

# *“Somebody, Nobody, Everybody”*

A Report from “Developing Collaborative Approaches in Men’s Mental Health” event –  
March 2020



# Why Now?



Thanks to all colleagues who attended and supported the event with their energy and commitment to thinking differently – please let's continue the conversation – [james.carter1@nhs.net](mailto:james.carter1@nhs.net) and [@forged\\_in\\_life](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IKOmNpMTFHg)

The video link to the event can be accessed here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IKOmNpMTFHg>

During the pandemic we have witnessed the emergence of a potentially kinder society that has highlighted how strongly we value staying connected and how deeply we depend on each other. However, with significant uncertainty and an impending need to adapt to our 'new normal' it is clear that statutory services or a focus solely on interventions of a crisis nature will only go a small way to supporting people when the going gets tough.

Thriving, positive and supportive communities are essential to encourage acceptance, hope, resilience and drive the message that recovery is possible.

Men in particular are at increased risk of mental ill health and the suicide rates remain stubbornly high with generic approaches to supporting men not offering the nuance needed to authentically support us - often "blokes" are offered support which doesn't recognise that we are far more than a sum of our parts.

Understanding men's mental health through the lens of the "whole-person" therefore is crucial to address how we recognise and support our life-experiences....**but what is out there, what is missing and how can we encourage a coming together of approaches?**

# “Engaging Men Earlier” – The Samaritans

Middle aged men have the highest rates of suicide than any age or gender group with evidence showing that wellbeing initiatives only become available or relevant at crisis point or when “picking up the pieces”.

Men report feelings of loneliness, isolation, shame and the sense of burden on others – so how best can we reach out and approach wellbeing earlier as a viable and positive exercise?

The Samaritans in [their recently released report](#) have defined **5 Core Principles** when designing approaches and services to engage men earlier;

1. Use activities to facilitate conversation
2. Be welcoming and accessible
  - Have a sense of irreverence
  - Start with low commitment and increase
3. Communicate clearly
4. Build meaningful relationships over time
5. Foster a sense of achievement



@josephtpotter

["Out of Sight, Out of Mind" - Samaritans Programme](#)

*“Is Mental Health in men seen as a luxury or an indulgence?”*



# The HOPE Project – Unloading some of the burden

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The majority of men seen by **HOPE** will have experienced a range of difficulties in their lives - Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) including emotional, physical, sexual abuse, bullying, alcohol or substance misuse may present, with wider challenges such as relationship breakdown and loss of contact with children or families.

These experiences of untreated trauma will spill out at some stage and impact on employment, debt, housing, relationships, parenting and child access issues (the legal system is not helpful for those with no resources).

From a HOPE perspective there is no “one size fits all” in support for men presenting to the service however feelings of Shame, Guilt and Embarrassment are regularly observed. As a service they struggle to access timely therapeutic support and counselling, with this often cited by the men seen in the service as a positive intervention and well needed.

## **What's missing:**

- Increased funding for local talking therapies/specific counselling for men, as seen in specialist female-only services (commissioning challenge)
- Immediacy of support is crucial for men who come seeking help



*Steve's story of how counselling has helped him unpack the trauma of a recent life event was especially powerful*

# “In-Reaching” to Men

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Barbers and Hairdressers are often referred to as “the poor man’s therapist” and with their extensive reach on the high street and into communities, a license to touch and the relative anonymity being one of many in the chair – it’s not hard to see why people open up, discuss and share things with their barber that other parts of society do not....who else gets to share news of weddings, divorces, births, deaths, job loss or first dates outside of a trusted friend or family member?

After a close friend died by suicide in 2015 Tom Chapman set out to develop a national training and education programme - [The Lion’s Barber Collective](#) - centred on training hair professionals in four key areas to support their customers with their emotional wellbeing – **“Recognise, Ask, Listen and Help to Help”**.

## Challenges:

- To listen, empower and support those culturally crucial barbers who have a privileged place in their communities to support their customers, where appropriate
- Providing professional support to those barbers who provide the listening ear – how hard is it to process or decompress after a supportive or challenging conversation when in the workplace?



*Tom's podcast series on mental health and emotional wellbeing is a great set of conversations with musicians, sports people and other online personalities*

# Community Building



[The Delicate Mind](#) exists as a result of Nikhwat's loss of his brother by suicide.

