**Concept Note**

**Guys Room in Battersea**

**January 2021**

**The rationale for Guys Room Battersea**

Everyone, regardless of gender, age, race or social background needs connections that matter[[1]](#footnote-1). Covid-19 has further highlighted the importance of meaningful social connections, whoever we are and wherever we are.

Lack of meaningful social connections can lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness, which can have a devastating impact on our physical and mental health and wellbeing. This can in turn have a negative impact on our work performance, how we care for our children, relationships and other aspects of our life.

Feelings of isolation, loneliness and poor mental health and wellbeing can happen to anyone.

There is insufficient evidence to suggest that feelings of isolation, loneliness and poor mental health and wellbeing affect one gender more than any other. This is because available data tends to only include cases that are reported or that a person admits to. It is thought that, particularly for men, lots of cases go unreported[[2]](#footnote-2). While on average more women are diagnosed with common mental health problems than men, the rate of male suicide is significantly higher[[3]](#footnote-3).

However, there is lots of evidence to suggest that these issues can affect men and women in different ways and that key reasons preventing them from talking about and addressing issues can be different. Therefore, initiatives designed to prevent and/or respond to them should take into account and be responsive to these differences[[4]](#footnote-4).

In Battersea, there are currently very few opportunities for men who want to come together and connect socially and informally with other men.

A budget of £4935.00 has been authorised by the joint Chairs of the Community and Belonging Forum of Big Local SW11 to help address this gap.

**Objective of Guys Room**

To create a positive, non-judgemental space where men can connect socially and informally with other men, discuss what’s on their mind and seek guidance if needed

**Timeframe for the project**

The initial timeframe for the project will be one year. We intend to start within the first week of February 2021 and run until January 2022.

**What we would like to achieve**

We would like to reduce the risks of feeling isolated, lonely and poor physical and mental health and wellbeing amongst men in Battersea.

We believe that important steps to reducing these risks include but are not limited to:

* Improved opportunities to meet up with other men
* Improved understanding of the importance of social connections
* Improved confidence to be themselves and not worry what others think
* Improved confidence to talk about what is on their mind- whatever it is
* Improved confidence to support others who might be worried about something
* Reduced pressure to pretend they are okay when they are not

**Activities**

We intend to start with bringing together a small group of six men. We envisage that these six men will then encourage others to join the group. By the end of the year, we expect the group to grow to around 18-20 people.

* **Set up a WhatsApp group**

We intend to set up a WhatsApp group as a way for the group to keep in general contact. It will be used as a platform for keeping members up to date and for the members to share ideas and/or information, whether around health or special offers in the area.

* **Informal meet-ups**

We intend to organise informal meet-ups.

Ideally these would be face-to-face but whilst restrictions are in place, they will initially be online. At the moment the maximum number of people that can do a WhatsApp video is 8 people. Initially we would utilise the WhatsApp platform to hold these meetings online but as the group grows, we will move them onto another platform such as Zoom.

Once restrictions are lifted and physical meetings are allowed, there are a few options in Battersea for where these meet-ups can take place, either free of charge or for a small donation. Options include Providence House and Platform 1. Tea, coffee, soft drinks and biscuits will be provided.

It is envisaged that they will be every fortnight, for a couple of hours and in the evening but we would like the group to be involved in deciding how often they happen, the time of day that suits the group, how long the meet-ups are, how they are run and the format they take, which is likely to change depending on number of people. Members of the group will be involved in developing house rules, which will be agreed from the beginning.

* **A weekend away**

Assuming restrictions are lifted, we would like to organise a weekend away for members of the group. This will likely be in early summer, would be outside London and for two nights.

Again, we would like the members of the group to be involved in deciding where the weekend away will be and what specific activities will be offered- whether that is a trip to the cinema or an external facilitator/ speaker.

* **Evaluation**

We will engage an independent person to help us understand what went well and what didn’t.

To do this, it is envisaged that the independent evaluator will hold one to one meetings, focus group discussions and/or a workshop with facilitators of the project, members of the group and others.

**Project Management**

The project will be managed by Mario de Souza.

**Budget**

Total budget: £4935.00. Please see attached breakdown

1. See for example: https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/wp-content/uploads/Promising\_Approaches\_Revisited\_FULL\_REPORT.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See for example: https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/m/men-and-mental-health [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See for example: https://www.counselling-directory.org.uk/men-and-mental-health-stats.html#menandmentalhealth [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See for example: https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/m/men-and-mental-health [↑](#footnote-ref-4)