



**#blokes
views**

Men's Outreach

Giving seldom heard men a voice on local health & social care to help
make a change

May 2016

Disclaimer

Please note that this report relates to findings from 187 men. Our report therefore is not a representative portrayal of the experience & views of all men in Blackburn with Darwen, only an account of what was represented at the time.

Acknowledgments

Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen would like to thank the following establishments for allowing us to engage with their clientele and supporting the project:

- Asda
- Blackburn Market
- The Postal Order
- The Bridgewater, Darwen
- The Old Chapel
- Bar Ibiza
- Zy Bar
- Ewood Working Men's Club
- The Times
- Old Function Room

We would also like to thank the following organisations & individuals for their contribution & support:

- Carers Service
- Care Network
- East Lancs Umbrella Society
- Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen Volunteers
- *Relax & Chat*
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- Karl Riding for illustrations throughout



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Introduction

Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen identified a need to engage with seldom heard men in the borough who have previously been deemed 'hard to reach'. Only 38% of our membership was made up of men & we wanted to listen to their views & experiences of local Health & Social Care provision to ensure they play an active role in influencing local services.

We aimed to:

- Identify men's awareness of local Health & Social Care Services
- Identify barriers in accessing local Health & Social Care Services
- Identify what works well currently & where there is room for improvement
- Identify effective ways of communicating & engaging with seldom heard men

We wanted to engage with men in their places of leisure, largely pubs, bookies & fast food outlets. These were the locations we identified to have had very little engagement previously, where men's voices need amplifying and where we could arm them with the information & signposts they required.

Why Men?

- On average 13 men each day take their life through suicide in the UK
- Male suicide accounts for 76% of the suicides in the UK
- On average men are 3x more likely to commit suicide than women in the UK

*Blackburn with Darwen Suicide Prevention Strategy

Local Statistics

- Life expectancy at birth (male): Blackburn with Darwen 76.8 (England 79.4)
- Life Expectancy is 12.8 years lower for men in the most deprived areas of Blackburn with Darwen than in the least deprived areas
- Healthy life expectancy at birth (male): Blackburn with Darwen 57.5 (England 63.3)**
- Percentage of adults (18+) with depression 2012/13 7% compared to an England average of 5% ***
- Suicide rate for men in Blackburn with Darwen 17.0 per 100,000 for the period 2012-14, compared to 14.1 per 100,000 in England *

**Public Health Outcomes Framework

***Community Mental Health Profiles 2012/13



Research Methods

We understood talking about Health & Social Care Services may appear dull for many men so we wanted to turn this on its head, making it relevant & exciting.

We decided to design engagement tools that were exciting & humorous, which focused on the following messages:

- Giving men a voice
- Allowing men to influence & shape local Health & Social Care Services
- Health & Social Care Services are relevant to everyone
- Men can find out about Health & Social Services
- Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen are **not** promoting any kind of health message

Task Group

A task group of local men was set up to help us design, implement, deliver & evaluate the project. They had a say on the name of the project whilst acting as experts throughout.



Questionnaire

The task group were responsible for designing the questionnaire & choosing relevant questions which they thought

would receive the best response from men.

73 men completed a #blokesviews Questionnaire

Quiz

A general knowledge 'Pub Quiz' was designed for those who may not have wanted to complete a questionnaire. This was a fun way to engage with an incentive for those taking part. As part of the quiz three questions were incorporated which helped us gather men's views in a less formal way.



Winner of the #blokesviews Quiz receiving a Hamper with The Postal Order Manager & Claire Moran, Information & Signposting Officer

51 men took part in the #blokesviews Quiz

Beer Mat

After speaking to men & also staff members in drinking establishments in Blackburn with Darwen it was decided that beer mats were an effective way of engaging those men hardest to reach.

A beer mat was designed to promote both the project & the role of Healthwatch. A number of humorous health related scenarios were designed particular aimed at men, the task group then chose their two favourite designs.

The beer mat acted as a broker for conversation whilst also raising awareness & discussion around the project in our absence.

Initial ideas for Beer Mat scenarios:

'Barry always drinks the same beer, he wishes he always saw the same doctor'

'David doesn't have to wait long at the bar, he waited ages this morning on the phone for a doctor's appointment'



The two final beer mat designs

Your View Your Voice

During the launch week of #blokesviews we held a Your View Your Voice workshop which allowed men to share their views & experiences.

Your View Your Voices is Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen's monthly themed workshop designed for discussion, debate & information sharing.

We used body map scenarios to get men to think about their positive & negative experiences including,

'Barry is happy with local services and feels good about it...'

'Bob is unhappy with local services & feels down about it...'

Language & Promotion

We consulted with men throughout the project on the language & promotional methods we used to ensure we best engaged with our target group.

Local men were used on posters & leaflets promoting the project. This gave them ownership whilst allowing other men to recognise them, therefore making engagement easier.

We used down to earth, regional & sometimes humorous language to ensure our target group found the project accessible.



Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen, giving men a voice

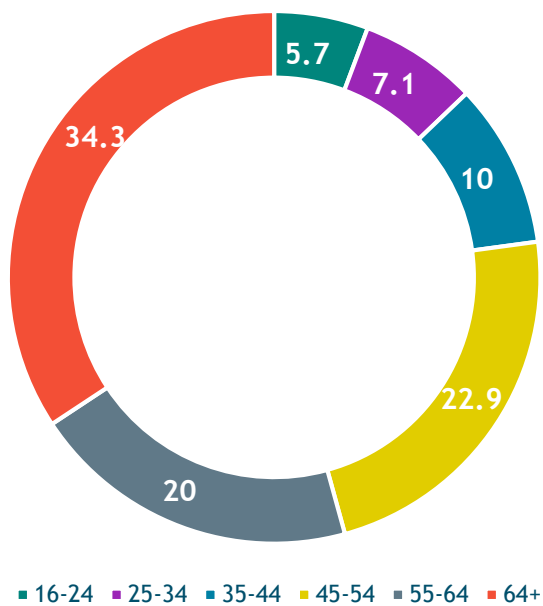
Join us for the launch of our dedicated men's project, giving men a voice on local Health & Social Care Services to help make a change.

The final leaflet produced to promote the launch of the project

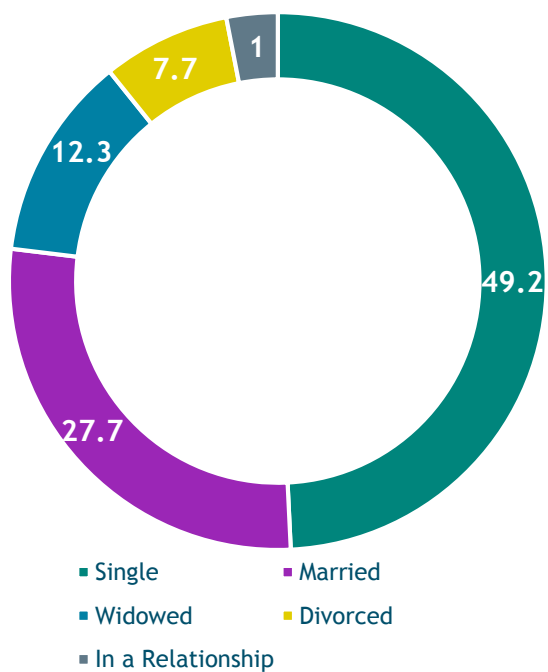
Who we spoke to?

We spoke to 187 men in total over the course of the project.

Age of Participants (%)

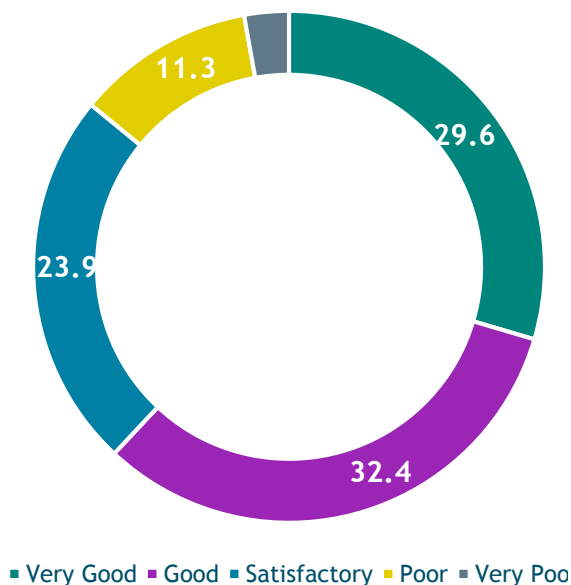


Marital Status of Participants (%)



Findings

How would you rate Health & Social Care Services in BwD? (%)



62% of men we spoke to felt Health & Social Care Services in Blackburn with Darwen was either Good or Very Good

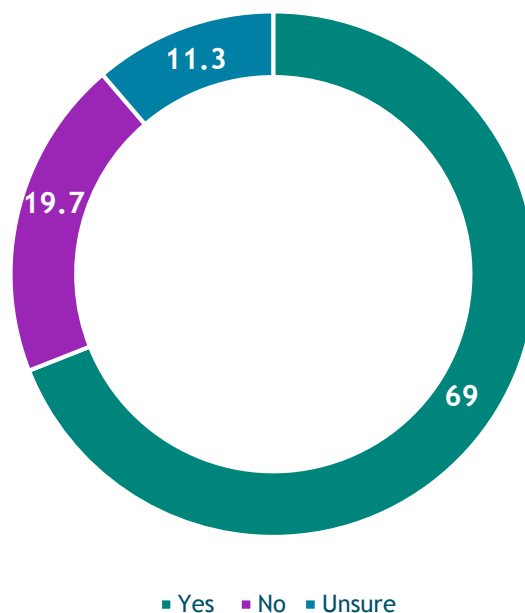
'the NHS is the best health care system in the world' 25-34 Single

14.1% of men we spoke to felt they were poor or very poor, whilst a number had very little awareness of any. A number mentioned how there could be more services specifically for men.

