

# Men's Sexual Health Grant Report

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# Introduction

The Men's Sexual Health Grant, delivered by Community Action Derby and funded by Public Health through the Derby Health Inequalities Partnership (DHIP), supported local voluntary and community organisations to encourage open conversations with men about sexual health. The aim was to build a clearer understanding of the specific health needs of men in Derby and explore how local services can become more inclusive, accessible, and responsive to those needs.

Through this small grants programme, seven community groups designed and delivered engagement activities, including workshops, focus groups and informal discussions. Six groups received funding to support this work, while the seventh delivered two workshops at no cost. These activities created safe spaces for men to share their experiences, ask questions and discuss what they would want from sexual health services, both now and in the future.

The project sought to:

- Listen to men's lived experiences and identify barriers to accessing sexual health services.
- Build understanding of how services can be improved to meet the needs of diverse groups, including men from minority ethnic backgrounds, LGBTQ+ communities, refugees, asylum seekers and those living in deprived areas.
- Strengthen relationships between statutory services and community organisations that already have trusted links with men, especially with men from the most deprived communities.
- Encourage open, stigma-free discussions around topics such as STI testing and treatment, PrEP and PEP medication, condom use and sexual wellbeing.

By working through trusted local organisations, the grant aimed to gather insights that will help shape how sexual health information is communicated and delivered across Derby, ensuring that services are inclusive, welcoming and reflective of the city's diverse male population.



# Derventio Housing Trust

Derventio Housing Trust supports men experiencing homelessness, insecure housing, or complex life challenges.

**Derventio**  
People Really **Do** Matter

## Who they engaged with on this project:

Men living in supported accommodation, many of whom face additional barriers such as low confidence, limited access to services or language challenges.

**Number of sessions:** 6

**Number of participants:** 14

The approach to the workshops ensured that health discussions were accessible, respectful and tailored to individual needs. This approach helped to create a comfortable environment where men could speak openly about health and wellbeing, particularly those who may face additional barriers to accessing support. The combination of tailored support and informal conversation made it easier for participants to ask questions, build trust and engage with topics they might otherwise avoid.

## How did participants rate their understanding of sexual health?

Most rated their understanding as average to good, saying they had learned about it through school, friends or the internet. For some, this was the first time they had spoken about the subject in a supportive space, which helped build confidence and awareness.

## How do the participants prefer to access services?

Most said they preferred to access services face-to-face through their GP or local NHS clinic, while others mentioned phone or online options. Some men described facing challenges such as language barriers, not having internet access or not knowing where to go. Participants from Eastern European backgrounds also said that having information available in different languages, such as Polish, would make services more inclusive.

## Participant feedback:

Feedback was very positive. Participants said they had learned new information about HPV, STI testing and local screening programmes. Several said they would now consider attending check-ups or contacting their GP for advice.

**Conclusion:**

The sessions showed that men respond well when support is offered in trusted environments, like supported housing, where they already feel safe and respected. Creating informal, judgement-free spaces allowed participants to engage more fully and take away practical steps to improve their health.



**Some young people are experimenting and unsure of their sexuality. They might not be aware of HPV. I have never heard of it and didn't know there was a vaccination for men. I think there should be education for all ages of young people & parents.**



**I'm in temporary accommodation and have no fixed address, which is a barrier to accessing health screenings. I would recommend talking to people on the street who are homeless and offering them food vouchers to get them to use the screening kits.**



# Headway Derby

Headway Derby supports adults living with acquired brain injuries, along with their families and carers.

## Who they engaged with on this project:

Men who may need information delivered at a gentler pace, with time for repetition, reassurance and discussion.



**Number of sessions:** 6

**Number of participants:** 43

The workshops aimed to improve understanding of men's health, encourage conversations around wellbeing and build confidence in accessing local health services. The sessions created a supportive and open space where participants could share experiences, ask questions, and reflect on how they manage their health. The approach ensured that participants could engage with men's health topics in a way that felt accessible, respectful and supportive of their individual needs.