- The key to building community is to approach your work as authentically and open as possible
- Question your authority and institution – drop the guard, the bias and the authority
- Foster your authentic self and engage those communities you wish to serve

**And please don't say that communities aren't hard to reach**  
– Go to trusted individuals and communities and **LISTEN.**

## What is **THE DELICATE MIND**



*Working in institutions can build unintentional blind spots – ask,  
“How am I being institutionalised?”*

# Community Building



**TALK ABOUT IT MATE** is a blended model of support committed to building communities supporting men through **Courage, Compassion and Connection**.

TAIM works with people at an early intervention stage so building time and space is crucial – all facilitators are trained and use their life experience which they draw upon.

The peer support groups work on topics such as Resilience, Shame, Hope and aim to role-model the behaviours of non-judgment, openness and supportive encouragement.

Their key message for their communities and facilitators is to hold the space through **Humility, Integrity, Purposeful Action and Simplicity**.

**TALK ABOUT IT MATE**  
Talk About It Mate is a peer-support community interest organisation, promoting positive mental health and wellbeing.

Talk About It Mate  
@talkaboutitmate

Community Building! It's what we do.  
[bit.ly/2ZRip2u](http://bit.ly/2ZRip2u)



*“Everyone who engages with Talk About It Mate is Seen, Heard, Valued and Understood”*

# Community Building



**MoveMENT** is a social movement in Warrington committed to preventing suicide across its 220,000 residents, in engaging and positive ways.

As an umbrella collective it aims to embrace each other organisations' strengths to ensure that any access point is informed and supportive so as to make that help and connection be as personal as the need, through embedding community building principles including "No Wrong Door" and "Making Every Contact Count".

Innovations such as a Strava group (physical activity tracking/supportive community) and partnerships with local retail spaces ensure the reach is as wide as possible.

**Key principles –  
Listening, Empathy, No Judgement, Relationship Building and Active Signposting**



*"Look in the rear-view mirror....  
Where has that person gone who  
only came to one group or one chat  
– did we optimise that contact?"*

# Social Media



[Enlighten The Shadows](#) exists to provide an easy, non-judgmental online platform which allows everyday people to share their stories around how they equip themselves and the ways they have transformed their lives.

YouTube is a huge space – 2.3 billion users. There is plenty of space for individual stories which can resonate and connect with other blokes that are potentially out of reach – the uniqueness of our stories are our strength.

The men's mental health space has positive energy to model the change we want to see in the world – we need to collaborate and outdo one another with love.

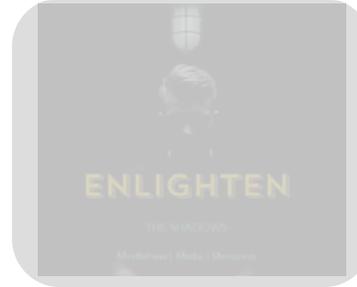
Keep going, keep growing!



*“It may sound counter-intuitive but being specific in your offer (“staying in lane”) is not limiting*

*Think Collaborate not Compete”*

# Social Media



[@gamblingguard](#) started his social media accounts to destigmatize disordered gambling and gambling addiction through humour, entertainment and “reach-in” to people and especially men through the social media platforms of TikTok, Instagram and Twitter.

Last year, Nick confronted his own gambling addiction and posted his story to social media – it went viral and was viewed 3.5m times with 100’s of people connecting with similar stories of shame and embarrassment that they had been caught up in an addiction – 75% of those people were men.

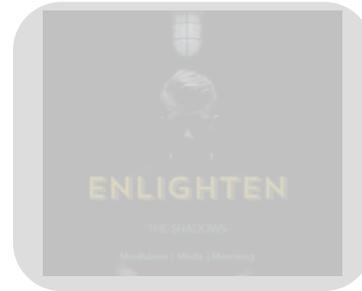
His content aims to provide modelled behaviours of providing information, promoting acceptance, destigmatizing the shame and proving that recovery is possible.

He sees his role as an agitator/disruptor to challenge the recovery models of the past – the 21<sup>st</sup> century is much more open to sharing a recovery journey and this is where social media can truly be used for social good.



