
Third Meeting of the Young Men and Suicide Advisory Group: Minutes

Date: Wednesday 7th December 2011
Time: 10.30am - 12.30pm
Venue: Videolink between the Institute of Public Health in Ireland's Dublin and Belfast offices
Present: **Dublin ...** Susan Kenny, Vincent McCarthy, Owen Metcalfe, Nigel O'Callaghan, Noel Richardson
Belfast ... Martin Bell, Colin Fowler, Madeline Heaney, Michael Lynch, Michael McKenna
Apologies: Derek Chambers, Nick Clarke, Bidy O'Neill
Chairperson: Owen Metcalfe
Minutes: Colin Fowler

Agenda Items

1. Welcome and Introductions

Owen, as Chairperson, welcomed everyone to the meeting, and thanked them for their attendance. As some 'new faces' were present, Owen invited everyone to introduce themselves and the organisation that they work for.

2. Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as an accurate reflection of those proceedings. A number of matters arising were also noted ...

- Noel informed the meeting that the Stakeholder events had gone well, and that there was an especially high turnout in Belfast. He is, currently, working on finalising the "Effective Practice" paper, and is also collating a draft composite report on the literature review / stakeholder phase of the project. Noel hopes to be able to circulate this report in early 2012.
- Michael L held his residential with men who have contemplated or attempted suicide. However, as the date of the residential had to be re-scheduled at short notice, Colin was unable to attend it.
- Colin has negotiated some additional support for the Northern Ireland Pilot Intervention from the Man Matters project.
- Colin submitted an interim progress report to both the Public Health Agency (late September) and the National Office for Suicide Prevention (early November).

3. Northern Ireland Pilot Intervention

Colin provided an update on developments in the Northern Ireland Pilot Intervention. Since the last Advisory Group ...

- Two Young Men and Suicide Stakeholder Meetings were held: Belfast on Wednesday 14th September and Dublin on Thursday 15th September.

- Colin met with Michael Mc from YouthAction NI's Work with Young Men Unit (Friday 16th September) to discuss YouthAction's input to the Pilot Intervention in Northern Ireland. This was followed-up by ongoing contact with staff from YouthAction NI in order to develop a proposal / budget for their specific input to the Pilot Intervention.
- Colin drafted a detailed proposal for the Young Men and Suicide Pilot Intervention in Northern Ireland.
- A further meeting was held with Annie Armstrong and Kevin Bailey from the Colin Suicide Prevention Task Force (Friday 7th October) to discuss the proposal for the Young Men and Suicide Pilot Intervention in their area, and to secure their buy-in. The proposal was then re-drafted as a result of these discussions.
- Colin met with Michael Owen and Helen Gibson from the Public Health Agency's Training and Quality Assurance Group (Thursday 20th October) to present details of the proposed Pilot Intervention, to ascertain if it will fit with the regional review, and to seek their advice on a way forward.
- A meeting was held with Owen O'Neill - Health Improvement Manager with the Public Health Agency in the South Eastern area - to inform him about developments, outline the structure and content of the proposed Pilot Intervention, and seek additional guidance (Thursday 17th November). Later that day, Colin met with Annie Armstrong from Colin Neighbourhood Partnership to discuss and seek final approval for the proposal for the Colin area.
- Marty McKinley (under the supervision of Jonny Ashe) from YouthAction NI has been nominated as the key facilitator for the 'Young Men's Advisory / Reference Forum' element of the programme. Marty and Jonny consulted with Michael Mc and Colin about the development of a detailed project plan for their initiative.
- Noel and Colin negotiated with the National Suicide Research Foundation (NSRF) to secure the delivery of 'Mind Yourself' Training for Trainers in the Colin area. This included teleconferences with Ella Arensman (Wednesday 16th November and Friday 25th November), the preparation of a detailed briefing paper on the Pilot Intervention, as well as ad hoc telephone and email communication with NSRF.
- A meeting took place with the Colin Suicide Prevention Task Force (Tuesday 6th December) to sign-off plans for the Pilot Intervention, and to begin the recruitment process for the various elements of the programme.
- Colin prepared an overview paper to help inform community groups in the catchment area about the nature and scope of this project.

