

SAMH and Hibs announce pilot programme to promote mental health and wellbeing



Men are two-a-half times more likely than women to die by suicide each year with the biggest group at risk being men in their forties and early fifties. Men aren't great at talking about how they feel, and we know that talking is one of the first steps to better mental health. Without talking, opening up and taking action, nothing will change.

Today, SAMH (Scottish Association for Mental Health) announced their unique programme which will bring men together using the power of football to promote mental health and wellbeing.

The Changing Room is a two-year pilot project which will work with Scottish Professional Football League Trust (SPFL Trust) and Hibernian Football Club to engage with men in the heart of their community, to take action for their mental health.

This project is funded by the global men's health charity, Movember Foundation. The Foundation raises funds to deliver innovative, breakthrough research and support programmes that enable men to live happier, healthier and longer lives.

During the development stage of the pilot project, SAMH in partnership with SPFL Trust distributed a survey to football fans all across Scotland which asked questions about their involvement with football and the conversations they have. Over 3,400 responded and a recurring message from the survey and focus group findings suggested that a range of activities (physical, educational and online) would help support and sustain engagement, educate men about mental health as well as enhancing their capacity to better self-manage it and more

importantly help each other.

The Changing Room will exist both offline and online where men (age 30 to 64 years) will have an innovative, inspirational and safe place where they can take action for their mental health. The aim is to increase the social connectedness of men in their middle years and deliver a programme of activity that will reduce loneliness and ultimately improve their mental health and wellbeing.

Billy Watson, Chief Executive for SAMH said: "We are absolutely delighted that the Movember Foundation is funding The Changing Room.

"Through our research we learned that large numbers of men in their middle years internalise societal perceptions of masculinity and identity resulting in their inability or unwillingness to talk about their feelings, their mental health and how to ask for help.

"For many years SAMH has been committed to promoting good mental health and has a number of other sports and physical activity programmes which align positively with this new development.

"Working alongside Scottish Football Clubs, such as Hibernian and using the power of football we will bring men together in spaces that they associate with trust and feel they belong.

"Talking is one of the first steps to better mental health and we hope by starting these conversations that The Changing Room will create a generation of resilient men."

Nicky Reid, General Manager for SPFL Trust said: "The SPFL Trust are delighted to be working alongside SAMH and Hibernian on such an exciting and innovative project. Scotland's professional football clubs are at the heart of their local communities and creative approaches like The Changing Room have the ability to make a real impact in the lives of those

who take part.

“Football already brings people together from across the country; using the draw of the professional game and the backdrop of a professional stadium environment to improve mental health and wellbeing is a wonderful thing.

“To be supported by Movember in this innovative pilot is fantastic! We look forward to reinforcing that Scottish football can be trusted to support people across Scotland.”

Leeann Dempster, Chief Executive of Hibernian FC said: “Hibernian is delighted to have been chosen to help pilot this important project. That it succeeded in gaining the support of Movember in the face of global competition is indicative of its potential and value.

“As a Club we have a real focus on mental health and wellbeing, and through our work with our innovative GameChanger public social partnership we know that football can provide a really effective way of engaging with people who might otherwise be very difficult to reach.”