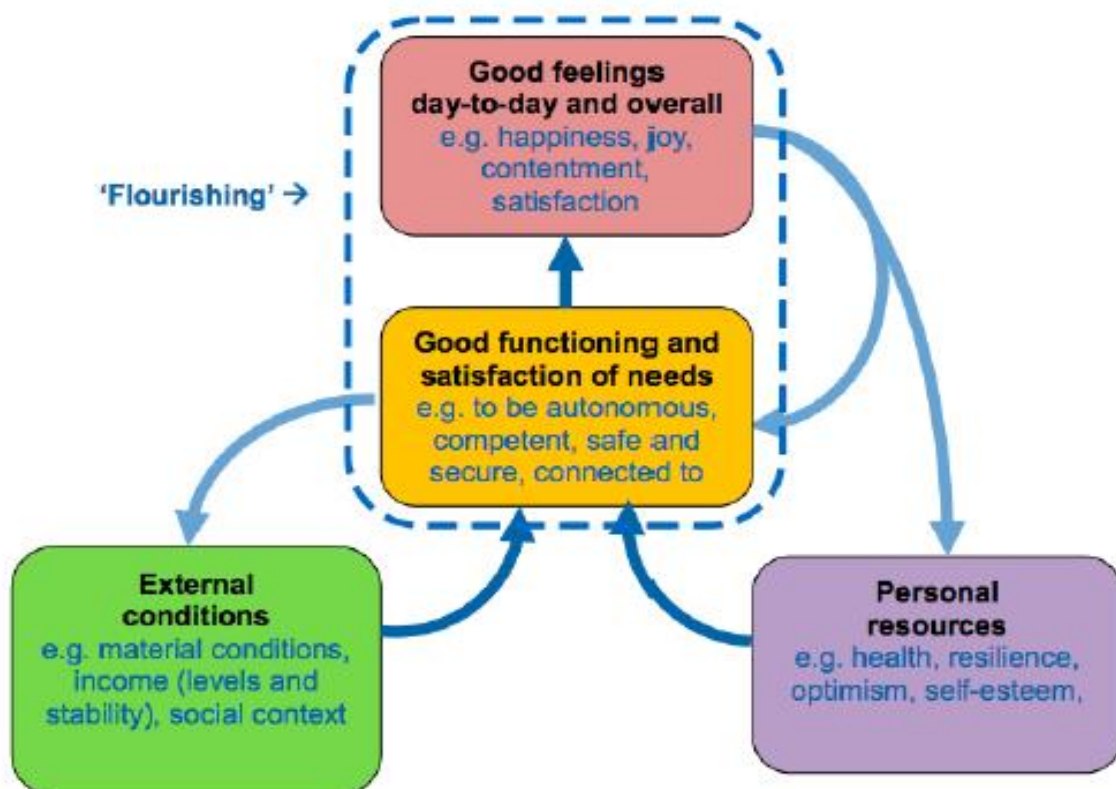


Mens Mental Health Project

Final Evaluation of the Three Year Project

December 2024



Acknowledgements

YAWR Services would like to thank Voluntary Action Rotherham for giving us the opportunity to deliver the Men’s Mental Health Project.

YAWR would also like to thank the Trustees and Staff of YAWR, the people who participated in this evaluation, Third Sector Solutions who has supported YAWR Services in producing this report.

Table of Contents

1. Preamble	2
2. Strength in Unity	3
3. Conclusion.....	7
4. Next Steps.....	9



1. Preamble

Men from the Pakistani Community in Rotherham feel pressure to succeed and provide for their families. Men fear of being seen to be weak, when they are struggling emotionally, they often feel shame. It makes them reluctant to seek psychological help. As a result, there can be a strong stigma in the Pakistani cultures against men dealing head on with mental health difficulties, either their own or those of family members.

Traditionally in the Pakistani Community mental illness is sometimes believed to have supernatural causes, such as spells or curses cast by jealous relatives or acquaintances. These problems are resolved by visiting faith organisers, faith healers or shrines.

