

Cross Party Group on Health Inequalities

Minutes of the Twelfth Meeting (Parliamentary session 2016-2021)

Tuesday 21st January 2020

Committee Room 4, The Scottish Parliament

MSPs present: Richard Lyle MSP (Chair), Brian Whittle MSP, Annie Wells MSP, Bob Doris MSP, Alison Johnstone MSP

MSP apologies: Anas Sarwar MSP, Donald Cameron MSP, Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP, Neil Findlay MSP

Other CPG members present:

Salena	Begley	Family Fund
Lauren	Blair	Voluntary Health Scotland
Sarah	Curtis	University of Edinburgh
Alan	Eagleson	Terrence Higgins Trust
Ryan	Frize	University of Glasgow
Mairi	Gordon	Samaritans
Alex	Hempton	Befriending Networks
Giulia	Loffreda	Global Health Policy Unit, University of Edinburgh
Janice	Malone	Macmillan Cancer Support
Carlene	McAvoy	ROSPA
Allyson	McCollam	Voluntary Health Scotland
Gillian	McNicol	Rowan Alba
Fariha	Mosadeque	Rowan Alba
Muriel	Mowat	Befriending Networks
Justina	Murray	Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol & Drugs
Paul	Okroj	CHSS
Mhairi	Russell	University of Glasgow
Jason	Schroeder	Men's Shed Association
Jonathan	Sher	QNI
Mary	Sinclair	Senscot
Nathan	Sparling	HIV Scotland
Claire	Stevens	Voluntary Health Scotland
Jo	Teece	CHSS
Sam	Whitmore	NHS Health Scotland
Tom	Wightman	Pasda
Kiren	Zubairi	Voluntary Health Scotland
Dylan	Morris	HIV Scotland
Diane	Waugh	Macmillan Cancer Support

Non-members present:

Laura	Andre	Individual
Nithya	Arunachalam	Napier University
Douglas	Guest	Home-Start UK Scotland NHS Healthcare Improvement Scotland
Rachel	Hewitt	Positive Steps
Paige	Linnell	Glasgow Council on Alcohol
Gary	Meek	Napier University
Aarathi	Mohanasundaram	NHS Healthcare Improvement Scotland
Donna	O'Rourke	Men's Health Forum
Martin	Tod	Big Hearts Community Trust
Craig	Wilson	Families Outside
Adam	Wilson	NHS Edinburgh Access Practice
John	Budd	Children's Health Scotland
Linda	Alexander	Tim Street Training and Consultancy
Tim	Street	

1. Minutes of last meeting

The minute of the business meeting held on 1st October 2019 was approved without amendment.

2. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

3. Proposed new members

The CPG received 8 new applications for membership. In addition, NHS Health Scotland, an existing member due to be absorbed into Public Health Scotland as of 1st April, were approved as a member in their new entity. Other applications approved were: Terrence Higgins Trust, Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA), British Red Cross, Macmillan Cancer Support, Church of Scotland, British Dieticians Association and Scottish Men's Sheds Association.

4. Topic for discussion: Men's Health Inequalities

It was noted that the topic was chosen because Bob Doris MSP had had an exploratory discussion with the Secretariat of the CPG, Voluntary Health Scotland, last year about whether there should be a CPG on men's health. There is currently a CPG on women's health which is convened by Monica Lennon MSP. VHS had subsequently proposed the subject as one for this meeting. The purpose of the discussion was to examine the impact that gender and inequalities have on men's health and their ability to access healthcare, and to shine a light on a range of health issues which may disproportionately affect men.

Martin Tod, Chief Executive, Men's Health Forum

The Men's Health Forum aims to help improve the health of men and boys, particularly those in the most disadvantaged areas and communities, through information, services and treatment.

Martin explained some of the health inequalities faced by men. In UK nearly 1 man in 5 dies under the age of 65 and this is nearly 1 man in 4 in Scotland. According to data from the National Records of Scotland more men than women die within each age bracket recorded from the age of 5 to 89. Statistics also show that the gap in life expectancy between men and women has been narrowing; however, overall growth in life expectancy has been stalling for both sexes.

Men's health and men's mortality has been framed by sexual health, men's cancers and suicide; however there are a range of other health inequalities that affect men. Across a range of 13 cancers men were more likely to die than women, moreover, men are slightly more likely to suffer from Type 2 Diabetes and three times more likely to have a diabetes related amputation.

Some of the reasons why men face higher inequalities is because men are less likely to consult GPs than women, however, this changes after the age of retirement when more men go to GPs than women. There is also a trend whereby men prioritise their work over their health and are unlikely to take time off work unless their symptoms persist or until their condition worsens. Men are also less likely to seek help for their mental health or access screening programmes. Men are also more likely to engage in risky health behaviours such as drinking alcohol, being overweight, smoking and gambling.

Martin pointed out that far more inequalities exist amongst men, across levels of deprivation, ethnicity and sexuality, than between the sexes.

