
Second Meeting of the Men's Health Week (MHW) 2025 Planning Group

Date: Wednesday 15th January 2025
Time: 11.00am - 1.00pm
Mode: 'Zoom' Video Conference
Minute Taker: Colin Fowler

Present:

Pauric Brazil - Health Service Executive (CHO 7)
Lorcan Brennan - Men's Development Network
Michael Broderick - Clanrye Group
Alma Brosnan - Shine
Greg Clark - Health Service Executive (CHO 1)
Brid Collins - National Youth Council of Ireland
John Collins - Pavee Point
John Paul Collins - Exchange House
Dáire Conway - Irish Heart Foundation
Sean Davitt - Health Service Executive (CHO 5)
Clare Deasy - Health Service Executive (CHO 4)
Niamh Doherty - Union of Students in Ireland
Ben Dolan - Irish Men's Sheds Association
Clodagh Foley - University of Galway
Miriam Forde - Irish Haemochromatosis Association
Colin Fowler - Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI)
Karyn Gavin - Galway Rural Development (Ballinasloe)
Martin Gillick - Bus Éireann
Caroline Kennedy
Ellie Leonard - Western Health and Social Care Trust
Ben Lindsay - Health Service Executive (Dublin North City and County)
Johnny McClurg - Community Sports Network
Laura McHugh - Longford County Council
Michael McKenna - YouthAction NI
Barry Murphy - Bodywhys
Finian Murray - Health Service Executive (National)
Shaun O'Donnell - Sport Ireland
Stephen Quinn - GAA
Kate Reilly - Men's Aid Ireland
Melinda Ryan - Galway Rural Development (Tuam)

Apologies:

Lise Alford - 3Ts
Paul Anderson - Forever Fathers
Deirdre Bigley - HeadsUp
Alannah Brennan - Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
Julie Bunch - Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council
Clare Corkey - Men's Advisory Project

Jim Curran - Irish Pharmacy Union
Paula Devine - ARK
Martin Dooley - Retired Engineering Trainer
Anne Farrell - CIE
Helen Forristal - Marie Keating Foundation
Brien Frazer - South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust
Garry Glennon - Letterkenny Youth and Family Service
Robert Glusek - Sure Start South Armagh
Sharon Graham - Carer Support Service, South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust
Michael Hart - Community Development, SHSCT, Craigavon
Frances Haughey - Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council
Marita Hennessy - INFANT Centre, University College Cork
Teresa Hennessy - HeadsUp Kildare
Caroline Hughes - Action Cancer
Tracy James - Irish Heart Foundation
Ellen Jennings - Bodywhys
Conor Keane - Alcohol Action Ireland
Eoin Kernan - Eating Disorders Campaigner
Michael Lynch - C4S
Ben McCallum - Lifeline
Rebecca McLaughlin - Irish Men's Sheds Association
Kathryn Meade - National Screening Service
Fra Mohan - Belfast Health and Social Care Trust
Sonia Montgomery - Western Health and Social Care Trust
Steven O'Connell - Football Cooperative
Shane O'Donnell - Health Service Executive (CHO 7)
James O'Hagan - LGBT Ireland
Kevin O'Hagan - Irish Cancer Society
Paul O'Kane - Belfast Health and Social Care Trust
Martin O'Neill - Martial Arts Coach
Tracey Powell - Southern Health and Social Care Trust
Kyle Robinson - Extern
Dan Russell - Health Service Executive (CHO 7)
Brian Samson - ESB
Pam Smyth - Carer Support Service, South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust
Barry Traynor - Promoting Wellbeing Team, SHSCT
Bill Vaughan - Mental Health Ireland

AGENDA ITEMS ...

1. Welcome and Overview

Coli welcomed everyone to the meeting, gave a brief overview of the practicalities of the session, and highlighted that the purpose of this gathering was to:

- Agree / refine the MHW 2025 theme.
- Determine the call to action / key message we want to convey.
- Explore possible concepts for the graphics.
- Scope potential 'Ambassadors' for the week.
- Share any other news that participants might have.

The meeting was reminded that membership of the Planning Group is open to anyone who wishes to contribute - in whatever ways are feasible for them. Everyone is welcome to invite other organisations to attend future meetings and/or to input electronically.

2. Round of Introductions

Finian 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.
- Share the nature of their interest in men's work.

3. Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 18th December 2024 were accepted as an accurate reflection of that gathering. There were no matters arising.

4. Overarching Theme and Strapline

Lorcan gave an overview of the voting process to determine the overarching theme, and steered a conversation to agree the focus for 2025.

At the first meeting of the all-island Men's Health Week 2025 Planning Group in December 2024, fifteen diverse suggestions were made as to possible overarching themes for the week. After that meeting, Coli had emailed all Planning Group contributors and asked for their help in narrowing down this field of choices. Everyone was asked to rank the suggestions, in order of preference, from 1 to 15 [with 1 being their top choice and 15 being their least appealing option].

There was a great response, and feedback was received from 64 organisations. The results showed that the suggestions, by and large, clearly fell into one of three categories:

- i. Those that were top scoring preferences for most people.
- ii. Those that were middle range preferences for most people.
- iii. Those that were 'Marmite Effect' options i.e. most people hated them, but a few people really loved them.

