

# Stakeholder Meeting Men, poverty and lifetimes of care research project

12.25 Social Sciences Building  
University of Leeds, 14/07/2015



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**timescapes**  
An ESRC Qualitative Longitudinal Study



The Leverhulme Trust



**UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**

## Executive Summary

**Stakeholders meeting for 'Men, poverty and lifetimes of care' research  
(14<sup>th</sup> July 2015, University of Leeds)**

**Project funded by Leverhulme Trust and University of Leeds**

### Main outcomes:

- A stakeholder analysis of the existing third sector in Leeds,
- The third sector is considered most likely to have a high interest in the study, as well as the capabilities to affect change for men at a local level,
- Government, and other national agencies were considered to have less interest in the study, although the highest capability to affect change over time,
- A list of relevant third sector and voluntary agencies was produced to steer the study and facilitate access to participants.

Several key themes emerged that might be explored in the study, including:

- Men's social isolation and the contexts causing it,
- Barriers to social participation,
- The importance of locality and the peer group to identities,
- Violence and emotion,
- Creating support opportunities to help men to develop relationships.

The project research questions were re-worked in light of stakeholder priorities and knowledge (see above). They are now constructed as follows:

1. How far do men's personal histories influence their ideas of care responsibilities and their ability to fulfill these responsibilities?
2. How far do men's personal histories shape their hopes for the future?
3. What do men think is 'good' care and what are the key barriers and constraints (perceived and actual) to them providing this care over time?
4. What kinds of support have men received over time and what spaces have helped them to develop their capabilities to provide care?

If you have any **comments** or **suggestions** about the research, or that you would like to add to report, please contact Anna directly via her email address [a.tarrant@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:a.tarrant@leeds.ac.uk) or via phone at 07857 712468. Similarly, if you have any suggestions about, or contact details for, **possible participants**, please let Anna know as soon as possible.

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## 1. Introduction

This report briefly summarises the outcomes of a meeting held with five stakeholders for the research project, 'Men, poverty and lifetimes of care', led by Dr Anna Tarrant<sup>1</sup> (a more detailed summary of the meeting is available on the [project website](#)). The stakeholders form an advisory group comprising individuals currently working for the third sector in Leeds that have shown an interest in co-producing the project. The meeting was designed in consultation with Dr Ged Hall, who also facilitated the activities that were run.

## 2. Meeting Agenda

*Participants:* Dave Cousins ([Grandparents Association](#)), Sarah Duffy ([GIPSIL](#) (Gipton Independent Supported Living)), Tom Senior ([Health For All](#)), John Battle (organiser of the men's walking group), Mark Crowe ([The WY-FI project](#) (West-Yorkshire Finding Independence Project)).

*Apologies:* Carers UK, WYCCP (West Yorkshire Community Chaplaincy Project).

### *Main Objectives:*

- To bring together stakeholders currently working in the third sector in Leeds to provide them with a space to share their experiences and meet with other providers,
- To gain an understanding of the current goals and priorities of the local third sector in Leeds, who provide services to men and their families, living on a low-income,
- To carry out a stakeholder analysis of the local third sector landscape, based on participant knowledge and understandings of which agencies have capabilities to affect change and levels of potential interest in the research,

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<sup>1</sup> The project has a website that is regularly updated (<http://menandcare.leeds.ac.uk>)

- To generate insights about their current work with men in the local area, as informed by an analysis of existing qualitative longitudinal data collected by previous research teams at the University of Leeds,
- To develop the research aims and questions in light of the priorities and experiences discussed.

*Item and facilitator:*

Activity 1: A round of introductions to each stakeholder, including reflection on why they are interested in the project (Ged Hall),

Activity 2: A stakeholder analysis exercise of the local context and key influencers, including analysis of their level of capacity to affect change and potential level of interest in the research (Ged Hall),

Activity 3: Reflections on previous data about men living on a low-income to prompt discussion of the current experiences and priorities of the third sector in Leeds (Anna Tarrant and Ged Hall),

Activity 4. Group discussions of the current research questions and their appropriateness for generating relevant evidence for the third sector in Leeds (Anna Tarrant and Ged Hall).

### 3. Activity Outcomes

#### 3.1. Introductions to each organisation

*Objectives:*

- To generate a clear understanding of the people who have formed the project advisory group,
- To learn more about why they may have a vested interest in the project and its outcomes.

Descriptions of each organisation can be viewed on their websites, and additional information about the participants is discussed in a longer report, available at <http://menandcare.leeds.ac.uk/project-outputs/>.