'Don't know any...' 16-24 Single

'Phoned crisis team 72 times, wanted someone to come and see me. I was in a state. They didn't have enough staff nurses.' 25-34 Single

Would you know where to go to find information about your local Health & Social Care Services? (%)

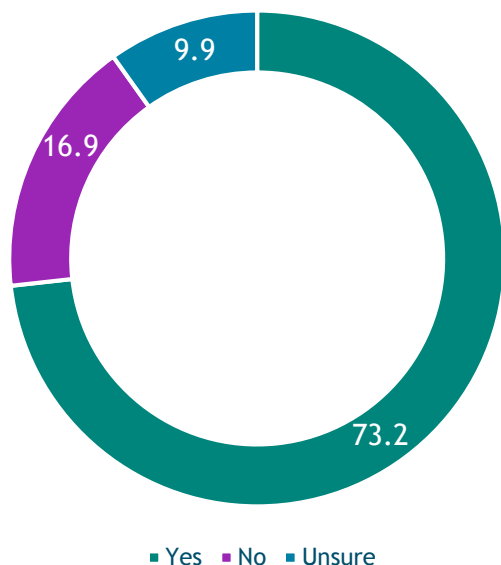


31% of the men we spoke to either didn't know or were unsure where to go to find information about local Health & Social Care Services.

Those who had family or a network of people around them tended to have greater awareness, one man said his wife did it all for him.



Are you confident in accessing local Health & Social Care Services? (%)



73.2% of men we spoke to were confident in accessing services. The 16.9% who weren't confident spoke about being unsure when to ring the GP & not seeing the same person every time.

They also spoke about the attitude of health professionals, in particular doctor's receptionists. One man went on to say the *'lady who sometimes answers the phone at my doctors acts superior and isn't understanding'*. Another spoke about their dentist and how they could be quite abrupt in giving instructions.

'We all feel a bit awkward questioning a doctor.'

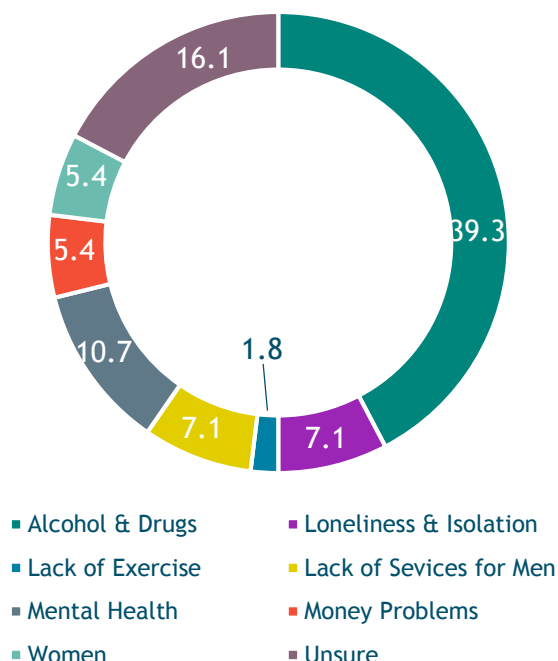
'Shouldn't feel stigmatised by your own GP'

One man spoke about *Inspire* substance misuse services. He talked about how they were changing their name & staff. He now see's different people at different times which has impacted his confidence in accessing support.

'When you ring 111 they are good but they end up referring you back to GP'

Another man went on to talk about how he felt his GP made decisions without him being involved.

What do you think are the main issues affecting blokes in BwD? (%)



The men we spoke to talked about a number of issues they felt affected men in Blackburn with Darwen.

The issue which was mentioned most was Alcohol & Drugs with 39.3% of the men we spoke to thinking this was the main issue affecting men. Men spoke of not having anything else to do, which was particularly evident in single or divorced participants.

'A lot drink and smoke. A lot don't know which way to go.'

'Booze and drugs. I'm a boozer but there is plenty that use the drugs.'

‘Don’t know what to do apart from go to the pub’ 55-64 Divorced

‘You can get drugs round here no problem.’ 64+ Single

‘(men) can’t talk about alcoholism’

Another man spoke about how men turn to alcohol or drugs to get them out of reality ‘*escapism*’.



Mental Health was mentioned by 10.7% of participants. This was linked to loneliness & isolation, rejection and the feeling of ‘not being wanted’. The situation men had found themselves in also had an impact, one man talking about turning to alcohol & becoming depressed because there is ‘*no work, no jobs*’.

Men also spoke about how often they were too frightened to go and see a GP.

‘Blokes don’t like white coats, don’t go to doctors’

Not being able to talk about medical issues ‘*awkward problems*’ due to the manly stereotype was also talked about by a number of participants.

‘Blokes don’t speak. They think it’s not a manly thing’

Men spoke about a lack of services & social groups specifically for men, more than one man spoke about how 50+ groups were often full of people much

older. If you are in your 50’s/60’s this just makes you feel older & doesn’t help.

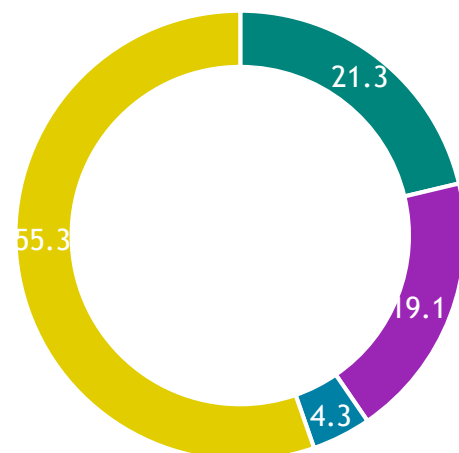
They went on to say how they don’t see any information relating to the issues affecting men.

