

# INVISIBLE MEN: engaging more men in social projects

Aman Johal, Anton Shelupanov & Will Norman

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# Foreword

The Big Lottery Fund believes that promoting equality and tackling inequality are an essential part of meeting need effectively. Our analysis of need determines the programmes we develop and the way we distribute our funding. This analysis requires a good understanding of the challenges people face, and how individuals, families, communities and formal services respond to the needs identified.

We know that men have particular needs, but we have also become aware that fewer men than women get involved in or benefit from the social projects we fund. In line with our commitment to equality, we commissioned the Young Foundation to study the reasons for this disparity. We wanted to provide guidance to raise awareness of the issue and help projects attract and retain men.

The study has explored what motivates men from a variety of backgrounds to get involved. It focused primarily on projects funded by the Big Lottery Fund. We know that many groups across the country are succeeding in attracting men, but many more will be interested in finding out how they can do so too.

We hope that this report will promote reflection and discussion as well as more effective engagement of men. Perhaps as importantly, the study serves as a reminder that the principles of equality apply to and promote the interests of everyone.

Peter Wanless  
Chief Executive  
Big Lottery Fund

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The publication represents solely the views of the authors. Any errors and omissions are theirs alone.

# Executive Summary

In the current socio-political context, including rising unemployment and the recent UK riots, men are increasingly facing crises and yet are more resistant to seeking help. Yet in spite of this, men are rarely considered to be a 'target group' and all too often they are not immediately thought of when developing services and projects to tackle needs. However, there is clear evidence that indicates that some men are suffering adverse outcomes in aspects of psychological and material well-being. For instance, in England and Wales, suicide is the second highest cause of death among males under 35. There is a clear need to better understand why these men who need help are not seeking it, and how the voluntary sector\* can overcome the barriers standing in their way to ensure effective engagement in social projects aimed at tackling these needs.

**This report explores the barriers that exist which prevent men from engaging with social projects at a beneficiary level and looks at how to overcome these barriers to ensure effective engagement.** It serves as a resource to assist those in the voluntary sector who are struggling to engage men who are in need but are not necessarily engaging with services and projects that could offer support and help.

We provide a detailed account of both the barriers and facilitators that aid effective engagement among men in social projects. We detail the existing knowledge on engaging men, including an examination of the role that existing notions of masculinity plays in male help-seeking behaviours and the breadth of issues that concern specific groups of men, from older men to fathers. We assess current practice, highlighting effective approaches to male engagement as well as lessons that can be drawn from the challenges that existing projects face. Finally, drawing on the lessons from effective practice and evidence collected from interviews with a wide range of beneficiaries, experts and practitioners, we offer recommendations for projects and funders to aid the effective engagement of men in social projects. Our evidence is presented in a UK context, according to the scope of this research, but draws on examples from further afield where relevant.

## Key findings

**The reluctance of men to engage with services, as beneficiaries to address their needs, is due to the presence of identifiable barriers.** Our research categorises these barriers into five main areas:

*Help-seeking behaviours:* Men are more resistant to seeking help from others than women. This is most evident in the health behaviours and outcomes for men in the UK, which are significantly worse than those of women. Men have a tendency to disregard symptoms for far longer than women and so diagnosis tends to be late. Men are also much less likely to take time off from work to seek help, which is detrimental when they need the support of services that operate during regular working hours.

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\* Many of our findings are relevant to a wide range of organisations. However, the primary focus of this report is on those that are part of the voluntary sector.

*Fear of stigmatisation:* Men's reluctance to engage with certain types of projects can be due to social stigmas. This can range from peer disapproval among young men, to stigmas attached to abuse from a perpetrator and or being a victim, which are often linked to notions of masculinity and manhood. Men can be reluctant to go public with a problem that they may perceive to be embarrassing or not 'manly'. Other stigmas present among particular men are associated with notions of sexual identity and men working with children.

*A lack of visibility of men in services:* A lack of male role models in the service provision was a commonly acknowledged barrier in this research. There is a perception among some men that volunteering constitutes a 'carer' role and that this domain is considered predominately female. The lack of visibility of men in the social sector can be detrimental in engaging male beneficiaries if they feel that they are in a female environment.

*Hard to reach men:* Although evidence has shown that there are barriers when engaging across all male groups, some groups of men appear to be even harder to reach than others. The evidence suggests that young men appear to be the hardest group to reach, followed by men from BME backgrounds. This is due to a number of factors ranging from language and cultural barriers to the susceptibility of peer influence.

*A lack of discourse:* When addressing the needs of society we tend to avoid examining problems in terms of gender and focus on cultural background, age and economic situation instead. Perhaps one of the biggest barriers in engaging men into social projects is this overall resistance to engage with gender as an issue from a male perspective. Despite evidence that tells us that that male engagement is an issue, we do not rethink our approach. This needs to be tackled so that engagement can happen effectively.

**A full understanding of the barriers identified is necessary to find effective methods to overcome them and identify engagement facilitators. The facilitators that this research explores include:**

*Activities:* In most cases it appears that men are more likely to engage in a physical activity. Most commonly this is around sport or exercise or DIY, as men are less likely than women to simply sit together and talk about their problems. There needs to be an element of activity, of doing something, which facilitates discussion.

*Time and venues:* Our research has shown that men are more likely to forgo other commitments in favour of work. This is especially true in the current economic climate when people are afraid to take time off work for fear of losing their jobs. Projects targeting working men should be aware that out of office hours activities would be more conducive to engagement. Consideration should also be given to the delivery venue, although our research has shown that most venues can work effectively if other facilitators are in place.

*Social connections and networks:* One of the most effective facilitators of engagement is word of mouth. Although most projects usually advertise through the local newspaper or on posters, more often it is word of mouth that draws individuals to the service. Raising awareness of the project through the right networks is of great importance.

*Partners/ wives/ families:* Men's support system of – families, wives or partners – can be of great benefit in encouraging initial engagement and sustaining it. They can quite often play a major role in help seeking behaviours among men and serve as motivating factors to maintain commitment.

*Peer support and male friendships:* Most programmes find word of mouth by male peers to be an effective engagement tool across all types of male groups. It is clear that if men see that their peers have successfully engaged with a project and reaped the benefits, they are more likely to engage too. The support that their peers can offer them will help to maintain engagement throughout the duration of the project. In the case of young men particularly, friendships can heavily influence what they choose to engage with, whether through encouragement or fear of disapproving friends.

*Practitioners:* The practitioners who deliver the project are key to its success, but so are all the other staff who interact (in however small a way) with male beneficiaries. The visual markers for the men are important. Training practitioners to make environments more male friendly is key to engagement. The importance of good practitioners cannot be underestimated. They must have the ability to build genuine relationships with male beneficiaries, not just initially but on a sustained basis.

*Organisational Partnerships:* Forming partnerships with other organisations can have a positive impact on engagement in numerous ways. They can serve a number of purposes from gatekeepers facilitating initial outreach to delivery providers.

**Existing organisations in the voluntary sector are already working effectively at engaging men. Lessons from existing effective practice include: incentivising engagement, valuing the beneficiaries' input, targeting outreach, acknowledging differences, building up relationships of trust, providing effective support and encouraging long-term engagement from beneficiary to volunteer. These lessons have shaped our recommendations.**

**Recommendations for projects that are trying to engage men more effectively:**

*Specifically target men:* Our research showed that to reach men it is important to target them specifically. This is especially true in environments that are often considered as female domains such as schools or family centres.

*Consult with your target group:* It is important to avoid assumptions about what your target group wants or needs. Men are more likely to be involved if they feel they have been consulted throughout the process, from conception to delivery. Consultation can take a variety of forms, but it is vital to identify the target group's needs and how best to address them.

*Go where men are:* In order to reach men you must go where men are. One of the most effective forms of outreach we have seen is going to venues such as pubs, snooker halls and sporting venues to engage with men in environments in which they already feel comfortable.

*Have 'hooks' to appeal to motivations and interests:* Many successful projects have 'hooks' to engagement that can serve to attract men initially. The nature of these

'hooks' can vary according to project. In our research, we have seen many different hooks ranging from trips and onsite health check-ups, to offering services such as free family photos. Although a single 'hook' could work to engage men, the best way to ensure wide engagement is to have a range of 'hooks' that will draw in different men at different levels.

*Build up partnerships with gatekeepers and networks:* Establishing partnerships can be vital to capturing your target group and maintaining engagement. Partnerships can take a variety of forms and serve a number of purposes. They could be with particular gatekeepers, such as community leaders or family members, or with formal services or organisations. Building partnerships with venues will facilitate access to men as organisations can join forces to reach more people.

*Tailor the service to provide for a range of needs:* Tailoring the programme to appeal to the target group is important. The project content and delivery should not be overtly prescriptive, so beneficiaries can take out of the programme what they need.

*Be flexible:* Most men will appreciate a degree of flexibility with regard to time, venue or content, and it is important to be adaptable as needs change.

*Build relationships on an individual basis:* Nothing is more effective in initial engagement than personal outreach. However, establishing individual relationships based on trust is truly effective in maintaining engagement throughout the duration of a project and even beyond. Making an individual connection with someone will ensure that they keep walking back through the door. However, it is important as trust is established the individual relationship should gradually change to a relationship with the organisation so that beneficiaries do not become overly dependent on single members of staff and to manage transitions when staff leave.

*Provide effective support:* Facilitating engagement also means facilitating support. Sometimes group delivery needs to be supplemented with individual support, whether from a practitioner or family member. There should be continuous dialogue with beneficiaries to ensure that their needs are being met and that any barriers to engagement that arise can be identified and dealt with early.

*Encourage beneficiaries to become advocates and volunteers:* Good practice has illustrated a higher level of engagement occurs when existing and past beneficiaries become advocates or volunteers. Others are encouraged to engage if they identify with the volunteers or advocates and can see first-hand evidence of how the project can benefit them.

## **Recommendations for funders to support the engagement of men:**

*Supporting organisations that are targeting men:* Specifically targeting men will facilitate higher levels of engagement and this example of good practice should be reflected at the funding stage. Funders should encourage the development of male targeted projects by highlighting effective case studies in their funding materials.

Guidance notes for programmes should emphasise the inclusive nature of funding and reflect an interest in seeing more programmes that address men's needs.

*Encourage organisations to develop effective engagement strategies:* An engagement strategy should be detailed and consider various elements to engagement, including initial outreach and maintained engagement throughout the duration of the programme. Funders can encourage the development of these strategies by sharing examples of effective engagement strategies and altering guidance notes so they emphasise the importance of planning how to engage target groups. In some funding programmes, it may be appropriate to ask the organisation about their engagement strategies as part of the application process.

*Measuring engagement:* Milestones for funding applicants should take into account not only numbers but the duration and level of engagement. Funders should ask for the numbers of those engaged not only at the beginning of the programme but at the end too and, where projects fail to meet engagement targets, offer to link them to organisations who can share effective practice to help them with retention.

*Sharing effective learning and practice:* Funders must take more responsibility in sharing existing knowledge among projects by facilitating networking between projects. Some funders have the capacity to run networking events, and should be encouraged to do so.

This report concludes by arguing that there is an onus on the voluntary sector to lead by example in breaking down the stereotypes of masculinity which are detrimental to help-seeking behaviours among men. As a starting point, there needs to be more discussion and debate around issues of gender from a male perspective, to combat the current resistance to talking about men as a target group for need which filters down to project development and design, and has consequences on funding.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Setting the context

In the 1970s and 80s the UK underwent major economic changes which saw the shift from a large manufacturing base to an economy dominated by service industries. This resulted in the loss of many of the more manual jobs that had employed men in communities across the country for generations. Those decades were synonymous with high levels of unemployment, and film footage of angry men on strike regularly appeared on the evening news. Today, we are again faced with the problem of high levels of unemployment. In the summer of 2011, we saw civil unrest and riots on the streets of cities across the country. Once more, it was angry young men we saw throwing stones and burning shops and cars.<sup>1</sup>

The exact causes of the 2011 riots are the subject of much debate. However, it was immediately clear that large numbers of young men in the areas where the riots occurred were angry and dissatisfied with their lives. The rioters are not the only men who are struggling to cope in today's society. There are a wide range of problems from which a higher number of men suffer than women. These include alcohol abuse,<sup>2</sup> suicide,<sup>3</sup> coping effectively with unemployment and financial insecurity,<sup>4</sup> disaffection with learning and school exclusions,<sup>5</sup> family responsibilities and flexible working arrangements,<sup>6</sup> and poor health outcomes.<sup>7</sup> Shockingly, suicide is the second most common cause of death in England and Wales among men under 35.<sup>8</sup>

We should be wary of over generalising, many men who are struggling, are often reluctant to seek help and support for their problems. The NHS, for example, has been frustrated by this for years and regularly runs campaigns aimed at men, urging them to take their health more seriously, and check themselves for various conditions and illnesses. Men tend to engage with services or react only when things reach crisis point. All too often this is too late.

The consequences of not seeking help or support for unmet and intensifying need can be severe. An individual's physical health and well-being can deteriorate, and affect their family and broader community. One of the findings highlighted by the Riots Communities and Victims Panel, set up by the Coalition Government to look into the causes of the riots and provide recommendations to prevent further rioting, was the importance of community engagement, involvement and cohesion. The Panel found that "organisations regularly using volunteers report excellent results – often because those at the receiving end of interventions better relate to a 'peer' than an 'official'".<sup>9</sup> As most of those involved in the 2011 riots were young men, this emphasises how important it is that the voluntary sector reaches out and engages more men.

The Panel also highlighted the wider problem of what local authorities call 'forgotten families' who 'bump along the bottom' of society.<sup>10</sup> The Government has recently established a Troubled Families Programme,<sup>11</sup> which is an intensive scheme designed to address the needs of the 120,000 most challenged families.<sup>†</sup> In 2011, the Big Lottery Fund launched Improving Futures – a five year programme providing

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<sup>†</sup> The figure 12,000 comes originally from research carried out by the Cabinet Office based Social Exclusion Task Force, using data from the Families and Children Study.

voluntary sector led joined up support for families with multiple and complex needs. Both these programmes highlight the need for family intervention, and one of the factors that needs to be addressed is that often there is a lack of a father figure or male role model young men can look up to. One of the recommendations from recent Young Foundation research into the impact of the riots in Tottenham was "to identify men in the community that could act as father figures for young people." As one interviewee stated, "People don't have a father figure and they need a father figure. If you don't have one you don't know where to go."<sup>12</sup> This lack of role models is also apparent in the education systems which employs far fewer men than women. The lack of male teachers is alarming and detrimental to young men. (This is discussed further in Chapter 2 of this report).

In this wider socio-political context, the voluntary sector can play a real part in engaging with these men and tackling issues at the root before they become areas of crises for the men themselves and society as a whole. If more young men had been engaged in preventative services perhaps less would have been involved in rioting. The riots highlighted the need for individuals to feel that they have a stake in society. Although the disturbances were not exclusively perpetrated by men, there is a clear and pressing need for men to engage more with their communities and for fathers to engage more with their families. The voluntary sector and its social projects can be instrumental in this process. This research seeks to help those projects and services engage all groups of men more effectively, not just young men and fathers.

However, currently in the voluntary sector, men are not generally regarded as a target group or thought of when services and projects are being developed to tackle social needs. Major funders, including the BIG Lottery Fund, have a wide range of funding for programmes available that can support these types of social issues in the UK. However, BIG statistics show that across the UK, from 2008-2010, only 1% of funded projects were targeted at men. In our survey for this research, 41% of respondents stated that their current beneficiaries were 'all women' or 'mostly women', compared with 15.4% who stated that their beneficiaries were 'all men' or 'mostly men', and within this group only 1.1% of respondents stated 'all men' (see Appendix C). Evidence from the UK and across the world indicates that the problem of engaging men in services is not unique to BIG projects, and that the engagement of men affects the whole of the voluntary sector.

The Young Foundation, in partnership with the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) has undertaken a comprehensive study to identify what barriers exist in engaging men and how these can be effectively overcome. This study explores what good practice already exists across the UK and beyond, and identifies how projects who are trying to engage men can do so.

