

## Hearing from men in Oxfordshire



*"I just work to be honest, work hard and don't stop when I get home ... There's a lot of pressure in life, mortgages, cost of living, high pressure."*

*"Men bury their heads in the sand. They need to get over it!"*

**March 2025**

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# Acknowledgements

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Many thanks to the men in Witney, Didcot and across the county who shared their experiences with us.

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# Executive Summary

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Men's health and wellbeing is a growing area of focus for health and care services and communities. Men have a shorter life expectancy than women and are more likely to die prematurely from coronary heart disease or by suicide. Men are also less likely than women to adopt a healthy lifestyle or to seek help for physical or mental health problems.<sup>1</sup>

Healthwatch Oxfordshire (HWO) built on [research we did with men in Carterton](#) in 2022-23, to hear from men in Witney, Didcot and across Oxfordshire about their health and wellbeing. This led onto proactive follow up and outreach to men in Carterton by the Oxfordshire Men's Health Partnership

From December 2023–November 2024, we focused on hearing from men again and held short, meaningful conversations with **167 men across the county** to understand:

- what helps men to be healthy and well
- what makes this hard
- what their experiences of using health and care services is like
- men's ideas for what would make a difference to support men to be healthy and well.

These conversations with Healthwatch Oxfordshire were in support of the **30 Chats in 30 Days** campaign by Oxfordshire Men's Health Partnership. We had these conversations with men in Witney in December 2023 and Didcot in November 2024, as well as at events and men's groups across Oxfordshire and throughout the year.

## What we heard

Men told us that things that **help** them to be healthy and well include:

- Trying to live a healthy lifestyle by eating well and being active
- Family, friends and community – for example enjoying spending time with others and being able to share problems and feelings
- Seeking help from professionals
- Religion, faith and spirituality
- Relaxation and 'time for me'.

We heard that things that **make it hard** for men to be healthy and well include:

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Oxfordshire [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#)

- A lack of time – due to work and other pressures to focus on health – for eating well, relaxing, being active or attending medical appointments
- Work pressures, worries about money and the cost of living
- Stigma and stereotypes around seeking help
- Barriers and challenges around healthcare, including finding it hard to make GP appointments.

Men shared **ideas for what would make a difference** to support men to be healthy and well, including:

- Information and support to adopt a healthier lifestyle
- More men’s support groups and raising awareness about existing groups
- Shared activity groups such as chess, walking or football to help men to socialise and get active
- Improving access to affordable physical activity and healthy food – and linking people up to what is already there
- Improving access to healthcare and health checks – for example by embedding them in workplaces.

## What we will do with this report

Healthwatch Oxfordshire will share this report on what we heard from men to help inform health and care services, commissioners and decision makers about men’s views and to guide work to proactively support men. We will share it with the following:

Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board, Oxfordshire Health Overview Scrutiny Committee, Oxfordshire Place Based Partnership, Oxfordshire Health Inequalities Forum, Oxfordshire Marmot Place, Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Oxfordshire Men’s Health Partnership, and Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB) as well as voluntary sector partners.

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# Background

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## Why men?

Men in Oxfordshire and the UK have a shorter life expectancy than women. They are far more likely to die prematurely from coronary heart disease and to die by suicide – 76% of those who died by suicide in Oxfordshire in 2019–2021 were men<sup>2</sup>. Men in Oxfordshire are more likely than women to have behaviours linked to

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<sup>2</sup> [Oxfordshire JSNA update 2024 - mental health](#)

higher risk of disease and poor mental health, such as smoking, drinking higher levels of alcohol, and gambling. Men are also less likely to be classed as having a healthy weight.<sup>3</sup>

These patterns are exacerbated by deprivation and other health inequalities. Men living in the most deprived areas of Oxfordshire have a life expectancy of up to 14 years less than the least deprived areas (compared to 11 years for women).<sup>4</sup> This disparity is especially relevant in the context of Oxfordshire's commitment to tackling inequalities as a Marmot Place.<sup>5</sup>

We also know that men, especially those of working age, are less likely to seek help for health concerns or access support. According to research by Movember, 64% of men surveyed nationally said they wait more than 7 days with symptoms before visiting the doctor, while 31% wait more than a month and 8% wait more than two years.<sup>6</sup> Movember found that despite changing views around men's mental health, many men still feel that gender stereotypes have affected their health behaviours and experiences of care, such as communication with their health provider and feeling their concerns were taken seriously.

Men are considered a seldom heard group – less likely to share feedback about their experiences of health and care. This is particularly the case for men of working age, in routine and manual professionals, from less affluent areas and from diverse and multi-ethnic communities.

In recognition of these patterns and the need to proactively support men to be healthy and well, in November 2024, the UK government committed to creating a men's health strategy to tackle the life expectancy gap between men and women.<sup>7</sup>

## **Supporting men in Oxfordshire**

Each November, as part of Men's Health awareness month, the Oxfordshire Men's Health Partnership runs a [30 Chats in 30 Days campaign](#), encouraging people to have short but meaningful conversations with men about their health. Over the past three years, Healthwatch Oxfordshire has taken part in this by hearing from working men about their experiences of health and health services.

