



User Engagement Group

2nd QTR 2023/24

The aim of this user engagement group was to gather qualitative data from male clients that gave insight into their opinions, attitudes, and experiences of The Mulberry Centre support services. The session, entitled 'Men Matters,' took place in The Mulberry Room at the Centre on Wednesday 2nd August from 6pm to 7.30pm.

Due to the limited success of previous user engagement groups, and historically fewer men signing up for such activities, greater importance was placed on marketing and promoting the session. The user engagement group was given a more appealing title and pitched as a social activity, with male clients invited to join for drinks, nibbles, and conversation after the popular table tennis session.

The session was included in the timetable shared electronically each month, added to the Pabau database calendar for sign-ups, and an email invite was sent to all male clients in the weeks preceding the event. Posters detailing the session were displayed around the Centre and flyers were placed in the leaflet rack in the reception area at the Centre for a month in the run up to the session. Furthermore, it was deemed that by scheduling the session after table tennis, which often had several men attending, as well as making it a social event, would make it easier and more likely that our male clients would stay to participate in the user engagement group.

Ninety minutes were allocated for the user engagement group session. Following this, the participants were invited to stay on for burgers and drinks, and to socialise in the garden and reception area of the Centre. The session was moderated by our male CISA (Cancer Information and Support Assistant), Leon, in the hope that an all-male group would make the participants feel more comfortable during the session and thus share their experiences and ideas more readily.

A total of eight male clients participated in the session. This was a very positive outcome of the developed marketing approach. Eight participants for this type of activity is considered sufficient for gaining meaningful qualitative data as it grants each participant sufficient 'talk time' as well as allow for adequate discussion and thus provide meaningful feedback.

Each participant completed a consent and personal profile form. This was to obtain permission for their feedback to be shared as well as to gain insight into the demographics of the group. Every participant gave permission for their feedback to be shared anonymously. The group demographics were as follows:

Age	Number of participants	Registered user	Number of participants	Ethnicity	Number of participants
51-65	2	Patient	4	Asian Pakistani	1
66-88	4	Bereaved	2	Black Caribbean	1
Prefer not to say	2	Carer	2	White UK	4
				White other	1
				Other	1



At the start of the session some background information as to why this session was taking place was shared along with the aims and purpose of user engagement. Recognised as a hard-to-reach group, and the fact that 72% of the clients registered with the Centre are female, The Mulberry Centre is keen to improve and develop support services for men. The participants of the user engagement group were to play an important role in defining what this would look like. The aim of the session was to elicit their views, opinions, and experiences on three main themes:

- Which of the **current services** work well?
- What **changes** needed to be made?
- What **new services** would be beneficial and appeal to men?

These themes were addressed through discussion around the following questions:

1. Which services do you currently use?
2. How do you use the Centre?
3. What do you get most out of when visiting the Centre?
4. How could the Centre improve to support more men in the community?
5. What has been most challenging about dealing with a cancer diagnosis?
6. What would make you use the Centre more?
7. How do you think we could reach more men, both those already registered and new clients?
8. Are there any services that you are currently not accessing?
9. What is stopping you from accessing these services?
10. What else you would like to add or share?

To help the participants feel relaxed and settle into the space, an ice breaker activity was used before any of the focused questions were discussed. The participants were encouraged to start talking by introducing themselves and sharing something positive about themselves. Leon, the group moderator, initiated this by introducing himself first. As this activity progressed the group became quite emotional, sharing intimate thoughts and feelings along with details of the challenges they had faced. Although this suggests that the participants felt comfortable in the setting and sharing their thoughts with Leon and the other participants, it also highlighted a need for a platform where this could happen more frequently. The need to talk and share feelings and experiences, and the subsequent benefit of doing so, was very apparent. Due to impact and response to the ice breaker activity, question 4 was omitted in the focussed discussion.

Current services:

Conversations around the current support services available, revealed that emotional and physical support services, along with wellbeing classes, were accessed most by the participants.

- Four of the participants had used the one-to-one counselling sessions and found this useful.
- One participant had attended the EFT workshop.
- Physical support sessions were well received. One participant had attended a men's yoga for prostate health session. There was positive feedback about the Strength and Balance class as well as the group walks and table tennis.



- Complementary therapies had also been taken up, with the participants accessing massage, reflexology, and reiki sessions. Positive comments were shared regarding the benefits of this service.
- Coffee mornings were very well received. The group felt that this was a positive activity for everyone and that it should take place more frequently.
- In terms of practical support, four of the participants were unaware of the support available regarding welfare and benefits.
- None of them had attended any creative or mental workshops i.e., the watercolour class, book club or creative writing. The general feeling was that these classes were aimed at female clients and were not of interest to them.
- There was some confusion regarding the Men's Support Group. They were not aware of the timing for the session and the general understanding was that this took place virtually although this is not the case.

Changes:

There were several suggestions regarding changes that could be made to increase the number of men accessing support services.

- With regards to the Men's Support Group, it was felt that the current timing of Monday afternoon was not convenient. The participants suggested that the session would be better attended if it took place in the evening or after another session that was well attended by male clients i.e., table tennis.
- Although the book club was not of interest to the participants, it was suggested that it may be more appealing if the chosen book was more relevant to them, had a more male focus, and was better promoted. No suggestion of an appropriate book was shared.
- The group felt that the images used on the timetable, flyers and posters were targeted more at females. They could not relate to them and therefore felt that the sessions being advertised were not for them. They suggested having more men in the images and a better balance of gender-based images, particularly on posters displayed on the hospital board.
- There was a consensus that many of the support services were targeted at females, so they did not feel included. An example given related to the *Look Good Feel Good* workshop, and how this was only for female clients. They suggested having more male focussed advertising to emphasise that the sessions were for everyone.

There was some discussion regarding how the participants had heard of The Mulberry Centre. Two participants had been referred by Macmillan and two through word of mouth. There was a general feeling that the Centre was not well advertised at GP surgeries and suggested that a leaflet or information about the Centre should be shared with all at the point of diagnosis.

New Services:

Services that the participants felt would encourage more men to use the Centre related to social activities and communication.

- The participants proposed that an email or monthly newsletter directed just at male clients would work well. It was agreed by the participants that men were more likely to engage with communication targeted directly at them and that was tailored just for them. It was felt that



this would have greater success at promoting support services to male clients as well as a good way to share information on issues relevant to men.

- The participants were enthusiastic at the suggestion of making the Centre a more social hub. They believed that this would entice more men to visit the Centre and feel more comfortable in the setting. The participants were keen to have a pool table or table football at the Centre as they felt this would help create a more male-friendly atmosphere.
- A games session was a popular idea amongst the participants. Suggestions included having a chess or Scrabble club and a quiz night.
- Outdoor activities and excursions/off-site socials were also discussed enthusiastically by the participants. Ideas included pub visits, bus and boat trips, fishing excursions, and creating a pub quiz team.

Conclusion

In summary, the key insights from this user engagement session are:

- Social bonding opportunities were considered key to enticing more men to use the Centre.
- Direct communication to male clients and more inclusive marketing of services would be well received.
- Another user engagement group for men would be beneficial to gaining further insight into services for male clients.