

Scrutiny Board :	Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board
Report Title	Men's Mental Health
Date of Meeting	Monday, 1 September 2025
Report Author	Kathryn Hickman, Diane Millichamp, Nicky Taylor, Anna Blennerhasset
Lead Officer	Dr Frances Howie Director of Public Health
Wards Affected	(All Wards);
Identify exempt information and exemption category	Choose an item. N/A
Appendices (if any)	1. N/A 2. N/A

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an assurance on the public health approach to Men's Mental Health in Sandwell including an overview of the Men's Mental Health and Wellbeing Community Programme commission and wider programme of work being facilitated by Public Health to support the improvement of men's mental health in Sandwell.

2. Recommendation

That the Board considers and comments upon the information presented and determines whether it wishes to make any recommendations to the Executive.

3. Background and Context

3.1 Public Health's Role in Mental Health

Public Health plays an important role in improving mental health and wellbeing and in the prevention of mental illness. For someone to have good wellbeing means more than the absence of mental illness. A state of positive wellbeing is where an individual realises their own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to contribute to their community.

Good mental health is integral to overall health; it is fundamental to quality of life and provides positive physical health and social benefits. Therefore, having good mental wellbeing is a protective factor against physical illness, social inequalities and unhealthy lifestyles – there is '[no health without mental health](#)'.

Mental illness doesn't just affect individuals, families and local communities, it also has a wider impact on society, including extra costs for the NHS, social care, workplaces, and benefits systems. Therefore, Public Health also plays a vital role economically in the promotion of mental wellbeing for all and in the prevention of mental illness.

3.2 National Context

Our work programme for men's mental health aligns with national policies and priorities. Recent reports such as [Men's Health: the life of men in our communities \(2024\)](#) and the announcement of a dedicated [Men's Health Strategy](#) by Government demonstrates the national concern for men's health in England. Mental health and suicide prevention are cited as a key priority area when it comes to men's health.

The recent publication of the [NHS 10-year plan Fit for the Future: 10 Year Health Plan for England](#) also emphasises the need for community-based services and a preventative approach in tackling poor health outcomes including for mental health. Our approach locally will support these ambitions.

Nationally, one in five (20.2%) adults have common mental health conditions (such as depression and anxiety). The prevalence of common mental health conditions is rising. [For 16 – 64 years olds this is an increase from 15.5% in 1993, 17.5% in 2000, 17.6% in 2007, and 18.9% in 2014, to 22.6% in 2023/4.](#) Additionally, prevalence is higher in the most deprived areas (26.2%) than in the [least deprived areas \(16.0%\)](#). These statistics align with the picture locally in Sandwell and taking a preventive approach will help to reduce this upward trajectory in mental ill-health.

3.3 Local Context

Overall, Sandwell experiences a higher estimated prevalence of common mental health disorders, higher rates of newly diagnosed depression, and a higher utilisation of inpatient mental health facilities compared to the West Midlands region and England as a whole. For Sandwell, self-reported wellbeing measures from 2015 onwards: people with a low worthwhile score, people with high anxiety and people with a low satisfaction score show that poor wellbeing has been increasing over the last 10 years.

In 2021/22 Sandwell Council Public Health secured £391,272 funding from Office of Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) Prevention and Promotion Fund for Better Mental Health. A suite of projects was identified to provide evidence-based interventions and direct support to improve mental health and wellbeing for key groups across the life course, with working age men identified as at increased risk.

Better Mental Health projects for men were delivered by The Albion Foundation (Team Talk) and Tough Enough to Care (Suicide and Mental Health Awareness training) with delivery taking place from 2021 and ending in 2024. 258 men were engaged in the Team Talk delivery from 2021-24 with 93% of men surveyed in May 2024 stating that Team Talk had improved their mental health in some way. Tough Enough to Care engaged with 1383 total attendees at their sessions, with positive impact reported throughout delivery.