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<sup>3</sup> [Oxfordshire JSNA update 2023 – behavioural determinants of health](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Oxfordshire JSNA update 2023 – population](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Oxfordshire County Council press release about Marmot Place](#)

<sup>6</sup> [The Real Face of Men's Health – Movember 2024 UK report](#)

<sup>7</sup> [UK government news article on men's health strategy, Gov.uk](#)

In 2023, we published a report based on what we heard from chat with 31 working men in Carterton.<sup>8</sup> This provided the catalyst and inspiration for the Oxfordshire Men's Health Partnership to focus on Carterton and the surrounding area in 2023, running health promotion events for local men. Since then, Healthwatch Oxfordshire has continued to engage with working men to make sure their voices and experiences help shape how health and care services are delivered in Oxfordshire.



Men's health event in Carterton, November 2023 – following on from our previous report on men's health

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## What did we do?

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Building on the work of the Oxfordshire Men's Health Partnership, which highlighted concerns about support for men's mental health in West Oxfordshire, Healthwatch Oxfordshire visited Witney in December 2023 to have 30 chats with men on the street and in local industrial estates. As part of the 'Making Every Contact Count' approach with these conversations, we provided the men with spoke to flyers with information about services and organisations that support men's health.

We then expanded our reach across the county, having conversations with men during Healthwatch Oxfordshire's ongoing outreach at events throughout the year. This included Play Days at Berinsfield, Banbury, Witney and Bicester,

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<sup>8</sup> [#30Chats with men in Carterton – Healthwatch Oxfordshire report](#)

Abingdon Health Fest, Kidlington Gala Day, Banbury Mosque, the Breakfast Club at The Hill, the Orchard Centre and Oxford Older People's Day.

In November 2024 we visited Didcot town centre and nearby industrial estates for a further 30 Chats with local men.

We used the 30 Chats in 30 Days approach to have short but meaningful conversations with men about their health, based on open questions:

- What things help you to look after your health and wellbeing?
- What makes it hard for you to look after your health and wellbeing?
- What would make a difference to help men in your local area to look after their health and wellbeing?
- Please tell us about your experiences of using local health and care services. What works well and what could be better?



Outreach in Witney, December 2023

In November 2024 we also worked with the Oxfordshire Men's Health Partnership and Oxford Community Champions to run a webinar on the theme of **'Designing Services with Men in Mind'** (see [Healthwatch Oxfordshire website](#) for recording).

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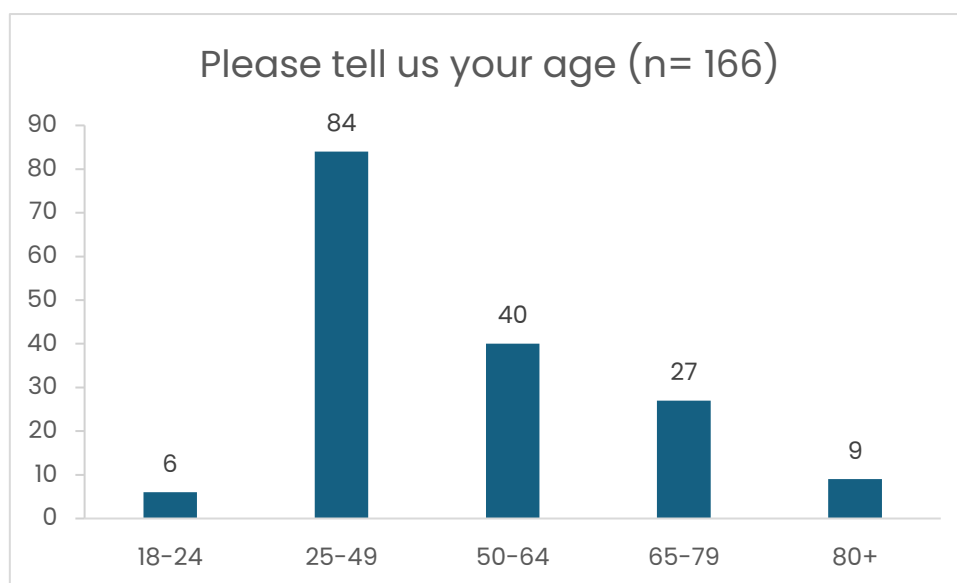
# Who did we hear from?

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We heard from 167 men.

Of those who told us about themselves:

- Half (84 men, 51%) were aged 25-49 and just under a quarter (24%, 40 men) were aged 50-64.
- 22% (29 men) have a long-term condition or disability
- 88% (147 men) are White British, 5% (7 men) have another White ethnicity, 5% (8 men) are Pakistani or British Pakistani. Other ethnic groups we heard from were Chinese, Indian, Black African, Black Caribbean and people with mixed ethnicity
- The most represented areas were Didcot (17 men), Abingdon (13 men), Banbury (26 men), Oxford (21 men) and Witney (29 men) – reflecting the biggest population centres in Oxfordshire and our targeted outreach.



