

Men's Health and Wellbeing Celebration July 2023

Hastings and St Leonards Men's Health and Wellbeing Project



Men's Celebration Event

Free Open Access Event
17th June
10 am to 3pm
Hastings Observer Building

Come along and join local men during Men's Health Week

- Hear what men are saying about living in Hastings and St Leonards
- Share your views and experiences
- Meet men's groups and organisations and see what is available locally
- Join us for free Activities, Workshops, Films and Presentations
- Listen to local Music, Performance, and Story Telling
- We will be providing Tea / Coffee and Cake

Be part of shaping the future for men in your community

If you would like to have a stall or run a workshop at this event please contact
jacy@hastingsvoluntaryaction.org.uk

Hastings and St Leonards Men's Health and Wellbeing Project
Funded by East Sussex County Council Public Health

Meet The UNUSUAL SUSPECTS

Helping to shape the future for men in your community

17th June 10am-3pm
Hastings Observer Building

Men's Celebration Event

THE FIRE FIGHTERS

We are the fire fighters and haven't got a clue!!!
Join us and other local men at the Men's Celebration Event
As we really want to know what's best for you?

Open Access Event • All Welcome

Hastings Observer Building • Saturday 17th June 10am - 3pm

Chat with Jonny on his Sofa

Observer Building 17th June 10am-3pm



The Hastings and St Leonards Men's Health and Wellbeing Project is hosted by Hastings Voluntary Action and funded by East Sussex County Council Public Health

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Section 1: The Hastings and St Leonards Men's Health and Wellbeing Project

This project has been funded by East Sussex County Council for three years (June 2022 – 2025) and is hosted by Hastings Voluntary Action.

June 2023 is the end of the first year of this funding and is a time to reflect on, and celebrate, the journey so far.

“The projects long-term vision is that men living in the most deprived communities in Hastings and St Leonards are living happier, healthier, and longer lives. They are at the heart of decision making about their lives and thrive in strong, supportive, and well-connected communities, where they can fulfil their potential.”

This project has been developed because we know that:

- Life expectancy for men in Hastings and St Leonards is significantly lower than the national average.
- Many initiatives have been delivered across the borough with the intention of improving health outcomes for those most in need.
- Individually, these have made a big difference to people who have had first-hand experience of them. However, this has not led to improved health across the wider population.

This suggests that no single action, or organisation, can solve this complex issue on its own.

The Project Team, Teresa Flower (Project Manager) and Jacy Kilvert (Community Development Worker), were appointed autumn 2022 to mobilise, and encourage collaboration between:

- Male residents who have lived experience of needing and / or accessing support around the wider determinants of their health and want to be involved in improving outcomes for men in their communities; and
- Services and community groups which either seek to support men around the wider determinants of their health or have responsibility for other health assets (physical and environmental), that impact on health and wellbeing for men

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) underpins this project approach.

“ABCD emphasises strengths, connections, citizen leadership and recognises that individual gifts become powerful when they are connected together”. (Tamarack Institute, 2022a).

The project is also underpinned by a whole systems approach that:

“... enables local stakeholders, including communities, to come together, share an understanding of the reality of the challenge, consider how the local system is operating and where there are the greatest opportunities for change. Stakeholders agree actions and decide as a network how to work together in an integrated way to bring about sustainable, long-term systems change”.

(Public Health England 2019)

Key elements of the projects work in this first year include:

- The development of the Men's Health and Wellbeing Project Forum which brings together volunteers and paid workers from across Hastings and St Leonards who currently organise groups or services that are aimed at men or wish to increase the number of men they currently reach. 51 individuals representing 43 groups or organisations have registered an interest and are on the mailing list.
- Initiating codesign workshops to develop a brand that speaks to local men (Section 3: Spotlight on 'Mr Hastings and St Leonards')
- Facilitating Men's Champion Training (Section 4: Spotlight on the 'Unusual Suspects')
- Offering opportunities for local men to share their views and experiences through an online survey, conversations with an external researcher and conversations with the project team. (Section 5: Local Insight – What Men are saying)
- Engaging with decision makers, frontline workers, and group leaders across the system to:
 - Raise awareness of what men are saying about what's important to them and what works and could make a difference to men's health and wellbeing.
 - Encourage reflection on what part they can play in making a difference.
 - Explore opportunities for collaboration moving forward. (Section 6: Influencing the System)
- Maintaining, and growing, a Project Steering Group with members from across public, voluntary and community sector organisations including commissioners, project managers, group leaders and community members. Organisations and groups currently on the steering group include:
[A Band of Brothers](#), [Changing Futures](#), [Change, Grow, Live \(CGL\)](#), [East Sussex County Council](#) (a number of roles and areas of expertise including [Employability and Skills](#), [Drugs and Alcohol](#), [Mental Health](#), [Adult Social Care](#)), [East Sussex Veterans Hub](#), [Hastings Borough Council](#) ([Active Hastings](#), [Community Safety and Housing Options](#)), [Hastings Voluntary Action \(HVA\)](#), [Men's Network](#), [NHS Sussex](#), [Project Rewild](#), [Rough Sleepers Initiative \(RSI\)](#) and [Seaview](#).



For more information on anything mentioned in this section of this report please visit the project webpage: <https://tinyurl.com/hvamenshealth> or contact the project team:

Teresa Flower, Project Manager (HVA) Email: teresa@hastingsvoluntaryaction.org.uk

Jacy Kilvert, Community Development Worker (HVA) Email: jacy@hastingsvoluntaryaction.org.uk

Section 2: Men's Celebration Event

Setting the Scene

The Men's Celebration Event was held on Saturday 17th June, 10 am to 3pm at the Observer Building in Hastings. It was planned to coincide with Men's Health week 2023 (June 12th – 18th).



Men's Health Week (MHW) is designed to raise awareness of men's health and wellbeing and give all boys and men access to the information, services, and treatment they need to live healthier, longer, and more fulfilling lives. For more information about men's health week themes and resources since 2015 visit the Men's Health Forum website: <https://www.menshealthforum.org.uk/mhw>



Holding the event during Men's Health Week enabled us to share Men's Forum resources and promote the event on the back of the national campaign.

Free copies of the Men's Health Forum 'The Man Manual' were available at the celebration alongside a display highlighting further resources available. The Mind Men's Mental Health Project also produced resources linked to the theme of men's health and the internet.

This was ideal timing as it fell at the end of the first year of the projects funding at a time when there was much to celebrate.