Despite the effective delivery of these projects from 2021-2024, upon their completion there was a clear gap in specific community-based support for

men's mental health in addition to the traditional clinical NHS mental health provision. However, evidence suggests that men struggle to engage with this type of service; only 32.6% of all NHS referrals for [Talking Therapies in 2023-2024 were for men \(where a gender was declared\), demonstrating that men are less likely to seek help for their mental health through traditional clinical routes.](#)

3.4 Strategic Priorities

The programme of work supports several of the Sandwell Better Mental Health Strategy 2024-29 and the Suicide Prevention Strategy 2022-25 recommendations:

- Improve the understanding of mental health and wellbeing and raise awareness of the support available.
- Ensure mental health services and community-based solutions can support all of Sandwell's diverse communities.
- Work with the voluntary and community sector to promote good wellbeing.
- Reduce loneliness and social isolation.
- Work in partnership to fulfil the zero suicides ambition.
- Encourage a better awareness of suicide prevention within local organisations and our communities.
- Reduce the chances of suicide in high-risk populations.

3.5 Men's Mental Health and Wellbeing Community Programme

Based on this evidence and previous learning, Sandwell Public Health Commissioning Board approved the procurement of a 2-year Men's Mental Health and Wellbeing Community Programme in December 2024. The procurement of this programme is currently in progress and a provider should be in place for a start date in September 2025. The project will respond to the priorities of the public consultation on men's mental health, which took place from August – October 2024.

The programme will offer non- clinical provision using a preventative approach, delivering a range of mental health and wellbeing programmes/activities in a community that enable men to manage and improve their mental health and wellbeing aiming to achieve the following outcomes:

- Reduce the risk of suicide for men.
- Increase awareness men's wellbeing and where to access support.
- Reduce social isolation.
- Reduce the impact of stigma relating to men's mental health. Deliver an inclusive and accessible offer within communities.
- Reduce the need for crisis intervention by Improving early access to preventative mental health services and activities.
- Improvement in self-reported wellbeing.

In line with our service specification requirements, an evaluation framework will be developed with the successful Provider to measure the impact of this programme. Some of the measures of success for the programme include:

- % of participants reporting that they have improved skills and strategies to manage their own mental health and wellbeing.

- % of participants following the intervention feel more confident and open to talk about their own mental health.
- % of participants who report having improved health and wellbeing following the intervention.
- % of participants report reduction in social isolation & loneliness following the intervention.

Additionally, the community programme will establish referral pathways and signposting to wider support available in the borough including welfare and debt advice and employment support as these ranked highly in the support needs of Sandwell's men.

The community programme will be delivered in all the six towns of Sandwell. As such, the programme will be delivered in an inclusive way to ensure that beneficiaries are representative of the diverse population of Sandwell and can meet the individual needs of men living or working in Sandwell, taking in to account disability, cultural or religious background and language needs. Town profiles will be used to support the Provider in achieving this inclusivity in each town.

3.6 Wider Programme of Work

We will be focusing upon a wide range of communications and media promotion to support the launch of our new Men's Mental Health and Wellbeing Community Programme and to raise awareness and reduce the stigma surrounding men's mental health. Working with the Public Health Marketing and Behavioural Insights Team we will focus upon promoting our men's mental health campaign "You Ok Mate?". Subject to the necessary Council approvals, this will involve:

- Podcasts, videos, infographics.
- Men's Mental Health webpage on our Healthy Sandwell website.
- A range of resources and materials which will be inclusive and representative of Sandwell's diverse communities and cultural influences.
- A range of resources that are health literate and offer easy read, British sign language materials, and use of a range of media for people who are neurodiverse, and/or have English as an additional language (EAL).
- Men's Mental Health Resilience Toolkit – this will be developed by men for men to use when they need support.
- West Bromwich Albion (WBA) Match Day Event – working in partnership with WBA we will reach approximately 22/23K home fans at the match day on 1st November 2025. Offering half-time activities and resources to raise awareness of men's mental health and wellbeing and our Sandwell offer.
- Baggies Wellbeing Cards – with QR codes to our Mental Health and Wellbeing offer.
- Men Matter (Portrait campaign) – Sandwell Men offering wellbeing messages and messages of hope, suicide prevention awareness campaign.
- Message to stranger's video and wellbeing cards (intergenerational project with local schools).

