

Men's Development Network (MDN) & Healthy Ireland (HI)

The aims and objectives of our Men's Health Programme (MHP) are in line with the Healthy Ireland Goals as follows:

Healthy Ireland's four high-level goals will be at the heart of all actions and activities of our MDHP. They are:

- Increasing the proportion of Irish people who are healthy at all stages of life
- Reducing health inequalities
- Protecting the public from threats to health and
- Creating an environment where every sector of society can play its part

In this context MDN's MHP will continue its role in implementing health policy and action plan at community level in line with the implementation of Healthy Ireland. HI Policy has targeted actions grouped under six broad themes:

- Governance and Policy
- Partnerships and Cross-Sectoral Work
- Empowering People and Communities
- Health and Health Reform
- Research and Evidence
- Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation

All of these themes are relevant to men's health. Men in general, and particular groups of men, suffer from some major Health Inequalities, life-span and suicide for example. MDN through its MHP through the ongoing implementation on the Men's Health Action Plan engages men, those working with men and the relevant statutory agencies. This work will build on the outcomes of the last five years of implementation at community level.

The Healthy Ireland Vision sees (HI 1.2 Page 6) a Healthy Ireland, where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential, where wellbeing is valued and supported at every level of society and is everyone's responsibility.

Healthy Ireland is designed to bring about real, measurable change and is based on an understanding of the determinants of health. Health and wellbeing are affected by all aspects of a person's life; economic status, education, housing, the physical environment in which people live and work.

Health and wellbeing are affected by:

- policy decisions taken by Government,
- the individual choices people make about how they live, and
- the participation of people in their communities.

This understanding calls for a partnership approach in all of the actions set out in the Framework. Healthy Ireland is designed to harness the energy, creativity and expertise of everyone whose work promotes health and wellbeing, and encourages all sectors of society to get involved in making Ireland a healthier place to live, work and play. The Healthy Ireland Framework describes four high-level goals and details 64 actions that will work together to help achieve these goals.

Through its MHP, MDN has developed the energy, creativity and expertise to deliver and promote health and wellbeing for men and those working with men. MDN refers to examples of these HI goals, themes and actions in relation to our Aims and Objectives.

As per Healthy Ireland MDN's Aims and Objectives through our MHP is to:

- Create an environment where every individual and sector of society can play their part in achieving a healthy Ireland.

MDN agrees that it is beyond the capability of any one Government Department or organisation to promote society wide health and wellbeing and this can only be done through society-wide involvement in and engagement with health and wellbeing promotion and improvement activities. As clearly outlined in our ongoing work plans for 2016 and beyond MDN's contribution will focus on delivery of its work under key Healthy Ireland themes and goals. This will be achieved through its work with and on behalf of men and those in community and services who engage men.

MDN's MHP contribution will focus on resource development as follows:

- Facilitation of health training modules and programmes.
- Work will be developed and implemented through working partnerships involving HSE, ITC, WIT, NOSP, MHFI and other community based organisations.
- All the work will focus on developing, promoting and signposting approaches to improving men's health and lives across communities nationally.

The MDN's MHP Aims are linked to Healthy Ireland in the following ways:

As a result of the National Men's Health Policy and Action Plan and in line with Healthy Ireland, provide Training, Education and Development nationally across a number of sectors (All HI Goals and Themes): environmental health, health protection and staff in other sectors. (Theme 4 – Health and Health Reform: 4.9)