## 1.2 The challenge

This research seeks to understand why men with emotional and/or physical needs do not seek support that is vital for their well-being, and how we can overcome the barriers to engaging these men at beneficiary level. There are a number of factors which may explain the reluctance of men to engage. An extensive body of research supports the notion that women are more likely than men to seek help for physical, as well as psychological, problems. (This is more widely explored in Chapter 2.) Many

theories have been presented to explain this, most of which attribute the reluctance to existing notions of masculinity in society or, in other words, what it means to 'be a man'. These notions can reinforce stereotypes of masculine behaviour and prevent help-seeking.<sup>13</sup>

The rate of help-seeking behaviour among men may differ according to the nature of the problem (for example, mental health problems, physical health problems and isolation), socio-cultural factors (such as age, ethnicity and socio-economic status) and urban or rural location. Occupation may also have an effect. For example, one local study in Merseyside found that men in traditionally male-dominated professions, such as bus driving, were the least likely to access health services and to look after their health.<sup>14</sup>

Services are not always designed around the needs of men, and men's needs have been neglected or not adequately attended to in some services. Research points to gaps in provision for particular groups of men, including older men, divorced men, male victims of domestic abuse and survivors of sexual abuse, gay and bisexual men, fathers, bereaved men, men in rural areas, and young offenders.<sup>15</sup>

A range of interventions are currently addressing the issue of male reluctance to access appropriate services. Some approaches currently being tested and advocated include encouraging greater understanding among policy makers and practitioners through training on identifying local men's health needs; raising awareness among men themselves, increasing initiatives specifically targeted at men, encouraging men to become men's health advocates or 'champions' at the local level, and providing more convenient and accessible services (for example, by offering services outside working hours, creating information displays aimed at men, providing services in places men will find more convenient and comfortable, such as sporting venues and workplaces.)<sup>16</sup>

Most research concerning men tends to explore the negative attitudes towards and detrimental consequences of help-seeking. Little research has been done on the positive factors that may motivate men to seek help from others, and this, in part, is what we have sought to address in our research.<sup>17</sup>

## 1.3 Definitions and scope

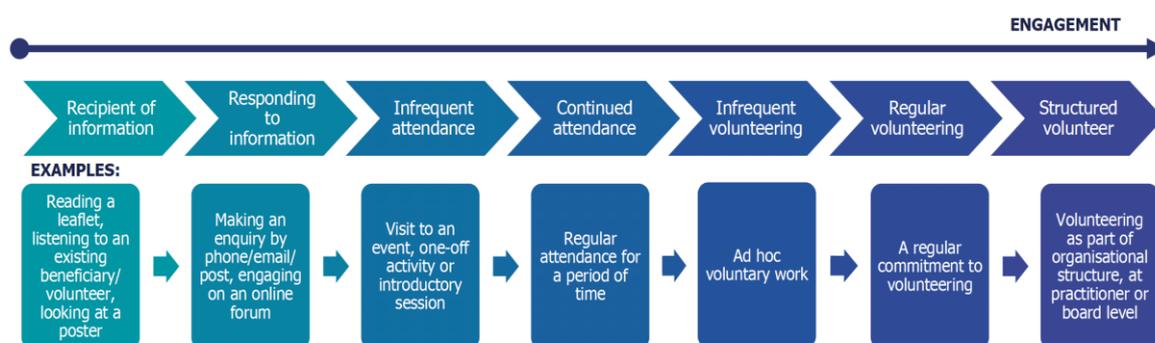
***Social project:*** For the purpose of this research we define a social project as a project or programme run by the voluntary sector with the aim to overcome and address a recognised social need, which could be material or psychological. This could be isolation among older people or high suicide rates among young men.<sup>‡</sup> Although this research focuses on the voluntary sector, we recognise that other organisations (such as statutory services) face similar issues to those identified in this report.

***Engagement:*** Defining engagement in social projects covers widely different levels of engagement. The spectrum (illustrated below) ranges from being a passive recipient of information to a structured volunteer.

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<sup>‡</sup> For further reading on the social needs identified in the UK please see the Young Foundation report, 'Sinking and Swimming'.

**Figure 1: Spectrum of engagement**



Different organisations may have distinct ways of defining and measuring successful engagement, be it recording that someone signed up for a session or measuring how many participants there are at the programme's end. For this research, we have focused on the engagement of men from a beneficiary perspective (at the lower to middle part of the engagement spectrum shown above), with the recognition that engaging men at this level could pave the way to engaging them at the other end of the spectrum. (We look at the journey from beneficiary to volunteer in chapter 5 of this report).

## 1.4 Focus of the research

This report details the research the Young Foundation undertook to identify key barriers to men's engagement in social projects and the factors which facilitate such engagement. It describes examples of good practice and learning, and shows how organisations across the UK have successfully overcome barriers to engaging men. Although this research has primarily focused on BIG funded projects, the lessons and conclusions drawn are applicable across the voluntary sector and beyond.

The research addressed the following questions:

### **a) Engagement patterns and trends**

- Do particular types of social projects have more difficulty engaging men than others?
- Are certain groups of men harder to reach, or engage than others?
- Are there trends surrounding initial engagement and continuous involvement through the life of a project?

### **b) Engagement barriers and facilitators**

- What are the common factors standing as barriers to male engagement?
- What are the common motivating factors in encouraging male involvement?

### **c) Lessons from effective and innovative practice**

- What should projects consider when trying to attract men to their activities (e.g. methods of advertising, raising awareness of activities)?
- What activities/projects have effectively engaged men?
- What lessons have been learnt from projects that have been successful in engaging men?

## 1.5 What we did

We reviewed existing knowledge bases from academia as well as research carried out by organisations working in the field (see Chapter 2). We surveyed over 500 organisations that have been funded by the Big Lottery Fund via an online survey (see Appendix C) and subsequently visited a number of them in all four UK countries. They ranged from youth organisations working to promote harmony between different faith communities through to healthcare projects and a project working with domestic abusers. We met and interviewed a range of different stakeholders, from trustees through to service users and community stakeholders.

We spoke to over 60 individuals, including grants officers across a number of BIG programmes: the Well-being programme (England), the Reaching Communities programme (England), the People and Places programme (Wales), the Healthy Minds programme (Northern Ireland) and the Supporting 21st Century Life programme (Scotland). We also consulted with and sought the opinions of experts, both UK-based and internationally to supplement and support our findings.

This report will begin by detailing existing knowledge on engaging men, and in subsequent sections our primary research will be presented, including the barriers to engaging men as beneficiaries, the facilitators which aid effective engagement, and the lessons that can be learned from existing effective practice. Finally, we have listed recommendations for projects and funders to aid effective engagement of men in social projects.

## 2. Engaging men: what's known

### *Existing literature and data on male engagement patterns and trends*

There is much we can learn from existing research. Numerous studies have explored why and how men engage in different activities. However, there is comparatively little work that has been done on looking at male engagement in the voluntary sector. In this chapter we review some of the existing evidence, looking at the different issues that affect help-seeking as well as looking at current patterns of male engagement across the voluntary sector.

Very little research has been carried out, in the UK specifically, on the engagement of male beneficiaries with social projects. The need for this work was identified by the BIG Lottery Fund when statistics showed that men were engaging with project grantees at much lower levels than women (for more details of this data, please refer to Section 1 of this report). However, as initial consultations and research indicated, there is a clear need across the voluntary sector as a whole to identify why men are less likely to engage with social projects than women and to formulate ways to overcome these barriers and reach men who are in need.

This section will begin by looking at existing literature regarding how notions of masculinity and sexuality can affect help-seeking behaviours among men, when the prevalent notion in society is that to be a 'man' means not showing any weakness or vulnerability.

### 2.1 Issues that affect help-seeking behaviours among men

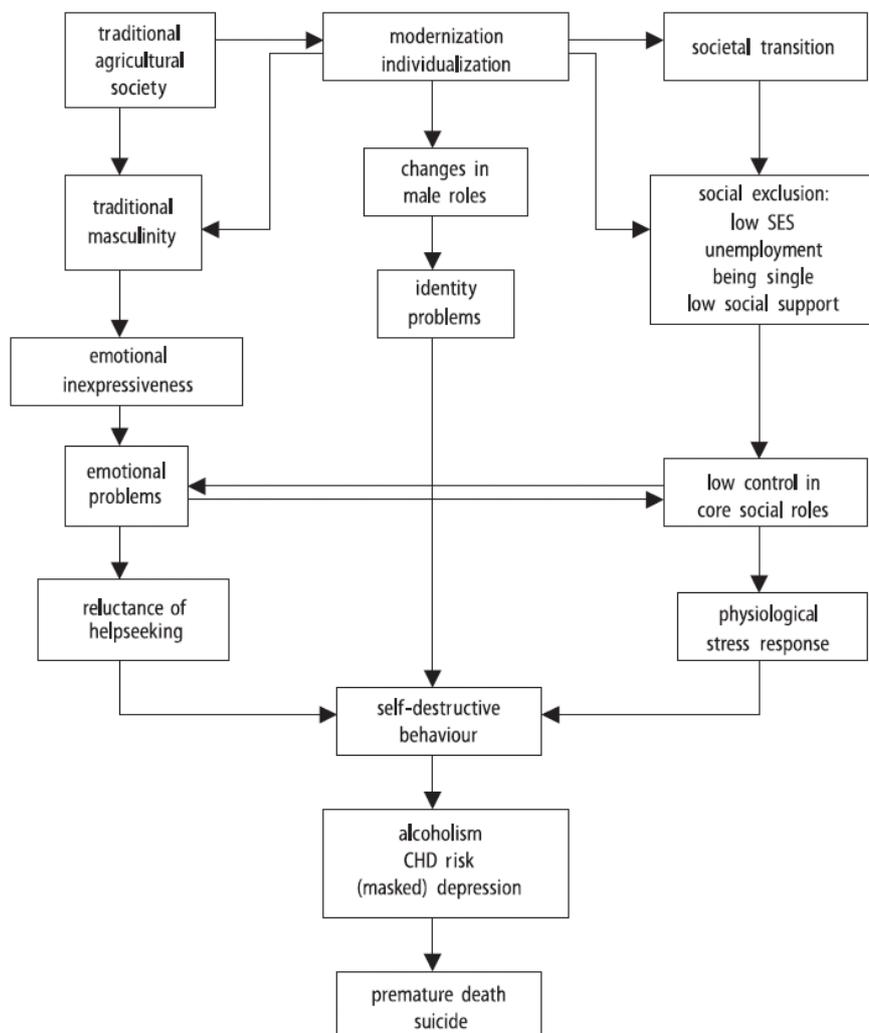
***Masculinity and gender roles:*** Prevalent notions of masculinity and what men 'should be and do'<sup>18</sup> affect their help-seeking behaviour and their engagement in various spheres including social projects. Much research references the traditional male gender role, which is characterised by attributes such as striving for power and dominance, aggressiveness, courage, independence, efficiency, rationality, competitiveness, success, activity, control and invulnerability.<sup>19</sup> Most of these attributes are not conducive to help-seeking behaviours and equating masculinity with success makes it hard for men to express their fears and needs.<sup>20</sup> However, existing research has also highlighted that men appear to be more open to renegotiating roles and responsibilities and seeking advice at various transition points in their lives, such as becoming a father or retirement.<sup>21</sup>

Gender conflict is referred to as a significant factor in male help-seeking behaviour. Just as the traditional roles of women have changed in society, now traditional male attributes are not deemed as desirable in modern UK society and the 'boys will be boys' mentality is no longer prevalent. Although the perceptions of some gender roles may have evolved, certain stereotypes remain. This tension between what men should be traditionally, and what their role now is, can lead to social isolation which can have adverse affects on male vulnerability. (See figure 2).

**Masculinity and health:** The reluctance to seek help is evident in male health outcomes in the UK. Statistically, men have worse health outcomes than women and a higher mortality for all the 15 leading causes of death. Their life expectancy is, on average, 7 years less than women.<sup>22</sup> It is unfortunately the case that, after accidents, suicide is now the second most common cause of death among young men aged 15 to 24 years in England and Wales.<sup>23</sup> As Angst and Ernst stated in summarising their work on male help-seeking, "*Women seek help – men die*".<sup>24</sup>

Why is this? A model developed by Möller-Leimkühler demonstrates how different factors, including traditional notions of masculinity (as discussed above), modernisation (including changing concepts of male roles in society), individualisation (the increasing isolation of individuals in society), social exclusion (including unemployment and being single) and questions of identity (regarding what it is to be a 'man') can lead to a reluctance to seek help, self-destructive behaviour and eventually premature death.<sup>25</sup>

**Figure 2: Gender model of male vulnerability<sup>26</sup>**



Even when negative well-being outcomes are not as extreme as suicide, men generally tend to be diagnosed with health problems, including serious ones, later than women because they tend to 'wait symptoms out' rather than going to see a medical professional. The notion still exists in various segments of society that men

should take risks, endure pain and be tough to prove they are “real men”. The result can be negative physical and mental health consequences, such as increased vulnerability and a higher risk of mortality.<sup>27</sup>

This indicates the importance of engaging men in health initiatives and projects, in order to combat these negative outcomes. The role of these social projects is to intervene in the early stages of male vulnerability (depicted in figure 2) in order to avoid the negative outcomes for men, which in worst case scenarios mean premature death. Finding effective strategies to engage men in these early interventions is needed among all service providers, including those in the voluntary sector. Much research already exists around health inequalities, including gender-based ones. Consequently, in recent years, there have been various initiatives targeted at men, arising from insights gained from research, including, Totally Trim Taxi Drivers in Northern Ireland and the Phoenix Community Health Project in Scotland (see Appendix A). However, there have also been various initiatives regarding general well-being, and this research seeks to illustrate some of the good practice occurring in tackling male vulnerabilities across the board.

## 2.2 Men and volunteering

While this report focuses on the way in which men engage with social projects on a beneficiary level, initial review of the literature highlights the importance of the relationships between men volunteering and being beneficiaries, In other words, how help-giving behaviours affect help-seeking behaviours among men.<sup>5</sup>

Existing statistics show the differences in the way that men and women participate in the voluntary sector. Most relevant is the extensive research that NCVO has carried out on volunteering, and gender patterns within volunteering. Men are almost as likely to as women to engage in regular formal volunteering (giving unpaid help through a club or organisation). However, there is a marked difference in regular informal volunteering (providing unpaid help as an individual), with more women volunteering than men.<sup>28</sup>

What men do as volunteers also differs. Men tend to be represented in higher proportions in board positions rather than on the frontline, a factor which affects the visibility of men in the voluntary sector, can have an impact on male engagement at a beneficiary level.

In the UK, people from younger age groups are less likely to choose to become volunteers. Indeed, people are more likely to volunteer and commit more of their time to volunteering around the time they reach retirement, which marks an important transitional point in their lives.<sup>29</sup> Although this assessment applies to the general population, it also highlights a trend that is applicable to men specifically.

The type of volunteering that different genders are more likely to become engaged in also needs to be taken into consideration. There are a number of important differences in the character of men’s and women’s involvement in offering their time in a voluntary capacity. For example, men are more likely to undertake voluntary work related to sports and recreation, whereas women are more likely to volunteer for projects working in health, education and social services. Men are also more likely

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<sup>5</sup> The impact of volunteering by men on engaging other men is explored in Chapter 5 of this report.

to occupy committee posts, trusteeships and board positions, in a volunteering and employment capacity,<sup>30</sup> which means that they may not actually be visible to many of the beneficiaries. (Whether this kind of visibility has an effect on men engaging with projects as beneficiaries is explored in Chapter 3.)

## 2.3 Differences in engagement: different men, different issues

When identifying barriers and facilitators to engage men it is important to understand and recognise that different issues affect different men. The development of project delivery and service provision should reflect the range of issues that affect the target group. The following section details some of the existing research that affects different groups of men, which allows us to see which specific issues may be prevalent in a particular set of circumstances. However, it is important to remember that some men will not fit neatly into specific categories but may straddle many, for example, an older man from a Black or Minority Ethnic (BME) background.