## How did participants rate their understanding of sexual health?

Most rated their understanding as good to very good, with many saying they had previously learned about it through school, family or NHS resources. Others said this was the first time they had spoken about men's health at this level of detail. The sessions helped to fill knowledge gaps and made participants more aware of issues such as cancer screening, prevention and where to find reliable information.

## How do the participants prefer to access services?

Most said they would choose face-to-face appointments through their GP or local clinics. A smaller number said they use phone consultations or online information. Some participants said they had not previously heard about outreach services, such as mobile health vans and that learning about these gave them more confidence to seek advice in the future.

## Participant feedback:

Feedback from the sessions was very positive. Participants described the workshops as informative, engaging and well-presented. Participants appreciated the steady pace and clear explanations, which helped them build confidence and feel more comfortable discussing their health and wellbeing. Many said they had learned more about prostate

and bowel screening, and that they were now more likely to take part in future screening programmes. A few shared that the sessions helped them to understand the importance of regular check-ups and talking openly about health concerns.

**Conclusion:**

The workshops showed that men respond well to straightforward, honest discussions about health. Creating a supportive environment allowed participants to ask questions without embarrassment and to leave feeling better informed and more confident about accessing support.



**The session went well, it was a good presentation and I learnt the importance of prostate screening.**

**Knowing where to go is a barrier to getting information about available services. I think more publicity of the help available is needed.**



# Inspire Fitness

Inspire Fitness is a community-based fitness organisation that works with men engaged in physical activity, wellbeing programmes, and local gym groups.

## Who they engaged with on this project:

Men who may not usually attend health workshops but feel more comfortable engaging when conversations take place in familiar, active settings.



**Number of sessions:** 1

**Number of participants:** 9

The session focused on men's sexual health and wellbeing, providing an opportunity for participants to talk openly about topics that are often seen as difficult to discuss. The relaxed and informal setting helped men feel comfortable asking questions and exploring areas of health they had not spoken about before. At first, the group was unsure what to expect, but as the session progressed, it developed into an open, team-bonding experience. This approach used the trust and routine already built within the fitness community to open up discussions about men's health.

## How did participants rate their understanding of sexual health?

Most rated their understanding as average, with many saying they had not discussed these topics in detail before. The workshop filled important knowledge gaps and increased awareness about STI testing, HPV vaccination and prevention. The group identified embarrassment and fear of being recognised as barriers to accessing services. They said that greater confidentiality and improved communication from health providers, such as through posters, websites and visual marketing, would help make services more approachable.

## How do the participants prefer to access services?

Most said they would prefer to use the NHS app and telephone or face-to-face appointments at local NHS venues. However, awareness of outreach services, like the health van, was low. Participants said they would be more likely to access support if these services were better promoted and felt more discreet.

**Participant feedback:**

Feedback from the workshop was positive, with participants describing it as informative and engaging. Participants said they appreciated the relaxed setting, which allowed them to speak freely and learn together. They valued the opportunity to learn in a safe environment and said they left feeling more confident about how to access advice and support. They described the session as helpful, saying it gave them a new understanding of where to go for support and clearer knowledge about PrEP and PEP.

**Conclusion:**

The key learning from this session was that men engage more openly when information is delivered through trusted community groups in informal settings. Combining health education with a familiar, supportive environment helps men overcome embarrassment and begin honest conversations about their wellbeing.



**My experiences of accessing sexual health services have been scary and embarrassing, but helpful. I would feel very doubtful about using them if I needed to. Ideally, everything would be kept as confidential and secret as possible. I wouldn't want people to see me in the waiting room.**

**Barriers to information are not always having access to the internet and self-doubt. I think this could be addressed with better advertisements on TV and visual posters. Waiting times are also worse than ever. It's very hard to see a GP. You're told to phone on the day, but within ten minutes of the surgery opening, there are no appointments left.**



# Open Doors Forum

Open Doors Forum is a community organisation dedicated to serving the Black African Caribbean community across generations.



