



Press Release

Date: 10th February 2022

All-Party Parliamentary Group calls for Government action on a Men's Health Strategy

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Issues Affecting Men and Boys has today published a new report setting out the compelling case for a Men's Health Strategy for England. After hearing evidence from a range of national and international men's health experts, the APPG is urging the Government to start work by June 2022 on developing a strategy to improve the health of all men and boys throughout their lives.

This date for starting work will be after the Government has published their long-awaited and welcome Women's Health Strategy, and a focus on men's health inequalities should also form part of the Government's forthcoming White Paper on Health Disparities.

The APPG report '*The Case for a Men's Health Strategy: For a Healthier, Happier and a More Productive Society for All*' concluded that such a strategy would benefit not just men and boys themselves; it would benefit women and girls with whom they share their lives and society. It would also reduce demand/costs on the health system and improve economic productivity. The report concluded that the case for a men's health strategy is a moral as well as a health issue.

The experts stated that the core principles of the Men's Health Strategy should include the need for a positive gender-informed 'What Works' approach and one that is built around the needs of men and boys, rather than men and boys having to accept what they are given. This was the approach of a number of men's health strategies that already exist around the world, including those created by the World Health Organisation (Europe) and by the Irish and Australian Governments. The international evidence shows what actions will improve men's health; what is needed now is the will to act.

The report also references a range of successful grassroots men's health initiatives already taking place such as UK Men's Sheds, Andy Man's Club and Football Fans in Training. Their positive approach gives men access to support.

Nick Fletcher MP (Don Valley), Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Issues Affecting Men and Boys, said: "On hearing the evidence from a range of national and international experts, it is clear that there are serious challenges in men and boys' health—and the current approach is not working. This includes tackling mental health issues such as suicide, health conditions such as cancer or unhealthy lifestyles underpinned by obesity and alcohol.

“The case for a Men’s Health Strategy is compelling. It should be founded on the experience of similar international strategies, be created around the needs of men and boys, and, ensure those charities and men’s health experts already working in the field are fully involved.

“A Men’s Health Strategy will improve the lives of men and boys, and women and girls too – we all share our lives, families and society together. It is morally the right thing to do. We strongly urge the Government and the health establishment to now start putting the wheels in motion.”

The report also concludes that a Men’s Health Strategy would be far more effective than a male deficit-model approach or the Government’s current disease/condition-based approach. The evidence is that the latter is not working well for men especially given a range of core indicators which are in plain sight such as:

- In 2020, 19% of UK male deaths – around one in five – were before the age of 65. In September 2021, the Office for National Statistics reported the first decline in male life expectancy since the 1980s.²
- Men in the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea now live 27 years longer than those in Blackpool.³
- In 2020, 4,500 men in England, Wales and Scotland took their own lives. With 2019 figures from Northern Ireland (157), this is the equivalent of 13 per day. Suicide is the biggest killer of men under 50.⁴
- Men have been disproportionately more likely to die from COVID-19 -- for working-age men there were 31 deaths per 100,000, compared with equivalent female death rates of 17 per 100,000, respectively.⁵

The APPG believes a Men’s Health Strategy will help turn this picture around and should focus on prevention, tackling societal barriers and creating a more responsive and integrated health system. The report produced a range of recommendations (see Annex 1) including;

- Clear and visible accountability for delivering improvements in men’s health including a Government Minister with responsibility, a Men’s Health Ambassador and a specific strand of work within the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities.
- Increased funding for multidisciplinary research into men’s health.
- Clear national and local quantitative and qualitative targets for improving men’s health.

The strategy should be founded on the outline of the arguments, principles and process set out by the international and national experts from whom the APPG took evidence. This includes those from the Men’s Health Forum who are running a wider campaign for a Men’s Health Strategy, an initiative that the APPG supports.

Martin Tod, Chief Executive of the Men’s Health Forum, said:

“We strongly welcome the APPG’s excellent new report and their support for our campaign. Men’s health across the UK is still unacceptably poor and in areas that need to be levelled up it is even worse. We need urgent action: men’s life expectancy is going down. Too many men die too young – many before they even retire.

“The recently announced Women’s Health Strategy shows the potential of a joined up gendered approach to improving health – and a Men’s Health Strategy to go alongside the Women’s Health Strategy will be just as powerful. The experience of other countries shows that this can work.

“In so many areas, there are big differences in men’s and women’s health and the approaches that need to be taken – COVID, mental health, heart disease, cancer. In all these areas, a properly gender-informed approach to health – backed up by a Men’s Health Strategy -- will be better for men and better for women.”

