



**Men's  
Development  
Network**

Better Lives for Men, Better Lives for All

2018

# Annual Report



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# CHAIRPERSON'S ADDRESS

2018 was a year of change for the Men's Development Network (MDN). At the Annual General Meeting held in December 2017, 3 new Directors were voted on to the Board, bringing the number of Directors to 9.

At the first meeting of the Board in January another change took place with my election as Chairperson of the Board following the withdrawal of the nomination of the outgoing Chairperson Gerard Walsh. During the year, the Board worked hard to give direction and oversight to the Organisation while also preparing for the forthcoming retirement of the CEO and his replacement by the recruitment of a new CEO. I am happy to report that the retirement of the CEO and the recruitment of a new CEO both went well, and that the new CEO looks to be a good fit for the Organisation. Indeed, late in the year, shortly after his appointment, MDN were approached by Tusla to provide an Advice Helpline for male victims of Domestic Abuse and this has since become operational.

During the year 2 members of the Board, Pauline O'Shaughnessy and Gerard Walsh, had to leave the Board due to health and work issues.

The year saw MDN continue to provide MEND/CHOICES Domestic Violence Intervention Programmes in 7 locations (an increase of 1 on the previous year) and provided Risk Management training to our national partners in Domestic Violence Intervention Programmes. We work in alliance with women's refuges, rape crisis centres, women's centres and local Women's Aid representatives in providing confidential support for the women who are survivors of men's violence.

The National Men's Health Programme is funded by the HSE, and is run by MDN in partnership with HSE, the Men's Health Forum of Ireland, Carlow IT and Waterford IT. It delivers the *Engage* training program to front line workers across Ireland, through 30 or so training days a year, with a major focus being on Men's Health Week in June each year. MDN is the main deliverer of the *Engage* training programme in Ireland and we coordinate the training nationally. We also provided a Counselling Service, funded by Tusla, primarily for male referrals and undertook some Parenting Programmes, funded through the National Lottery, again mainly for male participants

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the former CEO Alan O'Neill, a founder member who led the Organisation for 22 years who has contributed greatly to the important role the Organisation plays in Irish Society today. I'm sure I speak for all Board members and staff in wishing him a happy retirement.

I also want to pay tribute to the staff of the Men's Development Network, many of whom are leaders in their field of expertise, both nationally and internationally. The Board appreciates how dedicated they are to their work and to achieving positive outcomes for all the people their work relates to.

We very much look forward to building on the important gains during 2018, together with all our funders and partners, without whom we could not function.

## CEO

As outlined by the Chair in his address, 2018 has been a significant year for the Men's Development Network. In the last number of years, economic, social and interpersonal relationship across the world have many challenging and complex issues that need addressing. Europe and Ireland have been both deeply affected by these circumstances. Although signs of economic recovery are being highlighted, the truth remains that many, families and communities are still deeply impacted by the biggest recession in our country's history. Yet, this organisation has continued to deliver quality programmes that positively affect men's lives and those of their partners, families and communities.

The Men's Development Network (MDN) is now more than ever aware of the need for us as service providers to promote better mental health and new conversations, in these times that remain challenging for many.

As an organisation we continue to be to the forefront of creating change to ensure we do have a society in which men and women are treated equally. Our involvements and advocacy work in the recent Equality referendum and the adoption into law of the Sexual Offence Act, highlights our commitment to creating this fairer society. This is work we will continue to do through our White Ribbon Campaigns and through the programmes we design and deliver throughout the country.

This year we ran the 22<sup>nd</sup> consecutive summer school in Thurles Co Tipperary. This is an incredible achievement and all have to be commended in making it happen. Further programmes delivering the 7 key questions, leadership and Good Enough Parent programmes reached out to over 300 participants delivering 120 sessions in ten different counties from Cavan to Wexford.

Further training and interventions have been delivered through our health programme reaching unprecedented numbers with over 1100 participants taking part in training on our Engage Programme alone. Our counselling service has also provided 250 hours of counselling support to individuals.

The Mend programme continues to grow and develop and new programme are planned to come on stream. This year saw 156 men engaged in the programme across 7 areas with 55 eventually completing the programme. The partner support programme also continues to grow with over 50% of partners availing of the programme with of over 1500 individual interventions.

These are tremendous achievements, but we know there is more to do. Opportunities exist for us to show the way forward in designing and delivering programmes that address the key concerns for men and their families. Partnerships are there to be forged, to deliver innovative and creative programmes that fulfil our key mission "Better lives for men, Better lives for all".

# THE NATIONAL MEN'S DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

## MDN 7 Key Questions for Men

### Programme Outline

One approach that can be a support for our wellbeing is to use the (MDN's) 7 Key Questions.

