The title / theme / strapline is strong, clear, useful and inclusive. It seeks to move beyond just talking to doing.
- 'Action Men' can be interpreted in a range of ways e.g. action on men, action for men, action with men, men who take action ... This is a strength of this theme.
- The focus this year seeks action from a number of quarters e.g. policy makers, service providers, men's support groups, men themselves ... There is a role for everyone, and this is a call for everyone to move / act / change / think / include / plan / provide / implement / roll-out ...
- Men's health is not just an issue for individual men. While men have to take some responsibility for looking after themselves, there is also a need for policy-makers / service providers to recognise the role that they need to play.
- We have to be careful not to blame men for their own poor health or to focus upon their shortcomings without also recognising the social determinants of health.
- MHW needs to be seen as a celebration of men and men's lives.
- Taking action can be very simple e.g. talk about your problems, join a gym, wear a condom, walk to the bus, go to see the doctor, get involved in a Men's Shed, put out a cigarette etc.
- As in previous years, it is important to have a Briefing Paper which sets the context / tone of MHW 2013 for all interested parties. MHFI will prepare this.

MHW 2013 Posters ...

- There is a very limited budget to support MHW 2013. A large part of this goes on the design and printing of the posters. In the future, it was suggested that we should look for sponsorship from, for example, The Ireland Funds. Darach suggested making contact with Catherine Bates from the 'Students Learning in Communities' initiative in Dublin Institute of Technology to see if any of the graphic design students would be willing to offer their help with the posters. Paul suggested asking the BHSCT design team to see if they could offer any help in this field.

- The Man Matters project (a partnership between the Workers' Educational Association, Men's Health Forum in Ireland, Parenting NI and Home-Start NI) will offer a small pot of money to underwrite the printing of posters for Northern Irish organisations. MHFI will cover the cost of poster production for the Republic of Ireland.
- The sole purpose of a MHW poster is to let people know that there is a Men's Health Week 2013, tell them when it takes place, inform them about the theme, and let them know how to get more information. It is not, in itself, a campaign tool.
- It is important to have a common MHW poster that can be used by anyone who wishes to promote and support the week. As well as providing useful publicity and exposure, displaying a poster also offers an easy and practical way for organisations to be involved in MHW.
- The poster will be made available in a range of formats e.g. A₃ size, A₄ size, PDF, JPG, with a space to type / write in contact details for local events ... It will also be supported by an array of graphics e.g. MHW logo, banner, slogan, Facebook image etc. All of these will be made available for free online downloading.
- The 'everyman' image in last year's poster received very positive feedback. No matter what celebrity you enlist, there'll always be some people who won't recognise them.
- In an ideal world, the posters for 2013 should show a diverse range of males.
- It was felt that an inter-generational poster would be good e.g. child - teenager - late 20s - middle-aged man - senior citizen.
- If possible, it would be good to show men doing 'unexpected things' e.g. disabled man doing sport or older man doing DIY etc.
- The poster should avoid militaristic imagery, and stretch the definition of what it means to be a man.
- If possible, we should try to inject a sense of humour.
- Whatever imagery is used, it should not be judgemental or negative towards men.
- It is important to acknowledge small 'actions' as well as bigger ones.
- Two possible concepts were proposed:
 - Ordinary man seeing a superhero reflection(s) of himself in a mirror or window.
 - Range of ages (young to old) doing something which is an 'action' (e.g. sport, walking the dog, gardening, talking ...)
- Everyone was asked to forward any additional thoughts to Colin within one week.
- The posters need to be launched by no later than early May 2013. Therefore, the concept has to be finalised by early April to allow time to get them printed and delivered for this deadline.

Other Suggestions ...

- Stage a live 'Flash Mob' event to grab the attention of the media. This could be a men's choir, or dance routine (with MLAs and TDs doing Gangnam Style outside Stormont and Leinster House), or a men's Drum Circle ...
- Set-up a spoof interview with a famous person about MHW 2013, and have a Flash Mob / stunt taking 'accidentally' taking place in the background.
- Use all our contacts to engage widespread social media interest.
- Create a funny You Tube video(s). Possibly run a competition for the best video, and upload them all onto a MHW You Tube Channel. Scott has used 'Filmbase' in Dublin, where it costs €150 per day to use their equipment.
- Identify and recruit high profile 'ambassadors' for MHW 2013.
- Stay away from expensive and under-used phone apps.

5. Current Plans for Men's Health Week

Colin invited everyone to share any plans that their own organisation might have to mark Men's Health Week 2013. These included ...

NIMSC - Could recruit medical students to offer basic health checks (e.g. blood pressure) in public spaces such as shopping centres or at existing events for men.

Belfast Men's Health Group - Will be organising a large-scale event in Belfast City Hall.

Amen - hope to run a health information and health checks event in Navan (similar to the one they organised last year).

IHF - Will promote the week via their newsletter / contacts, and will issue a press release on the issue of men and cardiovascular disease.

MDN - Will raise awareness of the week with the voluntary and community sectors throughout Ireland, and hope to move the date of their Annual Summer School closer to the date of MHW 2013.

Fír le Cheile - Will invite leaders of community organisations to a lunch and a talk on men's health, and will promote the week via other hub organisations. They will be having a ritualistic gathering of men at the Hill of Uisneach in the centre of Ireland.

See Change - During May, they will be spearheading the 'Green Ribbon' campaign to reduce the stigma attached to mental health issues. The 'Make a Ripple' campaign includes three young men's experience of mental health. Will use their extensive social media networks to raise awareness of MHW.

ICS - Hope to re-launch their MANual publication for men, disseminate information via Facebook, and offer talks to Men's Sheds using the Community Health Education Programme volunteers. In May, they are running a large-scale conference which looks at alcohol, tobacco and physical activity issues, and November will be Prostate Month.

HSE - Finian will use his HSE contacts to raise awareness of MHW, and will play a role in liaising with the media.

Man Alive - Will be running their annual regional conference in the Southern Health Trust area, and hope to extend their outreach provision into the Western Trust area before MHW. They are compiling a men's work database for the Southern Trust area, and have a new male choir - made up of cancer survivors.

MAIN - For his PhD, Darach is working on a community-based participatory research project with men. MAIN is working with six men's groups, and will look at ways to make MHW attractive and interesting to these bodies.

MHFI - Will organise the design / printing of posters and logos; collate and promote details of activities throughout Ireland; research a briefing paper on MHW; offer a signposting role; prepare a document on 'what can I do to mark this week'; provide an online information hub (website, Facebook and Twitter); inform the media.

6. Date of Next Meeting

Everyone enjoyed the experience of meeting together in the same place - despite the additional time and effort required. It was, therefore, agreed that the next meeting should also be held face-to-face, and we can review what happens after that gathering.

The next meeting will take place on Wednesday 13th March 2013, from 10.30am - 1.30pm (including lunch). It will be held in the same venue i.e. the Armagh Diocesan Pastoral Centre, Dundalk, Co. Louth.