Due to the stigma within the community, emotional and wellbeing issues are invisible as they may be kept hidden and thus remain untreated for long periods of time, only to arrive at hospital emergency rooms by ambulance or police car after uncontrollable outbreaks or suicide attempts.

Our aim in delivering this project is to work with local faith organisations to raise the awareness of help and support that is available for Pakistani Males. This will be achieved by holding seminars, events and activities that aim to “Raise awareness and reduce stigma of emotional and wellbeing issues in Rotherham’s Pakistani community.” It’s estimated roughly that one out of four members of the Pakistani Community will at some time suffer with a form of mental illness. This programme will address preventative and low levels of mental health issues affecting men over the age of 18. According to a recent census, 9% of the population of Rotherham are from the BME communities of which 4% are of Pakistani/Kashmiri origin. Whilst there is support that is available men are not aware how to access the support due to a range of barriers that include culture, religion and stigma.



2. Strength in Unity

Through this three year project YAWR aim is to create a dialogue about such issues and engage predominately with Pakistani men who are living with or could be prone to mental illness. Due to our link with faith organisations, we have been in discussion with faith group leaders who have welcomed this proposal. Ultimately, our plan is, through continued consultation with community and faith leaders, to create new models for dealing with mental health complications and establish a support service that is “For Men by Men”.

In delivering this project, YAWR will explore an array of options for Asian men that includes exercise, sports to ayurvedic therapies and conversation clubs. YAWR’s aim is to establish mental health ambassadors to take on leadership roles in building anti-stigma efforts in their own cultural communities. The aim is to establish a model of “Best Practice” that can be shared across South Yorkshire and beyond. Therefore, the community will have a better understanding of accessing support that is available and the opportunity to create a service that has been established a “bottom up” support that the community has endorsed.

Prior to starting the project, YAWR staff held discussions with key members of the community to ascertain what initiatives and activities that will encourages men to take part.

Project delivery

The project initially got off to a slow start with only a small number of individuals attending as the concern was that if men were seen to be attending these sessions, then it would be seen as a sign of weakness. However, we established a working relationship with local faith organisations and that raised an interest as the beneficiaries in year one became advocates for year two.

The main activities in year one was to establish a social café, where beneficiaries would come and have a cup of tea and discuss pertinent issues. Board games were introduced, and this got the men talking.

In Year two, we engaged with a local faith organisation where most of the beneficiaries attended, and we started delivering sessions within the local faith organisation.

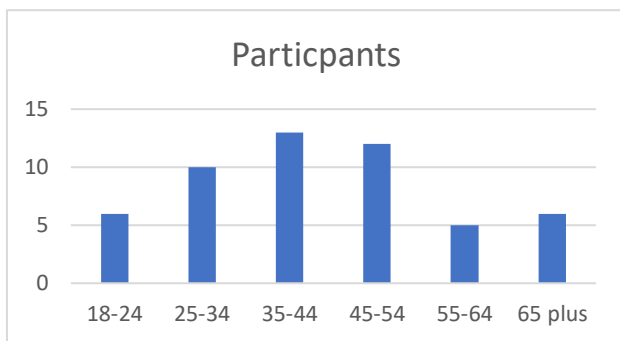
Following discussions with participants, equipment that included a table tennis table was purchased, and this generated the interest of additional members of the community. At this stage, we raised awareness of the need for this initiative and men were being inquisitive. Through social media we raised the profile of the project and shared stories of what the beneficiaries were participating in. We also expanded the activities by arranging outings for the beneficiaries. This included a boat trip, gardening and visit to the peak district. The beneficiaries commented on how much they enjoyed these activities. At this stage many men attending were aged over 50, however through discussions in the faith organisations.

The final year saw a significant increase in numbers attending and ages varied between 18 and 65 plus. Additional activities were organised building on the previous year's activities. This included 5 a side football, badminton and monthly talks on pertinent topics.