A number of things underpin the strengths of these 7 Key Questions: They promote a wellness model of engaging men through beginning by focusing the conversation on what's going well. They focus on supporting men through reflecting on their personal experience. They help us identify our needs. They support us to identify resources to incremental actions for better health and wellbeing. The questions are strengths based in their approach and direction, clearly focusing on normalising and sharing our lives in both our joys and challenges. It is MDN's hope that through using these 7 Key Questions we will continue New Conversations with and for men, and be part of promoting greater autonomy and ownership of our wellbeing and health.

### General stats

- This programme was delivered in 9 locations namely: Thurles, Wexford, Wicklow, Kilkenny, Tullow, Bagenalstown, North Dublin, Waterford and Callan Co. Kilkenny.
- These programmes were delivered over 15 days.
- 140 men were engaged with and 80men completed these programmes.

### Key Achievements

- *Delivered this programme with the support of MDN Reps increasing their understanding and capacity to deliver this work themselves or in co-operation with other MDN Reps.*
- *Engaged 80 men who experience or are in danger of experiencing marginalisation or disadvantage in this MDN Training and Development programme.*
- *Supported and enabled these men to identify their qualities, skills and potential while also addressing personal or structural barriers or issues that impact negatively on their lives.*

- *Introduced these men to MDN 7 Key Questions for Men Training Programme and provided them the opportunity to develop the skills intrinsic in the programme to support themselves, their loved ones and communities.*
- *Engaged with other frontline services to promote this programme informing them of our work and gaining their collaboration to engage men in this important work.*
- *Through MDN reports and presentations we informed government departments, organisations, community based projects and front-line services of our work and the issues this cohort of men encounter in their lives.*

#### Plans for 2019

- *NMDP Coordinator has secured €12,000 in funding through the HSE National Lottery 2018-19 to deliver the MDN New Conversation with Men Programme over 12 days.*
- *As detailed above this work will again target and work directly men who are most vulnerable in Irish society. And will again work collaboratively with agencies, organisations and community-based projects to roll out this work.*
- *Engagement with MDN Reps to support this work on the ground through outreach and personal involvement in the rolling out of this work.*
- *Make further funding applications in order to further develop and deliver this MDN programme nationally.*
- *Seek opportunities to deliver this programme to a broader group of people including agencies, organisations and projects nationally and internationally.*

## MDN Annual National Training and Development Summer School 2018

#### Programme Outline

The Summer School is a three-day residential event that enables and supports men to actively engage in their families, communities and the broader society to bring about positive change for themselves, their loved ones and the wider society.

The goals of the Summer School are to:

Create a new conversation with among men so that men can create better lives for themselves and for those around them. This conversation is supportive, developmental, and experiential. At the Annual Men's Training and Development Summer School men both experience this developmental process in a supportive environment and are trained to use It in their everyday lives. It provides information to men on why they are the way they are, including the effects of male gender conditioning on their lives. It also signposts the non-governmental organisations and statutory support systems and programmes that are available to them. It encourages men's creativity, embraces and celebrates diversity of cultures and

increases their personal and professional capacities to engage as fully as possible in society. This event builds confidence in men to realise their own intelligence, to address the challenges of life and identify any additional steps they need to take to enhance their life-skills through education, training, community development and leadership. It also highlights and addresses the major issues faced by men at present such as employment, unemployment, family relationships, health as well as a broad number of social and personal issues. Develop a caring atmosphere and environment among men so that they can safely explore their vulnerabilities and identify ways to address them. Through this developmental and training event it works with men to plan their next steps in order to make progress in their lives.

#### General stats

- This is the 22<sup>nd</sup> year delivering the Annual National Men's Training and Development Summer School.
- Outreach was carried out to 70 men with a view to securing 40 men for this event as this is the number of men we have decided is practical to work with at the school.
- This event attracts a cross section of men from across the country who are diverse in experience and backgrounds.

#### Key Achievements

- Delivered the Annual National Training and Development Summer School for the 22<sup>nd</sup> year with the support of MDN Reps increasing their involvement in the spread of MDN work and methodology. This year's event was in Thurles County Tipperary for the first time at the request of the long-time supporter and local Tipperary Rep Edmond McGrath.
- Identified and supported MDN Reps to facilitate the small and large development groups.
- 40 men who experience or are in danger of experiencing marginalisation or disadvantage attended this year's event.
- Created a safe, supportive and developmental environment for men to identify their qualities, skills and potential while also addressing personal or structural barriers or issues that impact negatively on their lives.
- Trained these men in MDN process and methodology and provided them the opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding of MDN work to support themselves, their loved ones and communities.
- Engaged with other frontline services to promote this programme informing them of our work and gaining their collaboration to engage men in this important work.
- Through MDN reports and presentations we informed government departments, organisations, community-based projects and front-line services of our methodology and work with men and the issues that men encounter in their lives.