Colin provided an overview of the key features of the Pilot Intervention in Northern Ireland ...

Title

To give a clear and distinct identity to this intervention, it will be called "*First Instinct*". This name reflects the underlying goal, i.e. to encourage and foster a 'first instinct' in young men which is to seek help and support at times of difficulty rather than ignoring their needs, self-harming, or taking their own lives.

Aim

The aim of this programme is to encourage the development of a community culture which understands the needs of and issues facing young men. Thus, there will be a specific focus upon the 'gendered dimension' of young men's lives. The approach adopted will draw upon learning from the 'Frameworks / Connect' initiative, and the project will seek to work alongside local stakeholders to develop a network of informed, empathetic, and actively engaged service providers, parents, and young men themselves.

Key Elements

There will be five key elements to the intervention ...

- Establishment of a Young Men's Advisory / Reference Forum.
- Participation by a range of local stakeholders in a 'Man's World?' programme - focusing upon working with young men and understanding their world.
- Training for facilitators to enable them to deliver the 'Mind Yourself' programme.
- Acquisition of a number of key resource materials on working with young men.
- Evaluation of the work that has been undertaken.

Young Men's Advisory / Reference Forum

A key target group for this intervention (in keeping with the Frameworks approach) will be 'gatekeeper' adults who live / work in this community e.g. teachers, youth workers, community workers, health service personnel, clergy, sports coaches, parents etc. However, it is also proposed that young men, themselves, should be engaged in both an advisory capacity and via participation in an evaluated programme which seeks to increase their help-seeking behaviour and awareness of mental health and well-being issues.

Michael Mc informed the group that this input will entail ...

- Engagement with a broad range of young men from across the catchment area, with the aim of establishing a Young Men's Advisory / Reference Forum.
- Interactive and creative group work activities with this core sample which will explore the lives, experiences, needs of, and issues facing local young men.
- Development of an 'end product' (e.g. video of young men talking, or a 'First Instinct' flyer for young men, or a photographic display portraying young men's lives, or a "Let's Talk - Protect Life" event etc.)

This aspect of the project will be spearheaded by staff from the Work with Young Men Unit in YouthAction NI. Umberto Scappaticci (Scap) - an experienced and respected youth worker in the Colin area - will participate in the programme as a co-worker. In this way, he can expand their own skills and experience in this specialist and evolving field of work, and ensure that a level of competence is retained within the Colin community after the YouthAction team leave - so, ensuring the longevity of the Forum.

This programme will ...

- Begin in early January 2012 and last until April 2012.
- Involve young men aged 15-17 years.
- Seek to engage up to 15 young men.
- Run for two hours each week.
- Take place in Cloona House, Poleglass.
- Give the participants a 'voice' and inform wider community programmes and services.
- Use WEMWBS and other evaluation tools to measure outcomes - for both the participants and the workers.

Man's World?

An inter-agency group, comprised of 10-14 service providers, practitioners, and parents from across the Colin area will be recruited. If possible, this will reflect a range of interest groups in the area e.g. education, youth work, community work, health, church, sports, probation, family work etc. This core group will be offered a package of training, support, mentoring, reflection and practical action in the field of working with young men, which will include ...

- A briefing meeting with senior staff in each organisation - to ensure they fully understand what their organisation is committing to, and to confirm their assent.
- An internal organisational audit / review of their level of 'male friendliness'.
- A session on why we need to target young men and an exploration of the experiences of local young men.
- A session on how to engage with young men - showcasing principles and models of effective practice from other places.
- A session on what practical actions could be undertaken locally to improve the 'First Instinct' of young men.
- Each participating organisation being asked to plan and deliver a realistic 'in-house' initiative which will contribute to meeting the needs of local young men.
- Ongoing telephone / email support from MHFI.
- Writing-up the 'projects' that were delivered.

This programme will run from February to early May 2012. Participants will also be asked to consider the possibility of working collaboratively to plan a community-wide programme of activities to coincide with Men's Health Week 2012.

Mind Yourself

The 'Mind Yourself' programme is a brief problem solving intervention aimed at young adults. Essential elements of the programme include ...

