

Men's Talk

A theatre performance by men with
lived experience of mental health issues



Introduction

Community Links Engagement and Recovery Service (CLEAR) is a group-based recovery-focussed wellbeing service for individuals with mental health needs.

Commissioned by Kirklees CCG since 2013, CLEAR works with adults across Kirklees in West Yorkshire.

Established in 2018, following a pilot project, Men's Talk is CLEAR's creative advocacy project for men who have experienced mental health issues; using applied theatre to enable the men to gain confidence, develop new skills and create original material, with the aim of reducing stigma, encouraging men to talk about their mental health and enabling change.

"Men's Talk" is 35 minute long performance created with and performed by men with lived experience of mental health issues.

'The performances delivered through Men's Talk can deliver mental health awareness in a way which is a different to typical delivery of public health messages. Men's Talk is a great example of how being creative can support positive wellbeing.'

Rebecca Elliott -

Public Health Manager Public Mental Health & Suicide Prevention,
Kirklees Council

"Men's Talk is all about engaging in
doing work as a cohesive group.
Unlike individual therapies Men's Talk
relies on you being a team
player and supporting each other"

Men's Talk participant.



Men's Talk 24

Following a series of successful performances in 2023, the men were keen to continue to share their work.

During 2024 bookings were made by a wide range of organisations taking the men across the north of England for performances in Sheffield, Manchester and Leeds.

Audiences included University students, civil servants, health professionals, service providers and service users:

In January Men's Talk were back out on the road when, through popular demand, we returned to Leeds Trinity University to perform for two cohorts of staff and students.

"Amazing performance to explain men's mental health. As a performance it was more meaningful than teaching the topic as a lecturer"

Men's Talk performed in front of around 100 people at the SWYFT Suicide Prevention Conference at Fieldhead Hospital. The audience, made up primarily of health professionals, were particularly receptive – with a number of enquiries coming in as a result: including GP's, Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS and the Samaritans.

"Amazing story telling and detailed understanding of what men go through in regards to mental health."

"Astoundingly deep"



Men's Talk had some fantastic support from Dewsbury Rams RLFC, who paid for a pitch-side advertising board featuring the project.

Dewsbury Rams' Chairman Mark Sawyer explained why the club has donated the pitch-side advert to Men's Talk:

"Mental health and wellbeing is a key part of the club – when we became aware of Men's Talk and how it encourages men to talk about their mental health, we were keen to show our support and raise awareness about what they do."



Our second performance for the MOJ took us to Manchester. Having traversed the Central Courts' security system, the men gave an assured performance in front of mental health advocates from across the North West region.

*"Well performed, emotional and heartfelt.
Keep up the hard work. I wish my friend who took his
own life had seen a performance like this. He might still be here today"..*

The men also performed in front of service users at St Anne's Hostel in Sheffield, Creative Minds 10th Anniversary Celebrations and for staff at Huddersfield and Calderdale NHS Trust.

*"Great job. I like how you powerfully showcased
different types of difficulties and used language
we can all identify with"*



Men's Talk finished the year with performances for Wakefield Samaritans and for service users who joined us The Mission in Huddersfield.

*"Thank you! There is so much truth in the experiences you share.
It's good to know I'm not the only one."*

Brunswick Centre

*"It was really nice to see men talking about these topics with such confidence,
which goes to show it's not a normal occurrence."*

Wakefield Samaritans

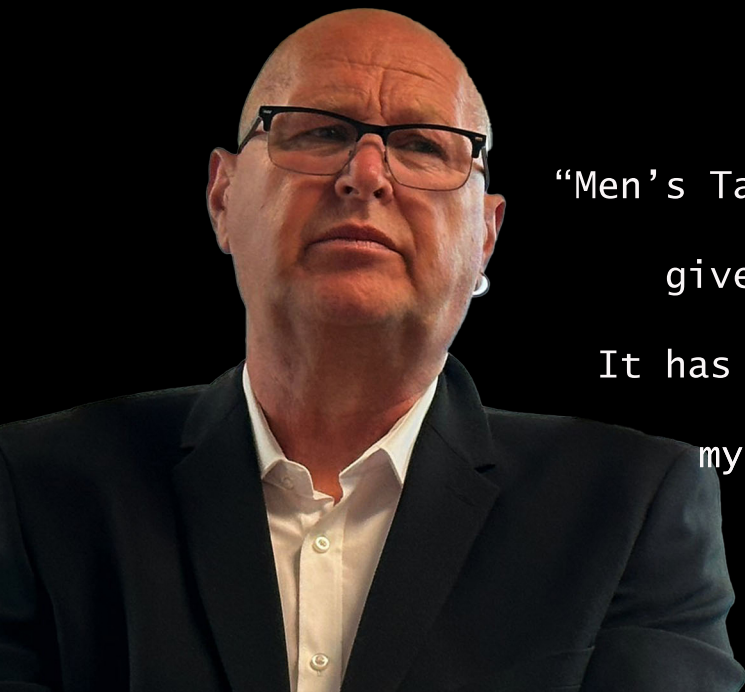


Men's Talk has featured in a number of reports this year including the Barings Foundation publication: Creatively Minded Men. The project was one of 10 national case studies featured in the report.



*"Creative Health essentially means non-medical approaches that use arts, nature, sport and outdoor activities. It is becoming clear that medical interventions and responses have limits and cannot tackle the social problems and pressures underpinning the causes of ill health.
There is increasing recognition of the value of Creative Health approaches, especially in response to the crises in mental health and the pressures placed on NHS services."*

Men's Talk features as an example of good practice.



*"Men's Talk has given me daily structure
(learning lines) it has
given me a purpose for getting
up in the morning.
It has also helped my social life in
that I can discuss
my activities with friends".*

Men involved in the project continue to report its' benefits:

“Men’s Talk has really engaged me in positivity. My suicidal thoughts have diminished and I am committed to work hard for a good outcome”.



“Men’s Talk has given me a structure and a purpose in my daily life. Not being conditioned to focus on my mental ill health has made me look at the broader picture that life is meaningful and can have a purpose”.

For further information about Men’s Talk:

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