It was planned, and delivered in a way that reflects the project ethos and approach. Through an enjoyable, and informative, day the event aimed to:

- Ensure men were front and centre to planning and delivering this first celebration event.
- Celebrate the contributions and achievements of local men in this first year of the project.
- Highlight what men from Hastings and St Leonards are saying about what's important to them.
- Raise awareness of men's health and wellbeing within the community, and within local organisations and services.
- Connect local groups with each other, and men living in Hastings and St Leonards.
- Encourage more local men to get involved in shaping, and leading, the future of the Men's Health and Wellbeing Project in Hastings and St Leonards.

Local Men Leading the Way

As is the key to this projects approach, local men were central to the planning, promoting, and hosting the Men's Celebration Event.

1. **Planning:** Local men heavily influenced the content and shape of the final celebration event through the Men's Forum, the 'Unusual Suspects' and conversations in the community.

"It was a really powerful day, and my fears of an empty hall were unfounded". Chris

"It was good to feel a part of the team and bring something together. It felt good to 'get the ball rolling', so to speak."
Martin



2. **Promotion:** Involving local men in the planning of the event led to a range of fliers being developed which can be seen on the reports front page (Unusual Suspects, Jonny's Sofa, Firefighters).

Whilst Hastings Voluntary Action (HVA) social media, website and newsletter were utilised to promote the celebration, alongside the networks of the many groups and organisations that are supportive of the project, it was recognised that a more hands on approach was also needed.

Prior to the event, fliers were placed in local venues and shared at events across Hastings and St Leonards.

On Wednesday 14th June, at a stall outside the Priory Centre, the Project Team and 'Unusual Suspects', handed out fliers and spoke with men, their friends and families, as they passed by. The event was also covered in the local press:

<https://www.sussexpress.co.uk/news/mens-health-week-2023-hastings-and-st-leonards-mens-celebration-event-4181266>

<https://hastingsonlinetimes.co.uk/hot-topics/health-matters/mens-health-week>

Promotion targeted local men, their friends, and families as well as organisations and local groups.

On the day fliers were distributed outside the building catching passers-by and the firefighters (pictured below) were on the street at regular intervals encouraging people to come along.

Sharon Rhodes, Hastings Observer Building Social Media Officer, was with us throughout the event sharing what was happening through live posts.



- 3. On the day:** Local men who were involved in the co-design of new project branding, along with the first cohort of men’s champions, were there throughout the event, sharing their experiences, encouraging conversation, and generally raising awareness of men’s health and wellbeing.

This photo shows project participants alongside Hastings and St Leonards Mayor, Cllr Margi O’Callaghan and Cllr Caroline Carr.



Back row (left to right) Dave McMurdo, Cllr Caroline Carr, Dean Hodges, Cllr Margi O’Callaghan, Chris Connelly, Simon Reeves, Martin Symons, and Jonny Standen.

Front row (left to right) Travis Mains- Marten and Maz Al-Jumaili.

Our volunteer photographer for the day, Richard Matthews, is a local resident and keen amateur photographer. He was pleased to be involved in the event, share his skills, and be part of the conversations around men’s health and wellbeing. Richard was busy all day and his photos can be seen throughout this report.



Attendance and Feedback:

The event was promoted as free and open to all. We also provided vouchers for free refreshments which was very popular and provided many opportunities for informal conversations in a relaxed atmosphere.

Men involved in the planning of the event felt that registration could be a barrier to some men attending, and so registration was not required. We can however estimate attendance at a minimum of 150 people based on the number of vouchers distributed.

Around the venue a wide range of opportunities to share views, experiences and/or comments on the project and celebration event were available.

- An interactive activity that encouraged feedback on questions around health and wellbeing.
- Send a message to the decision makers post box.
- Project Branding feedback sheets.
- What would you like to change and what ‘s great sheet.
- Suggestions for the future tree.
- ‘Five Ways to Wellbeing’ feedback activity.
- Evaluation feedback for the event.
- Sign-up sheets to register interest in the project (to find out more or get involved).

In addition, after the event, volunteers, organisations and groups that participated were asked for feedback on the planning, delivery and impact of the day.

The project team, including all volunteers on the day wore, 'Happy to Chat' badges. These helped attendees identify who could help if they had a question and encouraged open and friendly conversations. 'Happy to Chat posters' were displayed around the venue, reflecting the projects belief in the power of conversation.



Any local organisation or group were welcome to participate in the celebration event, either by hosting a marketplace stand, delivering an activity or coming along informally to chat with men, their friends and family on the day. Over 70 organisations were directly contacted, and numerous local networks shared the information.

Saturday was chosen for the event as men had told us this was likely to be more appealing and accessible than a week day. However, some organisations, and groups, identified that they didn't have the capacity to attend an event on Saturday, an issue made more challenging as there are a cluster of national awareness weeks and local events in Hastings at this time.

The Programme

A programme, and room plan, were produced to make the most of the time and space available and were displayed around the building (some minor changes happened on the day). More detail on the programme follows.

Time:	Stage:	Workshop Space:	Arts Space	Next to the lifts	Marketplace:
10.00	Schedule for the day(slides) Steve: Director HVA welcome and introduction.		Street Art/Stencil	Jonny on his sofa.	1. Active Hastings. 2. Active Hastings. 3. A Band of Brothers.
10.30	Teresa: Project introduction and learning so far. Followed by Men United Film		Workshop with Drew Copus	Drop in for a chat all day	4. Making it Happen. 5. Making it Happen. 6. Men's Project's in Hastings and St Leonards.
11.00	Maz: The Unusual Suspects.	11.15 Active Hastings: stretch session with Heather	Drop in All Day		7. Men's Network. 8. Mind Men's Mental Health Project. 9. Men's Refuge. 10. St Michael's Hospice. 11. The Conservation Volunteers (TCV). 12. I-Rock. 13. Possibility People. 14. MindOut. 15. Hastings Therapy. 16. Hastings and St Leonards Men's Shed. 17. Hastings and St Leonards Men's Shed. 18. Seaview. 19. Roots of Return. 20. The Library of Things.
11.45	Dean and Travis: Branding Project				
12.00	Matt: My story.	12.00 Men's Yoga, with Murray			
12.15	Teresa: Project introduction and learning so far. Followed by Men United Film				
1.00		1.00			
1.30	Roots of Return	A Band of Brothers film and discussion.			
2.00	Open Mic: opportunity to tell your story or share your project. Speak to Teresa or Jacy if you would like a slot ☺	2.00 Men's Yoga With Murray 2.30 Active Hastings: Circuit session with Heather			
3.00	Event close				Men's Project Corner <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Unusual Suspects • New Project Branding. • What Men are saying. • Hastings and Leonards Men's Project • And much more ☺

Stage - Presentations, Films, and Personal Stories.