- Inform Policy and Frameworks through Training & Inter-Sectoral Work (HI Goal 4): Create an environment where every individual man and sectors of society can play their part in achieving a healthy Ireland through MDN's society-wide involvement in and engagement.
- Through our MHP with health and wellbeing promotion and improvement activities - from individual men making positive lifestyle choices and projects run by community and local groups, to policy and legislative changes.
- Develop best practice and training resources for Engaging & Supporting Men and those engaging with men and younger men (HI Goal 1): Increase awareness of ways to support the proportion of men who are healthy at all stages of life by raising awareness of risk factors and promoting protective factors at every stage of life to support lifelong health and wellbeing.
- Through [partnership approaches, implement the work based on evidence, research and evaluation (HI 1.4): An important feature of Healthy Ireland is its focus on research. This ensures that goals, programmes and funding decisions are based on robust evidence about the determinants of health and best practice approaches in addressing them.
- Reduce Health Inequalities: (HI Goal 2): Health and wellbeing are not evenly distributed across Irish society as men's health figures show. This HI goal requires not only interventions to target particular health risks, but also a broad focus on addressing the wider social determinants of health. The circumstances in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. These are found in the economic, social, cultural and physical environments that foster healthy living.
- Address the Determinants of Health (HI Goal 2): Health and wellbeing are not evenly distributed across Irish society. This HI goal requires a broad focus on addressing the wider social determinants of health – the circumstances in which people are born, grow, live, work and age – to create economic, social, cultural and physical environments that foster healthy living. In the context of MDHP training and engagements highlight the impacts of the social determinants and work to support others towards addressing those impacts
- Engage in Advocacy (HI 3 Characteristics of an Effective Response): MDN's effective and successful health and wellbeing programme the MDHP also uses advocacy and networking to engage partners. In this way mobilise broad-based political and cultural support for equitable, sustainable and accountable

approaches to improving health.

- The health sector must assume both a stewardship and advocacy role to support other sectors in pursuing health and wellbeing goals.
- Strengthen Programme Development (HI 3.0 Characteristics of an Effective Response): To be effective, action to control the determinants of health include developing understanding and skills, and promoting informed health choices through our MHP. This means informing communities and those who work with men about how to improve their health and wellbeing and empowering and motivating them to do so. Map working to remove or at least minimise any legislative or practical barriers that impede their ability to make healthy choices.

The Key Objectives of the MHP are also linked to HI

MDN will deliver its MHP's effective ways to empower front line services and men to improve and take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing through

- Promoting a salutogenic approach to men's health (HI 3.0 Characteristics of an Effective Response): MDN through Healthy Ireland will help to raise awareness and promote healthy lifestyle choices among the public by understanding and acknowledging the broad causes of ill-health and by devising targeted, intersectoral public information strategies and actions to address them. (HI, Figure 3 Social Determinants of Health, Page 43).
- Have the Men's Health Programme play a strategic role in implementing the recommendations of Healthy Ireland informed by the outcomes of the National Men's Health Policy and Action Plan. (HI Theme 1.1.4): MDN works to inform policy units in Government Departments and partner organisations and to work with the Health and Wellbeing Programme to produce integrated, co-ordinated intersectoral plans to address risk factors and social determinants of health.

Build on the existing strong alliances to further promote positive actions for and on behalf of men's lives and health. The World Health Organisation attributes 60% of the disease burden in Europe to seven leading risk factors:

- hypertension,
- tobacco use,
- alcohol misuse,
- high cholesterol,
- being overweight,
- low fruit and vegetable intake
- and physical inactivity.

The effects of these risk factors are minimised when men are motivated and supported to make healthier choices through our MHP training and engagements to build Community and Personal Responsibility.

- Develop initiatives, programmes and policies supporting better health for men particularly in areas where MDN in partnership can deliver evidence-based prevention and early intervention initiatives. These are aimed at those working with and on behalf of men in relation to their children and families, initially focusing on areas of disadvantage.
- Develop a greater understanding of and raise awareness of working with men in relation to health (Theme 3 – Empowering People and Communities, 3.1-3.12): This is in order to implement its range of mutually-reinforcing and integrated strategies and actions developed to encourage, support and enable men to make better choices for themselves and their families, MDN will continue to work in partnership with WIT, ICT, NCMH, and with the HSE. To achieve the goals of healthy Ireland and meet targets relating to improved health and reduced health inequalities.
- Work for positive action and inclusion in all areas of men’s health (HI Theme 2.2.13): MDN will combine our positive mental health promotion (7 Key Questions for Men and New Conversation for Men) with our MHP and MDP interventions that address broader determinants and social problems as part of a multi-agency approach, particularly in areas with high levels of socio-economic deprivation and fragmentation.
- Applying our Best Practice approach and methodology (Theme 6.0 Implementation): The added value of Healthy Ireland is its status as a Government policy framework, its evidence base, its look to the future, and its focus on intersectoral collaboration, implementation, performance and results. MDN’s MHP plans to benefit from the leadership shown at the highest levels of Government, and supports for partnership working across government and other sectors. MDN will work the Health and Wellbeing Programme in the Department of Health on implementation, and ensuring that our MDHP’s Healthy Ireland actions are evidence-based, effective and closely measured and evaluated.