- Community Mental Health Training – to be developed through co-production with our communities a new innovative community training offer.
- 5 Ways to Wellbeing Campaign – a co-produced campaign to promote the 5 ways to Wellbeing and demonstrate practical approaches for integrating them into everyday life.
- Suicide Safe Communities – a targeted programme within the six towns to raise awareness of suicide prevention, offering free suicide prevention training, resources and support to break down the barriers and stigma of suicide.
- Refresh of Sandwell's Suicide Prevention Strategy 2025-2030 – Stakeholder event in October 2025, targeted communications and media campaign on men matter, video content, resources and develop priorities and actions to achieve our ambition of zero suicides in Sandwell by 2030.

4. Consultation & Co-Production

- 4.1 To better understand the barriers to men accessing mental health support and what impacts on their mental health we undertook extensive public consultation and co-production with men living and working in Sandwell between August – October 2024.

To gather quantitative and qualitative information we developed two surveys, one for individuals and one for organisations. The surveys were available on the Council's Consultation Hub and translated in the top 4 languages: Punjabi, Polish, Bengali and Urdu. We had 235 individual responses and 24 organisational responses.

- 4.2 We also undertook co-production activity through in-person focus group sessions at a range of community organisations and settings. This ensured engagement with a wide number of stakeholders. A total of 17 focus groups, events and workshops took place engaging with other 175 people. Through these focus groups we were able to understand:
- what barriers men faced in accessing support,
 - what issues affected their mental wellbeing,
 - what their preferred method of engagement in services was,
 - the types of activities they were interested in engaging with and,
 - what they did to support their own mental wellbeing.
- 4.3 89% of respondents to the surveys and focus group participants were men, with 88% of these being of working age. 84% of respondents stated they would prefer to access support through a community setting, such as community centre, sports club, faith setting or local organisations.
- 4.4 Key findings that have shaped the proposed delivery model for this programme are shown below:

Chart 1

What do you see as being the things that most impact on men's mental health?

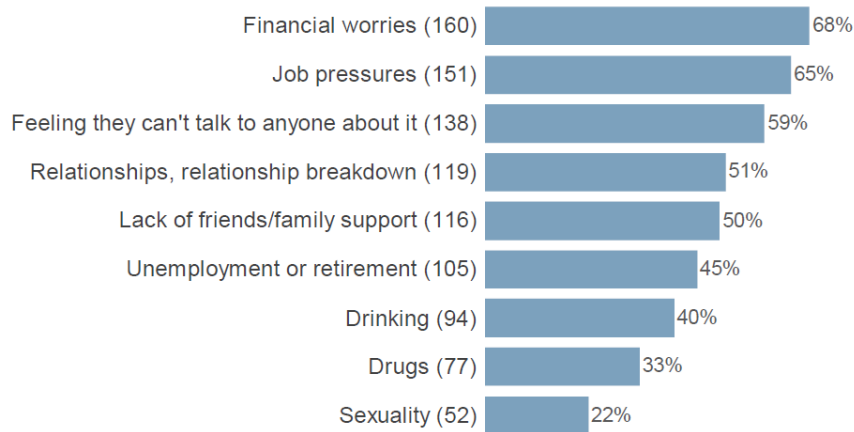
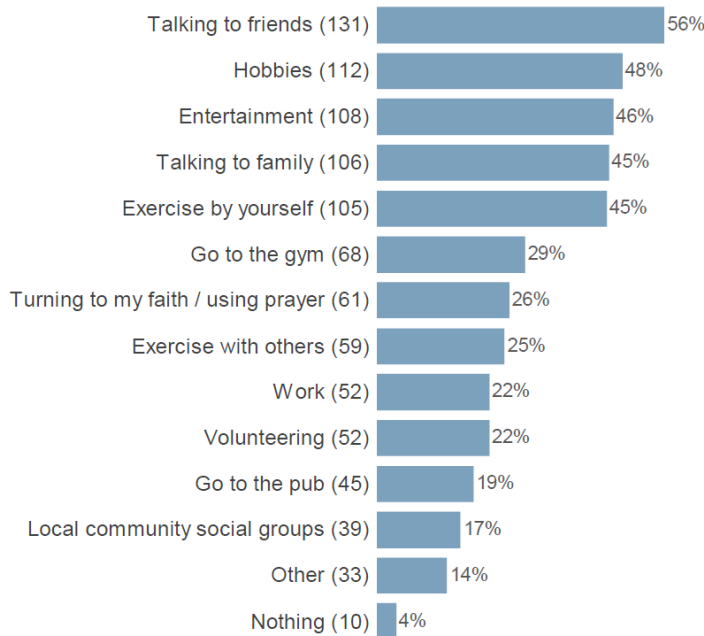