Our volunteer host for the day was **Maz Al-Jumaili, a local resident**, interested in men's health and wellbeing and one of the 'Unusual Suspects'. Prior to the day he shared his skills, experience, and enthusiasm to help shape the programme, promote the event, and compile presentations. On the day he operated the audiovisual equipment and introduced guests. He also hosted the Book Corner described later in this report.

Maz explained what he enjoyed most about the day:

"... camaraderie, discussion. Meeting new people. Finding common ground with men my age".

The day began with a welcome and introduction from **Steve Manwaring, Director of Hastings Voluntary Action** and long-term steering group member for the Hastings and St Leonards Men's Health and Wellbeing Project. After the event Steve said:

"... a seriously impressive event. I thought the space worked well and the event had a really good feel to it and some lovely feedback. I know how much work goes into the detail of all this".

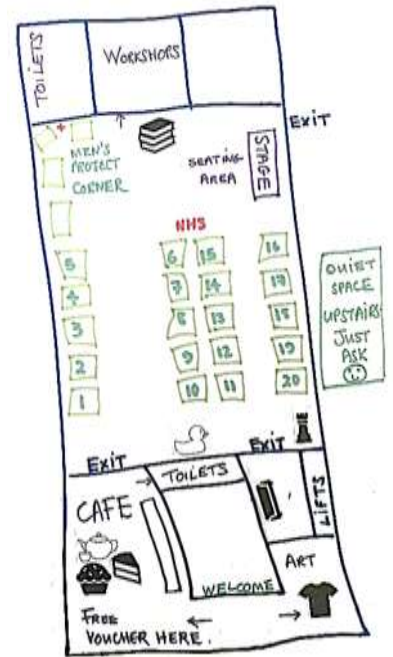
This was followed by **Hastings and St Leonards Mayor, Cllr Margi O'Callaghan** highlighting her support to raising awareness of Men's Health and Wellbeing and how powerful she felt the Celebration Event was.

Teresa Flower, Men's Health and Wellbeing Project Manager, then gave a brief introduction to the project, and the key role local men are playing in leading the way forward.

Teresa specifically thanked the men who were here today, the first men's champions, the 'Unusual Suspects' and those who have been working to design, and produce, new branding for the project that speaks to local men. Teresa highlighted how this event was an opportunity to celebrate their achievements to date and help shape next steps.

The '**Men United Film**', produced prior to this projects first year of delivery, highlights men's voices. You can watch the film on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/yuBd9Occ84s> or on the Project website: <https://tinyurl.com/hvamenshealth>

The Men's Project Branding Team (Mr Hastings and St Leonards) and The Men's Project Champions (The Unusual Suspects) both presented on stage. More detail can be read in sections 3 and 4 of this report.



A Band of Brothers Hastings (ABOB)

A Band of Brothers (ABOB) presented their film on the main stage. In this powerful, emotional, and authentic film local young men share their struggles and how ABOB supports them in their journey of growth and development. For more information visit ABOB [website](#)



“The Band of Brothers video was especially impactful, made even more powerful by the presence of some of the film’s contributors in the room’.

Roots of Return CIC

Roots of Return shared their presentation about their new project in Hastings.



Dan shared his personal story with the audience, a powerful and significant message about men hiding behind masks, concealing their pain and anguish. Dan spoke of how healing it can be to open up old wounds to the light, and how this can aid recovery and growth. For more information visit the Roots of Return website: <https://www.rootsofreturn.org/>.

Films and slides were also shown throughout the day from:



- **Craigs Cabin:** <https://www.facebook.com/craigscabin/>
- **Project Rewild Take Action Man Project:** <https://www.projectrewild.co.uk/takeactionman>
- **Men’s Network Green Man, Green Shoots, Green Economy Project:** <https://www.facebook.com/people/Hastings-Mens-Network/100075870024306/>
- **East Sussex Veterans Hub** <https://www.eastsussexveteranshub.co.uk/>

“I was particularly struck by the voices of those with lived experience of mental health problems in the 2 films. I found it encouraging to hear these men speak about their problems and think this will have been a really positive influence for other men watching these films.”

Marketplace and Networking

Some organisations stated Saturday was difficult due to staff capacity. Alongside this Hastings is renowned for the number of community events it hosts which means that at times difficult decisions are made by local organisations, about which ones to attend. This impacted on the number, and diversity of organisations represented in the market place. **The following groups and organisations participated in the day.**

Active Hastings brought their smoothie bike and information about a range of opportunities on offer locally. For more information on Active Hastings follow this link to their website:

https://www.hastings.gov.uk/sport_play/getactive/

“We met with different men to identify what physical activity sessions they would like; promote the sessions we currently run and identify some of the barriers men in Hastings have with physical activity.

Men were able to come and interact with the stall and smoothie bike and chat about physical activity and some of the reasons as to why they don't interact. More men than I thought wanted to speak to us about physical activity and were asking what was available to them”.

A Band of Brothers Hastings (ABOB) Band of Brothers is an award-winning charity positively transforming the lives of young men and our communities.

They work with young men involved in the criminal justice system, providing them with the support they need to make the transition to an adulthood free of crime and filled with a sense of belonging, connection and purpose. You can find out more about A Band of Brothers on their [website](#) and social media: [Facebook](#), [national Instagram](#) and [Hastings Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#) or email hastings@abandofbrothers.org.uk.

“ Please can we meet up after the event and chat about how we can work together to reach more young men that would benefit from engaging with Hastings A Band of Brothers ”

Making it Happen is a community development project hosted by HVA in Hastings. Su, the Community Development Worker supports communities to come together to make the most of the opportunities that exist to create positive change. For more information on Making it Happen in Hastings and St Leonards visit their webpage:

<https://hastingsvoluntaryaction.org.uk/project/making-it-happen-hastings>

“I was able to have conversations 1:1 with men who interestingly ‘opened up’ a lot more than maybe usual. I had some questions written down and some men found it difficult to commit to writing anything down, but it did open up opportunity for deeper conversation. Lots of men came in from the street.”