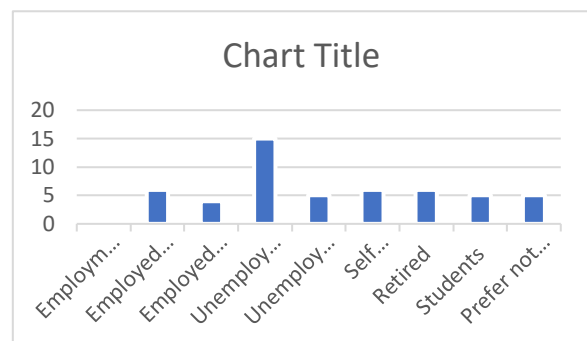
A survey was undertaken towards the end of year 3 to ascertain the effect of the project on the local community in improving their quality of life.

The results of the survey are as follows:

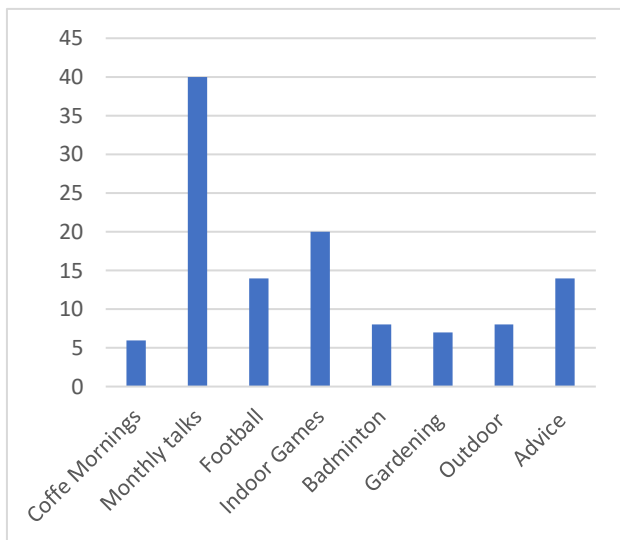
Question1 – Age of participants



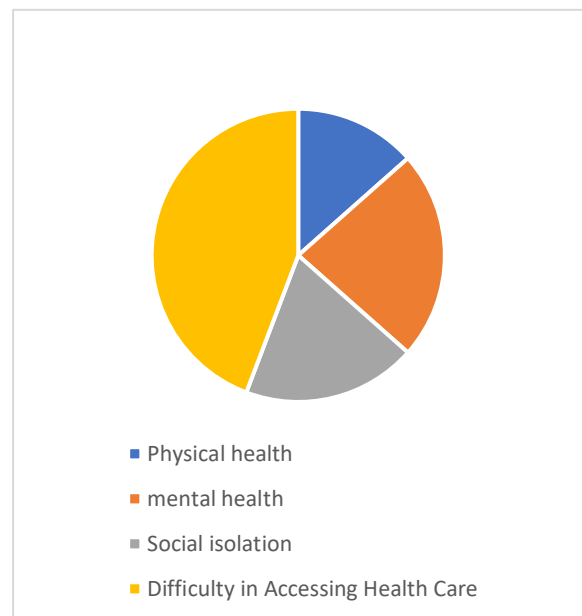