**Figure 1:** Graph showing ages of men we heard from (n=166).

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# What did we hear?

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## What helps men to be healthy and well?

We heard from a range of men with different experiences of health and wellbeing – from those who struggle to seek help to those who have been through extensive



treatment, from men who are strongly committed to fitness or spiritual growth to those who find it hard to find time for themselves. The things that men told us support their health and wellbeing come as no surprise: eating well, keeping active, strong social networks and being able to ask for and get help when needed. We heard about the importance of faith, relaxation, hobbies, useful information and a supportive work environment.

### **Healthy lifestyle**

We heard that almost all the men we heard from know the importance of eating well and getting exercise to their health. We heard 108 comments about how men look after their health by being active – for example, by going to the gym or walking.

*“I try to exercise, and I play football in a team once a week which is good as it's a nice social thing too.”*

*“I keep as active as I can, getting out and about as much as possible really helps me to stay well. I have had joint replacements so I know the importance of exercise.”*

We heard about what supports men to be active, including having an active job, friends or partners who also prioritised being active, easy or affordable access to gyms or green spaces, and support and advice from professionals.

*“Running, Hiking, going out with friends, Access to parks and green space.”*

*“I try to go to the gym at least 4 times a week and me and my partner are on the same page when it comes to wellbeing which makes it so much easier.”*

We heard about how eating well helps men to be healthy and well, and what supports them to do this.

*“I try to cook all my own food and try not to buy ready-meals and try to not use lots of oil and I cook a lot in my air fryer which is healthier.”*

*“Healthy eating and focusing on my gut health.”*

*“I am quite on top of this really – for me a lot of it is about diet and moderation. You can have some chocolate or cake if it's in moderation or if you do indulge then you just need to do a bit more exercise.”*

Several men also told us they take vitamins and nutritional supplements to support their health and wellbeing.

### **Family, friends and community**

Men told us that the people around them, like family and friends, can play an important role in supporting their health and wellbeing. This included:

- Keeping busy and spending time with family and friends helped people to be happy and active

*“My 7-month-old daughter keeps me pretty active – but she also means I’m not getting much sleep!”*

*“My Family and having lots of friends.”*

*“At my lowest ebb, I had depression and anxiety, I had no money and no prospects, my parents were splitting up. I was looking for hope at the bottom of a bottle and other things I shouldn’t have been doing. [My fiancée] really helped me, the fact that she was interested in me even when I had no hair and was so low, that really boosted my confidence.”*

- Some men told us that talking to others about how they feel helped them look after their mental health

*“Family time, talking openly to my family and friends.”*

*“Talking to my partner about how I am feeling. Us men aren’t really good at doing that. I have an amazing friend who I can talk about anything to.”*

- Friends, wives and partners supporting men to look after their physical health, including reminding them about appointments or helping them to make appointments

*“Live at home so my mum takes care of my health.”*

*“My wife is very persistent, she’ll stay in that [GP practice phone] queue.”*

We also heard about the positive impact of **men’s support groups** and **social groups** on men’s wellbeing, including the Breakfast Club in Banbury, My Life My Choice, sports teams and a Men’s Shed in Witney.

*“I attend the breakfast club every Friday and this makes a difference to my health and wellbeing.”*

*"Men will talk with their mates, not their wives. Sports clubs and clubs are ideal, because you are more social and can talk to each other."*

*"Carterton have a litter picking society, and it gets you out meeting people .... Keeping yourself busy you've got to be out, helping others helps."*

*"My shed! I do voluntary work up the hill, there's a community hall and at the back there's a shed where we can go and do voluntary work, like carpentry. And they're really good, they help people with getting a pass and that. I've been going there for 10 months, from sitting behind my front door..."*

*"Berin Centre activities like the Saturday dads' group."*

### **Seeking help**

We heard that men know it is important to seek help for mental and physical health concerns.

*"It's so important if there is something wrong that you don't leave it until it's too late but you get it checked out soon."*

*"Also it is important to get help when you need it – don't put things off, if I need to see a GP I go and see one."*

*"I have had some issues in the past and I now recognize when I need to ask for help and support. I have used a counsellor in the past and it was revolutionary – they changed my life – but I know I was lucky as I could afford to pay for this."*

We heard from some men that seeking help was something that got easier the more they did it or had been catalysed by a tragic event in their life.

*"I'm 65 so I get lots of reminders from my GP and always having checks... when you get to my age we start talking about our health, you come in and say, 'I've got this, I've got that' so I say 'go and get a test'. Once something happens, then you get used to it, I've no problem talking about it, and there's nothing I haven't had done to me."*

*"I haven't been to the doctors for years and years – touch wood I'm OK. But last year I lost my 39-year-old son-in-law to cancer – I was on about it last night, I'm going to ring up and book a health check."*

### **Support from health and care services**

We heard positive comments about health and care services and professionals from 80 men. Things people valued about health and care services included being seen or responded to quickly, kind and knowledgeable professionals, proactive follow-ups, and easy access to appointments, including for people who are not online.