*“I’m out there recovering loudly to stop others dying quietly”*

# Social Media



## #MALETALE

Tom Home set up [blOKes](#) as a result of his own personal experiences of mental health.

Using his interests in sport and networking, the team at blOKes use social media and an online presence to encourage men to tell a #MALETALE and break down the stigma of living with anxiety, stress, depression and normalising talking about it with others to share experiences.

An interesting innovation is his creating a network of ambassadors in the world of sport from the worlds of rugby, football, cricket etc. to utilise their experiences in building a sports club network across the country where talking about mental health is commonplace and normal.

### Our Ambassadors

We're incredibly fortunate to have a fantastic team of ambassadors who are all passionate about spreading the importance of men speaking about their mental health and telling a #Male Tale!



Alex Bloder



Callum Stoker



Dan Mugford



Matt Jones



Nick Williams



Dan Butler



Ryan Owens



Tom Stephenson



Tom Lindsay

*"Harness social media, knock on doors and build a Movement!"*

# Vulnerabilities and Finance

IncomeMax

Tell JO  
You Share - We Care

NHS  
Solent  
NHS Trust

Lee and his team at [IncomeMAX](#) help people by providing personal money advice to help them take control of their finances through increasing their income, reducing bills and getting the debt advice they need.

The [Martin Lewis Money and Mental Health Policy Institute](#) have highlighted that people with mental health problems are three and a half times as likely to be in problem debt – the challenges of structural inequalities and how financial services are set up is often a major contributing factor to worsening mental health.

This presents a vicious cycle and having someone by your side can be a stabilising factor to navigate and access help. Supporting those in financial distress and challenge is highly important....personally and societally.



*“When it comes to your finances, help is out there if you’re struggling with money.....”*

*Please reach out for that help as soon as possible”*

# Vulnerabilities and Finance



Understanding people’s vulnerabilities is a crucial way for statutory services (housing, council and health) to develop a “virtuous cycle” which allows for an earlier identification of crisis and rapid placing of support.

**TellJO** exists to provide an assessment of resident/customer or citizen’s life situations to better understand current vulnerabilities e.g. if an individual is entering arrears or a crisis point, and to then help both sides better manage in the future.

Of TellJO’s clients;

- 90-95% are experiencing debt
- 40% have experienced suicidal thoughts
- 60% reporting a mental health issue
- 14% with an addiction to prescribed drugs
- 9% with disordered gambling



*“By working in an open way with advice and support we can provide hope and longer term resilience, rather than collection letters, bailiffs or eviction”*

# Vulnerabilities and Finance

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Financial difficulties and mental health are a classic “chicken and egg”– which comes first when we know that financial difficulties increase mental health issues and people who are depressed will enter financial problems as a result of pressure, stress or avoidance? The COVID pandemic will have placed further pressures due to possible lost work hours or redundancy.

[Dr Thomas Richardson](#), a psychologist with a special interest in the links between money and mental health offered evidence on underlying issues that exist and how we can reflect on these in our day to day interactions;

- **Reduce the Sense of Shame** – evidence shows that shame often magnifies the issues presenting
- **Increase Hope** by showing that an individual is not alone...and that recovery is possible
- **Let people know there are ways out of problem debt** – it is not well known that free debt advice is available

*“It is often very easy to avoid the reality and not think straight where financial stress is involved – promote active coping and small steps to improve someone’s situation”*

# Nature and Physical Activity

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**State of Mind Sport** is a charity that harnesses the power of sport to promote positive mental health among sportsmen and women, fans and wider communities, and ultimately to prevent suicide.

They raise awareness of the issues surrounding mental health and wellbeing and deliver education on the subject to all levels of sport, business, education and community groups.

They signpost individuals to where they can receive care and support in their area.

First established in UK Super League in 2011, State of Mind Sport is now a much-loved national charity and international movement delivering its message across rugby league, rugby union, multiple other sports, age groups and territories.