## Who they engaged with on this project:

Men from Black African and Afro-Caribbean backgrounds, many of whom face additional barriers to accessing mainstream health information and services.

**Number of sessions:** 3

**Number of participants:** 35

The workshops created a relaxed, culturally informed and welcoming space for men to talk openly about their health and wellbeing, challenge stigma, and access information that felt relevant to their lived experiences, helping to build confidence and normalise conversations around sexual health.

## How did participants rate their understanding of sexual health?

Most rated their understanding as good, with some describing it as average or very good. Many said they had learned about sexual health through school, GPs or online sources, while others said this was the first time they had discussed these topics in a group setting. The sessions encouraged men to share their views and experiences, helping to make the conversation around sexual health more open and approachable.

## How do the participants prefer to access services?

Most said they preferred face-to-face support through their GP or local NHS settings, with some saying they would use phone or online consultations. Although most said they felt comfortable using services, a few mentioned embarrassment or uncertainty as barriers. For some, this was the first time they had learned about local outreach options, such as the health van, and they said this information made them feel more confident about accessing help in future.

Participants said they would like information about sexual health to be shared more widely in the community, through social media, TV, radio and posters in local spaces. They felt that information should be clear and easy to understand, particularly for people who do not speak English as a first language.

**Participant feedback:**

Feedback was positive, with participants describing the sessions as interesting, informative and helpful. Participants valued the opportunity to speak freely, share experiences and learn more about local support in a setting where they felt understood and represented. Many said they left feeling better informed and more confident about their health.

**Conclusion:**

The workshops showed that when given a safe and friendly environment, men are open to learning and talking about sexual health and that community-led discussions are an effective way to break down stigma and encourage engagement.



**I have little experience accessing sexual health services. I previously went to an old clinic situated in a portacabin and the experience was very uncomfortable, with limited confidentiality.**

**Services could be made more inclusive by attending meetings / running pop-ups in the Black community.**



# Safe & Sound

Safe & Sound works with children and young people at risk of exploitation.

## Who they engaged with on this project:

Younger males who may not have had many opportunities to talk openly about sexual health.

**Number of sessions:** 2

**Number of participants:** 21

The workshops aimed to raise awareness of men's sexual health and provide a comfortable space for open discussion. The sessions encouraged young men to talk about topics they might otherwise avoid and helped to reduce the stigma around sexual health.

## How did participants rate their understanding of sexual health?

Most rated their understanding as average, with a smaller number describing it as good or poor. Many said their previous knowledge came from school, while others admitted this was the first time they had discussed these issues in detail. The workshops helped to build confidence and created an opportunity for participants to ask questions they might not have felt comfortable asking elsewhere.

## How do the participants prefer to access services?

Most said they preferred to access services online or virtually, with many valuing the privacy this offers. A smaller number preferred in-person appointments. Some participants shared that they had never used sexual health services before and were unsure where to go. Talking openly in the sessions helped many to realise that support was easier to access than they thought, and that confidentiality was always respected.

## Participant feedback:

Feedback was positive, with participants describing the sessions as useful, informative and easy to follow. Participants said they appreciated the chance to learn in a relaxed setting and valued the clear, straightforward information shared during the sessions. Some said they would have liked more interactive elements, such as videos or games, to make the sessions even more engaging. Many said they left with a clearer understanding of local support options, including outreach services and free postal condom schemes.



**Conclusion:**

The workshops showed that young men benefit from open, approachable conversations about sexual health, delivered in ways that feel safe and relatable.