One participant spoke about how different communities not getting on together was an issue for men in Blackburn with Darwen.

Money Issues were mentioned by 5.4% of the men we spoke to, one man spoke about how a lack of information in regards to benefit entitlements can cause money problems. Another went on to talk about how becoming homeless had affected his personal hygiene as he couldn’t afford toiletries.

‘If you get invited to a ‘do’ you need new clothes so you can’t go.’
35-44 Married

What are the main challenges you face to accessing local Health & Social Care Services? (%)



- Making appointment with GP/Hospital
- Not knowing where to go
- Not being computer literate
- No challenges

21.3% of the men we spoke to felt making an appointment with the GP or Hospital was a challenge to accessing local Health & Social Care Services. One man spoke about how difficult it was getting an appointment around work.

GP receptionists were mentioned by a number of men, one man spoke about how there are lots of female receptionists and *'they don't understand men's issues'*, whilst in contrast another participant said he found female health professionals more compassionate.

One man spoke about how services are limited, especially in regards to mental health. *'Once sessions are over (e.g. CBT) it's down to the referral process again'*.

19.1% felt not knowing where to go was the main challenge they faced when accessing local Health & Social Care Services. Men spoke of the confidence, knowledge & information needed when navigating your way through the system to find the right place and/or people.

'who to turn to?'

One man spoke about how the Samaritans were limited in what advice they could give, he spoke about how he preferred to speak face to face rather than over the phone but often there wasn't the opportunity.

Trusting professionals, having to repeat themselves & *'explaining properly what's up with you'* to new staff were further challenges.

'Where does my mental health records go because services keep changing?'

'Getting people to listen to you, too quick passing the buck' 64+ Married

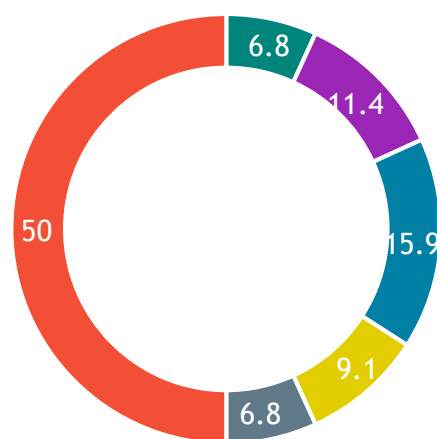
A number of older participants spoke about how not being computer literate

impacted their access to information & services.

The way in which men travel was also mentioned,

'If you don't have a car you are basically knackered!' 64+ Divorced

Is there anything local services could do to improve your Health & Wellbeing? (%)



- Difficulty getting GP appointment
- Lack of flexibility/Easier Access
- More information
- More Services needed
- Gym Access
- No

15.9% of participants said more information and/or services being better advertised would improve their Health & Wellbeing.

One man spoke about the need for doctors receptionists having better information on how to access services.

'Advertise in the local rag.' 64+ Single

11.4% of the men we spoke to spoke about lack of flexibility with services & a need for easier access.

9.1% of participants talked about a need for more services for men.

6.8% mentioned affordable or free gym access & sports clubs.

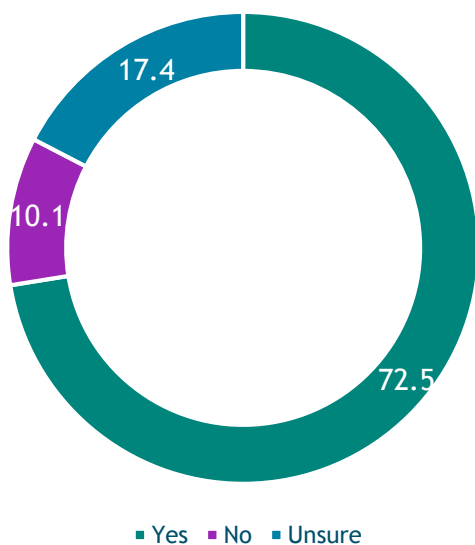
Other men mentioned cheaper prescriptions, free bus passes, help to keep young people off the streets, mental health awareness, quitting smoking & benefits.

'Stop stopping my benefits' 45-54 Single

Those less deprived & with greater disposable income seemed to have a more positive outlook.

'Can't think of anything - I'm fairly well off and enjoy good health'

Do you think there's a stigma attached to Mental Health issues in men? (%)



72.5% of men we spoke to said they thought there was a stigma attached to Mental Health Issues in men.

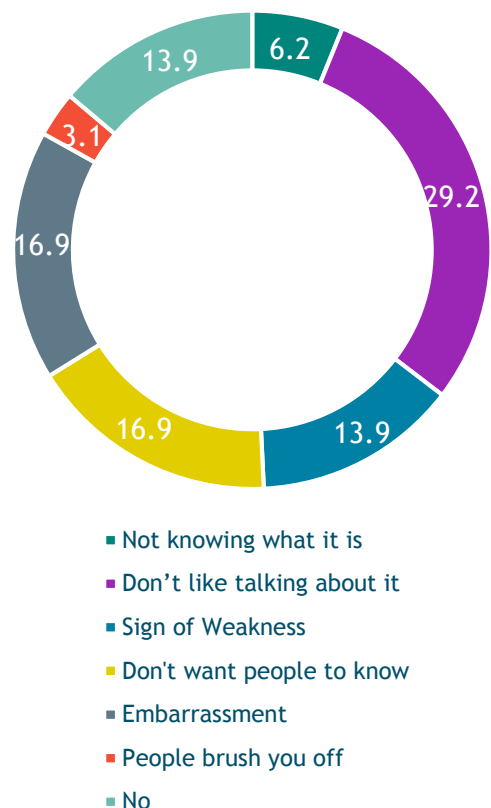
They went on to say men don't understand mental health the same because it wasn't something visual like Physical Health.