Question 2 – Employment status



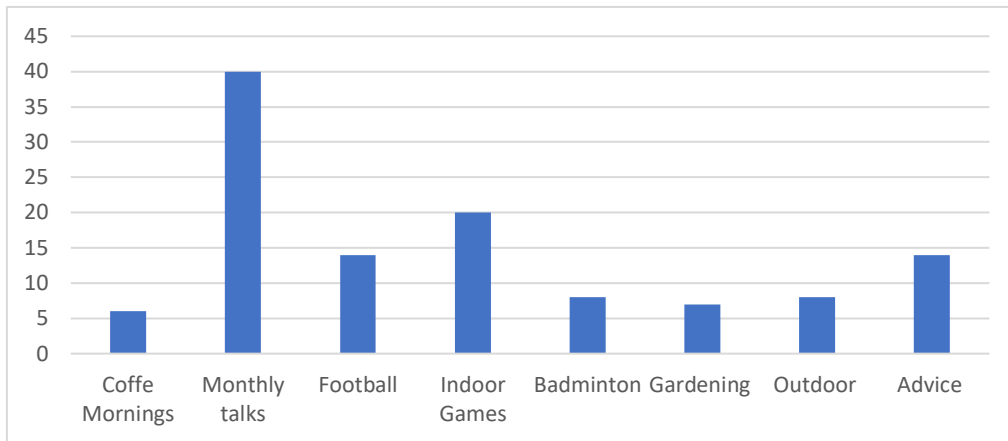
Question 3 – Activities attended



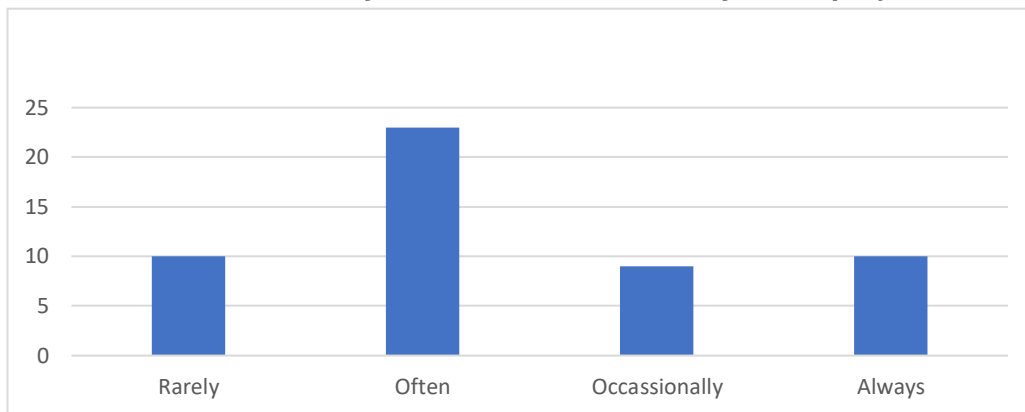
Question - 4 How has the project improved your health and wellbeing



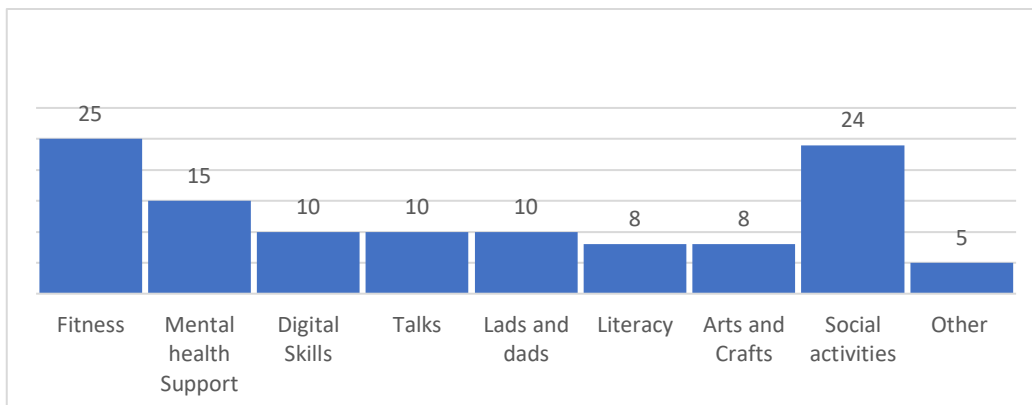
Question 5 – What activities help to maintain and improve your health and wellbeing