Hastings Men's Network is about creating a healthy masculine culture for men in the town. For more information visit their website: <https://www.hastingsmensnetwork.org/>

Mind Men's Mental Health Project is working to improve the mental health of men particularly between the ages of 30-59 years. For more information visit their webpage:

<https://www.mindcharity.co.uk/east-sussex/mens-mental-health-project>

“These kind of events allow men to read the materials laid out and a chance for those of us working in Mental Health to interact with them and start a conversation. Some of the men I talked with

seemed to find it difficult to make the first move into a conversation but once engaged were really happy to converse and tell their story.”

“...it was great interacting with local men and discussing their experiences.”

St Michaels Hospice brought along ‘Follow the Duck’. They spoke with people about what services they offer at the local hospice and within the community, and gained feedback from local men. For more information about St Michaels Hospice visit their website: <https://stmichaelshospice.com/>

“We brought the Mobile Duck along, to get some feedback and talk a bit about what we get up to.”

The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) offer conservation activities offering a wide range of tasks. Woodland maintenance to footpath clearance to litter picking, all helping to make our local green spaces nicer for everyone, to improve the environment, and to help people to connect with nature and boost health and wellbeing. For more information visit their webpage: <https://www.tcv.org.uk/southeast/volunteer-south-east/day-projects/east-sussex-biodiversity-action-team/>

MindOut work to improve the mental health and wellbeing of all LGBTQ communities and to make mental health a community concern. For more information visit their website: <https://mindout.org.uk/>

Hastings Therapy Centre is a new social enterprise in the heart of Hastings offering mainstream and low-cost therapy services to the local community. For more information visit their website <https://hastingstherapycentre.org.uk/>

“I thought this was a great event with lots of thought-provoking presentations and information. We really benefitted from making new connections with other organisations and also met a few members of the public who said they might use our services.”

“This was well organised and there was a great atmosphere. I don’t think you could have done a better job. “

Hastings and St Leonards Men’s Shed is based in Ore and is a well-equipped space where people can make things in wood or metal, follow a hobby or interest, share skills, or just sit, relax, chat, and enjoy a cuppa or two in good company. For more information visit their website: <http://www.hastingsmenshed.org.uk/community/hastings-st-leonards-men-s-shed-13770/home/>

Seaview is an award-winning charity based in the heart of St Leonard’s on Sea. Seaview offers a range of integrated support services operating from the Wellbeing Centre and within the wider community in an outreach capacity. For more information visit their website: <https://www.seaviewproject.co.uk/>

Roots of Return serve the communities of St Leonard's, Hastings and the surrounding areas, empowering people to lead their best lives through building community and belonging. For more information visit their website: <https://www.rootsofreturn.org/>

“Link together with Roots of Return and local therapists: create a therapeutic setting for men to meet and talk”.

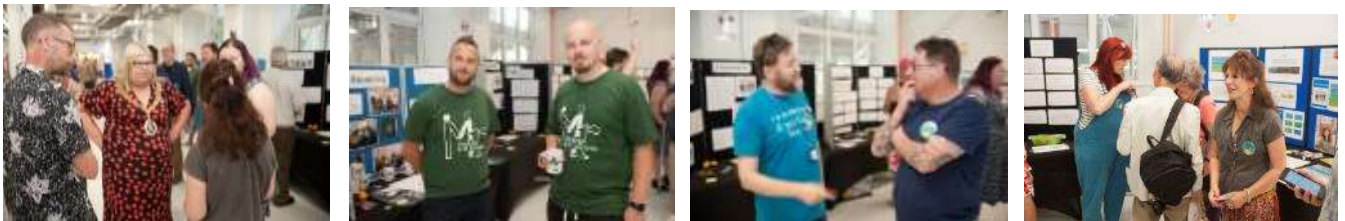
The Library of Things a lending library for "things". Members join and borrow things they want to use and then return them to be used again. For more information visit their website:
<https://umbrellasussex.org.uk/hastings-library-of-things/>

“We had an “engagement activity” that got lots of people talking to us and sharing bits of information about themselves. It also gave us a good prompt to encourage men to talk as we had something to talk about!”

NHS Sussex brought their ‘Let’s Talk’ stand. For more information visit their website:
<https://www.sussex.ics.nhs.uk/people-asked-to-share-their-views-on-the-nhs-in-sussex-as-work-progresses-to-improve-health-and-care-for-the-next-five-years/>

The Men’s Health and Wellbeing Project Corner :

- Mr Hastings and St Leonards - the work that has been undertaken to co-create a new brand for the Project.
- The Unusual Suspects - information about the training and next steps for Men’s Champions.
- What men are saying - insight from conversations and surveys with local men.
- The Hastings and St Leonards Men’s Project – information about the development and delivery of the project.



Networking, Information, Relaxation and Fun.



Workshops and Activities

Active Hastings Taster Sessions:

Heather Jury offered two sessions and was in the market place with the Smoothie bike.



Murray Davidson offered the opportunity to participate in Men's Yoga Taster Sessions. Murray is currently delivering men's yoga session via Active Hastings: https://www.hastings.gov.uk/sport_play/getactive/activehastings_listings/yogaformenshealth4a/

Jonny's Sofa

Jonny, one of the Unusual Suspects, was available on his sofa for a chat throughout the day but was also looking out for men who might need a bit of support and encouragement to join in. Jonny said:

"One man in particular, I originally chatted to outside and got him to come in. I walked around with him, and said about various stalls there, and what our aim is. He said it was much needed and a great thing we are trying to achieve."



T Shirt Stencilling

Local artist, Drew Copus, ran a T shirt stencilling workshop throughout the day in the marketplace. Engaging men their friends and family members so that the day provided something for everyone. Follow this link to see more about Drew's work: https://linktr.ee/droobie_art



Chess Corner

In the Chess Corner Jacqueline Terry offered a space to learn new skills and engage in a shared interest. Jacqueline said:

"I enjoyed it immensely and had some very interesting conversations with local men and some good games of chess"



Maz's Book Corner

The book corner was a space to talk with Maz, one of the Unusual Suspects, about his ideas around developing a Men's Book and Film Club or spend a few moments reading one of the books on display.

For more information contact Jacy from the project team: Jacy@hastingsvoluntaryaction.org.uk

Pictured on the left is Deputy Mayor, Cllr Heather Bishop with a copy of *A Pier Without Peer – Hastings Pier the History* by Steve Peek a local resident. 60 free copies were distributed at the event.