'That's the big one, the giant one.' 64+ Single

'I don't give a toss. No stigma as far as I am concerned' 55-64 Single



Are there things that might stop men talking about mental health? (%)



29.2% felt men don't like talking about mental health, whether this be to each other or health professionals.

‘Nobody talks about it. People just have a drink and a laugh. People are too embarrassed. They would sooner kill themselves than talk about it that’s why they drink and take drugs.’ 64+ Single

‘People build it up inside and keep it inside.’

‘Men are men, they don’t discuss their problems’ 45-54 Single

‘It’s undignified to talk’

A number of men went on to say how they thought it was easier for younger people to talk as they ‘seem free’ but harder for older people. They felt if it was *‘out in the open more people might talk about it’*.

One man talked about how he felt talking about mental health brought out a *‘dark side’* which people didn’t want to face.

16.9% said not wanting people to know and having pride would be the reason men don’t talk about mental health. One man spoke about how men don’t talk about their feelings because other men don’t want to listen to them.

‘Not nice to be a ‘nut case’ you don’t get any respect if you are prone to having a meltdown. If you admit you were a nutcase people wouldn’t want to know you the same.’ 35-44 Married

‘A lot of men tend to use substances to get through’

16.9% talked about a fear of embarrassment, ridicule or being laughed at.

‘It’s a macho image, women would talk all day about it.’ 64+ Divorced

13.9% spoke about how it was a sign of weakness. They spoke about how they thought it was an attack or threat on

their masculinity and how mental health issues could be interpreted as a form of weakness.

‘I’ve always had the attitude of just crack on and ignore it’ 25-34 Single

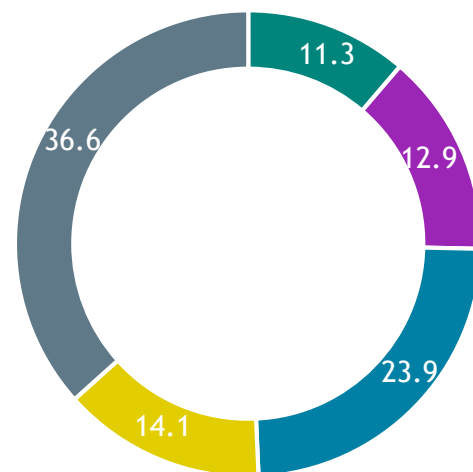
They wanted to show they were *‘carrying on and in control, ignorance is bliss’*.

6.2% of men thought not knowing what it is would be the reason men didn’t talk about their Mental Health.

One man spoke about *‘if someone hasn’t experienced mental health problems they find it hard to understand’*.

3.1% of participants spoke about how they felt services brushed them off when they started to open up about their mental health.

Do you talk about your Mental Health with your family and/or friends? (%)



- All of the time
- Most of the time
- Some of the time
- Rarely
- Never

50.7% of the men we spoke to said they spoke about their Mental Health with family and/or friends rarely or never. Men gave a number of reasons why they didn’t talk about it including not wanting

to upset them & not being taken seriously. A number of men spoke about how they have no one to talk to.

'Some of the time. Can't always say too much mates and family take the piss' 25-34 Single

'No. Not for last 60 years. I have got on with it since I was 16' 64+ Single

'No, communicate with my dogs' 55-64 Single

'Never. Don't have any friends' 45-54 Single

The men who did speak to family and/or friends spoke about how being open & honest was important and how discussing each other's problems helped them.

One participant initially said he didn't talk about his mental health before changing his mind after his friend said *'yes you do, you talk to me about Margaret'*.

21.5% of the men we spoke to felt lonely or isolated all or most of the time.

'At the moment, just recently widowed. It helps coming down here and having a cup of tea.' 64+ Widowed, Blackburn Market

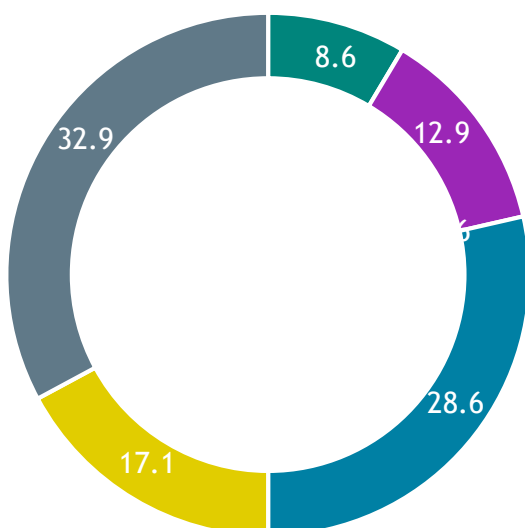
'Yes, a lot. Had cancer, no one to talk to, feel like door slammed in my face, talk to my daughter.' 55-64 Single