**I didn't realise girls could get contraception, so the session on contraceptives helped me learn about them and how they're used.**



**I didn't know you could get condoms for free, and I thought the expiry date meant how long they protected you from HIV. I learned what expiry dates actually mean, where to get condoms, how to use them, and how they help protect against STIs.**



# Time2Talk

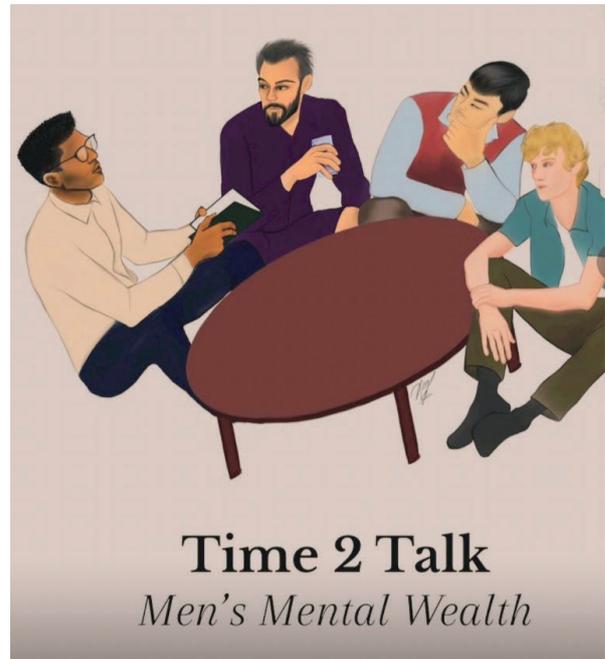
Time2Talk is a community organisation that supports young people and adults through open conversations about health, wellbeing, and relationships.

## Who they engaged with on this project:

Mainly younger men and early adult participants who may not usually talk about sexual health or feel confident accessing support.

**Number of sessions:** 2

**Number of participants:** 34



The workshops created a relaxed and supportive space where men could talk openly about sexual health and wellbeing, often for the first time.

## How did participants rate their understanding of sexual health?

Most rated their understanding as average to good, saying they had previously learned about it through school, the internet or TV. The workshops helped fill gaps in their knowledge and encouraged more honest discussion about health and relationships.

## How do the participants prefer to access services?

Most said they would choose face-to-face appointments through their GP or local clinics. Some said they would use online options, while a few said they were unsure where to go for advice. Several participants admitted feeling embarrassed when discussing sexual health, but said the sessions helped to reduce that discomfort and made them more aware of available services.

## Participant feedback:

Feedback was very positive. Participants said they valued the opportunity to discuss topics that are not usually spoken about openly. Many shared that the sessions helped them to feel more comfortable asking questions and learning about issues that can sometimes feel sensitive or awkward. Participants described the sessions as useful, informative and easy to engage with. Many said they had learned about free condom delivery schemes, local sexual health clinics and outreach options that they hadn't been aware of before. They also said the sessions encouraged them to take their health more

seriously and to talk about it more openly with others.

### **Conclusion:**

The workshops showed that men are keen to learn more about sexual health when information is delivered in a way that feels comfortable and relevant to them. Creating safe, open spaces led by trusted community facilitators helped break down barriers and increased participants' confidence in accessing support.



**I have been attending Time2Talk since January 2025 after opening up about sexual abuse as a child, which I had kept to myself for 53 years.**

**I had been a heavy cannabis smoker to try and block out the thoughts in my head, and after opening up and starting to talk, I was able to quit smoking and start to get my life back, and Time2Talk has been a great help towards that.**

**I think Time2Talk is a really important resource in Derby to raise awareness about men's health, in a safe and supportive group.**



# YMCA Derbyshire

YMCA Derbyshire works with young adults and men who may be experiencing challenges such as unstable housing, unemployment, limited family support or social isolation.

YMCA DERBYSHIRE

## Who they engaged with on this project:

Men who often have limited access to reliable health information and may feel unsure about where to seek help.

