



MHF action briefing

Getting It Sorted: A policy programme for men's health

This briefing is designed to help you communicate the key recommendations within *Getting It Sorted* to local health providers or your managers as well as your local MP.

Getting It Sorted represents the Men's Health Forum's view of the policy changes needed to improve the unacceptably poor state of male health in England and Wales. The fact that action is urgently required cannot be doubted by anyone who takes note of the statistics that reveal the scale of the problem and observes the current lack of national and local policies to tackle it. *Getting It Sorted* is being sent to all members of the Men's Health Forum.

The Men's Health Forum works primarily with English health policy and structures. However, *Getting It Sorted's* recommendations can be applied to policy in Scotland and Wales and to practice in Northern Ireland.

The Men's Health Forum does not believe in producing reports or policy documents only to leave them collecting dust. At a national level the Forum will be working hard to inform elected policy makers and senior health management about the recommendations contained in *Getting It Sorted*. We believe that MHF members and friends around the UK are well placed to take similar action in their area either by telling their managers about *Getting It Sorted* or contacting their local Primary Care Trust as well as lobbying their local MP to support the report's recommendations. With the public health white paper on the horizon, this is a particularly important time to draw MPs' attention to men's health issues.

Getting It Sorted is the result of over a year of consultation with MHF members, other national organisations and policy makers. This wide consultation means professionals working on the ground, experts in national organisations and specialists in their fields have fed their knowledge and expertise into *Getting It Sorted*.

Can you help to Get It Sorted?

Your local PCT

The Forum's work tells us that addressing health inequalities, including gender, will help meet national targets for cancer, heart disease and smoking, as it will ensure that differences in behaviour will be understood and differences in prevention and treatment put in place.

The *Getting It Sorted* recommendations we would particularly like you to consider raising with your PCT are:

1.3 Health Improvement and Modernisation Programmes must be specifically required to address men's health issues as part of a consideration of gender as a determinant of health.

1.4 Primary care trusts should be required to complete an assessment of men's health needs as part of their health inequalities work. Each PCT should also be required to ensure that it has a member of staff with dedicated responsibility for the improvement of men's health.

The arguments supporting these recommendations can be found in the report.

If you work for a PCT:

- we would like you to initiate projects that will lead to or encourage the implementation at least these two recommendations; or,
- if you are not in a position to do this, why not ask your manager or the Director of Public Health to address these points?

If you work for, or are involved with, a different type of organisation:

- why not write to your local PCT's Chair asking about these issues?
- You can also write to the local councillor responsible for health scrutiny: call your local council to find out who this is.

The PCT's and local council's contact details will be in the phone book.

Your local MP

Anyone can write to their MP, whatever their interest in, or experience of, an issue. A letter from a constituent should at the very least generate a response and register the issue with them.

Ideally your MP will respond in a helpful way to any questions and act upon any points you raise by asking about services locally or asking the relevant minister about national policy on issues.

To find out who your MP is visit <http://www.locata.co.uk/commons/> or call the House of Commons on 020 7219 3000. Once you know their name you can write to your MP at: House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA.

When writing to your MP it is a good idea to make your letter as to the point as possible as they receive very large amounts of post – try to limit it to one side of A4.

Explain why this issue is important to you and what you want to know from them, or what you want them to do – maybe they could ask the relevant minister what they are doing about the points you raised or they could put your points to the local PCT or the area's Strategic Health Authority. You could also tell them there is an All Party Parliamentary Group on Men's Health that looks at these issues and ask if they will attend future meetings.

Ask your MP about a couple of the following recommendations from Getting It Sorted. Remember to put your letter in your own words.

1.1. Unless there are clear and obvious reasons for not doing so, every policy document produced by the Department of Health should reflect the Government's stated commitment to gender mainstreaming and within that context, should cover men's health as a specific issue. Gender and men's health must become as obvious a subject for inclusion as the health of minority ethnic communities or the health of socially disadvantaged groups.

1.3. Health Improvement and Modernisation Programmes must be specifically required to address men's health issues as part of a consideration of gender as a determinant of health.

1.4. Primary care trusts should be required to complete an assessment of men's health needs as part of their health inequalities work. Each PCT should also be required to ensure that it has a member of staff with dedicated responsibility for the improvement of men's health.

Again, the arguments supporting these recommendations can be found in the report.

Feedback

We are interested in any responses you receive to letters about *Getting It Sorted*. Email them to colin.penning@menshealthforum.org.uk or fax them to 020 7388 4477.

As with news of all our work, you can read about developments in work around *Getting It Sorted* in MHF magazine and on our website www.menshealthforum.org.uk.

For more information on this briefing pack contact Colin Penning at colin.penning@menshealthforum.org.uk or by telephone on 020 8769 0520. For more on *Getting It Sorted* visit our website www.menshealthforum.org.uk or contact David Wilkins at david.wilkins@menshealthforum.org.uk or by telephone on 01963 362047.