'All of the time - that's why I am in here now, desperately.' 55-64 Single

'Everyday, morning, noon and night.' 64+ Single

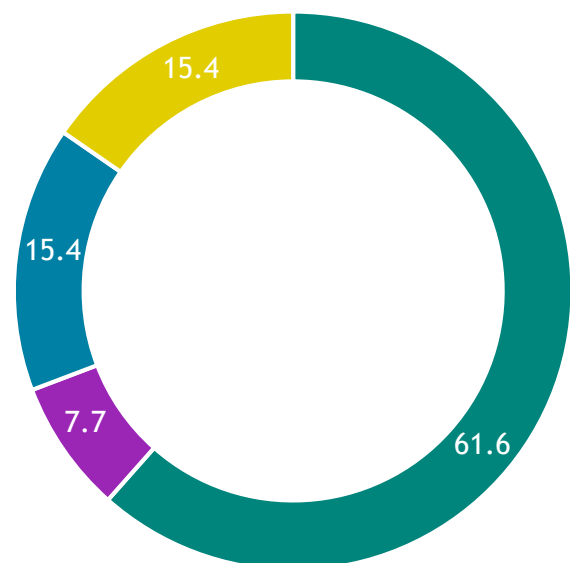
'After loss of wife, tried to go out and mix but too many 'cliques' so prevented further sorties. Length of wife's illness stopped socialising, then ill mother so got out of socialising.' 64+ Widowed

Do you ever feel Lonely or Isolated? (%)



■ All of the time ■ Most of the time
■ Some of the time ■ Rarely
■ Never

Marital Status of those Lonely or Isolated All or Most of the time (%)



■ Single ■ Married ■ Widowed ■ Divorced

61.6% of those Lonely or Isolated All or Most of the time were Single, 15.4% Widowed, 15.4% Divorced & 7.7% Married.

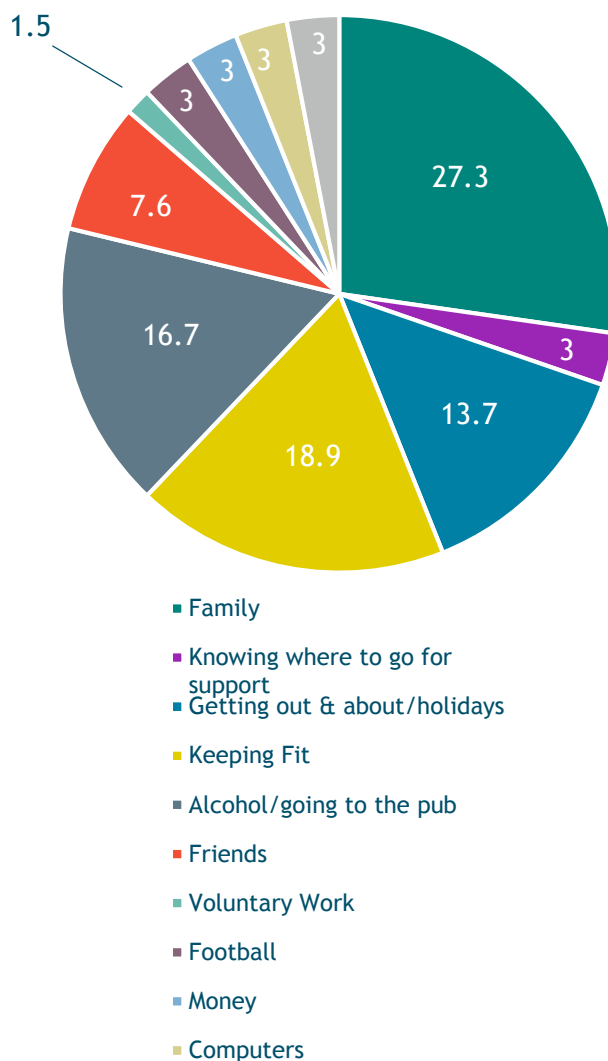
15.4% had an illness or disability whilst 7.7% were Carers.

Keeping busy, having groups to attend and family where all spoke about when it came to rarely or never being lonely or isolated.

One man spoke about how he would like to go to groups but he wouldn't know what to talk about.

Another man went on to say that even though he had people around him he felt lonely in his mind, whilst another spoke about living in sheltered housing, he didn't feel isolated but he was still lonely.

What one thing helps you stay Happy & Healthy? (%)



27.3% of men we spoke to said Family was the one thing that helps them stay happy & healthy. One man spoke of his 'wonderful wife' whilst others mentioned children & grandchildren.

18.9% of participants said keeping fit was the main thing that helps them stay happy & healthy.

16.7% spoke about Alcohol and/or going to the pub.

'Happy, booze, healthy, what's that?'

'Being able to get out and have a drink. Doesn't keep me healthy but



it keeps me happy. I can't stay in. I don't do anything healthy.' 45-54 Divorced

'A drink and a smoke'

'Football and couple of pints with the lads' 55-64 Married

7.6% of the men we spoke to said their friends were the one thing that helps them stay happy & healthy. A number of men mentioned how being with other people who have *'like minded problems'* helped.

3% spoke about having money,

'Having money in your pocket. You have to have money to be happy.'

Animals, relationships, football & voluntary work were also mentioned.

