



IMPACT REPORT

2021 - 2022

It's all about men growing together



Introduction

MensCraft is one of the only charities in Norfolk and surrounding counties, focusing exclusively on the wellbeing of men. We believe that happier and healthier men make for better brothers, partners, fathers, sons, colleagues and friends.



This report covers a period of time when we were emerging from the challenges of the pandemic. Restrictions were easing and we were taking small steps to returning to some semblance of normality, including offering in-person groups, activities and support. However, for many of the men we work with, there were longer-term consequences including isolation, relationship pressures, job insecurity and difficulty accessing services and support.

We are extremely proud of all that our team achieved during this difficult period and the support we were able to offer men who are vulnerable, struggling and marginalised or dealing with the effects of major life events such as bereavement, health issues, unemployment or family breakdown. This Impact Report is just a snapshot of our work during 2021-22 but it demonstrates the positive and powerful difference that MensCraft can make to men's lives.

A heartfelt thank you to the staff, associates, volunteers and Trustees for the commitment and work in shaping activities and approaches that cultivate a deeper and strengths-based understanding of masculinity and engaging men.

Tim Allard,

Development Manager



Our Approach: Promoting positive masculinity

MensCraft has supported men in Norfolk for 15 years and we have a deep understanding of the challenges men face, together with the emotional and practical barriers that prevent them seeking help. Throughout our work we aim to explore and raise awareness of what it means to be a man in today's society. We promote attitudes and behaviours that contribute to healthy relationships, opportunities and to improved self-awareness.



In August 2021 we carried out a survey 'The Lives and Times of Men in East Anglia'. Over 200 men responded, providing a valuable insight into what the value, their motivations and the difficulties they are facing.

84% of men said their family was important to them.

54% of men recognised that they tend to withdraw, close down when stressed.

70% of men agreed that 'we need to change perceptions about what it means to be and act as a man and redefine what it means to be a good man.'

"You are bombarded daily, through almost all channels... that men are the root of all problems in the world (but) that everything is amazing, just so long as you are a man. This doesn't give a lot of space to fail or not be perfect, or ever ask anyone for anything."

Collaboration

We work with others, including the UEA School of Social Work and across the new integrated care structures.

Association

We emphasise the benefits of connection and involvement to mitigate feelings of hopelessness and isolation.

**Our work
is defined by...**

Engagement

We encourage men to take part in our programme of meetings, activity groups and bonding sessions.

Non-discrimination

We offer an inclusive service for everybody who identifies as male whatever their age, race or sexual orientation.



Pit Stop

A chance for men to grow together

Our Pit Stop programme provides connection, friendship and a sense of belonging. Men from different backgrounds come together around shared passions, interests and activities including heritage health walks, yoga, healthy eating sessions, gardening and visual arts.



J's Story

J is a 42 and a kind and loving father of two, school age autistic children. In recent years he has suffered depression and loss of confidence due to bereavement, unemployment and a diagnosis of autism and epilepsy. J is a regular member of the Pit Stop's allotment group, the Common Plot.

"It takes me a while to get to know people and to trust them. I would say that I'm making new friends. I'm out in the fresh air. It's a way of getting out of the house and doing something outside of my caring roles – it's something for me. At the Plot, I've realised that the other men there are also vulnerable and that it is safe to open up. This really is a chance for men to grow together.

One of the things that I've really enjoyed is helping to make a level path. Once I stepped back from my work I got an amazing feeling of achievement – I would actually say, it is really therapeutic. After all these years of feeling powerless and having things go wrong, it is amazing to learn new hands-on skills, to feel valued and to see the fruits of my labours. It gives me sense of control and it is also great to be working as part of a supportive team."

PPA – Supporting men on the edge of crisis

Our Prevention and Positive Activities programme (PPA) supports men who have experienced suicidal thoughts and are at the edge of crisis. Working across Norfolk, our skilled and supportive team help men overcome the barriers that may prevent them opening up and talking to others.

Men who engage with the PPA programme are not only supported in their mental wellbeing, but also with the practical concerns which may have precipitated their crisis, such as housing, money, or relationship difficulties.

We receive referrals from multiple sources including, Norfolk Community Advice Network (NCAN), GP Surgeries, Mental Health Teams, Local delivery groups / PCNs across Norfolk and Waveney, Social prescribers, HMPP services and Community Chaplaincy Norfolk and self-referrals via our website.

Client testimonies:

I've been able to stop taking the antidepressants. I don't need them anymore. I have a reason to get out most days.

I feel listened to. (MensCraft) happened at just the right time. I was giving up on being able to find help and people I could trust.

(The service) has been an amazing thing for me. I'm not sure I'd still be here if it wasn't for it.

It's helped with my low moods. It's too easy for me just to withdraw into my shell. The engagement with others helps a lot.



**Over
450**

men have been referred to our PPA service in the past year by local health and social work professionals.

The average age of men coming to us for edge-of-crisis support.

