

Seacroft Men's Group

Its Aims
Description of Activity
The need for this group
How we address these needs
Partnerships
Impact Measurement
The Impact of the project
Costings

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Charity no. 1105268 Company no. 4930452

Aim of the Seacroft Men's Group

The Men's Group is a weekly drop in service targeting isolated men aged 18+ living in the East areas of Leeds with complex needs, with an aim to developing their emotional and physical health and wellbeing.

We provide confidence and skills-building activities including health education sessions, cookery skills sessions, bike maintenance and other practical information sessions. We arrange visits, guest speakers and involvement in arts projects, such as Love Arts Festival (an annual arts festival highlighting the issue of mental health.) We provide ongoing support to men who connect with the project and those with acute mental health issues, signposting them to community activities, volunteering and other learning opportunities. We are currently working with 18 men.

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Seacroft Men's Group

GAIN NEW SKILLS
SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY
VISIT NEW PLACES
ACCESS SUPPORT & ADVICE

A project just for men to meet up, chat & support each other

**Every Tuesday
10.30am - 12.30pm
Denis Healey Centre
Foundry Mill Street
Seacroft
Leeds
LS14 6RD**

**For info contact
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Description of Activity

The group meets for 2.5 hours every week during term time, at the Dennis Healey Centre in Seacroft. It has a very informal feel and provides low-pressure activities such as chatting, relaxing, playing pool, chess, football, making tea and making and eating lunch together as well as peer support.

These activities are used as a non-pressured vehicle for participants to develop their social skills, confidence and self esteem. They are also used as a springboard for participants to progress to other

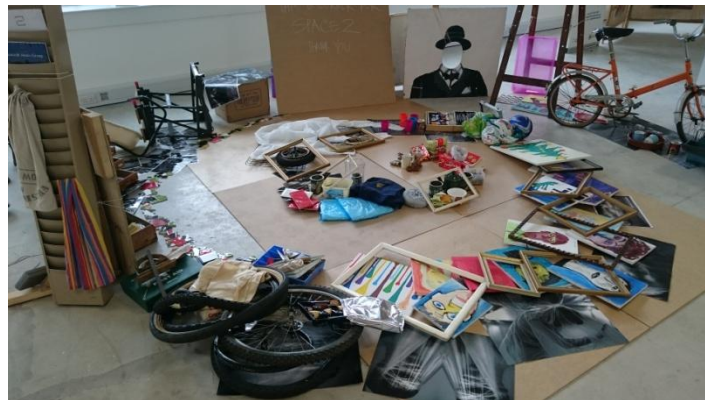
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activities. These have included “Headspace”, a course which develops participants’ positive thinking, stress management and confidence that we run during the session. We also ran a Space2’s FRESH men’s health messages project, where five men volunteered to share health advice and messages amongst their peers about prostate cancer. The Men had requested to learn more about prostate cancer. They have also taken part in Cook 4 Life courses learning all about healthy eating.

Our members have also taken part in a digital photography walk, trips to Temple Newsman, and West Yorkshire Playhouse to see Space’s shows they have also exhibited their photographs there. They have been to opera as part of Opera North Encore programme, creating an installation for a exhibition called The Fringe part of the Love Arts festival. The latter was a collaborative piece where members were asked to contribute their own interpretation “What the Men’s Groups Mean to You”. This included cups of tea, bicycles, self portraits, overalls and so forth.



In previous terms the group has also participated in activities such as canal boat trips, visits to Yorkshire Sculpture Park, the Royal Armouries .

A weekly job club also runs from the Centre by Gipsil which men are able to access and men from the job club access the group.

Three experienced facilitators lead the sessions. Not only do they facilitate activities but they also signpost to other services and provide a sounding board for men to discuss personal issues, housing needs, health and so on. The staff are extremely adaptive and flexible. They facilitate these conversations, which are able to take place both privately and publically.

We also encourage peer-to-peer support and the “have a seat and a cuppa” format of the group greatly facilitates this. We have members who have improved their mental and physical health through attending the group and they are able to share their journey with, and inspire, others.

The need for this Group

Over the past 3 years it has been clear that there are many isolated men in East Leeds, particularly single men with no family connections, some former armed forces members with PTSD and others with poor mental health and complex needs, including addiction issues.

In the Government’s Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Seacroft is ranked 120 out of 32,482 in England, where 1 is the most deprived and 32,482 the least. Unemployment and people receiving benefits is near 20% with over half long term unemployed and a further 5% receiving in-work benefits.

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Unsurprisingly, in a recent suicide audit carried out by the City, Seacroft has one of the highest rates of male suicides in Leeds. Men in Inner E/NE Leeds experience higher levels of ill health and die younger than men from affluent City areas, despite this they make less use of primary health care services.