'Watching videos of where I have been on holiday with my mum. I am happy in my own way.' 64+ Single

'Company of my animals. Without those I'd be swinging on the end of a rope.' 55-64

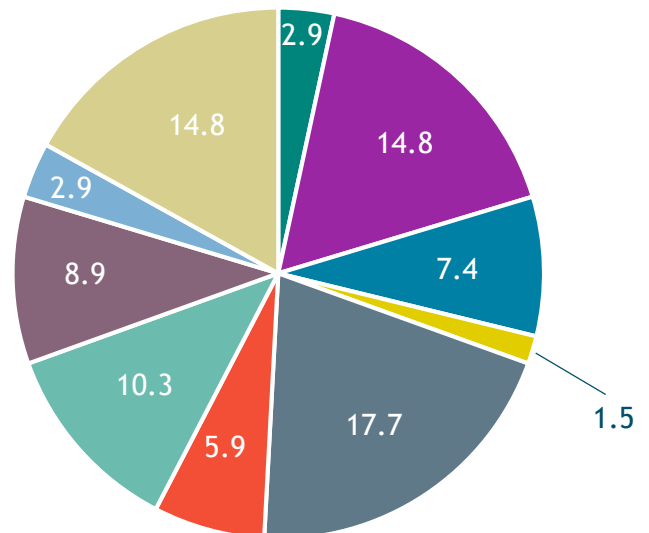
'Wanting my ex back'

Men's attitude & outlook on life was also evident in having an impact on staying happy & healthy. Those who were active in their community and attended regular events were often happier & healthier.

'Holidays, fast cars and fast women' 90 Widowed

'Being listened to, cheerful and happy faces'

What one thing makes it difficult for you to stay Happy & Healthy? (%)



- Living in Blackburn
- Money Issues
- No motivation/boredom
- Not getting out and about
- Stress/Depression/Loneliness
- Family Issues/Homelife
- Alcohol/Pubs/takeaways
- Not being able to exercise
- Smoking
- Health/Illness

17.7% of the men we spoke to said that Stress, Depression and/or Loneliness were the main things that make it difficult to stay happy & healthy.

14.8% felt their health and/or illness was the main thing that made it difficult to be happy & healthy.

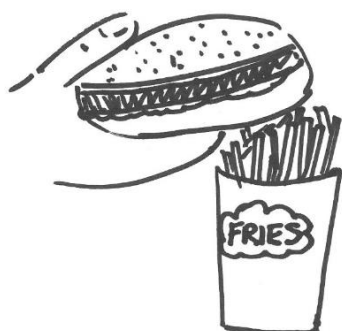
'Just get offered tablets, don't always get to know about single access point.'

'Went to see GP to reduce tablets and he said 'just keep taking them.'

10.3% said Alcohol, Pubs and/or Takeaways were the main things that make it difficult to stay happy & healthy.

One man went on to talk about how 'fresh stuff' was more expensive, as was the cost of cooking. With a lack of money he was more likely to choose cheaper less healthy food.

Another spoke about how living alone affected their diet as there wasn't the same portion control that they may have in a family environment.



8.9% of participants spoke about how not being able to exercise made it difficult. A number of men mentioned how from a health point of view there was 'more focus on women than men'.

5.9% spoke about family issues & home life, one participant spoke about how his partner wasn't very understanding.

Others went on to talk about money issues, motivation/boredom, smoking & health issues.

'If I plan to do something I can sometimes have a negative voice saying why bother'

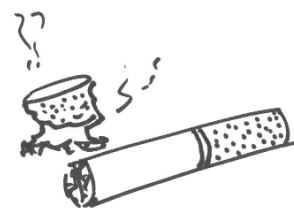
'Where I am living at the moment and grabbing quick meals'

'I would be happier if I had a partner. Instead of talking to your walls I need someone to talk to. I need trust, someone who can understand my needs.'

'If you haven't got a woman.' 64+ Divorced

The media was also mentioned by one participant,

'Always bad news on television'.



Conclusion

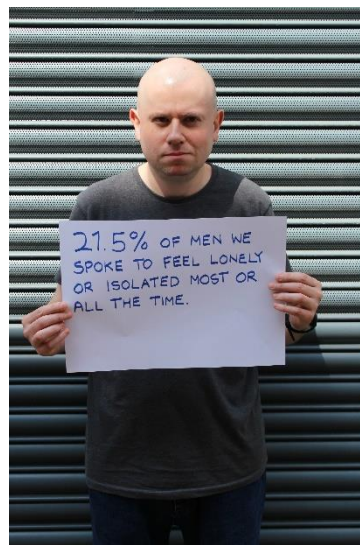
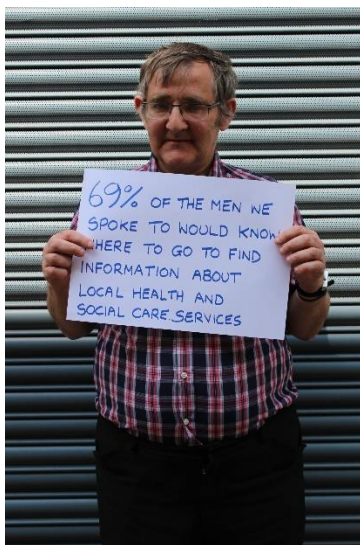
During the course of #blokesviews we spoke to 189 seldom heard men in Blackburn with Darwen over a 4 month period, largely in pubs & cafes. Initially we had hoped to engage with men in bookies, but this proved a difficult environment to engage as many were preoccupied and therefore findings weren't gathered here.