Professor Alan White, emeritus Professor of Men’s Health at Leeds Beckett University and Patron of the Men’s Health Forum, said:

“There is a growing body of evidence relating to the differing health needs of men and women and how these needs could be met. This has led to other countries now implementing men’s health policies and the WHO for Europe establishing a men’s health strategy, which the UK signed up for. They all recognise that it is too costly to leave the health of the male population to chance. We also need to grasp this opportunity given by the APPG to take a serious look at the health of the male population.”

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Notes to Editors

- 1 Due to devolution, health policy is devolved to the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive, however, the APPG’s intention is that the evidence could also be used for consideration in those three nations too.
- 2 Men’s Health Forum “Levelling up men’s health: The case for a men’s health strategy”: <https://www.https://bit.ly/3GdOKrP> and Office for National Statistics, National life tables – life expectancy in the UK: 2018 to 2020, September 2021: <https://bit.ly/3t7JmUm>
3. Imperial College London, “Life expectancy declining in many English communities even before pandemic”, October 2021: <https://bit.ly/3ufY4Jo>
4. Suicides in England and Wales: 2020 registrations: <https://bit.ly/3ohDCUH> / Public Health Scotland, “Suicide statistics for Scotland”, August 2021: <https://bit.ly/3q4qiEy> / Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, “Suicide Statistics 2019”, April 2021: <https://bit.ly/3eY8R1Z>
5. Office for National Statistics, “Deaths involving COVID-19 by month of registration”, December 2021: <https://bit.ly/3zCG5gR>

Further Information

The APPG Report can be found at: <https://equi-law.uk/mens-health-strategy/> including recordings of the evidence sessions.

For information about the APPG, please visit: <https://equi-law.uk/appg-menboys/>

For further media comment on the APPG from Nick Fletcher MP, please contact nick.fletcher.mp@parliament.uk and 020 7219 2759

For more information about the report, please contact Mark Brooks OBE, Policy Advisor to the APPG on mark.brooks70@talktalk.net or 07834 452357

This is not an official publication of the House of Commons or the House of Lords. It has not been approved by either House or its committees. All-Party Parliamentary Groups are informal groups of Members of both Houses with a common interest in particular issues. The views expressed in this report are those of the group.

Annex 1: Policy Recommendations

1	We fully support and endorse the creation of a Men's Health Strategy in England.
2	The Government should start the process (an outline process has been included in this report) by June 2022, or soon after the Women's Health Strategy is launched (if that is earlier). It should aim to complete and publish a Men's Health Strategy by Summer 2023.
3	The Government should build on the work of the wider Men's Health Strategy campaign led by the Men's Health Forum. This includes full engagement with national and international men's health experts as well as hearing from men and boys themselves.
4	We support the aims, strategy and strategic principles behind a Men's Health Strategy that the experts put forward, including being founded on the positive 'What Works' approach, not a deficit model approach.
5	There must be clear and visible accountability for delivering improvements in men's health including; a Government Minister with responsibility; a Men's Health Ambassador; a specific strand of work within the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities; specific accountabilities for local authorities, NHS Integrated Care Partnerships and mental health trusts.
6	Increased funding for multidisciplinary research into men's health.
7	There must be clear national and local quantitative and qualitative targets for improving men's health.
8	The creation of a National Centre for Men's Health.
9	A Men's Health Strategy should be included and be a key driver in the Government's forthcoming White Paper on Health Disparities in England.

Annex 2: List of speakers and presentations

Martin Tod (Chief Executive, Men's Health Forum): A briefing on male health disadvantage statistics.

Professor Alan White (Emeritus Professor of Men's Health at Leeds Beckett University): The UK case, including experience from Leeds.

Peter Baker (Director, Global Action on Men's Health and Fellow of the Royal Society of Public Health): Existing international examples and experience.

Dr John Barry (co-founder of the Male Psychology Section of the British Psychological Society, co-author of Perspectives in Male Psychology.): The role of Male Psychology in guiding a Men's Health Strategy to give positive outcomes for men's mental health.

Dr Rebecca Owens (Senior lecturer in Psychology at the University of Sunderland): Rebecca has developed the first module on male psychology which is built on biological and evolutionary foundations.

Dr Noel Richardson (Director, National Centre for Men's Health, Institute of Technology, Carlow, Ireland.): Insights from the Irish experience and suggested strategies to promote in England.

Glen Poole (Chief Executive of the Australian Men's Forum): Spoke to the research team separately on the Australian Men's Health Strategy.

Oliver Vikse (Andy's Man Club): The rapid growth and popularity of their groups for men struggling with mental health.