*"My support staff and knowing I can talk to them about anything. The support staff also help me by telling me what is best for me."*

*"Call back services from the GP are good at getting back to you quickly."*

*"I recently had an abscess and [my dental practice] were so good, they really looked after me and saw me every day of the week when I needed it, they were really good."*

*"Newbury Street in Wantage, the reception team are used to helping me as I don't do online they are lovely."*

*"Medical Centre is very good and they always follow through, they check on you for things like blood pressure checks."*

*"I have the most wonderful GP, she really, really gets me. I was with the mental health team, but she's allowed me to make my own decisions in my own way."*

Compared to other social groups we hear from, there were more positive comments about **using technology** such as the NHS app, online consultations and telephone appointments.

*"Telephone GP appointments work well."*

*"I have an excellent GP, I use their online services as I am lucky that I am computer literate and have internet access. So I book my own appointments and I am usually seen within the week -my GP is great very kind and caring."*

*"NHS app - I like that I can order prescriptions on the app so I don't have to be on the phone."*

We also heard about the positive impact of **health checks** on men's health.

*"I've got high Blood pressure, and get regular checks, my GP is great."*

*"It was a 'well man' health check that picked up my heart thing. As the ECG thing came out of the machine they were on the phone calling an ambulance, saying 'why aren't you dead yet, mate?!'"*

Several men told us about the positive impact of different forms of **weight management support** on their health and wellbeing.

*"Achieve have been very good."*

*"I play football in a local team which is a weight loss programme which is great supporting the team."*

*"I've been getting a lot of exercise, the doctor told me to lose weight and got me signed up to the gym, they do a discount price if you've been sent by your doctor."*

### **Religion, faith and spirituality**

Men told us that their faith or spirituality supported their personal wellbeing, helped them seek help, or helped connect them to community.

*"Friday prayers - Important aspect in life is believing in God."*

*"I got past it [talking about health] by going to church. I don't know if it's a physical thing, but from a religious perspective, people need to drop their pride."*

*"I found out about [the Men's Shed] from a woman at church."*

*"Spiritual meditation."*

### **Relaxation, self-care and 'time for me'**

We also heard that some men feel it is important to make time to look after themselves and reduce their stress.

*"Taking time out to look after me and my mental health."*

*"I never stress myself as I have high blood pressure."*

Other things that men told us helps them to be healthy and well included:

- Access to **fresh air and green spaces**

*"I am always working outside and get a lot of fresh air which is good for me."*

*"Access to green spaces that are safe and feel inclusive."*

*"I enjoy the wildlife in the area."*

- **Hobbies** like gardening and singing in a choir

*"I'm in a choir, the only man in the choir – there are 50 ladies and me! It's a social thing, men stay away from touchy feely things, but I like to sing and don't mind being the only man if that's the price to pay to sing so to speak, and they're good to me."*

*"I'm in the Oxford Welsh Male Voice Choir, and we go to different places, churches, we'll practice for an hour and a half and then a performance after that."*

- **Self-motivation** and a positive attitude

*"Keeping active and a positive mental attitude."*

- Knowledge and **information about health from different sources**, including on television

*"There is more awareness now – there was a thing on TV last night, the Real Full Monty, where they were talking about breast cancer for men and women and people checking themselves."*

*"I haven't been to the doctors for a long time, but I'm gonna go ask for a PSA test, I keep seeing it on the telly."*

- A **supportive work environment**.

*"We have a good work environment, very supportive manager, we have a lot on offer for mental wellbeing, including regular training, therapy and very good welfare."*

## **What makes it hard to be healthy and well?**

We also heard about barriers and challenges that stop men from making the most of things that support health and wellbeing. Men told us that the key barriers are a lack of time, often due to work and caring responsibilities, and worries about money and cost. We also heard that health and care services are not always easy to access when men need them, and that some men still find it difficult to seek help due to feelings of shame, stigma and stereotypes about how men should behave.

### **Lack of time**

A recurring theme we heard from men (51 comments) was that they did not have enough time to properly look after their health and wellbeing. This included time to eat well, get exercise, attend healthcare appointments, relax or make friends. For many men, this lack of time was linked to work and/or caring responsibilities like having small children. Cost of living also impacts – some men worked more than one job to make ends meet, or were working shifts.