***Men from BME backgrounds:*** It is important to recognise the diversity that exists with the in broad term 'BME'. Men from some black and minority ethnic backgrounds engage with projects differently to men from others. Levels of engagement can differ according to a range of cultural variables including language, family expectations and gender interactions within their respective communities.<sup>31</sup>

The Department for Work and Pensions has carried out some exploratory work around the engagement of older men and women from black and minority ethnic backgrounds.<sup>32</sup> Although dealing with both genders, their findings also apply to men specifically. The DWP study highlights a number of barriers to engaging older people from BME backgrounds, including the lack of tailored services. It argues that men and women from black and minority ethnic backgrounds appear to place greater trust in community and voluntary organisations that work specifically with their community and understand the specific issues facing their communities rather than statutory bodies which offer a more generic set of services. Other barriers highlighted included issues of language and methods of outreach. One issue of contention that emerges is whether staff need to originate from the same ethnic background as those they are seeking to engage and deliver services to.

Within the scope of our literature review, we found a lack of research into the separate issues concerning men from minority ethnic backgrounds compared to those concerning women. However, there are a number of social projects targeted towards BME men in the UK. A notable example is the 'Capital Men' project launched in London in 2011. Its aim is to pair black male mentors to black young men in certain boroughs of London which suffer from a number of challenging social conditions.<sup>33</sup> When the project launched specific targeting of volunteers successfully engaged over 2000 young men. However, they were only able to pair 21 mentors. It was clear that a strategy that is successful at engaging beneficiaries, may not work for volunteers.

***Gay, bisexual and transgender men:*** Issues that affect gay, bisexual and transgender men, as well as men who have sex with men, range from a specific set

of healthcare challenges through to a lack of acceptance on the part of communities or even service providers. For example, many health-based interventions may attempt to target men through the family structure, working on the assumption that personal relationships are likely to be heterosexual and fail to recognise that some men, who identify themselves as heterosexual, sometimes have sex with men. This potentially excludes large numbers of gay and bisexual participants, particularly in densely populated areas such as cities and larger towns. (This is explored further in Chapter 3).

**Fathers:** Transition points in men's lives appear to be times when engagement can be more effective because, at times of change, needs are often greater and men are more likely to question traditional roles. When males undergo certain transitions in their lives they are more able to engage in a way that they would not necessarily have done before. Becoming a parent is one such important transition and there have been a number of initiatives to involve and engage fathers, (see 'Campaign for Learning' case study in Appendix A) especially around health concerns and family centres. For example, ContinYou, one of the UK's leading education charities, offers a one-day training course for service delivery organisations that aims to increase awareness of the issues involving men as fathers when delivering interventions for men, children and whole families.<sup>34</sup>

Ghate, Shaw and Hazel's work around fathers in family centres has a number of recommendations for good practice to ensure male engagement, as there can be resistance from men in engaging with parenting programmes due to the implication that they are bad parents (see Chapter 3).<sup>35</sup> These recommendations include, taking steps to reduce the level of apparent female dominance in family centres, making a positive commitment to recruiting fathers, reconsidering the language that is used (for example the word 'mothers' could be replaced with 'parents' when trying to engage fathers) and providing gender neutral activities that appeal to men as well as women. (Engaging fathers is further explored in Chapter 5 of this report.)

**Older men:** There is already a significant body of work in the public domain around engaging older men in social projects. Most notably, Age Concern (now Age UK) has carried out a complete review of their services looking at enabling factors and barriers to working with and engaging older men. The main barriers identified were an apparent lack of visibility of older men within services, recruitment of staff and participants, and specifically targeted funding.<sup>36</sup>

A crucial aspect of engaging men entails understanding the issues that affect the beneficiaries a service provider may be seeking to target. Key issues for older men that have been identified are around transition points, such as bereavement and retirement, along with the need for sensitivity to the reasons why men from older age groups would come together. These reasons are often connected to identity, and a sense of solidarity and mutual support, and should be addressed within project design and delivery. When designing projects for older men, the Age Concern recommends that the centrality of work in most men's lives should be taken into account. Older men tend to look back at work as a defining period in their lives and the Age Concern research suggests that projects that make use of this fact could be more successful in engaging older men.

A significant barrier to engaging older men appears to be social isolation and resultant loneliness, which the Men's Shed movement has especially sought to address (see 'Camden Town Shed' case study in Appendix A). A Department for

Work and Pensions study has shown that divorce affects older men and women differently. Women tend to be pushed into greater poverty in later life, while men are more likely to see their social networks curtailed and to lose touch with their children and grandchildren.<sup>37</sup> This can have an isolating effect which limits engagement with society, including specific social projects. (The engagement of older men is discussed in Chapter 4 of this report.)

***Unemployment and job security:*** Work has long been seen as central in shaping and sustaining male identities.<sup>38</sup> The economic restructuring that has taken place across the UK since the late 1970s has had a profound effect on many men, particularly with the significant loss of unskilled male dominated manual work in the manufacturing and mining industries. Over the past 30 years numerous studies have shown that men, in particular, are adversely affected by losing their jobs. They are more likely to have mental health problems, are likely to smoke and drink more,<sup>39</sup> and are more likely to be divorced by their wives.<sup>40</sup> Other studies have shown that unemployed men are less likely to seek help from professionals or support from family and friends as their self-esteem diminishes.<sup>41</sup>

The problems associated with unemployment and the male tendency to avoid seeking help are particularly alarming as unemployment rates remain high in the current economic downturn. There are now over 1.5 million unemployed men in the UK today, with young people being the worst off.<sup>42</sup> The unemployment rate for young men is higher (20%) than young women (15%).<sup>43</sup>

One of the other features of the new economy has been the move away from a job for life to short-term contracts.<sup>44</sup> The job insecurity associated with these short-term contracts can lead to stress and worry as well as increased tensions in the home.

## 2.4 Gaps in the existing knowledge base

Our study of existing literature and work around male engagement has highlighted some gaps. For instance, there is a lack of notable research that explicitly addresses the UK context, by country, in engaging men. There has been some work on engaging different groups of men (as discussed previously in this chapter), but there has not been an emphasis on the engagement of, for example, 'English' versus 'Scottish' men.

There is also less literature around engaging younger men. While it is commonly agreed that sport can play a important part in attracting many young men, there has not been a great deal of empirical research on what really draws younger men from different backgrounds, social situations and locations into different types of social projects. Existing research notes that "younger people also have lower levels of neighbourhood attachment and civic engagement, and higher levels of social network than older cohorts."<sup>45</sup> On going debates about what lay at the root of the August 2011 riots, in which many participants were young and male, have brought no satisfactory answers: a further illustration of the gap in this particular part of the knowledge base. However, our research has indicated that, in spite of this, there are a number of organisations which are successfully engaging and working with younger men. We have documented some of their experiences, successes and lessons in subsequent sections of this report.

There is also a lack of significant work on whether geography has a significant impact on male engagement with social projects. Our research indicates mixed results on whether it matters if men are from a rural or urban locations. However, one of the case studies we selected shows young men from both rural and urban areas engaging successfully. This indicates that, even if location is an issue, there are ways to tailor engagement tools effectively. (The issue of location is discussed further in Chapters 3 and 5 of this report.)

Our review of the existing literature shows that, along with younger men, there is a gap in research focused on engaging men who are not in work and targeting men by sexuality. Our research also indicates that, while some organisations are very good at engaging men and sustaining engagement, they have not necessarily had access to existing research or examples of effective engagement. They have either had to conduct research from scratch or establish their own models of good practice through trial and error. Moreover, it appears that many funding providers and commissioners, including the BIG Lottery Fund, leave research and the development of good practice, to the projects they support, but the projects may not have allocated resources to this. While we have been able to reach a number of the organisations and initiatives which have done excellent work in establishing good practice in this area, a clear gap in knowledge exists in identifying how many projects have fallen by the wayside and not succeeded in engaging with male beneficiaries. This could (at least in part) be because they did not have the correct guidance or access to the appropriate information and development resources at the outset.

This section has looked at existing literature and work around engaging men and the different issues that affect different groups of men. It identifies that there is a specific lack of work on the engagement of men in social projects. The subsequent chapters outline the findings and themes to come out of this research, drawing on case study analysis and consultations.

## 3. The barriers to engaging men

This chapter explores the barriers that exist in engaging men in social projects grouped under five main headings: help-seeking behaviours, fear of stigmatisation, a lack of visibility of men in services, hard to reach men, and a lack of discourse. These barriers relate to the reluctance of men to engage with services as beneficiaries in order to address their needs. They were identified through the analysis of our research conducted with stakeholders, practitioners and male beneficiaries, including our survey of 507 projects across the United Kingdom. This section also draws attention to the role that barriers can play in preventing sustained engagement. Overcoming barriers to engagement (discussed in the subsequent sections of this report) depends on them being identified correctly.

### 3.1 Help-seeking behaviours

Men are more resistant to seek help from others than women. As one respondent from our survey said, *"Men can be more reluctant to acknowledge they need help"*. This is most clearly evident in the health behaviours and outcomes for men in the UK, which are significantly worse than those of women. Bob Blanchard, Senior Community Development Officer of the Breckfield and North Everton Neighbourhood Council (BNENC), which runs the HIM Project through the BIG Awards for All funding stream, put it succinctly when he said, *"The biggest problem with men's health is men."* Their survey of the local area showed that 9 times out of 10 women contacted medical services on behalf of their male partners.<sup>46</sup>

Dr Robert MacGibbon (former GP and Co-founder of the Camden Town Shed - part of the Men's Shed movement) also spoke of men's reluctance to seek help, and highlighted the problem of widowed men, *"if the woman dies first, the man's life expectancy goes right down. Women tend to go to medical services more, so from a health angle they are much more used to accessing services."*<sup>47</sup> Once their female partner dies these men are particularly vulnerable to isolation from health and other services. They lose a social support that tends to stem from the female partner.

This reluctance to seeking help is also prevalent among other groups of men. Men tend to ignore symptoms far longer than women, so are far less likely to catch problems early. They are also much less likely to take time off work to seek help, which is detrimental when they need the support of services that operate on a regular working hour basis. As Dr MacGibbon puts it, *"Men's social activity is work; it is their whole raison d'être."*<sup>48</sup>

Another barrier is the way in which men tend to view themselves and their needs. Our research indicates that, on the whole, men don't describe their issues as 'problems' that need to be addressed. The Choose2Change Programme in Wales is a domestic violence intervention programme (run by Relate Cymru and funded through the BIG People and Places funding stream), which has had difficulty reaching perpetrators of domestic abuse because the men don't see what they do as a problem:

*"Most services pitch themselves along the lines of, 'If you've got problems, come and see us.' What men have said in our research is, 'Well, we just don't have a*

*problem.’ So it’s not that they don’t lack the services or don’t think that they’re valuable for the community, they just don’t think that they’re relevant for them.”<sup>49</sup>*

### 3.2 Fear of stigmatisation

One of survey respondents, when asked why men were harder to engage, commented, “Most men don’t express their emotional and social needs in public.” Our consultations indicate that men’s resistance to engage with social projects may be because they don’t want to publicly acknowledge a problem they think is embarrassing or ‘unmanly’. A few beneficiaries of the Totally Trim Taxi Drivers programme in Northern Ireland (which has received funding from the BIG Awards for All programme) spoke of how others would not sign up because they were embarrassed about their weight and appearance.<sup>50</sup> Likewise, Denis Rees, Facilitator of the Choose2Change programme in Wales cited “*shame and guilt*” as one of the reasons men weren’t likely to engage in their domestic violence intervention programme.<sup>51</sup>

One male beneficiary from Youth Action Northern Ireland (which has received funding from the BIG Safe and Well programme) explained that some of his peers would not engage with the project because of what others would say. In this particular instance, this was due to the cross community work the project undertakes between young Catholic and Protestant men, “*there’s a couple that have got involved, and then their mates have been like ‘Ah cross community,’ so then they’d shy away from it for a bit.*”<sup>52</sup>

There is also societal stigma attached to male victims or perpetrators of abuse. Hence, a lot of projects that deal with these issues find it hard to engage with men. This is due to the link, often made, between abuse and notions of masculinity and manhood. Male victims of abuse may be viewed negatively because of common perceptions of what it is to be a ‘man’.

GMFA, the gay men’s charity, sought to reach gay black men and black men who had sex with men. One of the major barriers they found in reaching these men was the stigma of homosexual identity. They found that some men would be reluctant to engage with their project because the perception was that in doing so, you would be identifying yourself as a gay black man. For those who did not want to identify themselves in this way that was a barrier to effective engagement. Our survey also highlighted the stigma that male sex workers face, “*In relation to sex workers, men who sell sex to men are generally stigmatised and are conditioned to expect no assistance. They simply do not engage with the agencies they should.*”<sup>53</sup>

### 3.3 Lack of visibility of men in services

A lack of male role models in the voluntary sector is commonly cited as a barrier to engaging men in our research. (This issue was also referred to in Chapter 2). In our survey, 60% of respondents indicated that a ‘lack of male participants’ or a ‘lack of

male staff' was the reason respondents thought that men were harder to attract than women (where 100% = 130). There is a perception among some men that volunteering constitutes a 'carer' role and that this domain is predominately female. This was reflected in the responses of our survey, when respondents were asked why men were harder to engage than women:

*"The work of volunteers is traditionally seen as 'women's work'."*

*"Some men still see volunteering as "carer" type work and so think it is female orientated"*

*"Majority of men feel Social projects are not manly and should be left to women."*

There is a clear distinction between men and women in the places and types of organisations in which they volunteer. Men are more likely to engage with a sports or exercise organisation than women (60% compared with 49%), and are much less likely than women to volunteer at a school or in connection with children's education (26% compared with 42%), or at a health, disability or social welfare group (24% compared with 14%).<sup>54</sup>

## **Box 1: Men and volunteering – 2009-10 Citizenship**

**Survey statistics** (drawn on a sample of approximately 10,000 adults in England and Wales)

The Department for Communities and Local Government produced a detailed analysis of the 2009-10 Citizenship Survey which shows some interesting figures on men and volunteering.

**Formal volunteering** = giving unpaid help through groups, clubs or organisations to benefit other people or the environment.

**Informal volunteering** = giving unpaid help as an individual to people who are not relatives.

### **Do men volunteer more than women?**

Men were almost as likely as women to participate in regular formal volunteering (i.e. once a month) (24% compared with 26%), but there was a marked difference in regular informal volunteering, with women volunteering more than men (32% compared with 26%).

However, in terms of time, men gave more time to regular formal volunteering than women (13 hours compared with 10.8), and only slightly less time than women to regular informal volunteering (7.4 hours compared to 8).

### **Do men and women volunteer for the same type of organisations?**

Men are more likely to undertake voluntary work for a sports or exercise organisation than women (60% compared with 49%), and to be involved through a recreation, arts or social club (46% compared with 38%). They are less likely than women to volunteer at a school or in connection with children's education (26% compared with 42%), or at a health, disability or social welfare group (24% compared with 14%).

### **How do men get to hear about volunteering opportunities?**

For both men and women the most common way of finding out about volunteering opportunities is through personal contact i.e. through knowing someone involved in the organisation. But this is more the case for men than it is for women (57% compared to 50%). And, interestingly in the context of this project, men are also more likely than women to find out about volunteering opportunities because they have used the services provided (27% compared with 21%).

### **What stops them from volunteering?**

Men who didn't formally volunteer on a regular basis were more likely than women to say that work commitments prevented them from doing so (60% compared with 53%).

The second most common reason for men was that they did other things with their spare time (30% compared with 19% of women). In contrast, women were more likely to say that they had to look after children or the home (32% compared with 20% for men).

(compiled by Véronique Jochum of NCVO)

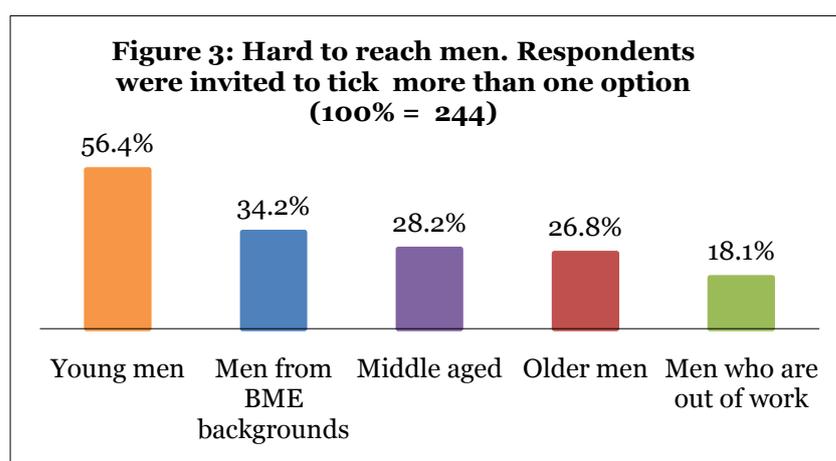
One group that has been identified as hard to engage is younger men. The lack of social value placed on volunteering by young people in general, but particularly young men, is a factor in this. A lack of male role models and even male teachers is cited as the problem. Men are less likely to be involved in social projects at practitioner level and are more likely to participate at a managerial or committee level. This means they are often behind the scenes and are less visible than those people working directly with beneficiaries.