42



Doug's story

Doug, who was referred to us via Wellbeing Service, has potential PTSD and mental health issues from his days in service and experiencing conflict. Covid restrictions and lockdown brought additional stresses, including fewer opportunities for work and reduced access to his only child. With weekly, face-to-face appointments with our PPA team Doug was able to engage more with his GP to resolve medication issues and to engage with Suffolk County

Council to arrange better housing for himself and for when his child comes to stay. He also now takes part in positive activities such as our Walk and Talk Group and his local Pit Stop which gives him regular respite.

Positive outcomes – Our one-to-one contact and support has proven benefits

Following our support, men report:

We steer men towards activities and behaviours with demonstrable benefits:

Less social isolation

96%

Improved wellbeing

91%

Participating in meaningful activity

Utilising local networks – belonging and connection

Less hopelessness

88%

Improved mental health

86%

Less hopelessness

Trying different things and challenges

Parenting and fatherhood

Many men who come to us for support have experienced family conflict and relationship breakdown. Many are at risk of or have already lost contact with their children. We help men create stable relationships with their children and partners and explore what it means to be a dad.

Caring Dads

During 2021/2 we delivered three Caring Dads programmes ; one face-to-face and two on-line. Caring Dads is a 17-week parenting programme which challenges men's abuse of their children and partners. It provides men with the tools for controlling their abusive behaviour and teaches them child-centred fathering techniques.

The benefits of the Caring Dads programme extend beyond the participants themselves; children, partners and wider family all benefit from the changes in men's behaviour and attitudes. Health and social work professionals are also more likely to achieve successful outcomes for families.



'Caring Dads has allowed me, alongside my colleagues, to provide perpetrators with a targeted service aimed at changing their behaviour which enables families to stay together and keep children safe.' K, a Senior Social Worker

Of 22 men who attended our Caring Dads courses:

18 said the programme was **very useful**

16 reported **improved relationships with their children**

13 reported **improved relationships** with their **children's mothers**

20 would **recommend the course** to others.



How's Your Father

In the autumn and winter of 2021/2, we co-created a theatre performance as part of a unique collaboration between local theatre group The Common Lot, the UEA School of Social Work and Norfolk County Council.

The play was based on UEA research of fathers' experiences of local authority children's services and the family court, and the views of other local fathers.

How's Your Father? was performed at libraries, community centres, pubs and a prison to over 400 people. We presented four stories about men's lives as fathers, what happens when they come up against different challenges, and what they discover about being a dad. Our aim was to open up the conversation about what it means to be a father, what challenges fathers face and why fathers matter, for all of us. The show was followed by a discussion with its cast and creators, to further explore the issues presented.



'A sensitive, skillful treatment of a complex topic.'

Reflection, self-expression and growth

Throughout our work we encourage men to explore and challenge traditional views of masculinity and provide opportunities for reflection, self-expression and growth.

The Woodland Project:

In autumn 2021 we ran a 12-week programme, in partnership with the Nurture Project, to enable men to experience the therapeutic effects of immersion in nature. The Woodland Project provided a place for men to improve their mental and physical wellbeing, learn new skills and spend time around an open fire for stories and discussion.



Movement and Mindfulness

Our 8-week Movement and Mindfulness course provides opportunities for improved physical and mental wellbeing through a combination of gentle movement, stretches and breathing exercises.

"I learned not to be so judgmental of myself and others in a really supportive environment".



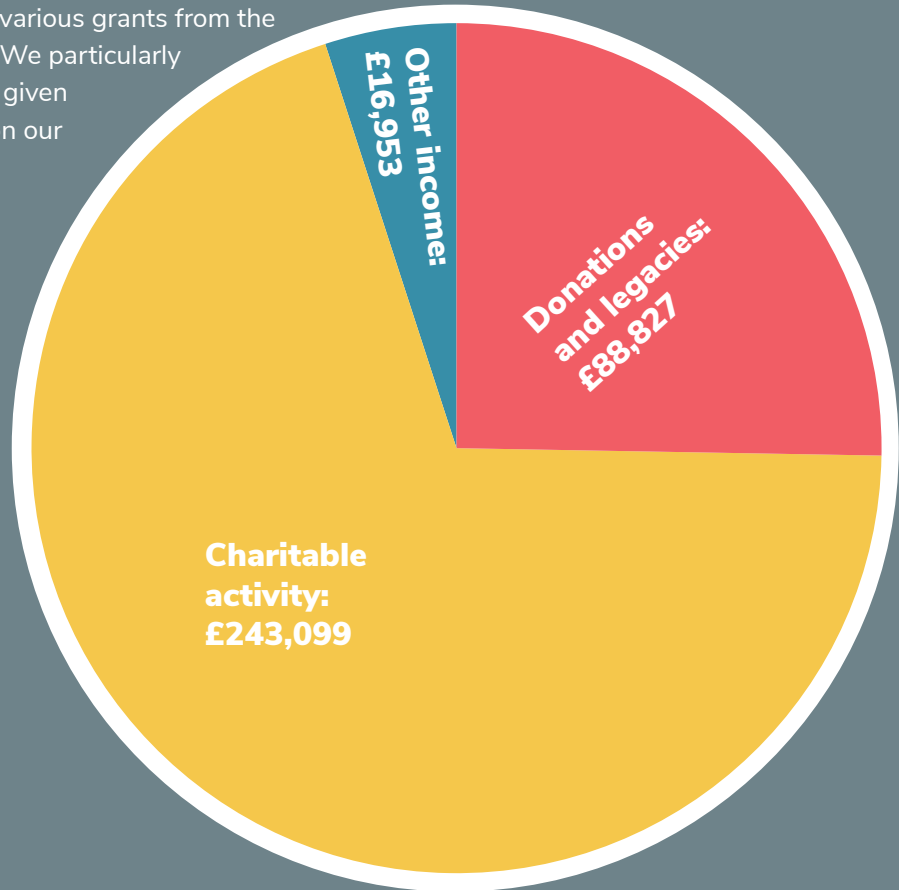
"This helped in many ways; I breathe better, I have more awareness of my thoughts and thinking, I feel better".