**Number of sessions:** 2

**Number of participants:** 18

The workshops focused on men's sexual health, covering topics such as STI testing, HPV vaccination, safer sex and local support services. Many participants said they had not previously attended a session focused specifically on men's health, and the discussions helped to challenge common myths and encourage men to think more openly about their own health. The sessions provided a friendly, welcoming space in a familiar and trusted setting, where men felt safe to talk openly about their health and wellbeing. The informal, conversational, and inclusive delivery style helped create a relaxed and supportive environment, making participants feel at ease and more willing to engage with sensitive subjects.

## How did participants rate their understanding of sexual health?

Most rated their understanding as average to good. Many said they had learned about sexual health at school or online, but felt that the information they received in the past had been too general or outdated. These sessions helped to fill those gaps, offering clear and practical guidance about where to go for advice, testing and support. For some participants, it was the first time they had felt comfortable enough to ask questions about sexual health in a group setting, showing that creating the right environment can make a real difference in how men engage with these topics.

## How do the participants prefer to access services?

Most said they preferred face-to-face appointments through their GP or local clinics, while others mentioned that online options were helpful for convenience or privacy. Several participants said they had not been aware of outreach services, such as the sexual health van and that learning about these during the workshops had given them confidence to explore this support in the future.

### Participant feedback:

Feedback from the workshop was very positive. Participants said they appreciated the opportunity to speak openly about topics they had rarely discussed before, and many said the clear, practical information helped them feel more confident about where to access advice, testing and support. They described the workshops as engaging, informative and thought-provoking, and said they appreciated the chance to learn in a relaxed, non-judgemental environment. Many left feeling more informed, more confident about where to go for help, and more comfortable discussing issues around men's health.

### Conclusion:

The sessions highlighted how valuable community-based delivery is in reaching men who might not otherwise engage with sexual health information or services.



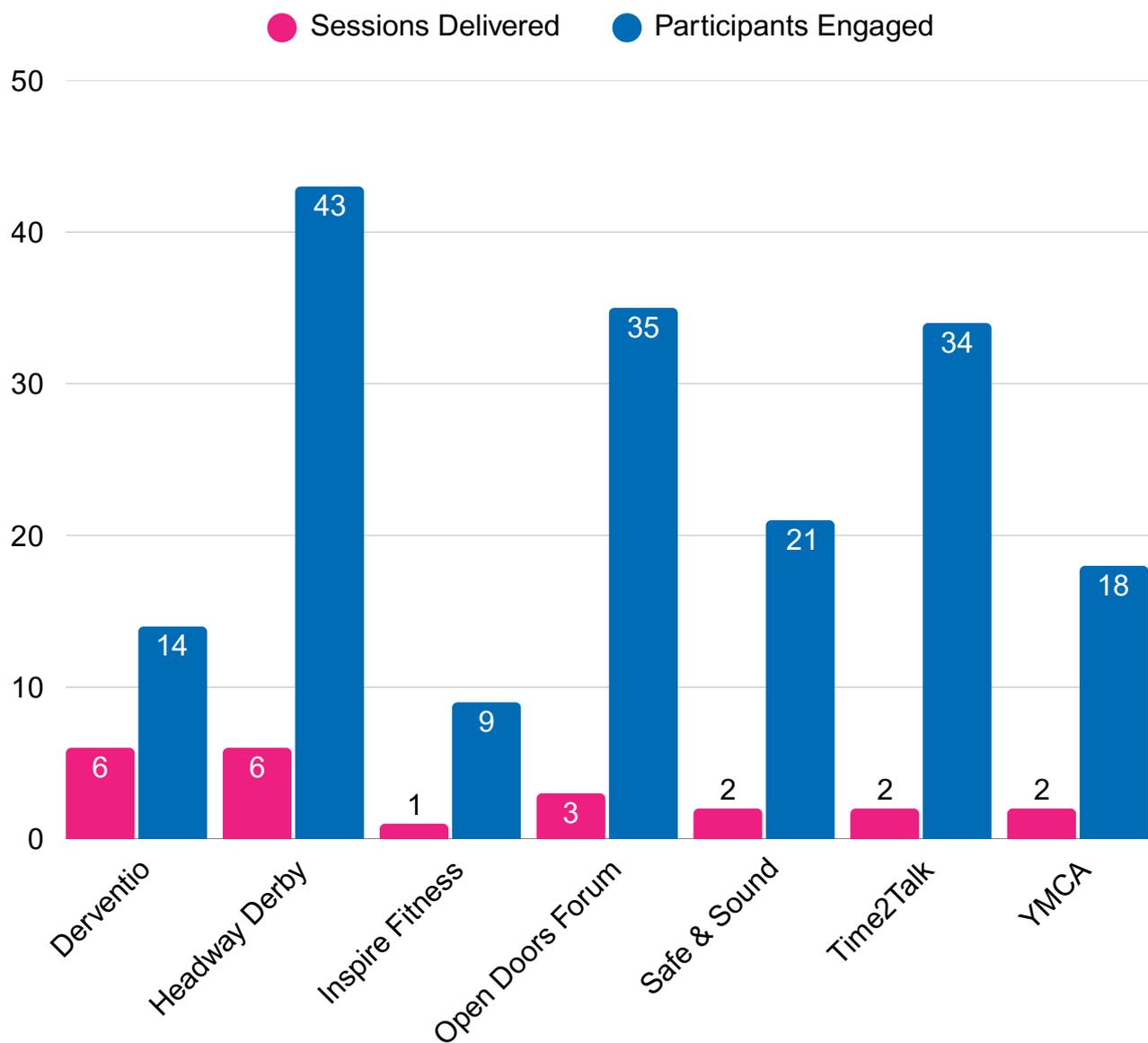
**My past experiences of accessing sexual health services have been awful. There aren't many walk-in places to get condoms, for instance, and it often feels like staff are judgemental.**