The lack of visibility of men in child services also relates to a fear of stigmatisation, as outlined earlier. As one survey respondent explained, there is an issue in "overcoming the historical barriers to men working with children". Our research has indicated that some men are afraid of social stigmas and being labelled 'paedophiles'. This explains the lack of male volunteers who work with families.<sup>55</sup> It is an issue which also affects the statutory sector, where there is a lack of male teachers in schools. The General Teaching Council (GTC) for England's figures for 2011 show that 27.2 per cent of all schools in England had no registered male teachers.<sup>56</sup> This lack of visibility of men has a knock-on effect for subsequent generations as GTC Chief Executive, Keith Bartley, stated:

*"We should focus on attracting the best recruits to teaching – regardless of their gender. If men do not believe that teaching is a worthwhile career option for them, or worse still, if their interest in teaching is viewed with suspicion, then children potentially miss out on a huge pool of talent."<sup>57</sup>*

### 3.4 Hard to reach men

Although evidence has shown that there are barriers when engaging across all male groups, consultations have shown that some groups of men can be even harder to reach than others. The evidence suggests young men are the hardest group to reach, followed by men from BME backgrounds.



The gaps in existing literature clearly indicate a lack of theoretical work on engaging with young men, even though there are projects that do so effectively. Our research indicates that younger men are more susceptible to peer influence and the attitude towards social projects among this age group discourages them from participating.

The Phoenix Community Health Project in Scotland (which received funding from the BIG Investing in Communities programme) recognised that it was struggling to engage with young fathers, who would not participate in parenting classes because of the implication that they were bad fathers. Time constraints are also likely to be a problem when trying to engage with young men. They are most likely to be busy with school and work commitments and to prioritise these commitments above others. (These issues are explored in Chapter 2).

Research conducted by the Inspire Foundation with the University of Sydney has found that male behaviours are quite consistent irrespective of income or cultural group. However, Jonathan Nicholas, Chief Executive Officer of the Inspire Foundation, concedes that, *"there are certainly some barriers there on how culture would interact with gender."*<sup>58</sup>

He explained that, in Australia, different immigrant populations express masculinity differently and are more used to operating in gendered spaces.<sup>59</sup> These cultural issues exist in the United Kingdom too. As one respondent in our survey pointed out when asked who they found most difficult to engage, *"[There are] Men whose cultural norms prohibit them from attending counselling. We have noticed a particular trend in young Muslim Asian men who are fearful that their relatives will find out they are attending counselling."*<sup>60</sup>

The charitable organisation Campaign for Learning targeted men from BME backgrounds for its 'Dads in the Picture' programme (which received funding from the BIG Family Learning programme). The barrier they faced was that many of these men did not perceive their children's education to be an area in which they were wanted. These men had a preconceived cultural expectation that this was a woman's domain, so the challenge was to convince them that not only were they welcome in this area, but they needed too. (See Chapter 2 for further discussion on BME men and fathers).

Another cultural issue to emerge was that of engaging those whose first language is not English. Kelly McGuire, Co-ordinator of the Choose2Change project in Wales, spoke of the cultural issues that were arising as a result of a higher influx of men from Polish backgrounds whose first language may not be English.<sup>61</sup> It isn't appropriate to involve an interpreter in the group work sessions the project delivers because key messages can be lost in translation and the presence of an interpreter hinders the building of trust.

Matthew Hodson, Head of Programmes, at GMFA, the gay men's health charity, highlighted the difficulty of engaging black gay men and black men who have sex with men as they are not part of a very 'visible' community.<sup>62</sup> The problem is identifying where you can reach these men, due to the lack of established community infrastructure (see Chapter 2). The gay black community is relatively discreet and so reaching into those networks is hard:

*"What we found was that, actually, the needs that are expressed in the literature are actually more around, 'we need to build a community', 'we need to establish an identity'. Having that infrastructure is important in terms of being able to deliver that health promotion work...we could develop a mass media campaign but where do you place those mass media campaigns?"*<sup>63</sup>

Our research has also indicated that some projects have found it hard to engage with men who may be isolated due to their location. This is particularly the case for those who reside in rural areas where transport links are not so accessible. Choose2Change has certainly found this to be the case in rural Wales and has tailored programmes so that they can be delivered to hard to reach men.

### 3.5 Lack of discourse

Jonathan Nicholas, Chief Executive Officer of the Inspire Foundation, discussed how, when addressing the needs of society, we tend to avoid doing so in terms of gender and focus on cultural background, age and economic situation instead. Perhaps one of the biggest barriers in engaging men in social projects is the overall resistance to consider gender as an issue from a male perspective. Despite evidence that tells us that that male engagement is an issue, we don't rethink our approach. As Jonathan puts it, *"it's a place where we're actually really comfortable to sit in stereotypes."* Dialogue about men in social projects tends to be in terms of assumptions rather than evidence. The resistance to talking about male engagement is rooted in the fear and misconception that by tailoring services to men we are somehow taking away services from women. Targeting provisions for men as a priority group can be politically challenging because many of their needs go unrecognised or remain hidden:

*"If you said, look, 'Indigenous young people have high suicide rates therefore we've got an indigenous strategy,' nobody would blink an eye, but to say we've got a men's service strategy because men have higher suicide rates, people start becoming quite, kind of, conscious that it doesn't look good."*<sup>64</sup>

In this section we have shown the common barriers that exist to engaging men in social projects. In the next chapter, we look at some of factors that facilitate better engagement of men in social projects and how they have been applied in practice.

## 4. Facilitating engagement

### *Patterns of common motivating factors that encourage male engagement*

Our research clearly shows facilitating factors that engage men in social projects. These factors can be vital to the success of a project and, if they are not delivered correctly, can be detrimental to engagement. So getting them right is key.

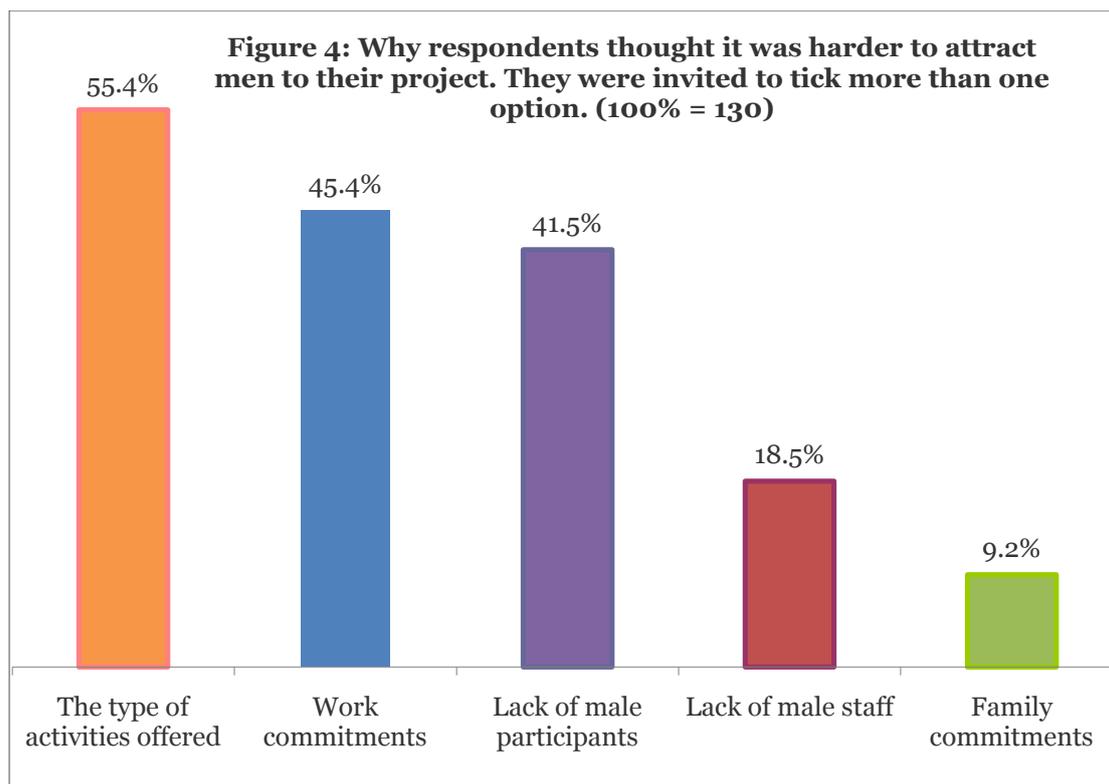
This section details these factors, which include:

- *Activities*
- *Time and venues*
- *Social connections and networks*
- *Practitioners*
- *Partner/wife/family*
- *Peer support and male friendships*

These facilitators, and good practice, are discussed in more detail below.

#### 4.1 Activities

Our research shows that the activity through which a project delivers its programme is particularly important in engaging men. In our survey, 67.1% of respondents stated that they had provided particular activities to attract more men (see figure 5) and 55.4% of respondents indicated that the type of activities offered are why men engage less than women (see figure 4). In most cases, it appears that they are more likely to engage in a physical activity. Most commonly this is around sport or exercise or DIY, (as is the case in the Men's Sheds movement which provides a space for older men to engage with others and combat isolation - see Appendix A). Our consultations indicate that men are less likely than women to simply sit together and talk about their problems. There needs to be an element of activity, of doing something which facilitates discussion. As Dr MacGibbon, Co-founder of the Men's Shed, Camden, said, "*Women speak eye to eye, men speak shoulder to shoulder.*"<sup>65</sup>



Part of the importance of the activity is the appeal that it will hold for the target group. Youth Action Northern Ireland are very aware that the activities that they run must be attractive to the young men they wish to engage. They do a lot of work around soccer and Gaelic football because it is not only a big draw but a uniting force which assists cross community work. Most of the young men involved with the project that we spoke to cited football as one of the key reasons they found sessions appealing and interesting. The beneficiaries are also aware of its ability to deliver messages about mental health and engage other young men. *"Jonny wants us to go out and deliver our own mental health sessions, on our own, to each youth club. After they've talked about mental health, we'll treat them to a football tournament. We want it to be big."*<sup>66</sup> Our research indicates that sport, and football in particular, can be effective in engaging not only young men but men of all ages as sport appeals to an existing interest that some men will dedicate their time to anyway. The Phoenix Community Health project in Scotland runs an Outdoor Pursuits programme, alongside its Steps to Excellence programme, which consists of a range of active endeavours from archery and water sports to team-based games. This is because they are aware of the confidence boosting benefits physical activity can bring.

Our research indicates that another reason sport and physical activity are effective in engaging men is the element of competition inherent in both. Sarah Carter, Diet and Exercise Consultant to the Totally Trim Taxi Drivers programme in Belfast, spoke of the motivating factor of competition the exercise sessions brought out in the men involved. She cited it as a crucial factor in keeping men in the scheme and sustaining their motivation, *"once they're here, they're better than women at committing. They're sort of strong willed and want to prove it to themselves and it's sometimes a competition thing, they want to prove it to a group of men."*<sup>67</sup> This idea of an inherent competition is important as it highlights the use of goal-setting as an effective engagement mechanism. Totally Trim asks beneficiaries to set out short,

mid and long-term goals to ensure motivation remains high throughout the programme.

It is not only sport and physical activity that are effective as engagement tools. As already stated, Men's Sheds have found DIY to be an effective tool for engaging older men around the country. Robert MacGibbon said Camden Men's Shed has been effective because so many of its beneficiaries simply do not have the space for a shed or a space to undertake DIY projects. The Camden Men's Shed has taken the idea further by accepting commissions, thus instilling a sense of purpose into the activities that they undertake. For instance, they recently received a commission to build a target for the local archery club, and by focusing their efforts towards this project were more effective in maintaining engagement.

The activity should be tailored to the target group, Campaign for Learning targeted ethnic minority men in its 'Dads in the Picture' project and found that animation was an effective activity to deliver the programme. Animation was chosen for specific reasons. The nature of the activity has universal appeal to children and men, so it facilitated the intergenerational work the project sought to achieve. It could also be tailored to the needs and abilities of the men involved. Animation could be adapted effectively according to skill sets, literacy levels, language and cultural background. It was an activity that the men could engage in at whatever level they wished.

## 4.2 Time and venues

Timing of the delivery of sessions is important for successful participation. Our research has shown that men are more likely to forgo other commitments in favour of work. This is especially true in the current economic climate when people are afraid to take time off work for fear of losing their jobs. This has certainly been the case for the Totally Trim Taxi Drivers programme in Northern Ireland. The taxi drivers we interviewed told us that because there was a huge amount of competition for jobs, some drivers would not take out time to attend the programme due to the fear of losing earnings.

When targeting men of a working age it is important to deliver programmes outside working hours. For example, the Phoenix Community Health project in Scotland ran 'Dads and Grandads Days' on Saturdays as they didn't want to exclude men that worked. This is also the case for Campaign for Learning which does a lot of work in the evenings and at weekends to accommodate working men and others who may have other commitments during the day. It is important to note that the target group may not have regular working hours, so timings will need to be adjusted accordingly. In Totally Trim's case, they are working with taxi drivers who work long shifts and are only able to spare short amounts of time intermittently. Totally Trim has tried to accommodate this as much as possible by keeping sessions to an hour and providing a number of times in the week when the men can use the gym. One of the taxi drivers said that making an initial appointment with the dietary consultant actually helped him to turn up as he did not want to let her down. Weekly Tuesday sessions with practitioners give the men the impetus to show up but there is flexibility in the times they can choose the rest of the week.

When engaging with young men, Youth Action Northern Ireland work around the availability of the young men they deal with. Most of the work is done in the evening as most of them will be busy during the day with school, college or work. However,

they also allow for daytime involvement if a particular individual or group feels that will suit them better. The staff are aware that young men have other commitments and so will tailor the meeting times accordingly. For instance, they will change sessions around football training (Gaelic & Soccer) or band practice.

In terms of venue, our research shows that although the choice of venue can have positive impact on a programme, it can be successfully delivered almost anywhere. Totally Trim deliver their programme for male taxi drivers in a gym for women, at designated hours when no women will be present, which is fairly unconventional. Although this could be perceived as a barrier, as the gym is tailored to women, it has actually been very effective in engaging the men. Sarah Carter explains that the men are very aware that it is a privilege to be in the ladies gym, so don't take advantage. They also feel more comfortable doing circuit training, which is more effective than simply lifting weights - commonly perceived as a 'manly' workout. This is a clear example of delivery outweighing venue. However, other sources highlight that delivery in predominantly 'male spaces' can be effective, as is the case in the Camden Town Shed. BNENC have found that delivering a health programme at Liverpool Football Club has drawn in huge numbers of men because the venue has an appeal of its own. In contrast, the Phoenix Community Health project has found the inconspicuous nature of their venue has worked to its benefit. The project's premises are located by a coffee shop, with no sign advertising the centre. This protects the privacy of the beneficiaries, who feel comfortable entering a place where people are unaware that they are going to seek help.

### 4.3 Social connections and networks

Our research shows that one of the most effective facilitators of engagement is word of mouth. Jacqueline, of Phoenix Community Health Project told us that although they usually advertise through the local paper or on posters, individuals are often drawn to the service by word of mouth. Raising awareness of the project is of great importance. *"We strive very hard to get our name out there and let people know we are here"*.<sup>68</sup> Beneficiaries talking to people they feel would benefit from the programme also inspire trust.