Mens book and film club



What we learned/was shared

This project is keen to learn from, and be shaped, by what local men tell us they value, are passionate about and are inspired by. What we learned from this event is:

What engaged, inspired, and made men proud. The Champions (The Unusual Suspects) and the Branding Team were asked for their thoughts. Here is just a little of what they said:

“Very proud...men’s wellbeing and mental health is so important not just in Hastings but everywhere.”

“Always proud to see people inspired. What they did was excellent, and the event was the icing on the cake.”

“Very proud of the movement to encourage conversation between men.”

“There were so many different people each with the same goal but with completely different approaches and journeys. It was engaging for everyone for different reasons.”

“Spoke to many people. Was very inspiring.”

“I was pleased to see a busy hall and to have had some very really open and candid conversations. My sense is that there is a real appetite for work in this area and it feels good to be a very small part of that experience.”

“I liked the village fete nature of the session, allowing people to wander and take in lots of different opportunities and offers in an unpressured way, whilst the talks on stage were both interesting and moving.”

“Let’s try and attend as many of the outdoor summer events as possible to spread the word”.

Future promotion of events:

- **Fliers:** Those designed by local men were eye catching, friendly and clear – too much information is difficult to read and can be confusing.
- **Podcasts for local men and men’s conversations:** These can reach men who are more isolated.

Inclusivity. The following feedback was received and will be explored further through community and organisational engagement.

“A positive event but the language used is very heteronormative ‘the unusual suspects’ and ‘champions’ there was no reference to gay or bi men. The language is ‘masculine’ language and that’s disappointing. Its ok to be a man, but only certain types of man. Much more inclusive language and understanding of men as a wider group is needed. Apart from the ‘mind out’ stand there was no reference to gay men. Please try to be more inclusive and step away from the dominant heterosexual narrative”.

- Over the coming year we will actively target organisations, and groups, that reflect the diversity of men’s experience and interests, in Hastings and Leonards.
- We will encourage them, and the men they are in contact with, to be part of ongoing engagement and collaboration to ensure they are represented at, and are part of the planning of, future events.
- We encourage diverse membership of the project Steering Group, Men’s Health and Wellbeing Forum and Champions Programme.

Choice of location for future events/reaching out into the community:

- A range of events will be delivered moving forward considering outside venues and possibly series of smaller ‘pop up’ events.
- Jonny’s sofa on wheels- take Jonny’s sofa on tour across Hastings and St Leonards
- We will continue to attend local events in Hastings and St Leonards for example Hollington Remembers and Hastings Pride.
- Consider length of day (possibly a morning **or** afternoon event).

Maintaining the momentum:

- ‘Celebration Meet Up’ and thank you for champions and branding group will be arranged ASAP.
- Plan way forward: keep in touch and maintain links with everyone who attended event.
- Build on excitement and momentum captured at event with interested groups and individuals.
- Continue to ensure local men are central to planning and decision making for all future events.
- Share feedback around the importance of funding men’s events and great men’s groups in the town with decision makers.

Section 3: Spotlight on Co- Design of the Project Brand

(Mr Hastings and St Leonards)

What happened

During May 2023 a group of local men came together with Dean Hodges, a local graphic designer, to form the branding team and co-design a brand for the Hastings and St Leonards Men's Health and Wellbeing Project.



A name and logo that spoke to local men and communicated what the project was about. The celebration event gave the opportunity to test the brand on men who attended the event and share the journey from first meeting to presenting the brand that had been developed.

Pictured below left to right Dean, Jay, Dave and Travis



Dean – Local Graphic Designer “This was a real collaboration, and I am really proud of the journey we went on together and the end result is a true reflection of everyone’s input and ideas”.

Dean was commissioned to share his expertise and enable the group to recognise the skills, knowledge and experience they had to offer to this process. Dean can be contacted on his email: dean@brandmeadow.com or mobile: 07875 930733.

Jay – Local Postman “We all came together in agreement on the final ideas, and I feel very proud to have been involved in the branding of this project”.

Dave – Local product Developer “I felt quite emotional when I saw the branding design that we had created together, and it resonated with the journey we had all been on together”.

Travis – Local Cab Driver “This has been an inspiring journey and the words we came up with for the project really reflect how we worked together in the branding workshops - unlocking doors, building bridges and inspiring change”.



What we learned/was shared

Display boards showcased the design process and feedback forms were available so that the branding team could hear local men's views of the proposed brand 'Mr Hastings and St Leonards'.

To bring the logo alive the branding team wore branded Shirts, and mugs were produced to show alternative colour ways.

The Branding Teams presentation was well received. The team talked the audience through the thought processes, and learning, that led to the development of the proposed brand being presented at the event. Feedback was that understanding the design process made a real difference to how they viewed the name. *"Very apt after seeing the explanation of how it came about".*

Feedback on the logo, and name, was positive on the day, though few put their thoughts on the feedback sheets.

However, at least 150 people attended the event, all of whom had the opportunity to view the new branding, and chat with the branding team and all feedback received was positive.



Written feedback included:

- Liked the colour (green) - calming was used by one man to describe it. They also said it would encourage them to find out more about the project.
- The design was seen as relaxing and words such as *solidarity, liberty, fraternity, network, support, community, and health* were used to describe how the logo made them feel and what the project was about.
"Supporting men to support each other" and "For men, by men – support network."

Next steps

- Branding to be shared with project steering group in July 2023.
- The Branding Team are keen to be involved in taking the brand to the next stage.
- A brand toolkit will be produced, and a communication strategy developed .
- Social media and website will be created with links to current HVA project pages and social media platforms. Local men have expressed an interest in working with us to create the social media for this project . Social media training can be offered to facilitate this.
- Opportunities to show case the new brand will be explored such as street art.
- Brand will be visible on all project materials.
- A small booklet about the project branding and project development so far will be produced. The Branding Team are very excited about this and want to share their journey with other men in the town.
- The Branding Team, and the 'Unusual Suspects', are excited about the potential for the 'Mr' brand to spread to other areas (be franchised). The project team (Jacy and Teresa) are often asked if this project is going to be offered in other areas, so it is interesting that local men are also thinking about this.

"Need to strike while the iron is hot with a launch. Focus groups and brainstorm what next".

Section 4: Spotlight on Men's Project Champions - The Unusual Suspects.

What happened

In May, and early June 2023, eight men joined the project team (Jacy and Teresa) as the first cohort of the Hastings and St Leonards 'Men's Champion Pilot'.

This first cohort was made up of a mix of volunteers, paid workers and community members of diverse age and life experience.