Chart 2

What things do you do that help you look after your Mental Health and wellbeing?



4.5 Sandwell men talked about the barriers to accessing mental health services and what mental health provision they need in their communities:

“Men’s Mental Health is so heavily stigmatised, it can often be harder for men to talk about and look for help with mental health.”

“Support is only there in crisis, and even then can be hard to access.”

“Use trusted community spaces such as churches, barbershops, places where men feel comfortable & supported in these familiar environments reduces the stigma surrounding mental health and encourages casual, non-threatening conversations about mental wellbeing.”

4.6 This invaluable insight alongside learning from our previous Better Mental Health provision for men, has resulted in the co-produced two-year Men's Mental Health and Wellbeing Community Programme due to start in September 2025 which will focus on:

- **Awareness and Accessibility**- advice and information, training, activities and sign posting, that help men improve mental wellbeing, seeking support earlier and reducing crisis interventions.
- **Behaviours and Identity** – Provision of information/education sessions that tackle the cultural, religious and social perceptions of the role of men, tackling the stigma of mental health by changing the narrative and get men talking about Mental wellbeing.
- **Community and Connecting** - community activities encompassing mental health & wellbeing in trusted locally based organisations, including physical activity and the 5 ways to wellbeing. This offer will be inclusive and offer accessible provision to meet cultural, social and language appropriate, with varying activities and times using best practice models.

The two-year programme allows us to pilot what works to improve the mental health and wellbeing of men in Sandwell and learning will help inform future commissioning decisions and/or help to leverage external funding into the Borough.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 Public Health budget of £80,000 per year (£96,000 inclusive of VAT). Total budget is £160,000 for a 2-year contract (£192, 000 inclusive of VAT). The programme will be managed by the Vulnerable Adults Project Manager and Mental Health Project Officer as part of Public Health's Vulnerable Groups team.

5.2 Additional budget has been allocated for the wider programme of work such as the marketing and communication campaigns across 2025/2026 and 2026/2027 financial years as part of our commitment to achieving the recommendations of the Better Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Strategies.

6. Legal and Governance Implications

6.1 Local authorities' statutory responsibilities for public health services are set out in the Health and Social Care Act 2012. Local authority public health teams have, since 1 April 2013, been responsible for improving the health of their local population and for public health services. Services should be commissioned based on evidence of need using the key indicators set out in the Public Health Outcomes Framework.

- 6.2** For a procurement of this value the Public Contract Regulations 2015 (PCR 15) and the Council's Procurement and Contract procedure rules are required to be met. Should variations to the contract up to a maximum of 10% of the contract value be necessitated, an appropriate assessment would need to be undertaken to ensure compliance with relevant procurement rules, including the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations.
- 6.3** All necessary Council and legislative procedures will be adhered to for all elements of this programme of work.

7. Risks

- 7.1** A risk assessment has been completed, in line with the corporate risk management strategy, for the Men's Mental Health and Wellbeing Community Programme. Risks for both the procurement exercise and the contract deliverables have been considered. The risks that have been identified have been considered and suitable measures will be in place to mitigate the risk to an acceptable level.

8. Equality and Diversity Implications (including the public sector equality duty)

- 8.1** An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was undertaken during pre-procurement activity for the Men's Mental Health and Wellbeing Community Programme and only positive and neutral impacts on protected groups were identified.

9. Other Relevant Implications

9.1 Procurement Implications

The procurement of the Men's Mental Health and Wellbeing Community Programme has been completed in accordance with legislation and Council procedures.