- A holistic life-skills approach encompassing coping and problem solving skills.
- A strength based approach which focuses on hope, optimism and solutions.
- A whole population approach to working with young people. This way, those who are more 'at risk' - but who may never come into contact with services - might be reached.
- A community based approach that consults young people on their needs.
- A firm grounding in strategies to enhance problem solving skills, emphasise optimism, and promote resilience among adolescents.
- The provision of information on resources and services available to young people.
- An empirical evaluation of the intervention in order to measure its effects on helplessness and hopelessness. Levels of depression, self-esteem, problem-solving strategies and coping methods might be looked at here.

The original programme entails two sessions, of approximately 90 minutes each, delivered to adolescents in groups of 15 or less (ages 15-17) in school settings. Another version of the programme can be delivered in informal settings such as youth groups, sporting bodies, training schemes etc.

The evaluation of this programme shows that it is effective in creating significant positive changes in terms of problem solving and emotional resilience. Other results indicate positive, but non-significant, changes in depressive symptoms (greatest reduction in boys) and self-harm thoughts.

The National Suicide Research Foundation (NSRF) has been asked by MHFI to deliver a two day 'Train the Trainer' programme for up to 14 participants in late February or early March 2012. It is hoped that the trainees will (in pairs) begin to deliver this package in the local Colin Secondary School (St Colm's High School) soon afterwards.

Susan raised a number of issues in relation to this programme ...

- When it was being developed in the Republic of Ireland, there was little engagement with the HSE.
- The National Office for Suicide Prevention fund NSRF - so using their programme as part of our pilot might be seen as 'double funding'.
- NSRF is a research and evaluation focused body rather than a training provider.
- The Republic of Ireland has already opted to use a different programme ('MindOut') in their school settings - so utilising this programme would not, necessarily, help to inform or add value to work in that jurisdiction.
- Is it possible to offer the contract to NSRF to do this piece of work without first seeking three quotes or issuing a tender document?

In response to a question by Martin, Susan made it clear that her issues do not relate to the quality of the NSRF programme or to the materials that it uses (as these have all been evaluated positively), but rather to the logistics of delivering it.

After discussion it was felt that ...

- The purpose of this pilot phase is to experiment with new approaches to see if there is anything that can be learned from them.
- As this is a pilot intervention in Northern Ireland (with an extremely limited budget and tight timescale) it is not necessary to put this piece of work out to tender.
- Mind Yourself has not been utilised in Northern Ireland and, subsequently, there would be learning gained from piloting it in this region. This learning could then be compared with that from the MindOut programme in the Republic.
- NSRF are the only body currently delivering the Mind Yourself programme. Therefore, they are the experts in it.
- If it is decided that the Mind Yourself programme should be adopted in Northern Ireland, then it would be useful to train facilitators to be able to deliver it in both formal and informal settings.
- Colin and Noel should compare and contrast the benefits of the MindOut programme with Mind Yourself.
- If we do choose to go with Mind Yourself, then NSRF should not be directly involved in the evaluation process - as they have a vested interest in its success.
- A decision needs to be reached as soon as possible if we are to stay within the projected timescale.

Noel, Susan and Colin are having a teleconference with Ella Arensman on Thursday 8th December to discuss this issue further.

4. Republic of Ireland Pilot Intervention

Noel and Colin met with Derek Chambers and Vince McCarthy in Dublin on Thursday 29th September to plan the Pilot Intervention for the Republic of Ireland. At this meeting, it was agreed to pursue the piloting of at least one element of the Australian 'WorkOut' programme in the Republic of Ireland. Derek and Vince had prepared an overview of WorkOut for this meeting (which Colin will forward to Advisory Group members for their information).

The WorkOut programme was designed by the Inspire Foundation / ReachOut in Australia, and uses the Internet and social media technologies to engage young men in looking after their own mental health. It seeks to promote help seeking amongst young men by:

confronting stereotypical attitudes of mental health; providing males with the language and tools to take positive action; promoting social connectedness; challenging attitudes that impede help-seeking behaviour.