In Seacroft itself, lung cancer hospital admissions are the fourth worst ward in the city (*Source: Director of Public Health 2013*), and in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, Killingbeck and Seacroft Ward has the second highest prevalence in Leeds for Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). In terms of health and wellbeing disparities between men and women, in both South and North Seacroft MSOAs, the gap in life expectancies between the sexes is nearly three years (*Source: Director of Public Health 2013*).

Additionally Leeds City Council Housing have identified that isolated men have been disproportionately affected by the under occupancy charge causing social and economic exclusion., and our attendees have identified themselves as being amongst this group.

According to the Leeds Suicide Audit, 76% of suicides were committed by people in the category of “separated, divorced or widowed”. We have analysed the proportion of separated, divorced or widowed men Leeds and found that both North and South Seacroft MSOAs have an above-average number of men in this category. 16% of men in North Seacroft are “separated, divorced or widowed” against a city-wide average of 10%, whilst South Seacroft shows 12%.

The high rate of male suicides is in direct conflict with the number of men requesting intervention before reaching this extreme action. Only a third of the men who committed suicide in Leeds had accessed their GP with mental health issues, and a whole other third had not accessed their GP at all in the six months prior to their death.

Various reports have also identified sociological factors behind high suicide rates amongst men, for example the redefining of men’s roles and the loss of traditional male-oriented work such as in the trades. This perhaps explains the high suicide rates amongst 30-60 year olds. Again, the Seacroft man is likely to fall into this category through the loss of local manufacturing industry in the past two or three decades, and the unemployment rate in the ward being higher than the city average.

The need for this group is also shown by its success. We have 18 on the register, with 12 regularly attending each week. When it started in 2011, the Men’s Group was a pioneering project. Its continued success is testament to the need for it in this area.

In a survey conducted by Space2 in 2013, a third of men said that there was “nothing to do” for men in Seacroft. A similar percentage cited a variety of activities that they would like to take part in if available, including adult education, health information sessions, leisure activities and job search.

How we address these needs

Our project provides men with the opportunity to open up about their needs, both physical and emotional. We support men in taking action on their own health before their condition becomes acute by facilitating discussions about men’s health, both on an individual and group basis, and both formally and informally.

We help the men to build emotional resilience through activities such as the Headspace course and through encouraging self-analysis and monitoring of progression, for example through the wellbeing wheels or informal conversations about one’s emotional state.

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We have seen above that poor mental health is borne out of isolation. We thus provide an “opportunity to connect” as the antidote to this, giving men a safe, informal space in which to relax and to connect with each other, and with other opportunities.

The form that these connections take are varied. Activities such as the Headspace course directly equip men with skills. Others, such as the informal chatting, the trips to the opera and so forth, give the men an opportunity to develop social skills. The making and eating of the lunch is also key in this respect, with the men preparing it together and eating it together with staff around one table. All of these aspects give the men a chance to identify with something, to feel part of something, and therefore feel less isolated, and at less risk of suffering mental health issues.

We also raise men’s awareness of their physical health, for example through providing information on testicular or prostate cancer, or inviting an external agency to come and offer diabetes checks. We promote healthy eating through the cooking of a well balanced meal. We also signpost men to the appropriate health service when appropriate.

For many men, this group is their only source of socialising each week. Bearing in mind our aim to tackle isolation, this group is vital to their sense of inclusion and social worth. However we are keen to ensure that the Men’s Group is seen by all its participants as a conduit for progression, irrespective of their place in their journey towards increase self-reliance and self worth. The provision of the above activities is key to making this positive progression an undercurrent in all that we do.



Partnerships

Leeds City Council support the project through providing the venue free of charge. The Men’s group has successfully collaborated in the past year with several organisations including Opera North, Gipsil, Artlink, Skipco, LS14 Trust, Oblong, BTCV Hollybush, and many others. We see collaboration and partnership as vital to the success of this group and welcome the opportunity to develop the group and its members through participatory approaches.

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How we Measure impact

We measure impact through weekly observation, informal conversations, and through our weekly staff debriefs and planning sessions. We also use the formal tool of the Wellbeing Wheels. These allow the participant and the facilitator to identify and track progress, so that the process is collaborative. It also facilitates discussion with each participant around their social, emotional and physical needs.

