

Men's Peer Support: Pilot Project: August 23 to August 24

We partnered with St Mary's Magdalene (Sale West Community Urban Trust) and Directions 4 Men to provide a support group for men in our community, within Sale, in the borough of Trafford. We seek to create a supportive space for men to drop in, chat and benefit from being part of weekly peer support sessions. This year a second trained Directions 4 Men facilitator has volunteered to spread the workload and to cover for annual leave or other absences.

We said that we would see **20** men in year one.

We have seen **25**.

We said that **90%** would report reduced isolation and increased connection with community.

100% said they felt less isolated/more connected with community.

We said that **75%** would report improved self-esteem

75% indicated an improvement in their self-esteem. The average improvement in self-esteem was **18.5%**.

We said that **25%** would see improved resilience.

87.5% saw improved resilience. The average improvement in resilience was **25.2%**.

In addition, we asked participants other questions which elicited, the following responses:

- 100% of people said they had made friends;
- 86% said they felt the group had helped them with anxiety; and
- 100% said they felt less low and more positive.

Future development

Based on the success of this pilot project, we will continue to run this group in partnership with St Mary's Magdalene (Sale West Community Urban Trust) and Directions 4 Men.

Focus group feedback:

All the members of the focus group considered that the Mens' Group had made a massive positive impact on them.

For some who struggled with anxiety, panic attacks and the need to stay inside their houses as a safe place, or bolt home when overwhelmed, said the group had opened up their world again. One participant said, *"I used to feel dizzy in Tesco's, and I didn't realise what it was. I didn't realise that's anxiety, you know it's only by listening to others and realising. I don't get dizzy in Tesco's anymore."*

Other comments included:

"When I first came here, I parked on the car park four times before I came in. I just could not physically get out my car. And then I was sat in the car one day and I saw Joel [group leader] and he said "are you for the mens' club?" And I was like "Oh I'm not sure at the moment", and he went "come on I'll come in with you". I came in with Joel, never looked back. This place has been my saviour, because if I didn't have this on a Monday, I couldn't structure my week."

"I was in the armed forces for 22 years... I'm struggling with PTSD...[I wanted to know] are other people experiencing the same feelings as me and how do they deal with their feelings and thoughts and things like that. That's why I come, it's done me the world of good"

"I was suffering with social anxiety.... my anxiety just grew, and grew, and grew to the point where I just had a small group of friends, didn't go anywhere, didn't do anything, always frightenedwhen I went out into a group....I felt, physically unwell. I wouldn't say its disappeared, it's always going to be there, but I can quite easily now go into a room full of people, and be like my former self. Within a couple of weeks people, my wife [and] other people, were noticing it; my best friend suddenly went "you seem more like your old self, you seem more confident.""

"I come along [to] share what I'm going through, with my wife being very ill at the moment...being in the house on my own..... It's good to come [here] and listen to other people's experiences..... for me going to bed was awful, because I just couldn't get to sleep, waking up at 2,3 o'clock in the morning, that's when I would get in touch with my sister..... I couldn't seem to get out of that cycle quite a few times I'd text my sister, and she'd say "look its 3o'clock in the morning"... That was when I did ring the Samaritans a couple of times... I've not rung them since I've been coming....It's been really good to talk."

"Having worked all my life and had 6 redundancies I needed to get out and start socializing.... Because that's what you miss about working. You know you get a group like this and we take the mickey ...; it's good, and I was missing that side of [working]"

"[without the Mens' Group] I think I'd be taking medication without a doubt.... by coming here, so far I've managed to resist"

"People [used to say] "oh come on just get your act together" or "there's nothing wrong with you". I think COVID has brought a lot of awareness of mental health issues."

"If I didn't have my kids, I was ready for lynching myself, because I was that messed up in my head....And it was the doctor that said to me, "there's a place at the Coppice Library" and I met Clair [social prescriber]. I wasn't open with Clair, because I didn't know her And then I started coming here."

"What we say in the room stays in the room."

“It works, I mean they say the best medicine is laughter. Yeah I think that’s the one thing, it’s the people in the group that definitely make it.”

“[it’s] your choice, if you want to speak, if you want to just listen, that’s what we do. But there’s always somebody available if you do need to talk, seriously.”

“I go home and I’m happy.”

“All of a sudden she’s not there ... coming here .. gets me out of that environment for a few hours. Otherwise, it’s just sitting there looking at my four walls, problem is that’s one of the worst things you can do.”

“best thing that ever happened to me is being sent here.... this really has been a lifesaver for me, even though its only one day a week, sets you up for the week that.”

“So the way it works at the moment, it really, really does work. There’s a serious side, but there’s a social and a fun side as well. So for me, it’s difficult to improve on that.”

“it’s helped me get my life back and I’m enjoying what I do in the wider community.”

“I’ve even said to some of these lads just give me a call. I will help anybody.”

“It’s definitely made a huge difference to me in such a short time, that’s the real surprise to me, just how quickly I’ve fitted in, and what it’s actually done for me.”