**Privacy is also an issue. Receptionists can be nosy and lack empathy, asking what's wrong with you with no sense of confidentiality. Men can be nervous about explaining sensitive issues at a public desk, especially to female staff. The waiting room makes me uncomfortable, especially when they shout your name out. A numbered ticket system would be better. The walls are thin, so you feel like everyone can hear you, so you end up whispering.**



# Breakdown of sessions

A total of 22 sessions were delivered across seven community providers as part of the Men's Sexual Health Grant, engaging 174 participants in total.



# Overall findings summary

Across the seven providers, a total of 22 sessions were delivered, engaging 174 men from a range of ages, backgrounds, and communities. While each organisation tailored their sessions to meet local needs, several consistent themes and patterns emerged through the delivery.

## 1. Safe and supportive environments encourage openness

A key success across all sessions was the creation of safe, informal spaces where men felt comfortable talking about health, particularly sensitive topics such as sexual health and wellbeing. Providers found that a relaxed, conversational approach helped to build trust and allowed participants to ask questions they might otherwise avoid. This approach was especially effective for those who had never engaged in health-based discussions before.

## 2. Bridging knowledge gaps around men's sexual health

Across all sessions, participants' baseline understanding of sexual health ranged from average to good, but many identified clear gaps in knowledge, especially around topics like HPV, STI testing and screening programmes. Several men said they had not received updated or accessible information since school, highlighting the need for clear, current and easy-to-understand resources.

## 3. Barriers to accessing services

A recurring theme was the range of practical and emotional barriers men face when accessing health services. Common challenges included embarrassment, fear of judgement, lack of awareness about available services and digital exclusion. Participants from marginalised groups, including those in supported housing or from ethnic minority backgrounds, highlighted additional barriers such as language, confidence and limited access to information.

## 4. Preference for face-to-face support

Most participants across all sessions said they preferred face-to-face appointments through their GP or local NHS clinics. While some valued online or phone options for privacy and convenience, the majority expressed a desire for personal contact and reassurance when discussing sensitive health issues. The findings suggest that maintaining a mix of in-person and digital options is important to reach different needs.

