
Minutes:

Second Meeting of the Men's Health Week 2015 Planning Group

Date: Monday 12th January 2015
Time: 11.00am - 1.45pm (including lunch)
Venue: Armagh Diocesan Pastoral Centre, Dundalk, Co. Louth

Present:

Eva Beirne - Irish Men's Sheds Association - Co. Louth
Lorcan Brennan - Men's Development Network (MDN)
John Cantwell - Fír Le Cheile (Men Together)
Alison Doake - South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust (SEHSCT)
Helen Forristal - Marie Keating Foundation
Colin Fowler - Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI)
Frances Haughey - Closing the Gap Project: Health Inequalities
Darach Murphy - Men Alone in No-mans-land (MAIN)
Finian Murray - Health Service Executive Dublin / North East
Greg O'Donoghue - Union of Students in Ireland
Rosemary Scott - Irish Cancer Society
David Walsh - Maynooth Men's Shed

Apologies:

Scott Ahearn - See Change
Derek Chambers - Inspire Ireland Foundation
Carrie Davenport - Shoot Positive
Paula Devine - ARK
Frances Dowds - Action Cancer
Sandra Gordon - Man Alive, Cancer Focus NI
Marita Hennessy - Waterford Institute of Technology
Michael Lynch - Men's Action Network (MAN)
Jill Martin - Lewis Fertility
Sara McCracken - British Medical Association NI
Geraldine McDonnell - Northern Health and Social Care Trust (NHSCT)
Michael McKenna - YouthAction NI Working with Young Men Team
Paul O'Kane - Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT)
Aileen O'Reilly - Headstrong
Umberto [Scap] Scappaticci - Colin Men's Group
Sandra Semple - Western Health and Social Care Trust (WHSCT)
Peter Topping - Relate NI
Rachel Wright - Samaritans Ireland

Minute Taker: Colin Fowler

AGENDA ITEMS ...

1. Welcome

Colin welcomed everyone to the meeting (especially anyone who hadn't been able to attend the first meeting) and gave a brief overview of the agenda, 'housekeeping' issues, and practical arrangements for the morning.

A large number of apologies had been tendered by a broad range of organisations. This was, once again, due to the date not suiting everyone, the distance to travel, and, especially, the tight restrictions placed upon representatives in relation to travelling outside of their own work catchment area.

Colin set out the main aim of today's meeting: To finalise the theme for Men's Health Week (MHW) 2015, and to begin the process of considering what the MHW poster / imagery might look like and include.

2. Introductions

Lorcan invited everyone to introduce themselves - by way of helping them 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.

3. Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the previous (November 2014) MHW Planning Group meeting were accepted as an accurate reflection of that gathering. However, the question was asked: 'What are the dates for Men's Health Week 2015, and how are these dates calculated each year?' ...

Colin explained that MHW always begins on the Monday before Father's Day, and Father's Day is always the third Sunday in June. Subsequently, MHW 2015 will run from Monday 15th - Sunday 21st June.

4. Theme for MHW 2015

The group was asked to consider if they are still happy with the suggestion, made at the November 2014 Planning Group meeting, about the theme / strapline for MHW 2015. At that gathering, it was felt that this should be: *'Creating Climate Change - it's time for a new script'*.

The meeting felt that although this concept is on the right tracks, there may be a problem with both the ordering of the sentence and, more importantly, with the word 'climate'. It was felt that using the word climate might divert attention away from our concept of changing the environment / culture / circumstances which contribute to determining men's health outcomes to focusing upon weather change (and, possibly, by association, blaming the men in power for causing the polar ice caps to melt!).

It was felt that there is no logical reason for leaving this as a 'grey area'.

At the earlier meeting, it was felt that this year's MHW should focus upon calling for a change to the prevailing social / political / economic / personal ... systems, structures, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours which negatively impact upon the health and wellbeing of men and boys in Ireland. Thus, this call is directed at a very broad range of organisations and individuals, including policy makers, service providers, the general public and men themselves.

After a lot of discussion, it was agreed that, to avoid any confusion and to be pragmatic, we should replace the word 'climate' with 'culture', and also invert the strapline, so that it becomes:

*Men's Health Week 2015:
It's time for a new script - create culture change*

This form of words indicates that we believe that some aspects of society do have to change - without naming them. In so doing, this leaves the door open to everyone to put their bit of the 'jigsaw' into place i.e. health service providers, politicians, men's groups, churches, sporting bodies, voluntary groups, advice lines, the media, men themselves ...

5. Learning from Previous MHWs

Finian invited everyone to think about anything from MHW 2014 (or previous years) which we should continue, change, avoid or learn from as we move into planning MHW 2015. Suggestions included ...

- The substantial media coverage which focused on the positive aspects of men's lives, and avoided the tired old caricatures of unresponsive men, was great.
- The language used in our MHW documents and in the media was very important, and mirrored our discussion in the November 2014 Planning Group meeting i.e. that we shouldn't see men as a problem to be solved, but as an asset to themselves and everyone around them.
- Hearing about / exposure to the real life experiences of local men brought the whole week to life. Listening to men and hearing their stories should be part of the 'culture change' that we are seeking for MHW 2015.
- We need to continue to avoid deficit-based approaches to men's health.
- 2014 was the first year that we had substantial interest from a broad range of male-dominated workplaces looking for information on men's health. These links should be continued and built upon if possible.
- The 'Challenges and Choices' booklet was a great asset and was well received. All 10,000 hard copies were disseminated within a week or so, and many more were downloaded from the Men's Health Forum in Ireland website. This was a tangible and useful resource that we could give directly to men. A re-print would be welcome.
- The 'postcards' produced for MHW 2014 were hugely successful. However, in retrospect, it would have been useful to design the back of them to look like an actual postcard - with a place for an address and a message - so that they could be sent to men before and during MHW.