# Nature and Physical Activity

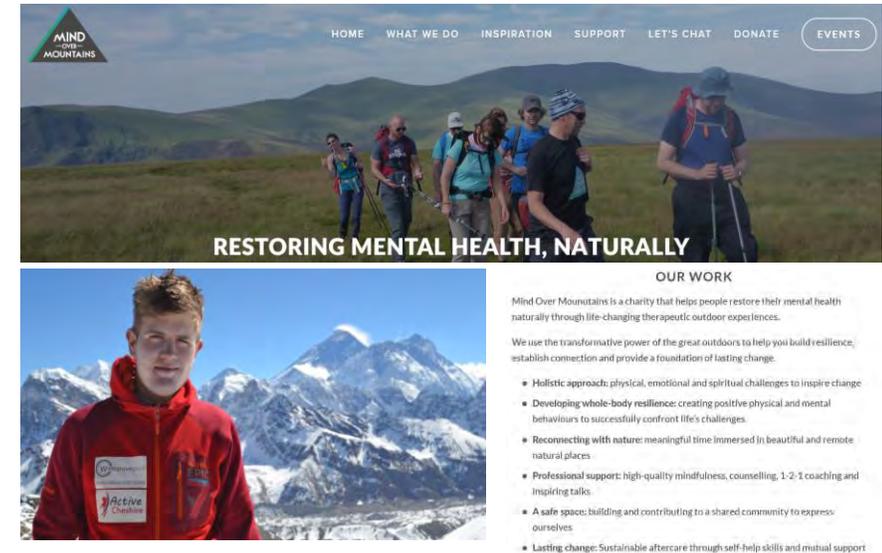


Alex's experience of the statutory mental health system is what motivated him to set up [Mind Over Mountains](#) – as an endurance athlete it took him longer to get an appointment to understand his anxiety, depression and bulimia than it did to cycle, run and walk the 5,000 miles around the UK.

For Alex, exercise and being outdoors is “the best anti-depressant” with nature acting as a grounding, mindful and levelling experience, especially for men.

“When we are walking uphill or out of breath we are sharing that it is OK to struggle, or walking through a howling gale, we recognise it is in this adversity that we show our potential for resilience”. Mind Over Mountains aims to restore emotional wellbeing through guided outdoor experiences, hill walking, mindfulness, coaching and counselling to walk, talk and share.

Evidence has shown that 50% of people have accessed green space as a way of coping with the challenges of the pandemic and 1 in 10 have started running to protect our wellbeing. Knowing the hardest part is often taking the first step...how can we reach out to our communities and harness the power of nature and connection?



*“The power of nature and activity to restore our emotional wellbeing and connection with others is real – we go up the hill as strangers and come down as friends”*

# Nature and Physical Activity



One of Jay's ways to live with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder is to share his experiences online and as a massive Evertonian and Amateur Boxer he had many people speaking to him as a result, sharing their own experiences.

The idea for **TalkHUB** came while out walking that being outdoors is not only beneficial, it is free and does not hold the same pressure as being in a room facing each other – the chance to connect outdoors breaks down traditional challenges of sharing and talking through life experiences.

The group undertakes weekly walks and offers a virtual “check-in” session for those unable to make it – it is now a worldwide community with people from near and far sharing photos of their walks and checking in to support and share how their weeks have gone.

Jay wants to engage with lads who may just be “OK” or going through a “life-wobble” whether it be job, relationship or family life to provide a supportive connection as early as possible.



*“I want my generation to be emotionally literate and feel OK to speak about our experiences; too often the older generation aren't receptive to mental health and brush it off”*

# Parenting and Fatherhood

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Becoming a Father is one of the biggest transitions in life and the impact on mental health during this period can be huge – supporting our partners and our baby’s development whilst also recognising the increased pressure that an entirely new life chapter brings, can hugely challenge our own wellbeing.

**Dad Matters** is a NHS commissioned service in Greater Manchester’s Perinatal Mental Health pathway which aims to provide support to Dads by providing a universal approach of information sharing, signposting, peer support and learning from each other’s lived experience to understand and share in the challenges of fatherhood.

The benefits of a universal pathway approach is that men can receive support but the real challenge is how to tailor support to an individual – and this is the power of collaboration and informed networks to ensure a responsive and supportive eco-system around the “referral point”.



DAD MATTERS; to mum, to baby, to everyone...