Approved by the Council's Procurement Board on 9th December 2024 and Value for Money Panel on 13th December 2024, we facilitated an open-competitive procurement process with support from Procurement Services.

At the time of writing this report, we are still under embargo to share the outcome of this procurement exercise as we proceed through to Contract Award. However, we should be able to update the Board at the meeting on 1st September.

9.2 Climate Change

A climate change impact assessment was completed as part of the Men's Mental Health and Wellbeing Community Programme procurement process and no adverse impacts have been identified:

Climate Change Implication	Effect on impact			Explanation
	Increase	No change	Decrease	
Emissions		X		This is a new service and therefore will inevitably have emissions. However, the proposed service only allows for a small staff team as such emissions from their

				<p>associated travel for contract deliverables will be minimal.</p> <p>Additionally, the service requires delivery of activities to be in local community settings for local people so therefore participants and staff are likely to be able to walk, use public transport or have short journeys and therefore will limit emissions.</p> <p>Potential bidders are expected to comment on their environmental impact as part of their Social Value response including local employment opportunities, use of local supply chains and more.</p> <p>We are considering the effects to be 'neutral' because of the measures put in place to minimise the emissions of this service.</p>
Resource Use and Waste		X		<p>The proposed contract activities and interventions will be community-based and will endeavour to build on current activities and allow for a small staff team and as such the resource use and waste associated with the contract deliverables are unlikely to change or have minimal impact.</p> <p>Potential bidders are expected to comment on their environmental impact as part of their Social Value response including their resource use, waste and supply chains.</p>
Natural Environment and Adaptation				Not applicable
Supply Chain Emissions			X	<p>Potential bidders are expected to comment on their environmental impact as part of their Social Value response including the use of local supply chains.</p>

The climate change impact of the wider programme of work is also minimal.

We will utilise existing resources used within the Public Health Marketing and Behavioural Insight teams including established social media accounts, websites, design software and other digital assets that exist in the Borough and so therefore does not greatly extend our carbon footprint. Additionally, promotional resources for the campaign will be created and purchased with climate change outcomes in mind i.e. using local supplies chains, purchasing correct quantities based on need, utilising existing printed literature and council communication mechanisms to reduce waste and duplication.

The community-based nature of the wider programme of work including the training and utilisation of local assets such as West Bromwich Albion football ground and local community venues also allows us to minimise the climate change impact.

9.3 Corporate Parenting

It has been imperative for us to consider our corporate parenting responsibilities as part of the full programme of work for men's mental health. The programme

will aim to help men to recognise the signs of mental health and enable them to manage their mental health more effectively and maintain a positive outlook.

Men who are carers for those within the care system will benefit from this programme of work. By improving their own mental health, men who have caring responsibilities will positively impact the young people they are caring for through a trickle-down effect, which ensures the best start in life for children and young people in care in Sandwell.

As a universal service for all men who live and work in Sandwell, men who have been in the care system themselves will also benefit from this programme of work. The programme of work will reduce the stigma and encourage men to reach out for support for the individual mental health issues. Additionally, the community-based nature of the programme of work will create a support system for them, ensuring more positive outcomes.

The programme of work will also be accessible to care leavers who leave the care system once they are 18 years. It will provide an opportunity for them to improve their mental health and allow the opportunity to raise aspirations and engage with other men and positive role models in a supportive environment.

9.4 Social Value

The programme of work for men's mental health will have added social value. The contracted service provider for the Men's Mental Health and Wellbeing Community Programme will have committed to social value outcomes as part of their tender submission. The Provider will have been required to consider Growth, Skills and Employment; Supporting Local Businesses; Creating Healthier, Stronger Communities; and Protecting and Improving the Environment. Upon commencement of the contract Commissioning Officers will agree performance indicators with the Provider ensuring these commitments are achieved.