Finance

We have continued to diversify our funding streams to lessen dependency on any one source of funds.

Our funding during this period derived from a grant from Tudor Trust, a contract with Norfolk County Council (N&WCCG / Public Health), People's Health Trust, NHS Charities and various grants from the Norfolk Community Foundation. We particularly thank all those people who have given donations and have fundraised on our behalf.



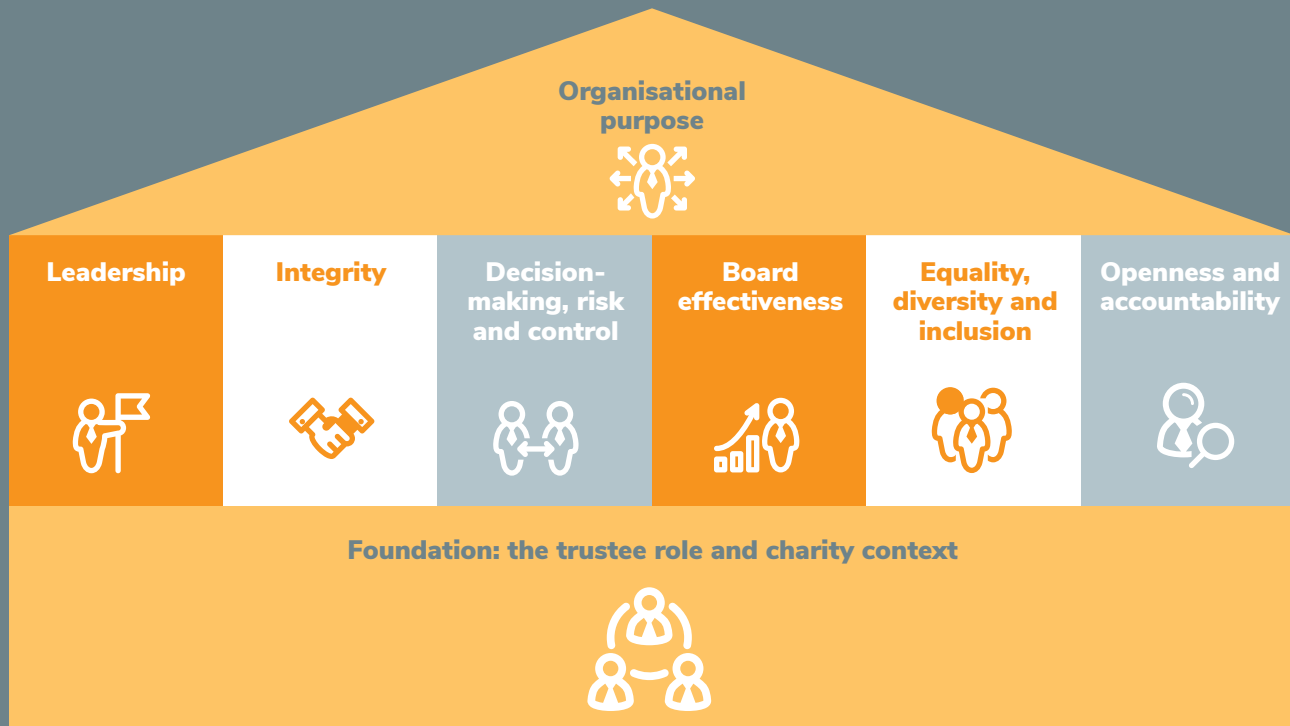
Income

Details of our accounts for the year are available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission>

Governance

Following our transition to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation in 2020 we have strengthened our governance in line with the Charity Commission's seven principles of governance.

We have further developed our governance through the Trusted Charity assessment, purchased Safepoint (a lone working buddying system), offered staff a range of training opportunities and invested in an Employees Wellbeing Assistance programme.



MensCraft is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, Registration Number 1188578

www.menscraft.org.uk