Four of the options polled were top scorers, and came out substantially ahead of all the others. These were ...

- **Shoulder-to-Shoulder** [Men working together in solidarity to build relationships, a community network and improve their health]
- **Just One Thing** [Ask men to choose a priority issue for themselves, and invite them to focus upon that one thing that they'd like to change about their health]
- **Connect 4 Health** [Target the negative impact that loneliness and isolation can have on male health and wellbeing. Also, improving men's health is not simply a job for men themselves. They need support, encouragement and opportunities to do so]
- **Plan your Route** [Be the driver of your own health and wellbeing rather than a passenger, but know that you can't do it on your own - even men need to ask for directions and help sometimes]

The middle range options were ...

- What Really Counts?
- Mind Your Self
- The Best a Man Can Be
- Health Matters - Start With Yours
- A Job Still To Be Done
- Kick-Start Your Health
- Start the Conversation

The 'Marmite' options were ...

- Detoxifying Masculinity | Positive Masculinity
- Your Health (or Metabolic) Age
- No Man is an Island
- The Invisible Man

The top four choices (i.e. Shoulder-to-Shoulder, Just One Thing, Connect 4 Health, Plan your Route) formed the new short-list for a second round of voting, and Coli wrote to everyone again to ask for their help to narrow these possibilities down to one. In total, 87 votes were received in this second poll, and the two most popular options received a broadly similar number of preferences ...

- Shoulder-to-Shoulder - 33 votes
- Connect 4 Health - 32 votes
- Just One Thing - 13 votes
- Plan your Route - 9 votes

As there was no clear winner in this vote on themes, the two top options were brought to today's planning meeting to decide which one to run with. It was felt that each proposal was a strong contender and had distinct merits / disadvantages, for example ...

- **'Shoulder-to-Shoulder'** reflects: unity; strength; bonds; working towards a common goal; connectivity; not being on your own; shared purpose; determination; support; a men's space / place etc. It also links naturally to the world of rugby and the upcoming Six Nations tournament (making it topical). However, on the downside, it lacks any obvious / in-your-face message about men's health and has a military association.
- **'Connect 4 Health'** reflects: a clear health message / call to action; the cornerstone of health promotion; building relationships; taking action; the need for connections; accessing support and help; moving away from isolation; physical, mental, social, financial and spiritual health etc. However, there is also a real possibility that a man could reach out for help and not be able to get it - due the current state of some support services in Ireland.

After a long discussion, and voting via a show of hands, it was finally agreed that both of these have merit and, in fact, they could be used simultaneously - if one is used as the theme and the other as a strapline. So, the theme for Men's Health Week 2025 will be:

Shoulder-to-Shoulder: Connecting for Health

It was also felt that the final word 'health' could (when required) be interchanged with 'life', or 'strength', or 'support', or 'a healthier tomorrow', or 'change', or 'action', or 'wellbeing', or 'policy change', or 'friendship' etc. This would help organisations to highlight their own unique focus and/or services when promoting the week.

5. Possibilities for Visual Representation of the Theme

Finian invited everyone to join Zoom Breakout Rooms to discuss how this theme might be represented visually on MHW 2025 publicity materials. The feedback included ...

- Men as part of a walk-and-talk group.
- A men's cycling group.
- Men sitting on a 'chatty / buddy bench'.
- Men having lunch or a cup of tea together.
- Men out jogging together or on a Park Run.
- A group of men standing at a bus stop.
- Two men sitting together on a bus.
- A large group huddle of men (all ages, racial backgrounds and abilities) facing towards the camera.
- A group of men at a picnic table.
- Male rugby players - possibly in a scrum or a line-out, with the picture taken from the back.
- The iconic Charles Clyde Ebbets photo of construction workers eating their lunch on the steel work of a New York skyscraper (or local men, on a building site, taking a tea break whilst sitting on scaffolding).
- Men working together to fix a car engine (or something else) - with one man handing the other a tool.
- The Man Matters photo of a younger man helping a blind older man to cross the road.
- The imagery needs to show as much diversity as possible.
- If we are representing disability, a wheelchair user has been shown in previous years so, perhaps, we could look at another issue e.g. a man without a limb or wearing a prosthetic.
- It might be useful to include speech bubbles on whichever image is used.

It was, however, acknowledged that whatever image is used, it must be able to be clearly recognisable on materials ranging from very small social media graphics to A3 size posters.

6. Ambassadors for MHW 2025

Finian asked group members if anyone personally [and realistically] knows someone who could be approached to be our MHW 2025 Ambassador(s) this year. A number of possibilities were suggested (but no contact points were named) including Gerry Kelly (who talked about the personal impact of prostate cancer on the Tommy Tiernan Show), Olympic boxer Kenny Egan (who recently did a great talk with Meath Travellers), Matt Cooper (broadcaster and journalist), and Ivan Yeats (broadcaster, ex-politician and business owner). If anyone has a personal in-road to a suitable potential Ambassador, please contact Coli as soon as possible with the details.

7. Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Planning Group will be held via Zoom on Monday 24th February at 11.00am.