The men came together over four mornings, to learn more about the project, what a Men's Champion role might look like, how they might want to be involved, how they might undertake conversations and what support they would need to achieve their ambitions. They brought with them a wealth of skills and life experience.

Initially Champion roles will be around encouraging conversation and gathering men's experiences and views but, depending on feedback from local men around what is needed, these roles may evolve over the life of the project.

Champions will pilot conversations in the community and regroup to evaluate the process. Lester Coleman will be working alongside the Project Team, and Champions, to support with the development of tools and the evaluation of this pilot.

The project team will be working alongside Champions to offer support and signposting if/when required and working to develop a mechanism that enables collaboration between the Champions, local men and the services and organisations that are part of the system that impacts on their lives.

Underpinning this process is an [Asset Based Community Development](#) approach to training delivery which valued the skills, life experience, connections, passions, and knowledge the men brought to the room.

As the sessions developed the group discussed what this new role should be called, feeling Champion was a slightly off putting and over used term.

After a photo was taken outside the HVA building, they came up the idea of 'the Unusual Suspects'. The name was used at the Celebration Event as a core group of champions were heavily involved in the planning of the event and delivery on the day.

Informal feedback around the name was positive, often raising a smile and generating conversation.

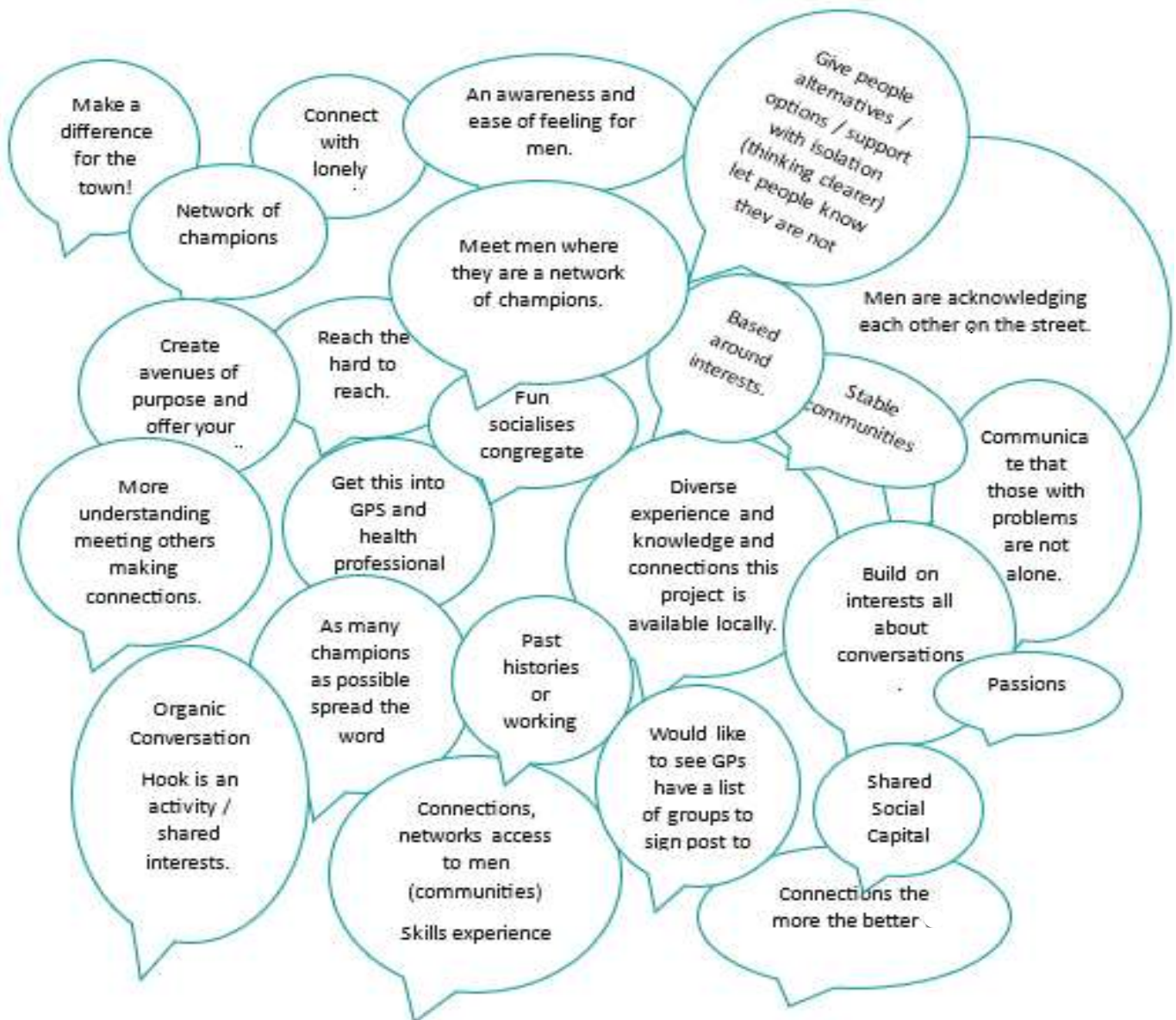
Although feedback from one source highlighted some concerns around the language of Champions and Unusual Suspects which will be explored further.



What we learned/was shared

- Local men bring connections, networks already in place and access to communities (such as the fishing community)
- They bring Social Capital, strengths, skills and understanding often not valued or recognised.
- Their passion and diverse experience opens doors, bringing people together through shared values and interests - builds trust.
- Their local knowledge and personal insight into how men interact within communities is invaluable as a way into communities.
- They bring understanding of how to work with local men and the issues that may arise.
- They understand it is important not to try and 'fix' men but to offer options.
- Acknowledging that men hide what is going on – masking and not asking for help.
- The impact of dialogue around men's roles and masculinity and how this impacts on engaging men around conversations about their health and wellbeing.

Champions Hopes For The Project



Next steps

- The Unusual Suspects are meeting with the project team to plan 'conversations' with men over the summer.
- Conversations may be 1:1, in small groups or during an activity. They may be planned or opportunistic.
- The team will provide them with resources including a list of pick and mix questions/themes, a hints and tips sheet and a local contacts card to support them.
- The project team will be available to talk through any issues along the way and plan in regular group meetings.
- They will be provided with a simple template to capture their activity and what they learn from the men they speak with.
- A date will be set for each man to speak with Lester, to share learning from the experience (August/September 2023)
- Learning from these initial conversations will be evaluated and this will lead to the development of a toolkit of resources, hints and tips, and training for future Champions. Further workshops can then be co-designed, and co-delivered, by local Champions and rolled out into the community and across the system, increasing the number of men having conversations with their peers.