The wider programme of work adds social value in several ways:

- Building capacity in the community and voluntary sector through funding which supports the longevity of local organisations support the residents of Sandwell.
- Building capacity and knowledge sharing across the workforce (both internal and external to the Council) through training and awareness raising that is sustained for the long-term.
- Resources and assets, such as the toolkit and website, will be available for wider use by other organisations, professionals and residents for the long-term.
- Providing men with the tools and knowledge to support their mental health and wellbeing not only benefits them directly but also has a positive ripple effect on their families and the wider community. By addressing the mental health inequalities that men often face, this approach enhances their ability to engage in community life and secure or sustain employment—ultimately contributing to the borough's social and economic prosperity.

9.5 Health & Wellbeing

The men's mental health programme of work clearly delivers significant positive outcomes for the men who live and work in Sandwell. The interventions and community activities planned will support the reduce the stigma that surrounds

men's mental health and improve earlier access to support to reduce mental health crises and deaths by suicide. The programme of work aims to change the narrative of mental health by getting men to talk about their mental health and engage in activities to reduce isolation and build social networks in communities. The programme of work contributes to the Sandwell Better Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Strategy Action Plans and the following Public Health Outcome Framework measures:

- C28 Self-reported wellbeing
- E10 Suicide Rate
- B18 Social Isolation

10. Background Documents

[Sandwell Better Mental Health Strategy 2024-2029](#)

[Sandwell Suicide Prevention Strategy 2022-2025](#)

[Healthy Sandwell Men's Mental Health information](#)

[Men's Mental Health consultation feedback 2024](#)

11. How does this deliver the Outcomes in the Council Plan?

Council Plan Objective	
Growing Up in Sandwell	<p>Raising awareness of men's mental health and helping men to better understand how to access mental health support and improve their health and wellbeing will have a positive impact within the whole family. If men are supported to have good 'wellbeing' they are able to realise their own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and are able to make a contribution to their community. This includes within their own 'community' of family and friends by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ providing a safe, stable and loving home. ▪ engaging in learning with children and removing potential barriers to school attendance. ▪ removing potential barriers for leading healthy lifestyles. ▪ providing an environment that includes positive activities, play and having fun.
Living in Sandwell	<p>The public consultation evidenced how wider issues such as employment, retirement, and financial challenges all impact on the mental health of men in Sandwell. Therefore, we have incorporated activities within the service that will respond to these needs through effective signposting to other services such as Welfare Rights, Housing, community advice and advocacy services, by reducing the stigma around having conversations about these issues, and by building resilience to cope with the normal stresses of life, the service will contribute to the core objectives within this strategic theme.</p>
Thriving Economy in Sandwell	<p>This procurement of the Men's Mental Health and Wellbeing Community Programme will contribute to this strategic theme as it will incorporate the social value impact of the service which includes potential providers to consider local employment and volunteer opportunities and the use of local supply chains all of</p>

	<p>which would encourage local business growth and investment into the borough.</p> <p>Supporting men with their mental wellbeing will help to improve workplace productivity, with reduced absence days.</p> <p>The programme will include engagement with local businesses to raise awareness of men's mental health offering resources and support.</p>
Healthy in Sandwell	<p>Investing in this type of community-based non-clinical preventative mental health programme aims to build resilience in men, improve their understanding of how to look after their mental health and wellbeing through the 5 Ways to Wellbeing and provide opportunities to tackle the wider influences that impact on men's mental health such as employability, financial pressures, impact of relationships and isolation.</p> <p>This in turn will ensure that men lead health lives and live well for longer and are protected from harms to their health and wellbeing. Additionally, by designing a programme that aims to encourage men to seek help earlier rather than waiting until they are in crisis, positively contributes to the outcome "Peoples' needs for care and support are reduced or prevented through early intervention and prevention programmes."</p>
One Council One Team	<p>This service contributes to the strategic objective as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The provider will be expected to offer a high-quality inclusive service to all men who live or work in Sandwell, making reasonable adjustments to reduce barriers to access as necessary. - The service specification has been informed by the voice of men living and working in Sandwell demonstrating our commitment to listening to the opinions of the intended service user and making sure they feel heard and valued. - We will ensure clear and transparent decision making and effective governance throughout the programme where our decisions are informed by data and intelligence which clearly evidences the need for a service of this nature.