The responses in pubs was mixed, with some larger groups of men hesitant to engage whilst in the company of others. In contrast many of those on their own were happy for the company.

1. 16.9% of men weren't confident in accessing services. The image (e.g. White Jacket) associated with both services & health professionals can be off putting for some men. This impacted on how involved they were with their care/treatment. Those who wanted to be involved often weren't and they felt decisions were made without them.
2. 21.3% of men thought making an appointment with a GP was a challenge. This frustration could impact men accessing services therefore having a negative impact on their health & wellbeing.
3. 31% of the men either didn't know or were unsure where to go to find information about local Health & Social Care Services. When information & services were found participants felt it was often unsuitable and/or not specific to men. The way in which men & women are communicated with was highlighted, which sometimes needs to be different, as it does within the male demographic. (e.g. men in pubs might not read the same information as men in gyms)
4. Those men with family support were more likely to access services, whilst 27.3% said family was the one thing that helps them stay happy & healthy. Participants also tended to have a more positive outlook on life and where more comfortable talking & sharing their views & experiences.
5. 21.5% of men were Lonely and/or Isolated all or most of the time. This was significantly higher in those who were single, widowed or divorced. It was also evident that being in an environment full of people didn't mean men weren't lonely or isolated; often quite the opposite. Those who were active in the community and attended regular activity were less likely to be lonely & isolated and had a more positive outlook.
6. 72.5% of men spoke about how they thought there was a stigma attached to mental health in men. This seemed to have a significant impact on their health, wellbeing & attitude. The fear of not being masculine enough was evident in many of the men we spoke to and this impacted on them accessing services and/or support.
7. 39.3% of men felt Alcohol & Drugs were the main issues affecting blokes in Blackburn with Darwen, whilst 16.7% felt Alcohol & going to the pub was the one

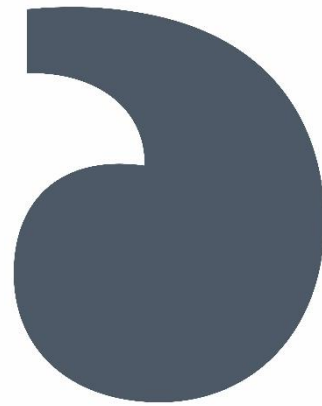
thing that helps them stay happy & healthy. The role in which alcohol played in men's lives evidently had both positive & negative outcomes. For many it was an enjoyable way of socialising that combatted loneliness & isolation, whilst for others (e.g. lone drinkers) it had become a habit they recognised was having a negative impact. Others talked about drinking they had witnessed and how they didn't like the violence which was sometimes an outcome of excessive alcohol and/or drugs.

8. The things that make people happy & healthy aren't always the same things. Men will often choose the things that make them happy (e.g. alcohol) as it has a more instant gratification. Men felt being told something was unhealthy often wasn't helpful as it was seen as interfering and resulted in disengagement. This became apparent after a number of men only engaged with us after we confirmed we were gathering views and not promoting a health message.
9. 14.8% of men felt money issues was the main thing that makes it difficult for men to stay happy & healthy, whilst another 5.4% mentioned it being one of the main issues affecting blokes in Blackburn with Darwen. This had immediate consequences in things such as personal hygiene & travel whilst also affecting men's mental health (e.g. depression/stress) & long term outlook. Men talked of living day to day, cheap substances where accessible and a 'temporary fix' to 'bigger problems'.



Recommendations

- 16.9% of men were not confident in accessing services, which impacted on their involvement with their care and treatment. Therefore, it is recommended that health professionals create a welcoming environment, and allow their patients enough time to ask questions and become active in their care pathway.
- 21.3% of men thought making an appointment with a GP was a challenge. It is recommended that further research into GP appointment processes is completed.
- 31% of men either did not know or were unsure where to get information about local services. Therefore, it is recommended services review the information they provide and methods of promotion to better reach men. It is also recommended that the health & social care signposting directory is made available in local services and promoted to the public by services.
- 14.8% of men felt money issues made it difficult to stay healthy and happy. It is recommended that information around local initiatives, such as the Beez Card, is promoted within the establishments visited in this project.
- 21.5% of the men were lonely or isolated either all or most of the time. Therefore it is recommended that the loneliness and isolation information provided by the Live Well section of the health and wellbeing board should be promoted throughout the Borough, and used by health and social care professionals when they identify need, especially the bereavement service.
- 72.5% of men felt there was a stigma attached to mental health in men. It is therefore recommended that health and social care services, along with the voluntary and community sector, continue to challenge stigma and continue to raise awareness of mental health in men.
- 39.3% of men felt alcohol and drugs were the main issues affecting men in the Borough. It is recommended that the information within this report is utilised by the Public Health team and the drug and alcohol strategy.
- The project found that a high number of men were interested in speaking about their health and wellbeing. Therefore, it is recommended that specific groups of men need to stop being deemed 'Hard to Reach', but the method in which they are engaged rethought.



If you would like more information about Healthwatch Blackburn with
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