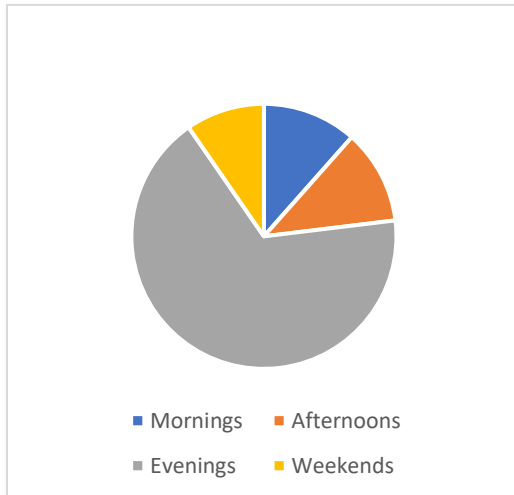
Question 6 – How often do you feel isolated or lonely if this project did not continue?



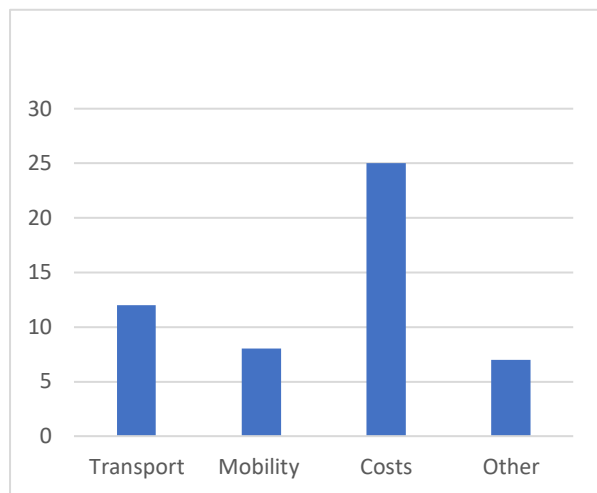
Question 7 – What activities would you be interested in participating



Question 8 – What are the best times to hold activities?



Question 9 – Do you have any challenges That prevent you from attending activities?



Question 10 – Additional comments

Some of the comments received from participants:

- Enjoyed the activities.
- Need it to continue.
- Friendly environment.
- Able to engage.
- Advice helped me.
- I can go somewhere where I feel comfortable.
- The talks were very informative
- Would like help to apply for jobs, prepare CV's, interview skills, etc.
- I want to learn how to use computers as everything is now online.
- Participants highlighted several difficulties that had been addressed within the project. These ranged from loneliness, isolation, lack of spoken English and financial problems to the challenges of 'negotiating the system' e.g. health, education, housing and benefits. Mental health and, to a lesser extent, physical health were common challenges faced by clients.



3. Conclusion

This project has highlighted the fact that Mental health is a key aspect of overall well-being. If ignored or taken lightly, it can swallow lives, which is often the case. Reports of suicide cases, shows that males were more frequently reported, accounting for 65% of cases, compared to 35% for females. This highlights the pressing need to bring attention to this issue and take proactive measures to address it.

YAWR Services through this project has been dedicated to shedding light on this critical issue, particularly focusing on men's mental health and invites everyone, regardless of gender, to be vocal about their concerns and seek professional help whenever they need it. Let's break the silence and support each other in prioritising mental health.

Despite its significance and prevalence, men's mental health remains heavily stigmatised, especially among the Pakistani community. A shroud of silence surrounds men's mental health as they are trapped by social expectations and emotional constraints, the burden keeps piling up, causing them to struggle in silence.

In today's world, mental health is often discussed, yet stigma persists across social, self, cultural, and professional spheres. This presents barriers for those in need of support, making it challenging to open up about their struggles and seek help.

Stereotypes further reinforce these stigmas, such as the belief that discussing mental health indicates weakness. These beliefs make it harder for individuals to seek professional support.

Societal gender roles play a big role in reinforcing the silence among men. From a young age, boys are often taught not to express their emotions, with phrases like "boys don't cry" ingrained in their minds. This message makes it challenging for them to discuss their feelings as they grow older.