*"I thought of people who I knew who I felt who Steps would really benefit, so I spoke to them to get them into different programmes with Jacqueline.... Speaking to people about Steps, telling them how I feel it has benefited me, and how I feel that maybe if they get to try it, it could possibly benefit them as well. Most of them who have come to try it, have loved it, and got on to better things, you know, they came through the course."*<sup>69</sup>

When Campaign for Learning began targeting men from ethnic minorities there were some key starting points for conversation. They did some work with mosques to establish connections and consultation points. Then the work was naturally spread through word of mouth and worked just as well as any formal advertising campaign.

Sarah Carter, from Totally Trim, explained that they were so conscious of the ability of word of mouth to be an effective engagement tool that it was one of the reasons that the taxi drivers were chosen as a target group - because of their willingness to speak to others. Taxi drivers tend to be more open to speak to others about their experiences and Totally Trim recognized this. As Sarah states, *"taxi drivers talk to people and if they're having success in anything they will generally tell others so we wanted them to spread the word about our charity."* Existing participants will

encourage others to join up by speaking to their peers. People don't always notice advertisements, so word of mouth helps increase the awareness of the programme and its benefits.

## 4.4 Practitioners

The practitioners who deliver the project are key to its success, but so are all the other staff who interact (in however small a way) with male beneficiaries. Juliette Collier, Deputy CEO of Campaign for Learning, highlighted the importance of the staff involved in the project and the vast difference they can make. *"The practitioner training is absolutely crucial"*.<sup>70</sup> Encouraging practitioners to make environments more male friendly is key to engagement. Juliette cited an incident in a children's centre, when a dad came into reception in a fluorescent jacket and before he had a chance to speak the receptionist said, *"Oh deliveries are round the back"*.<sup>71</sup> The receptionist had made an assumption and completely undermined the value that is placed on men in that context. Youth Action Northern Ireland knows that having the right youth workers on the project is of vital importance. They facilitate a welcoming, safe and enjoyable atmosphere which appeals to others. *"At school, you're like, 'will I ask this question or not?' because everyone else is judging you on what you ask. Here, you're all the same so you relate to each other. So you don't have that fear of asking."*<sup>72</sup> The young men really do feel they can relate to those working on the project and, most importantly, speak to them about any issues they may be facing. When asked who they would go to if they had a problem most responded that they would speak to their youth worker, especially over their teachers. *"It's because of them. Their sessions are enjoyable, it's not like school. You have a few laughs, but you also learn at the same time."*<sup>73</sup> The importance of good practitioners cannot be underestimated. They must have the ability to build genuine relationships with male beneficiaries, not just initially but on a sustained basis.

*"All our work is relationship based...you have a relationship with them and they trust you. They know that you're there for them and you're flexible, you can work around them, and I think that's really important in engaging them."*<sup>74</sup>

## 4.5 Partners/ wives/ families

Our survey results and interviews show that the support system of men's families, wives or partners can be of great benefit in encouraging initial engagement and sustaining it. They can quite often play a major role in help-seeking behaviours among men and serve as motivating factors to maintain commitment and. BNENC ran a local survey on men's health needs and found that men were just as likely to speak to their partner about their health concerns as a GP.

In some cases the gentle push of the partner was crucial in engaging men, whether at beneficiary or volunteer level. In fact one of the volunteers for the HIM project was put forward by his wife, *"I remember being a bit standoffish, because my wife's the people person. She's not quiet, she will talk to anyone. It gave me confidence, I got confident with talking to people."*<sup>75</sup> The Phoenix Community Health Project offers initial free health check-ups onsite in places where men are more likely to be, for instance pubs and snooker halls. They have noted that sometimes the men's partner

would enquire about the service on their behalf. It was found that the partner or spouse would then encourage them to have the check-ups and that it was this encouragement that made them more likely to respond.

In terms of sustaining engagement, one of the taxi drivers cites his wife's support as being crucial to his success on the programme. In this instance, not only did the partner provide support but, as the person who prepared the household meals, the key to the success of a healthy lifestyle programme. *"I don't cook. I could burn water, so my wife does all that...I used to go back with Kentucky Fries and Chinese like, that's all I ever ate whenever she didn't cook for me."*<sup>76</sup>

## 4.6 Organisational partnerships

Our research has shown that forming partnerships with other organisations can have a positive impact on engagement in numerous ways. Partnerships can both extend the potential outreach by making use of each organisation's network of contacts, as well as allow greater variation or specialisation in how projects are delivered. The Choose2Change programme in Wales has found that working with other agencies that already have contact with the target group is effective in establishing relationships with the beneficiaries. Kelly McGuire, of Choose2Change, explained that it is a matter of approaching a partner agency and saying *"Look, you are already working with this person, you have already got a really good relationship with them, what if we just happen to be around and pop in for ten minutes when you next contact them?"*<sup>77</sup> This serves to 'break the ice' in an environment where the beneficiary is already comfortable. It will also make that initial appointment with the programme easier, as they will already know who they are going to see.

Campaign for Learning delivers its programmes in partnership with local providers, which are key in terms of support and sustainability. Making sure the partnership works means ensuring that the local providers feel a sense of ownership over the programmes and a certain amount of freedom to deliver them, so they don't feel that they are being imposed from above.

BNENC have found partnerships have helped in delivering aspects of the HIM project successfully. They have worked with public places that men go to (such as pubs and libraries) to place their health materials in. They also work with sport institutions, such as Liverpool and Everton football clubs, which is extremely effective in engaging men who are already involved with them. BNENC were actually approached by Liverpool Football Club to form a partnership as their HIM project had been so successful. They deliver workshops in association with them, which run for twelve weeks, and have so far engaged roughly 350 men.

## 4.7 Peer support and male friendships

Peer support and friendships is key to successful participation. In the case of young men particularly, their friendships can heavily influence what they choose to engage with, whether this is encouragement or even fear of disapproving friends. One of the most successful examples of male engagement that taps into friendship networks is the Movember campaign. This is where friends come together as 'Mo bros' to grow

moustaches and raise money and awareness for prostate cancer and testicular cancer.

### **Box 2: Movember campaign**<sup>78</sup>

**About the campaign:** During November each year, Movember is responsible for the sprouting of moustaches on thousands of men's faces in the UK and around the world. The aim is to raise vital funds and awareness for men's health, specifically prostate, testicular and other cancers that affect men. On Movember 1st, guys register at Movember.com with a clean-shaven face. Then, for the rest of the month, these selfless and generous men, known as Mo Bros, groom, trim and wax their way into the annals of fine moustachery. Mo Sistas are the women who register to support the men in their lives, raising funds by seeking sponsorship for their Mo-growing efforts. Mo Bros effectively become walking, talking billboards for the 30 days of November and through their actions and words raise awareness by prompting private and public conversation around the often ignored issue of men's health.

**Their vision:** To have an everlasting impact on the face of men's health.

**Impact:** In 2011, over 253,500 UK Mo Bros and Mo Sistas got on board, raising over £19 million (to date – they continue to collect donations beyond November).

Our research has shown that most programmes find word of mouth by male peers to be an effective engagement tool across all types of male groups (as discussed above). It is clear that if men see that their peers have successfully engaged with a project and reaped the benefits they are more likely to engage too, and the support that their peers will offer them will help to maintain engagement throughout the duration of the projects. Male advocates play a strong part in engaging others, 55.3% of respondents in our survey stated that they had used existing male participants or staff to champion their project and recruit other men:

*"We have two male trustees who champion our scheme whenever they can"*

*"We train ex-service users to become volunteers and have recruited a male volunteer as a champion"*

*"Definitely word of mouth from male participants attracts more men"*<sup>79</sup>

In BNENC's HIM project, the volunteers mostly began as beneficiaries, so have had similar experiences to the men they are reaching out to. This peer support element is effective in attracting men to get involved. Genuine friendships have also been formed among the volunteers and they enjoy being together, which keeps them coming back. When asked what the best aspect of the project was a volunteer answered, *"very much the banter. It's always something that is left out, this is the actual fun that is had with it. That gears people up, actually makes people feel better about themselves."*<sup>80</sup>

Similarly, Youth Action Northern Ireland has found that tapping into existing male friendship groups is a particularly effective way of engaging others. They will often encourage the young men involved to talk to their friends about the project and have found that some will actively bring their friends and peers in without even needing

much encouragement. As one young man commented, *"It was my brother. He was a volunteer before me. He sort of called me about it, and then I spread the word to all the rest of them."*<sup>81</sup>

In the Totally Trim Taxi Drivers project the beneficiaries noted how important the peer support system was once they were engaged. They feel comfortable in the knowledge that they're in groups of men similar to themselves, which encourages them to complete the course and not be put off. As one taxi driver commented:

*"I would feel more, not embarrassed, but I wouldn't feel right if there was big men out there with all muscles pumping out, feeling like a real fat failure, you know, I'd feel out of place. Whereas here there's only us, and we all look the same and we all feel the same."*<sup>82</sup>

This section has looked at common facilitators to engaging men in social projects and discussed how they have been used in existing practice. The subsequent section will look in more detail at effective and innovative practice and discuss the lessons that can be learned in various stages of engagement, from the conception of the project to wider engagement once it has started.

## 5. Lessons from effective practice

A number of lessons for engaging men that has emerged from existing effective practice. These lessons relate to various stages of a project, from initial consultation and design to delivery and sustained engagement. In this section we look at a number of these, as well as thinking about the overarching journey of engagement that we have identified, which constitutes the journey from beneficiary to volunteer. This journey is evidence of sustained engagement and can assist in engaging other men. The lessons detailed in this section include:

- *'The hook' – incentivising engagement*
- *Consultation – valuing the beneficiaries' input*
- *Targeted outreach*
- *Acknowledging the differences – tailoring the service*
- *Building up the relationship – the importance of trust*
- *Maintaining engagement – providing effective support*

These lessons are elaborated below and are accompanied with examples of effective practice that we have identified.

### 5.1 'The hook' – incentivising engagement

Our fieldwork and consultations have shown that one of the most common and effective engagement tools used to attract men to social projects is to have some sort of 'hook' with which to attract the attention of men. This is an incentivising factor that will have mass appeal and work to attract individuals to participate. It can take many forms and will be specific to the project in accordance with the target group that it is trying to reach. The 'hook' could range from a trip abroad to some free food and there could be more than one. In fact, it may be prudent to have more than one hook as what engages one man may not engage another.

In England, we saw a range of 'hooks', Breckfield & North Everton Neighbourhood Council (BNENC), in Liverpool, actually used a play as their 'hook' to engage men in the HIM project. One of the men who was initially involved with the project was an ex-actor who used to write plays, so they developed a comic play on testicular cancer called 'Lumps'. They found that humour was one of the best ways to engage men initially. They advertised the comedy in places where men would naturally congregate, such as football clubs, snooker halls and clubs. Bob Blanchard, Senior Community Development Officer, credits its success to its visual nature. *"One, it's non-threatening. Two, we have got a high number of older men in this area with literacy problems".*<sup>83</sup> The play was a universal engagement tool that appealed to men of all ages. The viewings were so successful they were attended by hundreds of men who all engaged with men's health issues at some level.

One of the strategies Campaign for Learning used was to extend an invitation to the men not for a programme but for a free professional photo of themselves with their children. This served as 'the hook' to engagement and the beginning of what Juliette Collier describes as a "stepped relationship building process". They had local providers come and provide activities on the day of the photo shoot, so even though

the photo would take only a few minutes, most of the men ended up staying for roughly two hours and a relationship began to be established. This would alleviate any initial fears of engaging with the programme, as they would already be familiar with the staff and facilitators. This worked well as a 'hook' as many of the target group could not afford to have professional photos done with their children (or would not choose to spend their money on it). It was also effective as the fathers had to return to pick up their photos. This meant the programme workers met potential beneficiaries twice, giving them time to make the men aware of what they did and comfortable enough to attend.

On occasion the 'hook' can involve taking services directly to men. This means they are not inconvenienced and it gets over that help-seeking hurdle. We saw this in Scotland, where Phoenix Community Health chose to organise visits to the locations that men frequent with nurses offering simple on-site health check-ups. This encouraged the men to start talking about their health and allowed Phoenix to discuss their programmes, such as Steps to Excellence, and the ways they could benefit them. The health check-up serves as the initial 'hook' to engage with the men, from which they can establish interest in their programmes.

In Northern Ireland, we also saw examples of effective 'hooks'. The Totally Trim Taxi Drivers programme in Belfast has a simple but effective 'hook': free access to a gym. Participants said they could not believe that the programme was free. They explained that the taxi business in Belfast has suffered from the present economic conditions, so the lack of cost of the programme was a real incentive to sign up, *"I thought 'Well I'll give it a go, I've nothing to lose but a couple of stone!"*<sup>84</sup>

Offering an incentive to participate is an effective way of engaging young men, who as we have seen, are one of the hardest groups to engage. (See Chapters 2 and 3) At Youth Action Northern Ireland, the trips that the programme offers act as one of the big 'hooks'. They go on residential, which form part of their cross-community work, where they bring together young men from both Protestant and Catholic backgrounds to breakdown barriers. The trips are popular, and the young men involved recognize the importance of the 'hooks'.

*"I definitely think trips ought to be involved. The ones at our club didn't want to do cross community, and they found out we were going...and they were wondering why they weren't on the trip, and our reply was there were Catholics going with us, it was cross-community. So now they actually want to do cross-community, because of the trips involved."*<sup>85</sup>

*"If you said 'Do you want to go talk to Catholics?' they said 'No.' If you said, 'Do you want to go bowl[ing], and then talk to Catholics?' They're like, 'Why not?'"*<sup>86</sup>

Although these 'hooks' have been a key lesson to emerge from existing good practice, it must be noted that a 'hook' alone is not enough to ensure sustained engagement. It will serve to get people through the door but it is not enough to fully engage them. They must be supplemented by other facilitators and methods of engagement to ensure engagement at a sincere level. It may also be the case that these 'hooks' should be strategically thought about. For instance, with a trip it may be prudent to have the trip towards the end of the programme and not to have too many to distract from the aims of the project. Placing a trip towards the end of a programme would ensure that engagement is sustained for a longer amount of time, which could facilitate engagement at a deeper level rather than just for incentives.