*“Just really hard making this a priority as I have two jobs and a busy family, so I have very little spare time and when I do it’s really hard to motivate myself as I’m so tired. I did join the gym earlier this year and had got into a good routine with that, but I need to get back into it, sometimes it’s easier just to go for a quick walk with my wife than driving to the gym.”*

*“I work away from home, so I live to work really, there’s lots of travelling, not much time for family or anything else.”*

*“Time constraints of having small children and I don’t have much time to do exercise.”*

*“Time and energy! I have two young kids, and I run my own business so life is busy and time is precious, there’s always something more pressing to do.”*

*“I need to prioritise taking time for myself. All my spare time is taken with my family and children but need to find some time for myself. I have joined a gym and want to go at least once a week and also trying to do 30 minutes of walking every day. I always feel better when I am doing regular exercise but it’s just so hard sometimes to fit it in.”*

*“I do find it hard to make the time to do things and really have to self-motivate myself. Working shifts make it hard to keep to healthy eating and staying active.”*

*"Probably making time for me, I work full time and generally the pressures of life pull me in different directions. I just need to take time for me when I know I am heading on a downward path."*

*"Having more time to get together with my friends. I need to make more, lots of people leave."*

*"Working shifts makes it hard to eat healthy, sometimes I just grab food on the go. So, I don't eat as well as I would like, the different shifts affect my sleep pattern especially when I get home late and eat at what is someone else's bedtime."*

*"Getting access to health professionals is hard and also knowing where to go to get health advice. Rigid appointments system with no flexibility for people like me who work long hours. I am so lucky to have an amazing boss who will let me leave work for an appointment - in my old job this would not have been possible and as such my health would deteriorate as I couldn't get an appointment at a time I could get to."*

*"I don't look after my health, when am I meant to do that, I just don't have the time? Smoking is the only little pleasure I have - I work shifts, long shifts, I work weekends, and I live with my mum who has Alzheimer's, and I care for her. When am I meant to look after myself, and work don't give any time to go to doctors or anything."*

*"People haven't got the time nowadays, it's a different world, I'm still working and most of my friends are working way past retirement age."*

### **Work, money and the cost of living**

As well as affecting men's time to look after their health, we heard from some men about the challenges of work pressures, including experiencing discrimination (such as racism) from employers, taking work home with them, feeling stuck in a low-paying job, or working physically demanding job while living with a chronic illness.

*"In Witney some younger lads have taken their lives. Social media doesn't help... It's a difficult transition from school into work and there could be more accessible advice, to help them, rather than just being stuck in a basic role they don't want."*

*"I just work to be honest, work hard and don't stop when I get home, I've got young kids, so kept busy. Office jobs make it hard for people, it's hard"*



*to find time to do things if you work in an office. There's a lot of pressure in life, mortgages, cost of living, high pressure."*

*"It's like banging your head against a wall, they keep saying 'you need to change your job'. I was in heavy construction, and now landscaping, they have no idea of supporting people with chronic health conditions. Other blokes don't really understand as they see [condition] as an invisible illness, when they see me working, they can't see anything wrong. When I had my op, I was in the NOC, and had good physio afterwards, in a controlled environment... but then I had my disability allowance cut and had to go back to work before I was ready. Self-employed – you can't stop working."*

Men's feelings about work pressures and stress were often linked to money and the cost of living, and particularly the cost of housing.

*"Money – Having to work more than I should to provide for my family."*

*"I struggle to pay my bills."*

*"Cost of living – personal issues, housing issues, I live in shared housing – rents are high."*

*"Stress – work, everything is so expensive, life is very difficult at the moment. In the UK we have the best safety net in the world but to succeed is very difficult. I've managed to buy a house, but there are lots of people who can't do that."*

People also told us about how the cost of living affected their or others' ability to eat well, exercise, access healthcare or activities for their children.

*"Not enough access to cheap affordable leisure facilities that are of good standard."*

*"Cost of fruit and veg."*

*"I am lucky I can go to the gym because I can afford it but a lot of people aren't so lucky."*

*"There's not much for the kids round here and it's expensive."*

## **Stigma, stereotypes and barriers to seeking help**

We heard about some of the things that can make it difficult for men to open up about challenges and seek help, including gender stereotypes, personal pride or stoicism, stigma and embarrassment.

*"There are pressures from outside sources to 'be a man' rather than admitting you have a problem."*

*"We are on Facebook and we get friends suffering, talking about their problems, and two good friends have taken their lives in the past two years, and you didn't know anything was wrong, in Facebook we talk quite a lot, some people don't realise they have mental health problems, don't know how to recognise it."*

*"When I was younger, I would be much more reticent, like about my prostate operation."*

*"I had a fall, hence the scar, and the nurse said to me "you're very stoical". I just get on with it. If I have a cold I assume it will get better."*

*"Men not allowed to talk to each other."*

*"It may be an ego thing – not admitting that you're under par. Men would never talk about if their sexual performance is on the wane or if there's something wrong but you need to see a doctor as it could be a sign of a problem. But men bury their heads in the sand. They need to get over it!"*

*"I think a lot of women in their 50s are more used to medical procedures by their age, from childbirth and that. I didn't get an invasive procedure until I was 40, when I had irregular bowel things – it turned out to be IBS and fixed itself, but I had probes and scans of my insides. Men need to get on board with having those kinds of tests."*

*"It used to be an embarrassment thing and a pride thing, the younger generation might still have a stigma thing. Mental health is more out there now too."*

*"I've had problems with breathing for a while but kept leaving it and leaving it, I thought it would go away on its own."*