### *Outcomes:*

Common themes and shared interests emerged during this activity, relating to the issues men are experiencing in Leeds, as well as examples of good practice in providing services that engage men:

- A key issue faced by both young and middle aged men in Leeds is social isolation (attributed to housing policy changes over time, transitions to fatherhood, financial insecurity),
- Many of the men experience multiple and complex issues. Drug, alcohol and mental health problems are prevalent and many have been in care and/or prison,
- Good support is about providing advice, advocating and assisting people in an informed way,
- Men can be difficult to engage with services but they can be found (e.g. in pubs, betting shops) and with persistence and the development of relationships of trust, will engage longer term,
- Services must provide a safe environment for men and must focus on working with, and alongside men, rather than in a formal, head on fashion.

## 3.2. Stakeholder analysis

### *Objectives:*

- To gain an overview of the care sector in Leeds,
- To gain an understand of high capability, high interest agencies in Leeds who can aid in creating impact from the evidence the project generates,

Plate 1 is an image of the final outcome of the task. The group identified relevant agencies both locally and nationally on post-it notes and placed them on the grid to correspond with the level of perceived capability to affect change and the likely level of interest in the study itself.

High capability/high interest

Low capability/low interest



Low capability/high interest

High capability/low interest

Plate 1: Outcome of the stakeholder analysis.

*Outcomes:*

- Third sector and voluntary organisations are considered to be most likely to have high capability to affect change at a local level and to have a high level of interest in the project (a full list of the named agencies is available in the full report, accessible on the project website: <http://menandcare.leeds.ac.uk/project-outputs/>),
- National agencies such as the Department for Work and Pensions and other policy think tanks were deemed to have high capability to affect change but to have little interest in the project itself, with its very local focus.
- Individual participants and their families were deemed to be likely to have a high interest in the study but little capability to affect change, stressing the importance of engaging them in the study but also using the study as a vehicle to get their voices heard by the appropriate agencies,
- The low capability/high interest box also highlighted possible places of access to men, including sport's centres, churches and food banks.

Given the emphasis on the capabilities and interest of the third and voluntary sector in Leeds, co-production and collaboration with these organisations appears to be an appropriate ongoing strategy in terms of gaining access and ensuring that the project might have some impact at a local level for men and their families that are living on a low-income in Leeds.

### 3.3. Responses to existing evidence

#### *Objectives:*

- To share findings from previous research about men living on a low-income (Data shared with participants is available on the project website <http://menandcare.leeds.ac.uk/project-outputs/>),
- To generate further discussion about the participants' experiences of working with men and the issues men are currently experiencing.

#### *Outcomes (The importance of locality and male social networks)*

- Men's identities come from the locality, not from working,
- Engagement by men comes from seeing men like them and seeing someone they look up to.



*John: it's not older people like me telling them how to be a good dad, because I'm a granddad, but what can you do with peer groups?*

*Mark: We use people with lived experience as part of the project and part of the workforce on the project as well. And certainly when it comes to dealing with people who are particularly entrenched or outside the system then it's their ability to engage, it's not me. I haven't done engagement for toffee, but (laughs) when they've seen somebody who's been through and is coming out the other side,*

*Sarah: Or it's people that they actually look up to and have respect for.*



Young men's participation is affected by:

- The lack of opportunities available such as:
  - The erosion of educational opportunities,
  - Recent changes in the Conservative Government's summer budget (Summer Budget, 2015):

“ Sarah: *One of the things I find is people, often they will mistake a lack of education for a lack of intelligence. It's so offensive. And it's about opportunities that are available... what I see from our core work, which is with young men, is the lack of opportunity. And that's just getting worse. And yet they're born into this narrative of being required to be this great provider and to have this great job. And I just don't see those great jobs that are actually open to the young people that I'm working with. And they get so frustrated, who wouldn't? And so the stress that that then invokes and the stress that is involved in poverty.*

Mark: *It either comes out as stress, frustration, anger, or it becomes the other way, despair and a kind of inertia.*

John: *Suicide.*

Mark: *Well, suicide. Yes, in the way that you end up getting caught in that – certainly in the benefit system, where you can't have – you don't have any assets to get out of it and you can't exploit any of the assets that you've got*

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- The notion of getting people into work to alleviate poverty is highly flawed because work simply is not there for these young men.
- The impact of poverty on young men has serious implications for how they experience fatherhood, a key transition into adulthood:

“ John: *There is this notion of driving people into work that's not there, that's the problem. Rather than developing the whole person.*