## 5.2 Consultation – valuing the beneficiaries’ input

In our survey, when asked what recommendations they would give to other groups struggling to engage men, the most common response across all four countries revolved around consulting the target group regarding their needs and designing the programme around that:

*"Involve all service users/participants in planning and delivery so that new participants can see there is a place for them in the organisation."*

*"Carry out some research to find out from men what would persuade or entice them to engage in these types of projects."*

*"Talk to the men to ensure you are putting on the right activities at the right time."*

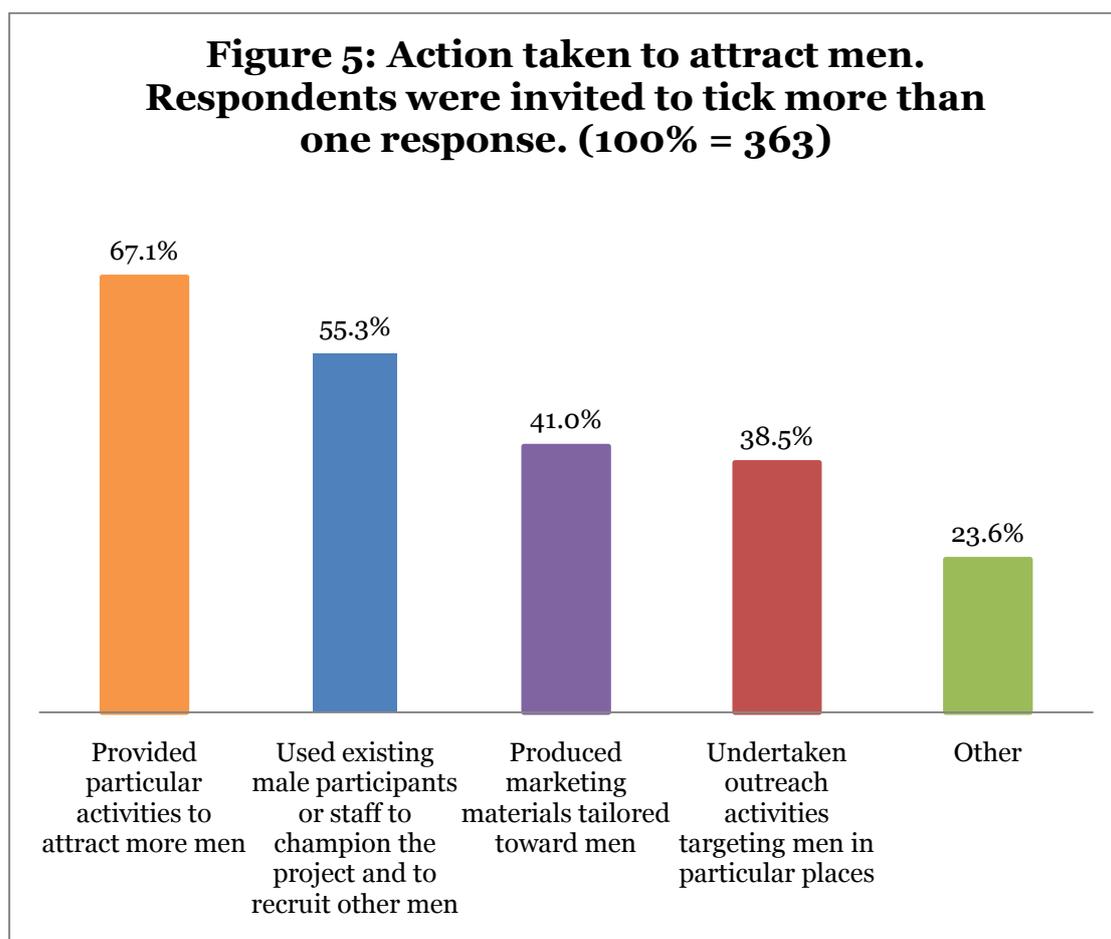
Consultation with the target group is essential as it will identify what the issues actually are, which will aid the development of a programme that tackles them effectively. This could be consultation at an individual level, as is the case with the Totally Trim Taxi Drivers programme in Northern Ireland, or at a community level as BNENC in England demonstrate. They conducted a survey of local men to identify their most prevalent health issues. They discovered that men would often hide health symptoms until as late as possible and that their partner was usually the one who took responsibility for medical help. Bob Blanchard was clear that this consultation stage is vital, *"Find out what their needs are as each community is different, ours is a complex community in a deprived area with men experiencing serious socio-economic issues."*<sup>87</sup>

Consultation is not only important to ensure that the delivery of the programme is correct, it also shows the target group that their opinions matter and forms the basis of an equal relationship. One of the barriers to engaging men has been identified as men simply not feeling that they belong in certain environments. Establishing a good relationship helps overcome that barrier and show them that they are needed. Juliette, of Campaign for Learning, has certainly found this to be the case. She explained that the first thing to do when engaging men is to "listen to them". Spending the time to do that shows that you respect their opinions, which will make them feel valued. She emphasised that you should not assume what the men want or need, which is an easy mistake to make and should be avoided because it never works. Campaign for Learning has based its engagement tools on consultation and cites this as the reason they are so successful, *"...the thing I learned that's most fundamental is whenever you make an assumption, is the time you make a mistake."*<sup>88</sup>

Juliette also highlighted how consultation can be key in addressing perceived failures. For instance, when outreach is attempted but only two people show up, *"two people to me is a success"*.<sup>89</sup> No matter how few people turn up they can serve as consultants. Even if it is only two people, do not assume it is a failure, you can find out why they came, who else is out there, why others did not come and so forth. Spending time with those individuals will make them feel valued and allow them to feel they've got something to say, which is critical. This all helps establish the equal partnership (mentioned above) between the practitioners and the men, which is crucial to start and maintain engagement.

## 5.3 Targeted outreach

Specifically targeting men as part of outreach work has appeared to be successful in engaging them. Throughout our research many people stated that, if men were not specifically targeted, the likelihood would be that you engage with women. In our survey, 37.2% of respondents had done something in particular to attract men, which included undertaking outreach activities to reach men in specific places. Examples of 'Other' responses included raising the profile of the project, the provision of incentives, taster sessions, linking with partner organisations to encourage referrals and asking the partners of men to come with them initially to break down the barriers to engagement.



Many of the projects we visited and spoke to have found that going out into communities and to where men are has been an effective form of outreach. Jacqueline of Phoenix Community Health in Scotland maintained "*Don't sit in a room and wait for men to come to you. It won't happen. We've been successful because we went outside and engaged with them out there, wherever we could find them.*"<sup>90</sup> Whether this is pubs, clubs, parks or even street corners, one of the best ways to engage men is to go to the places they congregate and speak to them personally. Phoenix advertised their visits on posters and in the local paper, so people knew when they were going to be present.

This specific form of outreach can also entail going through 'gatekeepers' to men and forming relationships with them. These gatekeepers could range from statutory

services to their own children. Juliette Collier stated that one of the keys to engaging men is getting somebody they know to get them to do it.<sup>91</sup> In Campaign for Learning's case it was getting the children to engage the men. They would target children in advertising, they went to assemblies, showed films and ran trial sessions with children to get them enthusiastic about the programme. Then a personal invitation would be extended to the dad (or significant male role model) from the child themselves. This meant that the programme could even reach non-resident fathers who may have never had contact with the school.

BNENC wanted to reach homeless men and offer them health advice and support, so approached homeless groups and organisations in the city of Liverpool, including the Salvation Army, White Chapel and YMCA. They also tailor their outreach to individual programmes, for example, for a drinking awareness project they went into pubs and hosted quizzes to raise awareness of the issues involved and reach the men it would most likely affect. They are also due to start taking GP referrals, so will start reaching men by working more formally with statutory services.

In Northern Ireland, Michael McKenna, Team Leader of the Work with Young Men Unit, explained how Youth Action is not actually based in the communities, so the first step in engaging young men is to build partnerships with the community organizations already there, *"The first port of call is really to go out and sell the project, or make people aware of the project who are already working there, and I think once we have that partnership struck up then I access the young men in the area and it becomes that little bit easier."*<sup>92</sup>

To reach those young men who are not engaged with any community project or youth centre already, it is a case of applying the principle of going to wherever they may be. Although this example is rooted in Northern Ireland, the principle can be applied across the UK. The youth workers from Youth Action will approach young men on the street to let them know what the programme can offer them and how they can get involved. As Jonathan Ashe, a development worker for Work with Young Men explained, *"it's pretty much just walking up to them and speaking to them, telling them who you are, where you're from and what the project has to offer them and would they be interested."*<sup>93</sup> In rural communities it may not be a case of finding young men on the street but going to where they are. Gerard Hughes, a Peer Educator, explained how he met young men at a Gaelic football pitch because that's where they would be.<sup>94</sup> In his experience this personal form of outreach has been really effective and most of the time the young men will respond positively and indicate that they're interested. It is about getting that initial barrier down and building a rapport with them, which is easier to do because you are essentially on their territory and the programme does have something genuine to offer them - even if the initial appeal is simply having somewhere to spend an hour and a half one evening.

Totally Trim chose to target a specific profession in engaging men. Their Diet and Exercise Consultant, Sarah Carter, explained how they wanted to target men for Totally Trim's programmes. They chose to target taxi drivers because they have a notoriously unhealthy lifestyle and it's a male dominated profession, so if outreach was limited to taxi firms the likelihood would be that the majority of people who turned up would be men. Sarah approached the management of two taxi firms in Belfast and spoke to them about the project and its benefits. The first firm put a memo out to the drivers to see if there was any interest. When there was, they fed this back to Sarah. In the second firm, the drivers operated more independently, so

she put notices up in the office and the drivers contacted her directly. These notices were succinct and upfront about the programme and how much commitment it entailed.

This direct targeted form of outreach is usually supplemented by widespread outreach, including advertising, which can be effective in itself (the Camden Town Shed, in London, have found this to be the case). However, it is important to extend the outreach far and wide to capture as many of the target group as possible. For instance, BNENC are fortunate that they have access to the local community through a newsletter that goes out quarterly to 3,500 local homes, so they have supplemented outreach by advertising the HIM project in this way. In Wales, Choose2Change undertook a large marketing campaign. Initially, they drew up a list of all the services across North Wales: voluntary services, public services, hospitals, health boards and education services. Then they sent out information about their project to these services, offered to attend team meetings to speak about the project and sent leaflets that could be handed out to clients. This approach ensured that their presence was firmly established in public spaces, and information was readily available to potential self-referees.

Advertising along with personal outreach has to be targeted at the right level and language is an important factor to consider when producing promotional materials and talking to potential beneficiaries. BNENC were aware that there was no use bringing in health specialists to deliver programmes to men because the target group they were working with wanted basic information and the technical aspects would not appeal to them. One beneficiary explained that specialists tend to speak in acronyms, which can be off putting to men seeking help. For instance, some people do not know what a GUM (genito-urinary medicine) clinic is. *"They don't like it, but they are just like 'I don't know what you mean there, so I'm not going to question what it is you said, because you are a professional.'"* Volunteers will speak to men about the issues in a way that is relevant to them. At this level, it is important to stick to the basics because that is what they want.

Similarly, we have seen that the use of graphics can be more effective in promotional material than language, which can be taken in different ways. For example, Campaign for Learning produced material that simply had a graphic on it that would appeal to men. It was a silhouette of a man and a child and was a powerful engagement tool for fathers. Graphics can be

effective in engaging men and making them visually aware that they are welcome. A graphic also has the benefit of being universal and able to reach those who may not have high literacy levels or whose first language is not English.



**Figure 6:**  
*Campaign for Learning graphic*

The benefits of targeted outreach are evident as they will obviously help to attract the target group. Personal outreach is a key component of successful outreach, however. Just as there should be many 'hooks' to attract optimum numbers, there should also be a number of forms of outreach to reach as many of the target group as possible.

## 5.4 Acknowledging the differences – tailoring the service

Our research has indicated that, in order to ensure optimum levels of engagement, projects must provide for a range of needs. Just as we discussed the importance of

numerous 'hooks' to appeal to as many men as possible, the project must meet numerous needs in both content and delivery.

One particular need that came out of consultations across the UK, was the inclination of some men to only engage with 'male-only' activities. Dr Robert MacGibbon of the Camden Town Shed explained that they have a strictly male-only day on Tuesdays, so they can bring in men who feel more comfortable solely in the company of other men.<sup>95</sup> Similarly, despite the presence of female facilitators, the taxi drivers who participate in the Totally Trim programme explained the appeal of male-only sessions. They felt comfortable in the knowledge that they're in groups of men similar to themselves.

These 'male-only' restrictions are effective because they allow the development of a peer support system and appeal to men who simply want to spend time with other men. It can also help to make men feel they are wanted in that particular environment. As one survey respondent stated, *"try to provide activities that are exclusively for men as a starter, to help them to feel comfortable coming on to the premises and joining a group."*<sup>96</sup>

This 'male-only' need commonly existed alongside other needs in the programmes we visited. These projects are effective in their engagement because they do provide for a range of needs. For instance, the Dads in Demand programme is not only a predominately male programme, which helps those men from ethnic minorities who prefer to be with other men, it is also an animation programme, which caters for language and skill needs. The Camden Town Shed not only provides a male network to combat isolation, it also provides a space in which men, who do not have the space at home, can embark on DIY projects. The Phoenix Community Health Programme provides free counselling along with its Steps to Excellence programme. These are all examples of how services should be tailored to meet as wide a range of needs as possible to ensure effective engagement.

Flexibility was a recurring recommendation that came out of our research. The differences between beneficiaries must be acknowledged and the programme must be tailored to meet their needs. A volunteer on the HIM project explained how the flexibility of the programme was one of its main appeals. The project is designed to allow individual men to address their own needs, *"Not preaching, it's actually offering every opportunity to get involved in what is going on with the project, but certainly not coercing in any way."*<sup>97</sup> This non-prescriptive method allows the programme to be flexible enough to allow the beneficiaries to take out of it what they wish.

Youth Action Northern Ireland is a particularly good example of flexible working. Being flexible around the needs of the young men is important to maintain engagement. The youth workers will sit down with the young men and arrange a time to meet every week that suits them. This will mostly be in the evening, but it is important to tailor this as their needs change. For instance, the youth workers will be on hand whenever an issue arises. Sometimes a young man's situation may change and they may no longer be in college or work, so they will arrange for them to get involved in the daytime.

Tailoring the programme can also mean changing the venue. Jonathan Ashe of Youth Action explained that during Belfast's bonfire season in July, and it would be difficult to attract young men to the usual centre, so he goes out to the bonfire sites and has sessions with them there.<sup>98</sup> The programme must work around the men.

Being flexible enough to tailor delivery according to the needs of the beneficiaries is essential to maintain engagement.

## 5.5 Building the relationship – the importance of trust

*"The staff here are brilliant. As soon as they come in, they make you so welcome. It's unbelievable really to tell you the truth"<sup>99</sup>*

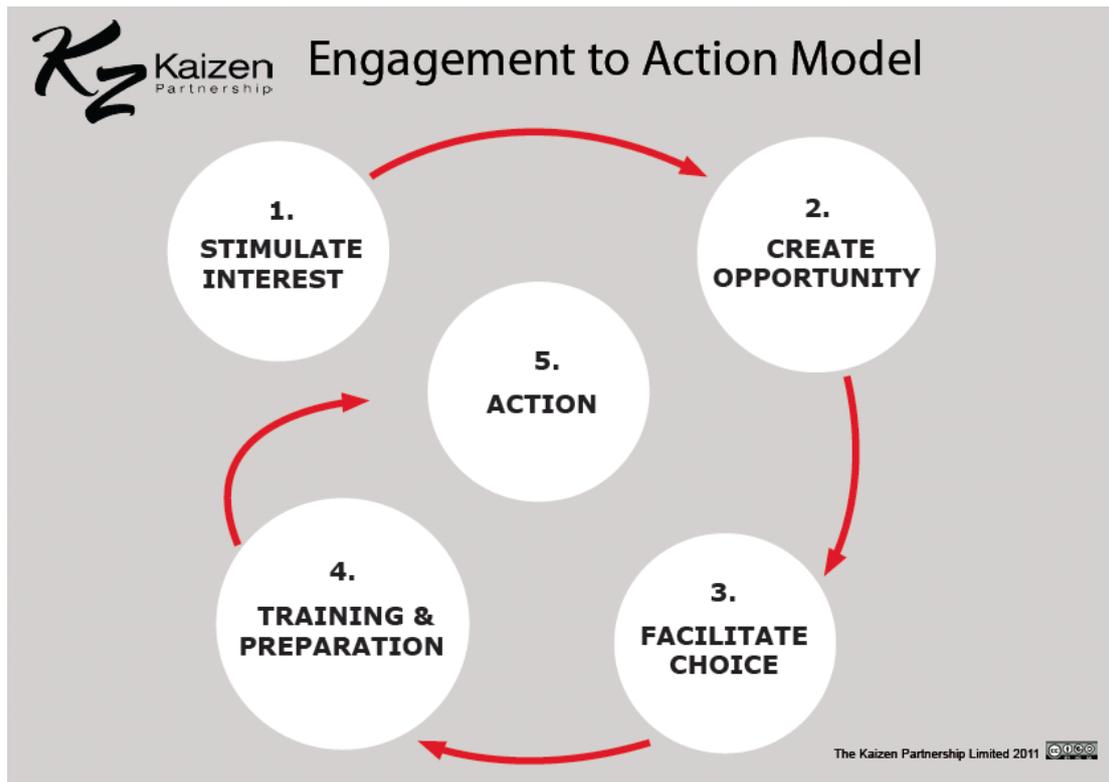
It is important to establish a relationship with the target group, treating them as individuals and making them feel valued. The foundation of this relationship has to be trust. Phoenix Community Health project has found that establishing a relationship of trust between team members and the men they help has been of great importance. The best way they have found of doing this is to simply talk to them when they first come to the session. As Duncan Shaw, Health/Community Development Officer, stated, *"Don't be, 'I'm at work or you're a client' just be real, just talk. Don't talk about anything in particular, just talk and get that engagement and use a wee bit of humour."*<sup>100</sup> Making someone feel comfortable who has just come through the door is important, not only to establish trust but also to ensure that they keep walking back through the door. This relationship of trust also means that the male beneficiary will have faith in the project and be more likely to recommend it to others who need the service. As Duncan stated, *"The trust thing is a big thing. Once you engage that, then the word of mouth around that is very important as well."*<sup>101</sup>

The importance of this relationship cannot be underestimated. Youth Action Northern Ireland's work revolves around building relationships with the young men and it is this that has proved so effective in not only initial engagement but maintained engagement. As one of the young men stated, *"a good programme can't go wrong if it's fun to be there and you can trust them."*<sup>102</sup> Jonny Zander, Director of The Kaizen Partnership, said they have found that the most effective way to engage anyone is through personal outreach, and that building a relationship is a part of that personal level of engagement.<sup>103</sup> The beneficiaries are more likely to keep engaged with a programme if they really feel a personal attachment to the project, based on a relationship of trust. The amount of time it will take to build this trust will vary from beneficiary to beneficiary.