Extract form weekly observation sent from the staff (removed names)

- 1) *A full on morning at the Men's Group , with only one or two of the regulars missing. (***** and *****) Everyone seemed in high spirits . ***** told us his carer/ woman friend had kicked him out & he was now living in temporary accommodation but felt much better about his situation . A sense of relief to be away from the chaotic household that was having a negative effect on his life. He had ate well at lunch & had extra helpings. ***** was due to go for a job interview that afternoon , and was apprehensive about it. ***** was in a very good mood , laughing & joking from the start , a big contrast to a couple of weeks ago , when he was talking about it not being worth living ! ***** was also in a good mood , and quite a few of us joined him in the gym to play around with his football including Damian , Orion's new recruit Male Insight development worker - who then went on to chat individually to the men about various projects , especially a project involving the men going out walking . ***** is still working on his bike in the workshop . ***** and ***** played 3D chess which looked very complex. Lunch was Mushroom Risotto , a favourite amongst the men now ! A very convivial morning this week without anything at all untoward .*
- 2) *Men's Group was a very relaxed affair this week , due to some absence namely **** , **** & ****. Also due to Helen taking half the group for Headspace , we are left with a very select group - This gave us an opportunity to talk in depth with the remaining men . I helped **** appeal against an ESA ruling by writing a letter of explanation . Apparently , the last time he went before the tribunal , he was so anxious that he took a double dose of Prozac , consequently answering all the questions from a high-as-kite standpoint and not giving a true insight into his problems. So they ruled against him . I am not confident they will reassess him but we can try . Because we did not have ****with us we were able to have Cauliflower Cheese for lunch (**** cannot eat cheese !), which was delicious followed by homemade banana buns , which soon disappeared. On one very positive note , we have learned that **** , who we have not seen for some weeks , due to him being on a training scheme . He has now got a proper full time job . When he first came to us , he was emaciated from alcohol abuse and not having a proper diet . After many months he gained confidence , he became friendly with other members of the group , meeting outside socially with them . Improved his status all round , became motivated again and started to think about returning to work , which after a long struggle he has managed . No doubt he will pop back and see the group when he is able . So all in all , a very good session , those that were distressed last week were much happier this week (**** & ****) due to the efforts of Space2.*

Impact of the Project

The regular low pressure and informal activities are a gateway to progression. The definition of impact and progression will vary from individual to individual. For some, it has meant going on to attend a course at another venue. For others, it may be participating in a collaborative art activity. For many, it may simply mean getting out of the flat and attending the group on a regular basis.

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In terms of numbers, as mentioned above, we currently have 18 on the register, with 12 regulars, and we have employed an extra member of staff to accommodate the increased intake, as sometimes there are 18.

Figures from the last six months:

- The Headspace course was attended by 5 group members and had a 100% retention rate.
- Five members signed up to volunteer for the FRESH Men course had a 100% retention rate.
- Three men have gone on to attend the Space2 Fork to Fork (gardening) project at LS14 Trust.
- Two men have joined the Friday Men's Group at LS14 Trust.
- One member has gone on to a green woodworking course at BTCV in Kirkstall.
- The Digital Photography Walk was attended by five men.
- Eight have attended various Encore opera performances at Opera North.
- Eight contributed to and participated in the submission to the Leeds Fringe Arts Festival.

As mentioned earlier we also encourage peer-to-peer support amongst the group, and members have formed friendships and gone on to meet each other outside of the project. Said one member:

"Three of us, we arranged to go to York together on Saturday and it was brilliant. We're gonna do it again, it was just beautiful, and we all helped each other out."

Another member said how the group had helped him to finish an unhealthy relationship:

"Yes I finished that relationship, I was being beaten up and tortured in my head...mentally...so I've ended it. Lots of people here have helped me"

Another described earlier this year how an information session has helped him and two other group members to manage debt:

"We've worked out the three of us are all going to go and pay our bills together at the beginning of each month, then go and have lunch (at one of the group's house). He cooks a great pie, nice and cheap. We all chip in for that and all the bills are paid so we've nothing to worry about."

One member recently gave a talk at a Public Health Resource Centre seminar, detailing his journey from near-suicide to self-worth. He credited the Men's Group with supporting him on this journey and how he now feels able to support others who are in a similar position to the one in which he found himself.



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Costings

To run this project for a year costs £14451, this does not include venue hire, but includes , 42 sessions over the year and several trips. Cooked healthy lunch every week, and well as follow up support when required. On a average of 12 men a week that is £1204 per man per year. “ „

The economic cost of a completed suicide for someone of working age in the UK exceeds £1.6 million.” This is probably an under-estimate as it does not include the cost of failed suicide attempts leading up to it. *Knapp, Martin and Lemmi, Valentina (2014) The economic case for better mental health. Chapter 9.*



For any enquiries please contact:

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We hope that this document provides you with all the information that you need to make a funding decision. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you require any further information.

Many thanks - The Space2 Men's Group Team.

Space2 is part of the Orion consortium.



**Engaging
People
Inspiring
Communities.**

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