This reluctance to talk about emotions extends to the workplace as well, where men feel pressured to hide their struggles, such as demotions or lack of bonuses, fearing they'll appear weak or burden others with their problems.

These stigmas potentially create a suffocating pressure to meet societal expectations, particularly as providers. This leads to overwhelming feelings of misery and, in severe cases, thoughts of giving up. As a result, many men believe that keeping their emotions to themselves is the solution. However, without even realising they start developing

symptoms of serious mental health issues, including stress, PTSD, anxiety, depression, and more.



To break this cycle, we must encourage open discussions about mental health and provide support to those in need.

Empowering men's mental health awareness and support Men who face mental health challenges often shift to self-destructive behaviours rather than seeking the help they need. They fear judgement, negative societal perceptions, and the titles like they are not masculine enough if they seek treatment. Unfortunately, stigma, prejudice, and discrimination against men's mental health issues are widespread, due to a lack of understanding.

Many participants at the end of the project described having gone from social isolation, stress and fear to a confident and outward looking life as a result of their involvement with the project.

They understood the concept of mental wellbeing and rated the support that they had received from the project as making a big difference to their wellbeing.

YAWR achieved this by partnership working, establishing a “Bottom up Approach” and ensuring that the following points were addressed.

- **Personal approach**

We realised that to ensure that men participated we had to initially remove stigma. This was achieved by discussing around health issues, good leadership, using the right language and relaying positive stories.

- **What kind of settings are effective for men**

This was crucial to engage the men and initially two settings were utilised throughout the three years. This included Mowbray Garden Library and Chapel Walk Masjid. This worked effectively as the two settings were in a conducive environment and they were “shoulder to shoulder” settings for elderly men. Subsequently through discussions held with the participants and talks held at Chapel Walk we were able to reduce mental health stigma and discrimination.

In year two and three we engaged young middle aged men and therefore we hired badminton courts and 5 a side football pitch.

- **What style of intervention works for men**

Different activities were organised for different aged groups. For the elderly men activities included chair based exercise, talks on pertinent topics, provide advice and information as well as “peer to peer” support. For the young and middle aged men that we engaged in the latter two years sports based activities proved a success.,

Over the course of the three years we established social support groups for elderly, an arms length approach, ensured that the participants had ownership, that they were practically engaged in activities as evidenced by the gardening activities and involving users in designing the activities. This included the trips to Chatsworth House, garden centres, Peak District, canal walk, barbecue, etc.

- **What therapeutic approaches are effective for men**

The key area in this section is that we were able to manage Stress by listening. Men feel that they don't have an opportunity to be listened to. However, within our social groups we discussed various topics, and the participation was effective. In some cases, some of the participants required personal advice and this was also provided. The monthly talks at Chapel Walk addressed mindfulness and we also tried to develop mentoring opportunities for the young people.

- **What does success look like**

In delivering any project, YAWR have realised that partnership working is key. Hence the reason we engaged key stakeholders at an early stage. We also realised that we could not achieve our aims in year one. Therefore, we took a step by step approach in engaging the community. However, we do realise that sustainability is key and now that the project funding has finished, we need to replace it with some other activities and build on the success.

4. Next Steps

YAWR Services will continue to encourage the men to continue with the activities that they have engaged in.

This includes physical wellbeing and mindfulness through activity sessions ranging from sports, simple exercise and continuing with the monthly talks. Where we can also provide 1:1 advice and support, ESOL courses, careers advice and job search activity as well as health promotion.

In developing and delivering this project we have gleaned that the following obstacles need to be understanding:

- Communicate with men in a way that respects their culture
- Positive role models
- Intervention has clear objectives
- Social support interventions
- Activity based interventions
- Conducive environment
- Peer support
- Positive examples
- Look beyond intervention
- Plan evaluation from outset
- Men are often considered hard to reach when it comes to health.