*"Men don't have a voice anymore. Men's men have been demonised as toxic masculinity. We just want to look after our women, but it makes you shrivel into your own shell and our shoulders get heavy, you become your*

*own downfall. There needs to be resources, spaces, appreciation for old school men – not talking about your grandad who used to slap his missus when dinner wasn't ready, it's more that people shouldn't be told not to be stoic or not to protect their families."*

*"Encourage men to talk and to be open on how they feel. I do not think men are good at communicating."*

### **Barriers and challenges with healthcare**

Men told us about what makes it harder for men to get the healthcare they need. We heard most often about problems making a GP appointment – including having to wait for an appointment, waiting on the phone to contact the GP practice, difficulty using online consultation forms, language barriers, and making appointments at times that fit around work and other responsibilities.

*"Trying to see a GP is honestly a nightmare. You'll ring up at 8am and be told you're 22 in the queue and then if you do hold on by the time you get through unless it's an emergency there are no appointments left and they try to put you off."*

*"Not being able to see a GP when I need to. I think it is so important to be able to get help when I need it not two weeks down the line."*

*"Not being directed from GP to Ill to pharmacy and then back to GP – everyone is always directing you elsewhere. I know how to look after myself when I have coughs, colds etc but when I am really unwell and want to see a GP I should be able to."*

*"Using online forms for I think it's called triage – when my English isn't so brilliant is really hard and frustrating."*

*"Sometimes it is such a battle and the online forms I just can't use but I am lucky as the reception staff are so helpful – I don't know what I would do if they weren't."*

*"Getting access to health professionals is hard and also knowing where to go to get health advice. Rigid appointments system with no flexibility for people like me who work long hours."*

*"It would make my life so much easier if I could just use drop-in surgeries – not sure they exist! I give blood and most of the time it is a drop-in which*

*is great – but when I have to make appointments, I just can't do it. Even though my boss is great I just don't want to take advantage."*

*"I was ringing for 3 days to get an appointment – it was a bit of a job to get it. I would ring first thing and they said all the appointments had gone for the day, then the surgery was closed, then the line was busy. As soon as I said I was having trouble breathing they said can you come in the same day."*

Men pointed out these barriers were particularly a problem for men who were reluctant to seek help in the first place, or those who had already put off seeking help.

*"You need to be determined, so if you already have a bit of reluctance than then if you have to queue [to make a GP appointment] – that can kill you."*

Other problems with health and care we heard about included:

- **Waiting times** for secondary care referrals

*"Poor waiting times for hospital scans and specialist – waited six months for MRI. Being seen by knee clinic at NOC – had one knee treated, then had a problem with my other knee – told me I had to go back to my GP to be referred back to same clinic – GP was annoyed and meant I had to wait again."*

- **Confusion** around booking health checks

*"I'm going to ring up and book a health check. A thing came in on my phone to go to Newbury but I didn't know if it was a scam."*

- A **lack of follow-up** after tests

*"I had my health check, and no one even discussed my results with me which was the least I expected."*

- A **lack of continuity of care**

*"I had a great relationship with the GP years ago. I always have different appointment with different doctors now which is not very good."*

- **Negative experiences of care** and feeling like care does not meet the person's needs

*"I have to be self-reliant though as the GP is rubbish and has virtually washed their hands of me, I never go to the doctor now, I do my own thing with nutrition and supplements."*

*"I went to the hospital with a bad ear, the doctor didn't speak English, he didn't look at my ear, just googled it, gave me a paper and said go over there. I went over there, there was nothing."*

*"I've had really severe alopecia, but my GP wouldn't give me a blood test for the medication. When I lost my hair, it was the hardest mental health of my life. I waited 8 years for a dermatology appointment so I went private."*

- **Avoiding going to the doctor** because of a personal aversion

*"I don't go to the doctors, I just don't like them, I hate it when I have to have my bloods drawn."*

- **Communication problems** with health and care professionals, including providing information in an accessible way, and understanding accents when both patient and professional do not speak English as their first language

*"I wish the professional could understand and keeping words simple so it makes it easy for everyone to understand."*

- Difficulty accessing **pharmacy care**

*"Local pharmacies close early and have long wait times."*

- Problems with access to **ADHD medication, mental health support, and dentistry.**

### **Other barriers and challenges**

Some men told us about health conditions, including chronic illness and poor mental health, that affected their ability to look after their health and wellbeing.

We also heard about how **loneliness** or lack of a support network affects men.

*“Loneliness, especially for the hard of hearing. And men don’t like talking about loneliness, and there aren’t many spaces for them to talk, that aren’t pubs.”*

Some men said there was **a lack of or confusing information** about how to be healthy and well, including advice that is tailored to men. We heard from several men who told us of ways they had developed to support themselves – not always using NHS health guidance, for example with self-medication, or following strict regimes, perhaps reflecting the influence of the internet and social media on health messaging.