*Sarah: The thing with young people as well, the thing about fatherhood, we are often going through both the young women and the young men as well, and it's this sense of – a real sense of excitement, the same as any of us would have felt having a child. It's almost like this is a blank page, this is a really good start. But the stress then of having a newborn baby when you're a young person but more crucially you're in poverty just taints the whole experience to such an extent that it's a wonder that any of them get through it.*

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- Violence (including violence both perpetrated and experienced by men)) was identified as a key concern and was certainly evident in the two datasets analysed prior to the meeting:

“ *John: I think there's something about men and violence, there's a real systemic problem in our society of what men are expected to do....I think there's a whole thing, how to be a good dad. But I think the violence thing is a big issue that we're not tackling about how you protect your family with violence but how do you discipline your children without using violence? And it's getting the violence out of the system...allowing for the emotional without it turning into violence, isn't it? How do we manage our emotions?*

*Mark: I did this street research in Manchester amongst people with complex needs and we found a really surprisingly high proportion, I forget what it was, but a high proportion of men who'd been victims of domestic violence in that. And that was just one of those things that was really striking. I never got to really follow it up but I would be interested to think about that.*

”

- The group identified the importance of relationships to men,
- Work is not just an economic activity but also one where relationships and social interaction take place,
- They identify a gap in service provision where men are brought together to build relationships:



*John: How do we get people into relationships? In a sense if the relationship is too intense and they just internalise it, pull them out, let them compare notes, that's what they need to do, isn't it, and setting up those contexts. Now who is going to pay for it is part of the problem, because you need a bit of brass to just oil the wheels to make it happen and buy a cup of tea. And it's there I think society has just shut down all that, assumes the relational is happening and we've turned it all into a highly transactional commissioning system, and people are just falling through the cracks.*

*Sarah: The thing is, work isn't just an economic activity.*

*Mark: No, absolutely.*

*Sarah: And what would be happening is that men would have those relationships in those workplaces. And quite often they're in workplaces that were predominantly male. And those opportunities are simply not available. And I think that comes across with a lot of sixty year olds, they're actually used to – it's a myth that men don't talk, they do....we are kind of generalising, but the men that we've worked with both young and old, given the chance to be able to sit down and actually participate they were more than happy to do so. I do think that work brought so many other benefits.*



Additional points were summarized on post-it notes in relation to the themes of barriers to participation, violence and relationships:

Barriers faced by men:

- Having to wait for benefits,
- Changes to the welfare system – long term impacts,
- Benefits changes will increase barriers, particularly for young people,
- Lived experience needs to be balanced out from risk,
- Judgment, environment, society,

- Second chances are disappearing i.e. getting into education, further or higher education almost out of reach,
- Years ago Youth Training Scheme (YTS) awful but now a wonderful option,
- Apprenticeships closed to young men due to funding pressure.

#### Emotional responses

- Born into narrative of provider but opposite of emotional response,
- What are men expected to do? Violence 'to be a man'?
- Allowing emotions, managing them,
- Cross reference to women and domestic violence in the research.

### 3.3.1. Summary of key points

Informed by the findings of the secondary analysis, the discussions and the post-it notes provided a useful understanding of the issues that men are facing and are seeking support for, according to individuals from the third sector. The key themes highlighted are briefly summarized here and provide insight into some of the current service gaps and themes to be considered in the design of the research questions and interview schedules:

- Peer groups and shared experience were described as an important way of engaging men in services. Past practice suggests that men can also be engaged in services if found in the right spaces, like pubs and betting shops – this is an important methodological finding in terms of accessing isolated men for the project,
- Local service providers in Leeds recognize, and are concerned, about structural issues and their particular impacts on men. For young men this includes the effects of the erosion of educational opportunities, poverty, gendered expectations, such as being a provider and policy change (such as those announced in the 2015 Budget). For older men, there are concerns about a loss of relationships resulting from being at work,
- Structural barriers such as these can result in anger, frustration, stress and violence. The group identified a need to understand contexts of

violence better, including men as perpetrators but also victims of violence,

- The participants identified a loss of opportunity for men to form relationships and suggested that as a society, there is an assumption that the relational is always happening, meaning that men actually fall through the gaps in support.
- Work is not just an economic activity; it supports social interaction. Worklessness is therefore a social, as well as economic risk to men,
- When men, young and old, are given opportunities, under the right conditions and in the right spaces, they do engage and they do participate.

### 3.4. The research aims and questions

#### *Objectives:*

- To develop the project research questions to generate potentially useful evidence for the third sector in Leeds.