In order to tackle men's health inequalities the Men's Health Forum have called for better measurement of men's health issues and more gendered analysis of health, a focus on prevention and the removal of barriers to enable men to engage with health services. Martin also spoke about the need to proactively reach out to men by going to where they are, for example, work places, and the importance of targeted programmes that understand intersectionality and the needs of the highest risk men and boys. Martin also raised awareness of men's health policies and gendered strategies that have been established in Ireland, Australia, Iran and Brazil and called for developing a Men's Health Forum in Scotland. Anyone interested in joining such a network or would like further information should contact Martin:

martin.tod@menshealthforum.org.uk

Nathan Sparling, Chief Executive Officer, HIV Scotland

Latest statistics show that there are around 5,881 people living with HIV in Scotland of whom 73% are men. Trends show that there is often a late diagnosis of HIV, with 28% of those newly diagnosed at a late stage of infection: this could be because men are not actively going to get checked.

Gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men are 24 times more likely to be living with HIV than the general population. Nathan explained that this poses challenges for diagnosis as many men do not self-identify as gay or bisexual and therefore do not access sexual health services or information. Sex workers and people who inject drugs are also at greater risk of HIV as the current outbreak of HIV in Glasgow illustrates.

Nathan also spoke of the stigma surrounding HIV and how this presents the single biggest barrier to accessing services for prevention, testing and treatment. Myths and misinformation continue to perpetuate this stigma and around 25% of Scots wrongly believe that HIV can be passed through sharing cutlery and mugs.

Scotland has become the first country in the UK to offer PrEP for free, alongside free home testing options. However, 99% of those accessing PrEP are white gay men, so it's clear that it is not reaching everyone. There are also issues around access to wider services such as mental health services with 2 in 5 people with HIV saying they have an unmet need in terms of their mental health, as well as loneliness and isolation.

Steps forward identified by Nathan included more actions to tackle stigma more measurement of how stigma can be challenged. More meaningful engagement of people with and at risk of HIV and improving quality of life for everyone living with HIV is also required.

Craig Wilson, General Manager of Big Hearts Community Trust

The Big Hearts Community Trust is a registered charity based in Tynecastle Park, Edinburgh, that aims to improve the lives of vulnerable adults and children through the power of football. The trust is able to provide support that is more accessible to people who would not use services in a traditional setting.

They have identified a range of issues affecting people in their local area such as loneliness and isolation, poverty (with 39% of young people in their ward growing up in poverty), dementia, addictions, mental health issues and children in care.

They run four projects locally and some are national. The Football Fans in Training Project supports men to lose weight through football. The Male Carers Group for kinship carers and male carers provides a range of support groups and provides a space for male carers to think about themselves and their needs. Walking Football supports older people to stay active but also provides a social setting for people to get together. They have also started a walking netball group for women. They have a project called the Changing Room, which aims to promote men's positive mental health. It is open to men aged 30 to 64 and is a 12-week programme offering participants free opportunities to meet up, engage in activities together and start positive conversations about their mental health and wellbeing. This project offers a safe place to discuss challenging issues and people who take part often stay on afterwards to volunteer and recruit others to join the project.

Discussion

Bob Doris MSP thanked VHS as Secretariat for organising the discussion.

A number of people voiced support for continuing the conversation beyond this particular meeting. Bob Doris MSP suggested that as a starting point a subgroup of members of the CPG could meet to discuss the issues further and scope what works to tackle inequalities. Bob suggested the group identify realistic actions. He suggested the group should write to the relevant Minister at the Scottish Government to identify what its current activity is on men's health inequalities. The group could propose an Action Plan to tackle men's health inequalities. The importance of any strategy or action plan being led by lived experience was discussed.

The barriers for men volunteering were discussed and these included stigma and fear in relation to some volunteering opportunities, e.g. with children. The work of Big Hearts Community Trust in supporting and encouraging men to volunteer through the power of sports was commended.

Martin Tod also discussed the importance of tackling stigma around male carers citing that a quarter of males who care don't describe themselves as carers. Selena Begley of the Family Fund suggested a joint CPG meeting between the Health Inequalities CPG and the Carers CPG and spoke of the importance of male carers to be supported to care for themselves.

The work of Men's Sheds to engage men of all ages from 18 onwards, in volunteering was also highlighted: all men's sheds are run by volunteers in Scotland.

The importance of supporting vulnerable men and boys especially those with conditions such as autism which make them harder to engage with was highlighted. It was noted that issues of intersectionality needed to be better understood and considered when designing support.

Jonathan Sher of Queen's Nursing Institute Scotland (QNIS) pointed out the range of resources available on the UK QNI website in support of men's health.

5. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

6. Date of next meetings

- Tuesday 28th January- 2-4pm CPG Study Visit- Art in Hospital, Queen Elizabeth University Hospital, Glasgow
- Tuesday 14th May 12.30- 14.30 Committee Room 4, Chaired by Donald Cameron MSP. Topic: Drugs, Deprivation, Discrimination and Disease