*“I smoke weed to reduce stress, it helps me sleep, not dwelling on bridges you might never cross.”*

*“I used to train a lot, but I’m happier now I’m not chasing 2% body fat and waking up at 2am to have protein. I’m more relaxed.”*

Other barriers and challenges men told us about were:

- **Motivation** – we heard that a lack of motivation can be a challenge for some men – particularly around eating well, avoiding unhealthy food and keeping active
- **Alcohol, smoking and substance use** – including pressure to go to the pub in order to socialise.

## **Ideas**

The men we spoke to shared ideas for how men’s health and wellbeing could be better supported. Suggestions included:

- **Health promotion** and advice

*“To promote healthy eating and wellbeing leaflet for men.”*

*“Advice on how to take care of yourself more. I think I need to make it more of a priority rather than just giving up too quickly.”*

*“Webinars on mental health on how to cope with life.”*

- **Support groups**, and **raising awareness** of support that already exists

*“Men’s Cafe where men can talk and share their problems.”*

*“Having more men’s clubs like the Breakfast Club.”*

*“Talking more – to have a group via social media for men to talk.”*

*“Having lunch with local men in the community.”*

*“To have drop-in places for men across the County.”*

*“Groups to combat loneliness – men’s sheds. Early intervention for mental health.”*

*“Promoting the support we have in Grimsbury for the local Muslim community.”*

- **Activity groups** – for example walking, chess or football

*“Need over 50’s club – walking, football”*

*“More recreational activities groups where men can meet up and play sports.”*

- Improving **access to physical activity**, for example through men-only gyms, exercise classes for people with long-term health conditions or providing cheaper access to gyms and leisure activities<sup>9</sup>
- **Support to eat well** – including making affordable, healthy food more easily available, and cooking classes
- Easier access to health checks and healthcare – including meeting people where they are, drop-in or flexible appointments for people working shifts or long hours, or embedding health checks or clinics in the workplace.

*“More health and wellbeing days for men at work.”*

*“If you can’t get people to go to their doctor then you can do pop-up clinics, that would catch so many cancers and things.”*

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<sup>9</sup> Note that some of these things already exist! [Move Together](#) supports people with a long term health condition to get active; [YouMove](#) provide free and low-cost activities for children and their families. Local councils provide discounted membership and prices at public gyms and leisure centres to people meeting the eligibility criteria.

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# Useful links and information

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- Oxfordshire Men's Health Partnership [30 Chats in 30 Days campaign](#)
- [#30Chats with Men in Carterton](#) – Healthwatch Oxfordshire report, Feb 2023
- [Men's Health](#) – Healthwatch Oxfordshire and East Oxford United report, Nov 2018
- [Designing Services with Men in Mind](#) – Healthwatch Oxfordshire webinar with Oxford Community Champions and Oxfordshire Men's Health Partnership

## General health information for men

For information and advice about men's health and wellbeing see the **Men's Health Forum** website at [www.menshealthforum.org.uk](http://www.menshealthforum.org.uk)

**Beezee in Oxfordshire** – provides free healthy living courses, including a course for men

⇒ [oxf.maximusuk.co.uk](http://oxf.maximusuk.co.uk)

⇒ 03332 208952 or [HelloOxfordshire@maximusuk.co.uk](mailto:HelloOxfordshire@maximusuk.co.uk)

**Live Well Oxfordshire** – an online guide to all local support services

⇒ [livewell.oxfordshire.gov.uk](http://livewell.oxfordshire.gov.uk)

**Active Oxfordshire** – provides support and opportunities for people to get more active

⇒ [www.activeoxfordshire.org](http://www.activeoxfordshire.org)

## Aged 40–74? Have you had a free NHS Health Check?

If you're over 40 you may be at risk of developing heart disease, stroke, kidney disease, diabetes or dementia. A free NHS Health Check can help you reduce these risks and make sure that you stay healthy.

If you are aged 40–74 and haven't yet been invited for a Health Check you can contact your GP practice to find out if you qualify.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See the [NHS website](#) for more information.



## **Mental health and wellbeing services**

Contact your doctor if you are experiencing mental health problems and are not known to local mental health services.

If you, or someone close to you, requires emergency mental health support dial 999. Call 111 if you need medical help quickly, but it's not an immediate risk, or if it is out-of-hours for your doctor's surgery.