*"All our work is relationship based...you have a relationship with them and they trust you. They know that you're there for them and you're flexible. You can work around them, and I think that's really important in engaging them."<sup>104</sup>*

## 5.6 Maintaining engagement – Provide effective support

### **Figure 6:**



Jonny Zander explained that effective engagement is maintained engagement. It is not enough to have many people engaged at the beginning of a programme only to have them drop out before the project is complete. Kaizen have developed the model shown above to indicate the phases from 'passive' to 'action' (or in other words, to engagement). According to Jonny, only when all of these processes have happened (whether they take 5 minutes or 5 weeks) can there be full engagement. If a beneficiary is struggling to maintain engagement, the correct 'stage' in this process that is causing the dilemma needs to be pinpointed and dealt with in order to ensure that maintained engagement is achieved once again.

In practice, our consultations have shown that there are numerous ways to maintain engagement (sometimes beyond the duration of the programme). These mostly revolve around ensuring that a support system is in place for individual beneficiaries. Choose2Change in Wales knows first-hand the value of one-to-one support in maintaining engagement throughout the duration of a project. Denis, a facilitator on the programme, highlights the importance of one-to-one sessions with those who are visibly struggling in the group. If someone has not turned up to a session, the facilitators will call them and offer individual support. This support is vital in maintaining engagement throughout the duration of the programme. *"By doing one-on-one, you keep them engaged and they won't drop off. With one-on-one you've got that trust and connection that they belong. That's quite important."*<sup>105</sup>

Sarah Carter also explains that this one-to-one level of support has been effective in keeping the taxi drivers engaged in Belfast. An initial discussion is important to gauge levels of commitment, even if this just a 'chat' on the telephone. This line of communication should be maintained throughout the programme, *"When they're in the project, stay in touch. Email, phone, constantly ask how they're getting on and give heaps of encouragement."*<sup>106</sup> Sarah also explained that the fact that their

programme is delivered in small groups helps to maintain support, as no-one gets missed off and close bonds inevitably form.

Our research has shown that projects across the UK can find initial engagement a lot harder to achieve. But once they have captured men, they tend to see maintained engagement throughout the programme. This indicates that the programmes must be successful in engaging full commitment. After engagement through a 'hook' is achieved, if the programme is good and right for the individual it might not have to do much more to keep men engaged. According to Jonny Zander, these projects will have gone through all of the stages of engagement effectively.<sup>107</sup> Getting engagement right at the beginning can help to maintain it throughout the project. For example, in Scotland, Phoenix Community Health have found that engagement once achieved is almost continuous, on a social and emotional level. Duncan, who works on the programme, describes the whole process as a journey. The staff invite their men to call them at times of crisis. The men will initially be sceptical but *"when you've built that level of trust, the change is quite startling"*. They will engage at a deeper level because of the trust established within that journey.<sup>108</sup>

This engagement at a deeper level can result in an actual change in the beneficiaries' mindset, which is conducive to effective engagement. For example, in the Dads in the Picture programme, many of the men involved have failed academically in the past and go into the project thinking that they cannot help their children with their homework and are not wanted in that area. They lack confidence and think they lack the skills to participate. The programmes have engaged them at a deeper level because they become liberating for these men who end up thinking 'Well actually if I've failed in the past it's because I wasn't taught in a way that I could learn, and learning is learnable.'<sup>109</sup> As a result, many of the men maintain engagement, which has a wider impact and they have become closer to their families as they establish more of a role in their child's education. *"Before the project I wasn't involved and I didn't know the level of my children's education. I didn't know the teachers well. Now, when my kids come home from school we come together, eat, and do homework."*<sup>110</sup>

This programme has been successful at maintaining engagement and the Campaign for Learning has found that these men have stayed engaged beyond the duration of the programme, either with the local provider or in another way. For instance, in one school, interviews showed that prior to the programme few of the fathers were involved in the education of their children. Eight months after the delivery of the programme had finished in that school they had 128 fathers get involved with the Father's Story Week initiative run by the Fatherhood Institute. Considering that prior to the programme there was a precedent of no real engagement, this was a great success.

In the Totally Trim Taxi Drivers Programme there have been indications that the men will actually engage with a healthier lifestyle overall, maintaining engagement beyond the programme. The programme is effective and, as it combines elements of education with physical activity, it facilitates engagement with healthier living beyond the duration. As Chairman, Ed Smith states there is a thread of continuity there because the taxi drivers use the gym beyond the programme.<sup>111</sup> One of the participants actually joined another healthy living programme on the back of Totally Trim and still keeps a food diary, despite having finished the programme some time ago:

*"I actually still keep a diary. I fall off it every now and again, but now I'm conscious, you know, I'm conscious of what I'm eating. I actually say, 'Well I'm going to have a bar of chocolate,' and don't have any for the rest of the week or two weeks...definitely prior to that, I was eating anything."<sup>12</sup>*

## 5.7 The journey from beneficiary to volunteer

One of the more interesting observations to come out of our research has been the overarching journey from beneficiary to volunteer that we have observed in numerous projects which has sustained impact upon engagement levels. This overarching journey is depicted in our engagement spectrum (figure 1). At many of the projects we visited most of the volunteers had initially engaged at beneficiary level (progressing from a 'recipient of information' to 'continued attendance' right through to 'structured volunteer'). Not only is this an indication of effective engagement, it also indicates the continued engagement process. These volunteers, who were at one time beneficiaries, have the advantage of being able to relate to potential beneficiaries on a real level and so are an effective 'hook' in themselves. It is also an indication that projects are engaging people on a sustained level, inspiring beneficiaries to dedicate time to support the project as a regular or structured volunteer after it has helped them. The indication is that working towards a goal of being a structured volunteer can be motivating for the men involved.

Michael was a beneficiary of the Steps to Excellence programme, which is part of the Phoenix Community Health project, and is now a voluntary facilitator. So, he is an understanding peer support worker and a particular asset when engaging other men, as they can relate to him and, because he has been through the programme, have confidence in what he is saying:

*"We're right down to earth with them. I think that makes it a lot better for them, if they see people here looking through the course with them are the people putting the course to them as well and there's no difference. We're in the same boat. Honestly, they cry and they laugh. It's been brilliant."<sup>13</sup>*

One of the main elements of the HIM project, in England, is that it is delivered by local men who were mostly beneficiaries to begin with. Many initially heard about the project from others involved and so that engagement continues through word of mouth. Once engaged, the project is very good at appealing to men and giving them the confidence to get involved. The appeal is that the HIM project is flexible and allows men to get involved in issues and areas that are of interest to them:

*"The whole principle of it is picking what it is that you want to do, whether it's to do with health, or whether it's to do with what happens out back in your gardens or boxes or any other project that is coming up. At the moment, we are trying to get a bakery reopened, and that is why I chose to get involved, because it was on offer as far as this project was concerned. That has been a great stimulus for me, if nothing else, to get out of bed every morning, go around and do that. I don't mean for that to sound like a desperate need for doing something, but it's just great to be doing it, and it's a great challenge."<sup>14</sup>*

Campaign for Learning has seen a journey among their beneficiaries that has not necessarily resulted in them volunteering for the same programmes, but they have served to empower the men who get involved and many have become more active in

the social action arena as a result.<sup>115</sup> There is a project called 'I'm The Daddy' , which is a spin-off from the Dad's in Demand programme set up by one of the participants. It has obtained funding and set up a partnership with the British Museum to deliver animation projects. This shows the confidence the men gain from engaging with these programmes.

Youth Action Northern Ireland is an example of where having particular goals can provide motivation. They have a volunteering scheme for 17 to 25 year olds incorporated into the programme, which aims to increase young men's leadership in local communities and encourage them to be positive role models. It is a formal volunteering programme with training and a number of different levels of qualifications in youth work. Trainees also participate in the ASDAN Youth Achievement Awards, which can give formal recognition to the young men who participate. This aspect of the programme is important as it gives the young men a sense of ownership and engages them on a deeper level. Accreditation is important, as part of the appeal of the project is that they realize it's good to put on their CVs and could help them with their future education and career prospects.

The volunteering aspect of the programme is effective in gaining long-term engagement from some of the young men who participate. Many of the youth workers now employed on the programme were beneficiaries themselves, so the longer journey of engagement is one of the key elements of the programme. It demonstrates how Youth Action is effective in empowering young men to contribute positively to their communities and how the impact of engagement is far reaching. One of the young men has already demonstrated his long-term commitment to youth work, yet only a couple of years ago he was involved with rioting between communities. This overarching journey from beneficiary to volunteer has a tremendous impact, and should be encouraged and developed as much as possible.

This section has looked at the lessons that can be taken from existing effective practice in engaging men. Drawing primarily on case study analysis, it has detailed lessons that can be applied throughout a project that is trying to engage men, from consultation to sustaining engagement beyond a programme's duration. The next section details recommendations for projects and funders that will facilitate and support engaging men in social projects.

## 6. Conclusion and recommendations

This research was triggered by the fact that men are far less likely to engage in social projects than women. Yet there is mounting evidence that men's unmet needs are damaging the lives of individuals and society at large: the 2011 riots were mainly perpetrated by men), the high levels of suicide among men; and high numbers of absentee fathers. Our research looks at some the barriers that exist to engaging men and highlights lessons from existing good practice in order to show how these barriers can be overcome. Social projects act as interventions at various points on the model of male vulnerability. Currently, male projects tend to be targeted at crisis points, for alcoholism, domestic abuse, or suicidal depression, where often the problem is so deeply embedded it is harder to overcome. Therefore, the importance of engaging men in early intervention projects is vital for improved outcomes among male beneficiaries.

Effective engagement will vary according to the individual being targeted and the project involved. However, effective engagement will entail a comprehensive understanding of the barriers to engagement facing the target group. Whether these barriers are social stigmas, a lack of male visibility within the project or practical issues such as timing and venue, the project or service must be flexible enough to address these barriers and tailor provisions accordingly. Existing practice, detailed in this report, shows that currently there are projects that are engaging with men well. Sharing this good practice across the voluntary sector is important to encourage others who are struggling to engage with male beneficiaries or hope to do so in the future.

There are many engagement tools and methods of practice that can be applied to encourage male beneficiaries to engage with projects and services. These need to be better applied across all the organisations providing social and support services to people, whether they sit within the public, private or voluntary sector. However, the voluntary sector has the opportunity to lead by example. It can take a lead in breaking down stereotypes of masculinity which are detrimental to help-seeking behaviours among men.

There needs to be much more discussion and debate around issues of gender from a male perspective. Currently, there is a resistance to talking about men as a target group for need, which filters down to project development and design, and has consequences on funding. This is despite statistical evidence showing that male well-being is not as it should be, not only in the UK but internationally too. The Inspire Foundation in Australia is conducting research on the economic impact of ill health among men of a working age. The results are staggering and prove that neglecting well-being can have a detrimental impact, not only on the individual but the economy as a whole, as it impedes productivity and can lead to adverse health later on in life which impacts on public spending. We need to challenge the embedded stigma and practice we have towards men in order to assist those who are in real need.

### 6.1 Recommendations for projects

*The following summarises the key recommendations to come out of this research, and applies to those projects that would like to target men in the future, are currently trying to reach men or are concerned at the lack of men within their services.*

## 1. Specifically target men

Our consultations have shown that in order to reach men you must target them specifically, especially when in environments that are commonly perceived to be a female domain such as schools or family centres. Targeted outreach has seen effective results for many projects and this benefit must be taken into account. Some projects have even found it effective to specifically engage men by proxy, for instance Totally Trim targeted taxi drivers as this is a male-dominated profession. As long as a higher number of men are being targeted the likelihood is that you will have more men engaging with the project.

### **Recommended actions:**

- **Focus the efforts of the organisation to reach out to men. Identify which men are the target group**
- **Tailor marketing to target men specifically, taking into consideration language and graphics.**

## 2. Consult with your target group

It is important to never assume what the target group wants or needs. Men are more likely to be involved if they feel as though they have been consulted throughout the process, from conception to delivery. Consultation can take a variety of forms but it is vital to identify what needs the target group actually has and how best to address those needs. BNENC conducted a survey among its local community to ask men about their health concerns. It then developed the HIM project around this consultation. It is important to consult at as early a stage as possible and to continue talking to potential beneficiaries so that the project can adapt to changing needs among the target group.

### **Recommended actions:**

- **Conduct a survey and/or interview people from your target group.**
- **Run focus groups and keep dialogue open, with potential beneficiaries at the start of the project and existing beneficiaries throughout the process.**

## 3. Go to where men are

Part of targeted outreach means targeting venues that men frequent and tapping into networks that they actively participate in. In order to reach men you must go to where men are. One of the most effective forms of outreach we have seen is going to venues such as pubs, snooker halls and sporting venues to engage with men on their own territory. YouthAction Northern Ireland targeted youth centres where there were proportionally a higher number of boys. This method is effective, as not only

are you reaching higher numbers of men but you are engaging with them in an environment that is non-threatening to them.

**Recommended actions:**

- **Go to appropriate venues where your target group will be and speak to men directly. Examples we came across include:**

**For young men - go to youth centres, schools, colleges and sports pitches.**

**For BME men - go to community centres and faith institutions.**

**For older men - go to pubs and community centres.**

**For men in general: go to pubs, snooker halls, gyms, sporting venues, libraries and community centres.**

#### 4. Have 'hooks' to appeal to motivations and interests

It is important to provide a range of opportunities and methodologies of engagement to attract men. It has to be varied in order to catch as many of the target group as possible. Individuals respond differently to different engagement strategies and advertising alone is not enough. The purpose of a 'hook' has been a clear theme within our research. Many successful projects have 'hooks' to engagement that can serve to attract men initially. The nature of these 'hooks' can vary according to project. We have seen trips, an onsite health check-up and a free photo as examples of 'hooks' in this research. Although a single 'hook' can work to engage men, the best way to ensure a wide range of engagement is to have a range of 'hooks' to draw in different men at different levels.

**Recommended actions:**

- **Provide a range of 'hooks' that will appeal to the target group. Examples we came across include:**

**For fathers - offer a free family photo.**

**For older men – offer a free health check-up.**

**For younger men – offer trips or residential events.**

**For men in general – offer free gym membership, increased access to sporting facilities or free food.**

#### 5. Build partnerships with gatekeepers and networks

Establishing partnerships can be vital to capturing your target group and maintaining engagement. Partnerships can take a variety of forms. They could be with particular gatekeepers, such as community leaders or family members, and they can also be with formal services or organisations. Just as we spoke about going to where men are, you must build partnerships with those venues so that they can facilitate access to the men. In terms of gatekeepers, it is also the case that sometimes men are more likely to do something if someone close to them encourages them to do so. Just as Campaign for Learning has been successful in engaging men through their children, partnerships and outreach with other family members and friends can be effective too.

**Recommended actions:**

- **Identify local services and organisations that already engage with your target group or will provide an incentive for your target group to join.**
- **Reach out to these services/organisations and establish formal partnerships based on mutual understanding and maximum benefit for the beneficiaries.**

## 6. Tailor the service to provide for a range of needs

Tailoring the programme to appeal to the target group is important. We have seen how both sport and animation have been used as effective methods that aid the delivery of programmes. The programme must meet a range of needs. This, again, relates to being flexible. The project content and delivery must be flexible enough to allow beneficiaries to take out of it what they need. There should not be overly prescriptive outcomes for individuals. Men we spoke to cited that particular projects were appealing because they could choose the extent that they wished to be involved.