### 5. Value of community-based delivery

All providers agreed that community settings played a vital role in engagement. Delivering sessions through trusted organisations and familiar venues helped men feel more at ease and supported open discussion. These localised sessions reached individuals who might not typically engage with health campaigns or attend formal healthcare settings.

### 6. Increased confidence and willingness to engage

Feedback from participants across all organisations showed a clear increase in confidence, knowledge and motivation to look after their health. Many said they would now feel more comfortable seeking advice, attending check-ups, or sharing information with others. Providers also observed that once men started talking, they were keen to continue the conversation and learn more.



# Recommendations

The Men's Sexual Health Grant projects provided valuable insight into how men engage with health and wellbeing support when it is delivered through trusted, familiar and inclusive community settings. Across 22 sessions, organisations engaged 174 men and identified key ways to build on this progress and strengthen future delivery.

## 1. Continue to invest in community-led delivery

Men responded positively to sessions run by local, trusted organisations. Delivering activities in familiar settings such as community centres, gyms and supported housing helped reduce stigma and increase participation. Future work should continue to fund and empower grassroots groups to lead this engagement.

## 2. Create more safe, informal spaces for men's health conversations

Many participants said this was the first time they had spoken openly about topics like sexual health, screening or mental wellbeing. Informal, conversational delivery helps men to open up, ask questions and share experiences. Future projects should continue to prioritise these relaxed approaches.

## 3. Improve awareness and visibility of local services

Across all sessions, participants showed limited awareness of available services, including outreach vans, online testing and support clinics. Stronger, more joined-up communication, such as using community venues, faith centres and social media, is needed to promote what's already available in accessible and culturally relevant ways.

## 4. Address embarrassment and stigma through peer influence

Embarrassment and fear of judgement remain key barriers. Providers found that peer-led and group discussions helped to normalise conversations and increase men's willingness to engage. Building peer advocate or ambassador roles could make a lasting impact in encouraging men to seek help earlier.

## 5. Maintain a mix of delivery formats

While most participants preferred face-to-face engagement, others valued online and telephone options for privacy and flexibility. Offering multiple ways to access information and support ensures services remain inclusive for all men, regardless of background or circumstance.

## 6. Develop tailored approaches for specific groups

Different groups of men face different barriers. Those in supported housing, younger men

and men from ethnic minority backgrounds often need more targeted engagement. South Asian community groups were approached but declined to take part due to stigma around discussing sexual health, highlighting the need for culturally sensitive, co-produced approaches in future work.

### **7. Sustain momentum with long-term investment**

The success of this programme shows the difference small-scale, flexible funding can make. Continued investment is essential to sustain the trusted relationships and safe spaces that local groups have built. Ongoing support would help maintain momentum, allow organisations to plan longer-term activity and reach more men who are currently disengaged from health services.

### **8. Strengthen partnerships and shared learning**

Providers highlighted the benefit of working collaboratively and sharing insights. Creating opportunities for regular peer learning, joint training, and cross-referral between organisations would help maintain consistency and quality across community delivery.

By acting on these recommendations, Derby can build on the momentum of the Men's Sexual Health Grant to create a long-term, sustainable approach to improving men's sexual health, one that is community-led, stigma-free and responsive to local needs.



# Conclusion

The Men's Sexual Health Grant has shown how powerful community-led work can be in helping men talk more openly about their health and wellbeing. Across 22 workshops, seven local organisations reached 174 men, many of whom had never taken part in health-related activities before.

By holding sessions in familiar, trusted spaces, providers created the right environment for men to have honest conversations about topics that are often seen as difficult to discuss. This approach helped to break down barriers, build confidence and increase awareness of local services and support.

The learning from this project highlights that change happens when health is made accessible, relatable and local. With continued support and collaboration, Derby has a strong foundation to keep this work going, helping more men take small steps towards better sexual health.



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