**Oxfordshire Mind** – for information about mental health and services

⇒ [www.oxfordshiremind.org.uk](http://www.oxfordshiremind.org.uk) or 01865 247788

**Oxfordshire Safe Haven** – open every day for people experiencing a mental health crisis

⇒ Call 01865 903037 or email [osh@oxfordshiremind.org.uk](mailto:osh@oxfordshiremind.org.uk)

**Keystone Mental Health and Wellbeing Hubs** – these new hubs have opened in town centres, including Abingdon, Banbury, Blackbird Leys and East Oxford, Oxford city centre, Kidlington, Wantage and Wallingford to make it easier for people with mental health challenges to access support when and where they need it. See [www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/keystone](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/keystone)

**Talking Space Plus** – offers free NHS talking therapies

[www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/oxon-talking-therapies](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/oxon-talking-therapies) or 01865 901222 (open Monday 8am–5pm, Tuesday to Thursday 8am–8pm or Friday 8am–5pm)

Call **Samaritans** for emotional support on the phone, 24 hours a day 365 days a year by dialling **116 123** free from any phone

Call **CALM** (Campaign Against Living Miserably) if you're a male in the UK who needs to talk or find support, on **0800 58 58 58** (5pm–midnight, 365 days a year)

**Sport in Mind** – A charity that uses sport and physical activity to improve the lives of people with mental health problems. See [www.sportinmind.org/oxfordshire](http://www.sportinmind.org/oxfordshire) or call **0118 947 9762**

## **Addiction support services**

**Turning Point** - wellbeing and recovery support from drug or alcohol addiction

⇒ [www.turning-point.co.uk/services/oxfordshire](http://www.turning-point.co.uk/services/oxfordshire)

**Stop for Life Oxon** - provides free support on how to quit smoking

⇒ [www.stopforlifeoxon.org](http://www.stopforlifeoxon.org), text STOPOXON to 60777 or call **0800 122 3790**

## **National Gambling Helpline**

⇒ [www.gamcare.org.uk](http://www.gamcare.org.uk) or **0808 8020 133** (free 24 hours a day seven days a week)

## **Men's groups in Oxfordshire**

See [Live Well Oxfordshire](#) for more information:

- ⇒ Sibford Men's brunch club, Hook Norton
- ⇒ Men's Sheds – Faringdon, Witney, Sonning Common, Blewbury, Banbury, North Hinksey, Sutton Courtenay
- ⇒ Age UK Oxfordshire Men's Breakfast, Banbury
- ⇒ Man v FAT Football, Banbury
- ⇒ The Corner Men (mental health support), South Moreton
- ⇒ Andy's Man Club – Thame, Grove & Wantage
- ⇒ Henley Man Club, Henley
- ⇒ A Band of Brothers, Blackbird Leys

## **Healthwatch Oxfordshire**

Healthwatch Oxfordshire is an independent charity for people who use health and social care services. We find out what matters to local people and make sure their views are heard by the people who make decisions about those services. We can also provide help and advice if you have a question about local health services.

**Healthwatch Oxfordshire** our friendly staff are here for you to help answer questions or give you information on health and care services in Oxfordshire. If you need more information or advice call us on **01865 520520** from 9am-4 pm Monday to Friday

Visit our website [www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk) (with translation facility) email us on [hello@healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk](mailto:hello@healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk)

**Healthwatch Oxfordshire** ami-nia simpátiku funsionáriu sira iha ne'e atu ajuda hodi hatán pergunta sira ka fó informasaun kona-ba servisu assisténsia no saúde nian iha Oxfordshire. Se Ita presiza informasaun ka orientasaun barak liu tan entaun telefone ami iha **01865 520520** husi tuku 9 dader to'o tuku 4 lokraik, Loron Segunda to'o Sesta.

Vizita ami-nia sítiu [www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk) (ho facilidade tradusaun) haruka email mai ami iha [hello@healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk](mailto:hello@healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk)

**ሄልዝዎች ኦክስፎርድሺር** (እኛ) ተግባቢ ባልደረቦች አሉን፤ ጥያቄዎቻችሁን በመመለስ ለመርዳት እንዲሁም በኦክስፎርድሺር ውስጥ ስላሉ የጤናና የእንክብካቤ አገልግሎቶች መረጃ ለመስጠት የሚችሉ ናቸው። ተጨማሪ መረጃ እና ምክር ቢያስፈልጓችሁ በስልክ ቁጥር **01865 520520** ደውሉልን፤ ከሰኞ እስከ አርብ፣ ከጥዋቱ 3 ሰዓት እስከ ቀኑ 10 (9 ኤሌም - 4 ፒኤም) ጥሪ እንቀበላለን። ደግሞም

- በ [www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk) የሚገኘውን ዌብሳይታችንን ጎብኙ፤ የትርጉም ርዳታ መስጫ አለው።
- በ [hello@healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk](mailto:hello@healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk) ኢሜይል ላኩልን።

**Healthwatch Oxfordshire** shaqaalahaena caaifimaadka waxy diyaar kuula yihiin inay kaa caawiyaan kana Haqabtiraan wixii su'aalaha ama ay ku siiyaan macluumaad ku saabsan adeegyada caafimaadka iyo daryeelka bulshada ee **Oxfordshire**. Hadaad ubaahantahay macluumaad iyo talooyin dheeri ah soo wac *No Tell* **01865 520520** laga bilaabo **9-4 p.m/fiidnimo** . *Isniinta ilaa Jimcaha* Booqo boggenan website : [www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk) (si aad uga bogatto) wixi talo ah noogu soo dir Emailka:- [hello@healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk](mailto:hello@healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk).

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[hello@healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk](mailto:hello@healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk)

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