### **Recommended actions:**

- **Provide a range of ways that men can get involved. For instance, if offering a discussion forum also offer practically based activities or activities with a sporting element.**
- **Design activities and approach in conjunction with beneficiaries to ensure that their needs are met.**

## 7. Be flexible

One of the keys to maintaining engagement is to work around the needs of the target group. An essential part of social projects is the emphasis on being of benefit to the beneficiaries. Most men will appreciate a degree of flexibility, whether with time, venue or content. As depicted, many programmes that are successful are flexible with the timings and venues of sessions and will look to engage those who cannot come at particular times in different ways.

### **Recommended actions:**

- **Speak to beneficiaries who may have difficulty attending and establish why this is the case so that the programme can be tailored.**

## 8. Build relationships on an individual basis

It is important to reach out to men on an individual basis. Nothing is more effective in initial engagement than personal outreach. However, it is establishing individual relationships based on trust that is truly effective in maintaining engagement throughout the duration of a project and even beyond. Making an individual connection with someone will ensure that they keep walking back through the door.

### **Recommended actions:**

- **Organise one-to-one sessions with beneficiaries to allow individual relationships to build and ensure support is given on an individual basis.**

## 9. Provide effective support

Facilitating engagement also means facilitating support. It may be the case that a man's partner or family will give him that support, but the need for some sort of support system needs to be recognised. Other men may not have access to this kind of support or may need more than that. This relates to building relationships with beneficiaries on an individual level. Sometimes group delivery needs to be supplemented with individual support and there should be continuous dialogue with beneficiaries to ensure that their needs are being met and that any barriers to engagement that arise can be identified and dealt with early.

### **Recommended actions:**

- **Pair beneficiaries with a contact from the programme who they can reach personally as and when they need to.**
- **Give positive feedback regularly to contributions made by beneficiaries.**

## 10. Encourage beneficiaries to become advocates and volunteers

One of the most effective methods of engagement is word of mouth and this is most effective from men who have themselves been beneficiaries. The case studies we have illustrated have shown a higher level of engagement occurring when there is a passive to active journey from beneficiary to volunteer. A beneficiary who becomes an advocate or a volunteer is one of the most effective engagement tools. They will encourage others to engage because they are able to identify with existing volunteers or advocates and see first-hand evidence of how the project can benefit others.

### **Recommended actions:**

- **Build volunteering opportunities into your programme for beneficiaries.**
- **If possible, link to formal volunteering services where accreditation or formal recognition can be offered.**
- **Encourage existing beneficiaries to bring in friends or family members who can benefit from the programme.**

## 6.2 Recommendations for funders

### 1. Supporting organisations that are targeting men

This research has shown that specifically targeting men will result in engaging more of them. Most of the projects we consulted that effectively engage with men have set out with the specific objective of getting more men to participate. BIG statistics show that across the UK, from 2008-2010, only 1% of funded projects were male targeted. This reflects a low rate of applications. From 2008-2010, applications for projects targeting female groups exceeded those for males by a ratio of 5 to 1.<sup>116</sup> The Big Lottery Fund should look at ways to encourage more applications from organisations targeting men through existing open programmes. Case studies of

projects effectively working with men should be highlighted on the website and in other funding materials, with accompanying text stating applications which specify they aim to engage more men would be welcomed. The guidance notes for existing and future funding programmes should be modified to emphasise the inclusive nature of BIG funding and its keenness to see more programmes that aim to address men's needs. Outreach work through the regional teams may also increase the number of applications from organisations working with men.

**Recommended actions:**

- **Adjust funding stream guidance/criteria to reflect the need for some programmes to target men specifically, particularly in areas where they are adversely affected, for example, suicide prevention programmes.**
- **Showcase successful examples of projects working with men in funding and publicity materials.**
- **Make engaging with men more of a priority in wider strategic programmes.**

## 2. Sharing effective learning and practice

This research has highlighted examples of good practice in engaging men in social projects and has shown that it can be done effectively. Funders must take more responsibility in sharing existing knowledge among projects by facilitating networking between projects. A great deal of learning could be shared from and with groups working with other 'hard-to-reach' groups. Some funders have the capacity to run networking events, and should be encouraged to do so.

**Recommended actions:**

- **Run networking events so that projects can meet each other and share lessons for effective practice.**
- **Establish an online forum where projects can communicate with each other and offer each other support and advice.**

## 3. Encourage organisations to develop effective engagement strategies

This research has shown that to improve the engagement of target groups organisations have to properly think through who they want to reach out to and how best to do it. This applies to all target groups and not just men. An engagement strategy should be detailed and consider various elements to engagement, including initial outreach and maintained engagement throughout the duration of the programme. Examples of successful strategies could be provided. Engagement consists of many levels and it is not enough for a programme to state that they will be advertising through local media.

Guidance notes for funding programmes should emphasise the importance of planning an approach to engaging target groups. In some funding programmes it may be appropriate to ask the organisation how they plan to engage their target audience as part of the application process. This would ensure that organisations

would give more thought to engagement at an early stage and would encourage them to look at the examples of other engagement strategies on the website.

**Recommended actions:**

- **Provide examples of engagement strategies on the website.**
- **Modify guidance notes to emphasise the importance of planning how to engage target groups.**
- **Consider asking organisations to provide information about their plan in some funding programmes (where targeting specific groups is part of the programme objective).**

#### 4. Measuring engagement

Milestones for funding applicants should take into account not only numbers, but also the duration and level of engagement. The emphasis of engagement should not be on numbers alone. Although it is important to ensure that the capacity of a project is being fulfilled, it must not be to the detriment of engaging at a deeper level. We have seen from other work that there is a danger that funding criteria regarding numbers can cause projects to frantically ensure that there are enough people through the door at the beginning and, due to lack of engagement at a real level or because they have targeted everyone they can regardless of whether the programme is completely right for them, the dropout rate during the programme will be high. In order to effectively evaluate levels and duration of engagement, the funder should ask for the numbers of those engaged not only at the beginning of the programme but also at the end.

**Recommended actions:**

- **Implement evaluations to record the numbers attending at the middle and end of the programme, and not just the beginning. The mid-term reporting will allow organisations to act upon findings and improve their work before the end of the project.**
- **Where projects fail to meet engagement targets, offer to link them to organisations who can share effective learning and practice to help them with retention.**

## Appendix B - online survey: descriptive results

Name:	
Answer Options	Response Count
	505
<i>answered question</i>	<b>505</b>
<i>skipped question</i>	<b>2</b>

Position in organisation:	
Answer Options	Response Count
	505
<i>answered question</i>	<b>505</b>
<i>skipped question</i>	<b>2</b>

Name of organisation:	
Answer Options	Response Count
	505
<i>answered question</i>	<b>505</b>
<i>skipped question</i>	<b>2</b>

Region in which you operate: (tick all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Wales	13.7%	69
Scotland	3.2%	16
Northern Ireland	4.4%	22
All England	4.8%	24
East Midlands	7.7%	39
East of England	9.9%	50
Greater London	12.7%	64
North East England	6.9%	35
North West England	14.5%	73
South East England	10.5%	53
South West England	9.3%	47
West Midlands	6.9%	35
Yorkshire and the Humber	8.5%	43
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>505</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>2</b>

**What BIG Lottery funding programmes have you received money from?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Reaching Communities (England)	78.4%	396
Family Learning (England)	3.0%	15
Wellbeing (England)	4.8%	24
Healthy Minds (Northern Ireland)	2.4%	12
Supporting 21st Century Life (Scotland)	1.4%	7
People and Places (Wales)	11.7%	59
Other (please specify)		71
<i>answered question</i>		<b>505</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>2</b>

**Please describe the activities of your organisation:**

Answer Options	Response Count
	468
<i>answered question</i>	<b>468</b>
<i>skipped question</i>	<b>39</b>

**Who are the main beneficiaries of your work?**

Answer Options	Response Count
	468
<i>answered question</i>	<b>468</b>
<i>skipped question</i>	<b>39</b>

**What is the gender split between your project's beneficiaries?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
All women	3.4%	16
Mostly women	37.6%	176
Equal numbers	43.6%	204
Mostly men	14.3%	67
All men	1.1%	5
<i>answered question</i>		<b>468</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>39</b>

What is the age range of the group that you work with? (tick all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
0 - 18	61.5%	288
19 - 29	79.9%	374
30 - 50	76.5%	358
Over 50	76.7%	359
<i>answered question</i>		<b>468</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>39</b>

Have you found it more difficult to attract men than women to participate in your organisation's activities?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	37.0%	158
No	57.6%	246
Not applicable (we do not work with men)	5.4%	23
<i>answered question</i>		<b>427</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>80</b>

If yes, why do think that this is? (tick all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
The type of activities offered	55.4%	72
Lack of male participants	41.5%	54
Lack of male staff	18.5%	24
Family commitments	9.2%	12
Work commitments	45.4%	59
Other (please specify)		87
<i>answered question</i>		<b>130</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>377</b>

Are there particular groups of men which you have found harder to attract?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	36.5%	156
No	57.4%	245
Not applicable (we do not work with men)	6.1%	26
<i>answered question</i>		<b>427</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>80</b>

If yes, which men? (tick all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Young men	56.4%	84
Middle aged	28.2%	42
Older men	26.8%	40
Men from BME backgrounds	34.2%	51
Men who are out of work	18.1%	27
Other group (please specify)		32
<i>answered question</i>		<b>149</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>358</b>

Have you done anything in particular to attract more men to your projects / activities?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	37.2%	155
No	56.4%	235
Not applicable (we do not work with men)	6.5%	27
<i>answered question</i>		<b>417</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>90</b>

If yes, what? (please provide details alongside the appropriate fields below)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Provided particular activities to attract more men	67.1%	108
Produced marketing materials tailored toward men	41.0%	66
Undertaken outreach activities targeting men in particular places	38.5%	62
Used existing male participants or staff to champion the project and to recruit other men	55.3%	89
Other	23.6%	38
<i>answered question</i>		<b>161</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>346</b>

Do you find it more difficult to keep men engaged in the services or activities you provide compared with women?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
More difficult	16.2%	65
Less difficult	10.2%	41
About the same	73.6%	296
<i>answered question</i>		<b>402</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>105</b>

**If more difficult, what are the challenges or issues you face in keeping men engaged?**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
	77
<i>answered question</i>	77
<i>skipped question</i>	430

**What recommendations would you make to other organisations who are struggling to engage men in their projects?**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
	427
<i>answered question</i>	427
<i>skipped question</i>	80

## Appendix C – List of interviewees

Jonathan Ashe, Young Men's Development Worker, YouthAction Northern Ireland, interviewed 15/02/12

Bob Blanchard, Senior Community Development Officer, BNENC, interviewed 09/02/12

Sarah Carter, Diet and Exercise Consultant, Totally Trim, interviewed 30/01/12

Juliette Collier, Deputy CEO, The Campaign for Learning, interviewed 19/01/12

Frank Prendergast, Manager, BNENC, interviewed 09/02/12

Matthew Hodson, Head of Programmes, GMFA, interviewed 17/02/12

Gerard Hughes, Peer Educator, YouthAction Northern Ireland, interviewed 15/02/12

Dr Robert MacGibbon, Co-founder, Camden Town Shed, interviewed 11/01/12

Kelly McGuire, Co-ordinator, Choose2Change, interviewed 17/02/12

Michael McKenna, Team Leader – Work with Young Men, Youth Action Northern Ireland, interviewed 15/02/12

Hywel Mills, Movember, interviewed 20/01/12

Jonathan Nicholas, CEO, Inspire Foundation, interviewed 17/02/12

Jacqueline Johnston, Project Leader, Phoenix Community Health, interviewed 26/01/12

Duncan Shaw, Health/ Community Development Officer, Phoenix Community Health, interviewed 26/01/12

Denis Rees, Facilitator, Choose2Change, interviewed 10/02/12

Ed Smith, Chairman, Totally Trim, interviewed 16/02/12

Peter Wray, Young Men's Development Worker, YoutAction Northern Ireland, interviewed 15/02/12

Jonny Zander, Director, The Kaizen Partnership, interviewed 27/02/12

Male beneficiaries, BNENC, interviewed 09/02/12 (x4)

Male volunteers, BNENC, interviewed 09/02/12 (x4)

Male beneficiaries, Totally Trim Taxi Drivers, interviewed 16/02/12 (x3)

Male beneficiaries, Phoenix Community Health, interviewed 26/01/12 (x4)

Male volunteers, Phoenix Community Health, interviewed 26/01/12

Male beneficiaries, Camden Town Shed, interviewed 11/01/12 (x3)

Young male beneficiaries, YouthAction Northern Ireland, interviewed 15/02/12  
(x10)

Julie Coxon, Grants Officer, BIG Lottery Fund, interviewed 13/12/11

Angela Brecknell, Grants Officer, BIG Lottery Fund, interviewed 13/12/11

Holly Hudson, Grants Officer, BIG Lottery Fund, interviewed 13/12/11

David Frith, Grants Officer, BIG Lottery Fund, interviewed 12/12/11

Jolanta Astle, Grants Officer, BIG Lottery Fund, interviewed 12/12/11

Gary Gibson, Grants Officer, BIG Lottery Fund, interviewed 14/12/11

Helen Richards, Grants Officer, BIG Lottery Fund, interviewed 14/12/11

Guy Jones, Grants Officer, BIG Lottery Fund, interviewed 20/12/11

Gareth Hughes, Grants Officer, BIG Lottery Fund, interviewed 20/12/11

Mary Hubbard, Grants Officer, BIG Lottery Fund, interviewed 19/12/11

Alison Brown, Grants Officer, BIG Lottery Fund, interviewed 08/12/11

Alice Cassels, Grants Officer, BIG Lottery Fund, interviewed 12/12/11

Jonathan Mendoza, Grants Officer, BIG Lottery Fund, interviewed 21/12/11

Gilly Young, grants officer, BIG Lottery Fund, interviewed 21/12/11

Sandy Rocket, Grants Officer, BIG Lottery Fund, interviewed 16/12/11

Anne Flynn, Corporate Equality Manager, BIG Lottery Fund, interviewed 08/12/11

Graham Brand, Policy Officer, BIG Lottery Fund, interviewed 21/12/11

Norrie Breslin, Head of Policy and Development - Northern Ireland, BIG Lottery Fund, interviewed 12/12/11

John Rose, Director (Wales), BIG Lottery Fund, interviewed 12/01/12

# Appendix D – Bibliography

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# Endnotes

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69 Male volunteer, Phoenix Community Health, interviewed 26/01/12

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93 Jonathan Ashe, Youth Worker, YouthAction Northern Ireland, interviewed 15/02/12

94 Gerard Hughes, Youth Worker, YouthAction Northern Ireland, interviewed 15/02/12

95 Dr Robert MacGibbon, Co-founder, Camden Town Shed, interviewed 11/01/12

96 Survey respondent

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## About the Young Foundation

The Young Foundation brings together insight, innovation and entrepreneurship to meet social needs. We have a 55 year track record of success with ventures such as the Open University, Which?, the School for Social Entrepreneurs, and Healthline (the precursor of NHS Direct).

We work across the UK and internationally – carrying out research, influencing policy, creating new organisations and supporting others to do the same, often with imaginative use of new technology. We now have over 60 staff, working on over 40 ventures at any one time, with staff in New York and Paris as well as London and Birmingham in the UK.

## About NCVO

NCVO (National Council for Voluntary Organisations) is the largest general membership body for charities and voluntary organisations in England. Established in 1919, NCVO supports and helps give voice to over 8,000 organisations, from large household name charities to small groups involved in all areas of voluntary and social action at the local level. NCVO research specialises in the development of robust, practical evidence for policy and practice.

## About Big Lottery Fund

The Big Lottery Fund (BIG), the largest distributor of National Lottery good cause funding, is currently responsible for giving out around 46 per cent of the money raised for good causes by the National Lottery. Our mission is to bring real improvements to communities and the lives of people most in need. We want Lottery money to be used to make big changes for communities through the fair and open funding of people, projects and programmes, with a particular emphasis on tackling need for those most disadvantaged.