#### *Original research questions:*

1. How far do men's personal histories influence their ideas of care responsibilities and their ability to fulfill these responsibilities?
2. How far do men's personal histories shape their hopes for the future?
3. What do men think is 'good' care and what are the key barriers and constraints (perceived and actual) to them providing this care over time?
4. What do you think are the key barriers and constraints on these men?

In relation to the first two research questions, Mark and John made the following points and identified key areas of interest where evidence from this project might contribute. Questions they would like to be answered by the project include:

- Who creates 'their' responsibilities or are those responsibilities imposed? Does this come from society (and state) / culture (local / national)?

- Resilience is important; interested in how this is built and how that can be evidenced.
- Also interested in points at which the 'hopes for the future' change and what causes those changes e.g. a lifelong junkie (whose default setting is often negative), going clean (whose default setting changes to positive).
- Are negative histories more 'remembered' than positive histories and, if so, why?
- How do men create the space to define their responsibilities and build their abilities to care?

They also made the following points:

- How does the aggregation of the different stories come to 'mean' something? Perhaps leading to change or evidence for change?
- Poverty (and the ability to provide) and lack of resources; how should this be addressed to allow space to build capabilities?
- What are the biggest causes of the constant 'grind / struggle'?
- Subsistence living prevents any resources being devoted to social / relationship building,
- Systems tend to look at deficits, which hinders any analysis of assets/ capabilities.
- Personal shared histories can help to build solidarity and community (gentle / informal / relational).

In relation to the third and fourth research questions, Sarah and Dave made the following points and identified key areas of interest where evidence from this project might contribute:

- Sarah reflected on how myths about family are represented by television adverts, particularly at Christmas Time. She questions where these myths come from and how people measure themselves up to those adverts as 'good' parents. She queried if these encouraged people to go to door-to-door lenders. Dave suggested that for grandparents raising grandchildren Christmas can actually be a real

battle that are not represented by the images sold – so how do images of ‘good families’ impact on these men’s experiences and perceptions of themselves?

- GIPSIL would benefit from evidence of what is being seen on the ground i.e. men’s experiences. Sarah suggested that the Big Society could be promoted but not while people are living in destitution,
- Is there a link between substance use and lack of opportunities? Seeing others do things that they themselves cannot do?

The second questions (any other considerations? What should I add?) received additional responses:

- Dave argued a need to address the issue of FASD (referring to Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder), which he has observed is contributing to the helplessness grandparents (including grandfathers) feel when raising their grandchildren with the condition,
- Is there a prevalent fear in men of interacting with children?
- Can the importance of communication be evidenced? What works? They felt that walking alongside men was a more positive and successful approach and that groups with a more practical and pragmatic approach have attracted more men in the past.
- Believing in men and giving them a treat is also an important approach.

*Outcomes:*

- Questions 1 and 2 were deemed to be appropriate for understanding men’s experiences and circumstances and for uncovering the factors that shape their capabilities to care,
- The exploration of the multiple and complex needs of men in low-income families, such as those of grandparents raising grandchildren with FASD for example, can also be built into the sampling and access process,
- Questions 3 and 4, which focus on the barriers men both perceive and experience in relation to their care responsibilities, were deemed to be

too similar. There is scope for the project to explore another area that will respond to the overall research question about the contexts in which men define, negotiate and experience their care responsibilities over time.

Two themes that repeatedly emerged in the course of the meeting were:

1. The importance of creating the right conditions and spaces of support for men and,
2. The importance of using these spaces to build men's capabilities rather than just focusing on their limitations or deficits.

Given the desire to co-produce the initial project design with the third sector, it would clearly be useful to ask the men about their experiences of support and about more positive ways of building their capabilities through the building of appropriate spaces to support them in building relationships. Given the similarities between questions 3 and 4, there is an opportunity to develop a question that addresses what has worked for men and what types of support and spaces could be created to support men in fulfilling their care responsibilities.

Resulting from this meeting, the four areas that the project will now explore, and framed as research questions, are:

1. How far do men's personal histories influence their ideas of care responsibilities and their ability to fulfill these responsibilities?
2. How far do men's personal histories shape their hopes for the future?
3. What do men think is 'good' care and what are the key barriers and constraints (perceived and actual) to them providing this care over time?
4. What kinds of support have men received over time and what spaces have helped them to develop their capabilities to provide care?

#### 4. Final action points

- Please contact Anna with any further comments or suggestions about the report. Please also provide her with possible contacts for participants that would like to be involved in the research,
- Anna will invite the project stakeholders to a briefing and advisory meeting in mid-2016, once she has collected and analysed some data.

#### 5. References

Gov. UK (2015) Summer Budget 2015,

<https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/budget-july-2015>, [Accessed 20/08/2015]