Section 5: Local Insight - What men are saying.

What happened

Listening to local men, and sharing learning from their experiences, views and ideas, is key to ensuring impact and legacy for this projects work.

Online Survey

An Online Survey went live week of 6th February 2023 on the Project's webpage hosted on the HVA website . It closed on 3rd April 2023 and was completed by 134 local men.

12% were under 35 years old, 19% 35 – 54 years old and 69% over 55 years old.

84% described themselves as heterosexual, 11% gay or bisexual, 56% felt they were living with a physical or mental health condition.

A previous online survey was undertaken in 2020 and completed by 200 men to inform the projects development. Post pandemic, the 2023 survey will ensure our understanding is current. It was promoted widely through local networks and, although this was designed to be quick to complete, it will help us better understand what works for men in Hastings and St Leonards.



- What men feel about living in Hastings and St Leonards.
- What impacts on their health and wellbeing.
- Their access to social activities.
- Access to support when they face issues in their lives.

Researcher Conversations

An external researcher, Lester Coleman, undertook conversations with local men between January and April 2023.

Lester spoke with 18 men. Of these, nine were from Hastings, eight from St Leonards and one person was from Ore. They ranged from 24-72 years (with an average of 48 years). 13 were White-British with the remaining either White-Irish, Asian-Indian or Black (terms described by the participants). Four participants described themselves as gay and three as living with physical disabilities. Four men had lived in the area all their life and for those moving to the area, usually from London or Brighton, the average time was for 19 years ago (ranging from 4 years to 52 years ago).

Community Engagement

The project team are continually speaking with local men at community events, planned visits to local groups and with the men engaging with the project as volunteers. We are also listening to men who work, or volunteer in local projects and have a wealth of experience to share around what impacts on men's health and wellbeing.



What we learned/was shared

Our experience is, that when the environment is right, and given the space and time, men do talk and have a lot of knowledge, skills, and experience to share that can impact positively on the future of men's health and wellbeing in Hastings and St Leonards.

After this first year, cross cutting themes are emerging around stigma, mental health, asking for help and masculinity. Here is a little of what we have been told:

Around engagement in this project:

- Men are keen to be involved in this project and are very proud to be leading the way.
- Lived experience is key when engaging with other men – especially around mental health.
- Men want to share and collaborate on things that matter for them.
- Men are responding really well to the project's positive, strengths-based approach.
- A 'fixing problems' approach is often the opposite of what men want, rather they want the tools and resources to fix themselves – empowerment.

Around men's help seeking behaviour:

- Statements like 'men don't seek help' are simplifying a complex issue and need exploration.
- When men ask for help, they feel like they have been beaten by the issue. It takes a long time to admit some help/ support might be needed.
- Past negative experiences of seeking help will impact on how men perceive support and expectations will be low.
- Men often don't ask for help until it's a crisis - response then needs to be a positive and timely.
- Men who do ask for help earlier sometimes feel they are not heard and so give up. Men sometimes feel they have to show emotions, cry or shout, to be heard.
- These issues are accentuated when a man is isolated.

Around men and mental health:

- Mental health is the biggest taboo for men.
- Men are often anxious about joining new things. How do we get men through the door is the biggest challenge.
- Mental health support is needed but alternative language needs to be found to promote it and encourage engagement.
- Men often feel women's mental health is supported, and acknowledged, more in the workplace. If they are having a mental health issue – men feel this is overlooked dismissed.

Around men and masculinity:

- Traditional views of men, and what it means to be a man, still prevail and are still in men's heads – 'man up', 'boy's don't cry' etc.
- Some men feel dispensable in a world where gender roles have changed.
- If men are still brought up to believe they are the fighters, and the protectors of place and people, how does that sit with the idea of asking for help.
- Young men need diverse, positive male role models in their day-to-day life. They need support from an early age to find their place in the world.

Around connecting and engaging with men:

- Working men's clubs, and pubs, in diminishing and its cheaper to drink at home. However, this means social connections are reduced.
- It is suggested that women talk to each other more than men. However, men do talk to each other but rarely about feelings - conversation is more banter based.
- Many local men are invisible so won't join a group or fill in survey – different approaches are needed to reach men and must be explored and actioned.
- Men like to know what is expected within a session/ activity.

NOTE: Nine key themes have begun to emerge from the external researcher conversations are included as appendix 1.

Next steps

- Listening to men and recording their experience will continue to be an important part of this project's agenda over the next two years.
- Themes from the external researcher conversations, alongside connected recommendations, will be fully explored in a final report which will be available on the project webpage and via the project team.
- Full analysis of the qualitative data generated through the online survey is underway and will be available September 2023 on the project webpage and via the project team.
- A learning event will be held in late September 2023 to ensure what we have learned reaches local services providers and decision makers and influences the work described in Section 6 of this report.
- This insight, and ongoing engagement with local men, will inform the identification of project priorities moving forward.

Section 6: Influencing the System

What happened

A key element of this project's work is to work to influence the system that surrounds local men and impacts on their health and wellbeing.

A map of the system surrounding men in Hastings and St Leonards was produced when this project was being developed in 2020 and is included as appendix 2.

This highlights the key thematic areas that impact on men's lives, who is working locally around those themes/issues, and the factors that impact on men's health and wellbeing around those themes. This now needs refreshing, and this work is underway.

During the first year of this projects delivery the team have been building relationships with services, and local groups that impact on men's health and wellbeing in Hastings and St Leonards. Joining networks and partnerships, attending events and team meetings, to raise awareness of men's health and wellbeing, the project's vision and approach, and potential opportunities for collaboration moving forward.

In May 2023 a Systems Thinking Workshop was held which brought together 24 participants from across the system. The workshop:

- Introduced participants to the Hastings and St Leonards Men's Health and Wellbeing Project.
- Increased their understanding of systems thinking and why it is central to this project's work.
- Enabled participants to contribute to system mapping around men's health and wellbeing in Hastings and St Leonards.
- Explored opportunities for future collaboration.