- The publicity materials need to be ready, printed and in the field well in advance of MHW.
- MHW social media postings can and do attract a lot of attention. This needs to continue. It might also be worth looking at trying to secure a small budget to promote the week via Facebook advertising.
- It would be useful to ask organisations that are running Father's Day events to think about also associating them with MHW.
- We could deliberately target visitors to Ireland during MHW 2015 in addition to local men and boys.
- Third level students are not in college during MHW. Therefore, information needs to go to them well in advance of the week. They could possibly be targeted via social media during mid to late May.

6. Posters and Images

Colin highlighted that there is no dedicated design budget for posters / images for MHW 2015. Historically, we have relied upon the Man Matters project to underwrite this element of the week, in addition to the goodwill of professionals in this field - who have offered us a cut-price service and a huge additional voluntary input. Since Man Matters no longer exists, MHFI will cover these costs during 2015. However, the budget is even more limited than in earlier years.

In Ireland, we tend to think of a 'real man' as being one single model, and his characteristics are often perceived as:

- White
- Heterosexual
- Able-bodied
- Physically fit
- Muscular / large body frame
- Fairly young
- Into sport
- Can handle himself ...

Whenever possible, MHW imagery and text needs to challenge this stereotype and to reflect the diversity of men's lives and personal traits. This ties-in to the MHW theme of a new script and creating culture change.

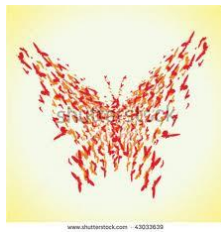
A range of possible concepts were suggested for the poster *[please note that the images which follow were just randomly picked from the Internet to illustrate the concepts being put forward, they are not suggestions for inclusion on MHW posters] ...*

(a) Brian O'Driscoll (Honorary PhD Doctorate from DCU - though both his parents were medical doctors) in a white coat writing the 'new script' on a prescription pad.

(b) Use an optical illusion image that can be interpreted in at least two completely different ways (i.e. we need to think differently and view things in new ways), for example ...



(c) An image of a man which is made up of hundreds of smaller images which depict males of all ages, races, looks, styles etc. or made up of relevant text, for example ...



(d) An image of a mix-and-match 'identikit man' made of different body parts (as in the children's toys / books), for example ...



(e) Use an inter-generational photo of men from diverse backgrounds, for example ...



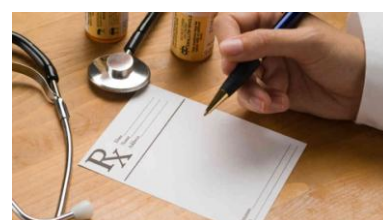
(f) Have a classic look 'olden days' photo of men to illustrate / emphasise the need to 'create culture change', for example ...



(g) Use a men's health cartoon which reflects the MHW theme, for example ...



(h) Use a prescription pad with a script being written on it as a background / wallpaper for the poster, for example ...



(i) Use a 'word cloud' generated from key phrases / words / people / services / medical terms etc. associated with men's health. This could also be in the shape of something specific, for example ...



Men could appear in the foreground, with this 'cloud' as a backdrop.

(j) At the previous MHW Planning Group meeting, it was felt that the poster could benefit from a clever way to get people's attention and to encourage them to see things differently, for example the anti-racism Ad starring Jason Sherlock which said: '*Jason Sherlock is a member of a small ethnic minority - Dubs with all-Ireland medals*'. Participants were asked to think about how - if at all - this could be done.

It was pointed out that although we all recognise that 'it's time for a new script' and that we wish to 'create culture change', we also have to be very careful and astute about how we present this message. There is little doubt that this call could be seen as very politically charged, and may provoke the sensitivities of some organisations who need to be on-board and supportive of men's health. However, we need to be courageous about asking for these new conversations to begin - without singling out any specific person or group for criticism.

It was also felt that the posters should be reproduced as postcards again this year - with formatting for a message and recipient address on the reverse side.

7. Any Other Business

- As the meeting was running over time, all members of the group were asked to send a few lines about their plans for MHW 2015 (if any) to Colin, as well as any additional ideas that they (or their friends / colleagues) might have regarding the poster concept.
- David felt that it would be useful for members of men's groups to meet with politicians and health service personnel to discuss men's health issues and needs. This is an area that he hopes to follow-up.
- John suggested that MHW might be an appropriate time to try to convene an all-island meeting of men's groups to explore the possibility of future contact and partnership working. He is looking into the prospect of using Croke Park for this gathering.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next MHW 2015 Planning Group meeting will take place on Monday 9th February 2015, at 11.00am. It was agreed to hold one last face-to-face meeting, and this gathering will be held, once again, in the Diocesan Pastoral Centre, The Magnet, The Demesne, Dundalk, Co. Louth. It will finish with lunch served at 1.00pm.