The programme is delivered online, and uses video, peer role models, interactive activities, and the provision of information / resources to improve 'mental fitness'. Participants ...

- Complete an initial online assessment test and get their results.
- Undertake practically focused 'missions' / tasks to help improve their mental fitness.
- Review their progress.

There are four areas which are addressed in the programme ...

- Taking Control (using the Mastery Scale)
- Handling Pressure (using the K6 scale)
- Being Practical (using the Barriers to Help-Seeking Scale)
- Building Confidence (using the Ten Item Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale)

Vince and Nigel gave a PowerPoint overview of the programme (which Colin will circulate with these minutes) ...

- In Australia, the WorkOut programme is, currently, available online in Beta format - to test it and help to identify and rectify any glitches within it. The learning from this will be built upon in the Irish trial phase.
- ReachOut Ireland has considerable experience of engaging with local young adults via the Internet and social media technologies.
- Many of the young adults who engage with ReachOut are experiencing psychological distress.
- ReachOut Ireland currently attracts a much higher proportion of males than their colleagues in Australia.
- The pilot programme in Ireland will have two dimensions to it: an online component and a local campaign(s).
- The campaign dimension will seek to work in partnership with other bodies e.g. FAI, Sports Council, Irish Amateur Boxing Association, IRFU etc. Susan pointed out that many sporting bodies in the Republic of Ireland have expressed an interest in supporting mental health initiatives with males, and may prove to be useful partners.
- As Inspire Ireland is associated with the Inspire Foundation in Australia, they have been given permission for the programme to be tested in Ireland.
- The Irish pilot will focus upon the concept of 'mental fitness', and will try to create culturally relevant materials.
- There is an emphasis upon making changes to personal lifestyles.
- Continuous evaluation is built into the online tracking process.
- The initial assessment test will identify anyone who needs help urgently, and direct them to support services. However, although this intervention is primarily targeted at young men in the Republic of Ireland, some thought also needs to be given to Northern Ireland support services - as some of the users may come from this jurisdiction.

Noel, Colin and the staff from ReachOut Ireland will form the implementation team for this initiative. They will have a teleconference before Christmas, and ReachOut will prepare a paper on this proposal by early January 2012.

5. Evaluation of Interventions

MHFI will work in partnership with the Centre for Men's Health in IT Carlow to evaluate the impact of these pilot interventions. This work will be undertaken by a student studying for their Masters degree. They will work under the supervision of the Centre's Director, Dr Noel Richardson.

Noel will draft a methodology for the evaluation of the various elements of the programme before the end of January 2012. However, he pointed out that ...

- The WorkOut programme has a built-in means of capturing data on an ongoing basis.
- The YouthAction-led initiative is underpinned by substantive measurement tools including WEMWBS and outcome-focused feedback.
- The Man's World? package elicits participant feedback at the end of each session, includes an organisational audit, and seeks formal evaluation from participants at the end of the programme.
- The Mind Yourself (or other) programme will have an impact evaluation already developed for it.

6. Action Points

- i. Noel will collate a draft composite report on the literature review / stakeholder phase of the project by early 2012.
- ii. Colin and Noel will compare and contrast the benefits of the MindOut and Mind Yourself programmes.
- iii. Noel, Susan and Colin will have a teleconference with Ella Arensman (NSRF) on Thursday 8th December to discuss the use of the Mind Yourself programme.
- iv. Colin will forward a copy of the overview paper on 'WorkOut' (prepared by Derek and Vince for their meeting with MHFI in September 2011) to Advisory Group members.
- v. Colin will circulate a copy of the PowerPoint presentation given today by Vince and Nigel to Advisory Group members.
- vi. MHFI and ReachOut Ireland will have a teleconference before Christmas to further develop the plans for the WorkOut programme.
- vii. ReachOut staff will prepare a paper on the WorkOut proposal (for the Advisory Group) by early January 2012.
- viii. Noel will draft a methodology for the evaluation of the various elements of the pilot interventions before the end of January 2012.

7. Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 1st February 2012, from 10.30am - 12.30pm (followed by lunch). This will be conducted via videolink between the Institute of Public Health's Belfast and Dublin offices.