What we learned/was shared

- There is acknowledgement across the system of the importance of gaining a better understanding of issues surrounding men's health and wellbeing in Hastings and St Leonards.
- There is a real interest in engaging in opportunities to collaborate across the system to make a difference. *"Looking forward to hearing and learning more".*
- The visual representation of the systems map can be off putting and appear too complex to address and there is also some scepticism of the approach.
"Systems thinking masks what is required. Root and branch reform of a lot of statutory services needs to be done".
- Using an ABCD approach to systems thinking workshops, that builds on skills experience and knowledge in the room and brings together diverse stakeholders in a welcoming and non-threatening environment, seems to be what many that have participated to date value.
"Liked the informal way it was run."
"Well presented, interesting and informative – too short!"
- There is concern that young men (16 -18 years old) may not be considered through this projects delivery and that this is the key to longer term impact on men's life expectancy in Hastings and St Leonards.
- There are several projects/programmes locally using a systems change approach. There is a risk of duplication/wasted resources, or fatigue within the system, if these initiatives do not take a collaborative approach to engagement and sharing of learning themselves.

Next steps

Focussed conversations will be hosted throughout August around issues that impact on men's lives (thematic areas). These themes are listed below and have been identified through emerging local insight, and the current systems map included as appendix 2.

- Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Housing and Homelessness
- Physical Health and Activity
- Education, Training and Employment
- Drug and Alcohol Use
- Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour
- Relationships and Social Connections

Conversations will bring together local men, front line workers and decision makers to consider:

- **What matters to local men.**
- **What's working well.**
- **Who needs to be connecting, talking, and listening.**
- **What needs to happen.**
- **Where should we start.**

When all conversations are completed the participants, and what they have shared, will be brought together to identify connections, challenges and opportunities for collaboration moving forward.

This work will align with the learning event planned for the end of September 2023 and together, they will inform project priorities around systems thinking for the coming year.

Section 7: Next Steps for Hastings and St Leonards Men's Health and Wellbeing Project

Summer 2023 is the time to align learning from the first year of this projects work around local insight, Men's Champions pilot, co-design of the project brand and systems change initiatives.

A learning event in late September/early October will bring together all this learning to identify priorities for the future.

Over the next two years:

- Local men will be front and centre of this project. They will lead the way, building on their wealth of life experience, knowledge and strengths.
- Together we will co-design mechanisms that enable men's voices to be heard and influence service development and delivery.
- We will encourage collaborative working across a wide range of services and organisations that impact on men's health and wellbeing.
- With local men, and local services, we will explore the best way of ensuring that the impact of this project, and new ways of working that are established, are self-sustaining moving forward.
- Together we will adopt a strength based, systems change approach, to address the wider factors that impact on men's lives.

Appendix 1: Emerging themes form external researcher conversations

Nine key themes are emerging from the 18 conversations that took place and are included here.

1. **Background:** Both positive views (e.g. seafront, events and activities within the town, and the rich history) and negative views regarding the town (e.g. crime, safety, transport infrastructure, poor for cycling, lack of community in places)
2. **History of Mental Health:** A total of 12 out of the 18 men had current or previous mental health concerns and used this experience to share strategies or activities that had helped. For some, the health issues also extended to physical conditions that limited their everyday life.
3. **Strategies to keep well living in Hastings and St Leonards:** For many, keeping well was undertaking some form of exercise and having a focus and keeping busy. This may be walking along the seafront, making a point to go out every day, or ‘people watching’ across town.

4. Wider determinants of Health:

- Most men were generally happy with their housing situation, although there were some exceptions due to lack of space and disrepair.
 - Most men had positive comments about their neighbourhood with a sense that people ‘looked out for each other’. However, there were some exceptions, with regards to concerns over the anti-social behaviour of some residents.
 - There was a mixture of people employed, unemployed and looking for work, and unemployed and not looking for work. This had a strong impact on income which limited people’s options to join in activities or hobbies. The cost-of-living crisis has made this heightened.
 - Typically, men had a handful of friends, with some wanting to meet more to counter isolation. For those recently moving to the area several had lost friends and were keen to meet new ones. Most lived with a partner or family with three men living alone.
5. **Sense of community and community-based activities:**
- While walking was a popular activity, there were also comments about having a ‘safe space’ for men. This could be a place to meet people to feel more connected within the community. This space need not be a physical building but also as an opportunity to make space to talk. These community spaces were also seen as a route to sharing information to men in an ‘informal’ manner, so they could pick up information such as housing opportunities, benefits and support for their health and wellbeing.
 - Some community spaces had been tried but were not always suitable, either ‘not bloke friendly’, ‘too flaky’ or too many young people.
 - A suggested means to attract men to communities was through some types of activity, such as football, snooker or garden work, where men would feel more comfortable and build up



trust with each other. Two men talked at length about how they helped to build community networks within St Leonards.

6. **Volunteering:** In relation to having a 'focus' to fill their free time, 11 men had some volunteering experience. This was thought to be a useful way to meet people.

However, there were some concerns over how complicated the process of applying was, the lack of follow-up, and feeling depreciated. Volunteering opportunities were mostly through 'word of mouth' and it was difficult to know where to look for places to volunteer.

7. Supporting health and wellbeing:

Barriers of awareness and stigma - Men mentioned that increasing the awareness of support opportunities was fundamental to improving their health and well-being. A timetable of events across the town that men could participate in was mentioned. Some gave examples of community halls/services closing in their area.

The stigma to seeking help was mentioned throughout, with the main conversation style among men being banter rather than having deeper conversations that could include their health and wellbeing.

Men's ideas - In terms of service design, aimed at better attracting men, there were five main recommendations:

- Services and support being more focused rather than trying to do too much.
- Having more joined-up support services for signposting and learning from others.
- More flexible services to allow them to operate out of office hours.
- Having professionals who are suitably skilled in providing support to men.
- Preferences for single-gender groups.
- Support services need to be tailored to people's needs.

Attracting the 'under the radar' men (who are less likely to seek support) was a main challenge. Offering support where men live (outreach activities) was suggested as a strategy. Although resource intensive, this was thought to potentially attract men who are less likely to use services or feel part of their community.

8. **Building on strengths and interests (assets):** Financial constraints were the overriding barrier to assets being furthered. Quite often, costs acted as a barrier to extending hobbies or interests.

Cycling was mentioned as an interest and source of wellbeing, but poor cycling lanes and traffic were off-putting. Concerns over crime and safety occasionally restricted men to pursue their interests or meeting other people.

9. **The future and aspirations:** Every person spoken with was generally positive about the future. Some men had quite specific and personal goals like getting work, moving house, getting fitter and meeting a partner.

Appendix 2: Hastings and St Leonards Men's Health and Wellbeing Systems Map