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Attachment & Bonding



Mums & Dads Mental Health



Get Access to Services

*“What Dad Matters shows is that we don’t need to reach everyone – much like a motorway our approaches create lanes however the networks all move in the same direction....we can change lanes easily and all lanes are open to us”*

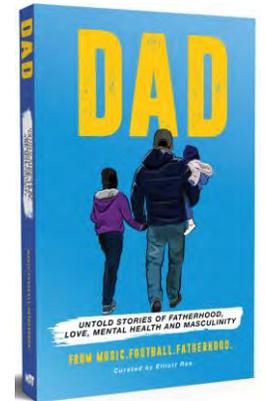
# Parenting and Fatherhood

**Music. Football. Fatherhood** is a lifestyle space for men with 3 key aims;

- Promoting open conversations for Dads to share experiences
- Advocating for equal parenting in respect of fatherhood
- Presenting a positive representation of fatherhood across all areas of life experience (sexuality, race, class etc) in the media

Developing relatable voices and wide-ranging topics through community events, discussions and webinars is the core of MFF's purpose. Earlier this year, MFF crowdsourced funding for a publishing project (£12,000 in 2 weeks) – **“DAD”** presents diverse stories of modern fatherhood and their experiences with honesty and vulnerability...subjects such as living with autism, grief and loss, impact of miscarriage, bullying in the workplace and same sex fatherhood are told in an inspiring and defiant way.

Pre-orders will be available from Tuesday 27th April and the book will be released on Tuesday 25th May. To register your interest, please visit [www.wereadad.co.uk](http://www.wereadad.co.uk).



*“We need to build relationships to in-reach into our communities...we can all play our part but we need each other to achieve goals and work together by bringing our different perspectives to the table...we need to share objectives and drop the ego’s”*

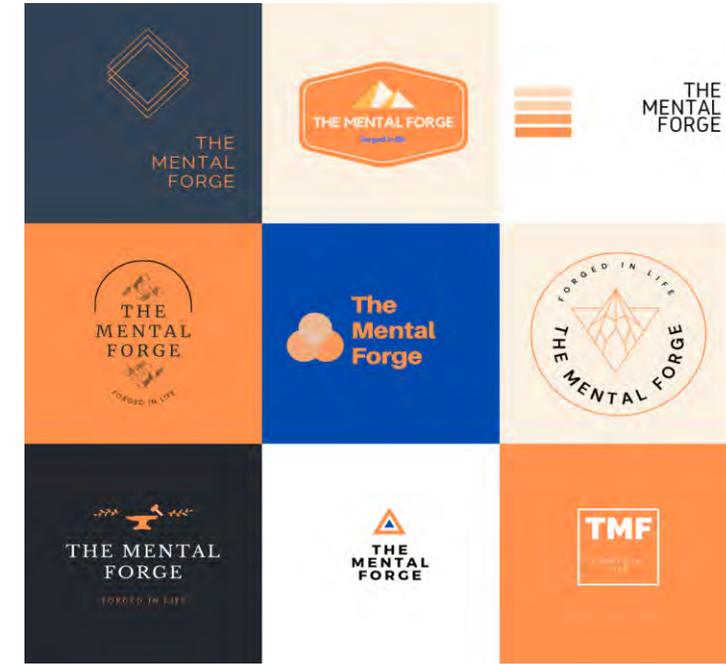
# “Making the Impossible Inevitable”

“Staying in lane” and analogies of the motorway were brought up during the event, but what does it mean for us as a movement?

Driving on a motorway is a singular direction (Men’s Mental Health) made up of many different approaches and reasons for being on that motorway at any given time (lived experience and organisations). Having lanes and entry/exit points means we are all on the same journey and able to change lanes, speed up, slow down, take a break or ask for help.

**The Mental Forge** aspires to support the smooth running of this motorway. They are a collective of similarly minded, yet distinct organisations and lived experience champions all travelling on the motorway. We are creating the supportive capacity of a super highway where anyone with the same destination in mind can be supported to enter/exit, speed up or slow down, take a break and be connected to others who would normally not be on the same road or aware of others who would normally pass by, often without us knowing.

Will Nicholson from TMF summed it up by encouraging this type of approach – “Without the motorway we are individuals travelling on lonely, winding and bumpy roads – let’s smooth the road, retain our autonomy while recognising the benefits of mutual co-operation”.



*“Finding creative ways of bringing people together that wouldn’t normally meet while retaining the autonomy and individuality of our respective approaches is powerful and allows us to bridge, make connections and drive a way forward together”*