#### Plans for 2019

- The Annual National Training and Development Summer School is in its 23<sup>rd</sup> year and will be delivered again with the support of MDN Reps progressing this important MDN event and way of working developmentally with men.
- This year's event will once again be delivered in Thurles County Tipperary for the second year running replicating our previous plans to deliver this event two years in each location nationally.
- Outreach to engage men in this event will be carried out too individual and groups of men and the agencies, organisations and projects nationally that work with men.
- Explore how we can continue to make this work relevant and beneficial to the men attending including examining our methodology, structure, content and process.

## *MDN Parent Support Programme*

#### Programme Outline

The course is primarily aimed at parents of 9-17 year old. It is the only parent support programme that concentrates on the challenges of parenting and teenage development. It has been successful in its engagement with parents as it aims to support parents in building good relationships with their children.

This is done by focusing on:

- **Listening:** the basis of all effective communication
- **Love:** building relationships and self-esteem
- **Limits:** practical help with limits – for oneself and with one's children
- **Learning:** about relationships, people's needs and health

#### General stats

- Delivered the MDN 8 Week Parenting Support Programme in 5 different locations across the south-east.
- Outreached to schools and community-based projects and successfully engaged 32 parents in our MDN Parent Support Programme.

#### Key Achievements

- Secured €21,500 in funding through the HSE National Lottery 2018-19 to deliver on this important work.
- Engaged with FRC's Schools and other community base organisations and projects towards promoting and bring parents into this programme.
- Secured 32 parents in 5 different locations from across the south-east who attended these MDN 8 Week Programme.
- A number of the parent's teenagers are engaging with CAMs.



- Supported parents to identify and begin to address issues such, managing conflict, self-care, isolation, teenagers self-harming, suicidation
- accessing additional services.
- Delivered one of three training weekends to bring new facilitators into this MDN work. This creates a pool of trained facilitators that can be utilised for the delivery of this programme nationally and for other MDN work also if required. The remaining two training weekends is planned for 2019.

#### Plans for 2019

*The MDN NMDP Coordinator secured funding under the HSE National Lottery to progress this work nationally in 2019 through the delivery of this programme in 9 different locations namely North Dublin, Wexford, South Tipperary, Waterford, Kilkenny, Wicklow, County Waterford and South Dublin.*

*Introduce newly trained MDN facilitators to support the delivery of this work.*

## MDN Men's Leadership Training Days

#### Programme Outline

The aim of the MDN Leadership Programme is to provide the opportunity for the men to locate the need for leadership and change within their own personal experience. The focus of the training is to explore our understanding of leadership including its purpose, the qualities that underpin it and the confusion or misinformation we may carry as men in relation to this important role or function. Leadership within the MDN is about empowerment of one's self and others through mutual respect, and the desire for a more equal and just society.

*MDN overall aim for the Men's Leadership Training Programme is: -*

- To facilitate men to engage in a reflective process enabling them to develop and articulate their understanding of leadership including the values, beliefs, intention and focus of their leadership and other models of leadership within a broader conceptual framework.
- To engage in training in the MDN developmental methodology and process including male gender conditioning, social analysis and steps to undo the negative effects of misinformation and mistreatment.
- To provide the opportunity to develop and practice skills that enable men and others to connect with their potential to be activists in their lives, their communities and society.
- To engage in a non-judgmental space allowing for self-discovery enabling men to connect to and take the lead in their lives in an intentional way.

## General stats

Engaged 15 men in MDN Men's Leadership Training Programme over 4 Days.

## Key Achievements

- Engaged men in MDN Men's Leadership Training Programme training them in our MDN social analysis, methodology and process.
- The men developed an understanding how male gender and social conditioning, mistreatment and misinformation can create barriers to living their lives fully and intentionally.
- The programme enabled the men to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to begin to undo the negative effect of this mistreatment and misinformation.
- The men were supported to develop an environment that was safe, supportive and developmental.

## Plans for 2019

- Three further Men's Leadership days are planned for 2019.
- These men will be supported and encouraged to utilise their learning to support and promote MDN's Mission Statement "Better Lives for Men Better Lives for All".
- These men will be engaged in the broader work of MDN including MDN's National Men's Training and Development Summer School as well as other MDN work where appropriate.

# NMHP ANNUAL REPORT 2018

## *The National Men's Health Programme (NMHP)*

Throughout 2018, the National Men's Health Programme (NMHP) at the Men's Development Network continued its work nationally facilitating training and workshops for and with frontline service providers and men.

The work supports developing greater awareness in relation to the way men are understood and the way services are provided to and for men.

The National Men's Health Programme is funded by The Health Service Executive.

- The work of the NMHP continues to support service providers towards improving men's access to services and enhancing their experience of using those services.
- It provides a clear focus for engaging and supporting men with their health especially within community and other settings.
- Through its work service providers and men are supported to create new conversations, more supportive communities and networks for men by moving out of isolation.
- Central to all the work of the NMHP is highlighting how best to support workers engaging with men and young men to pay attention to their health, their lives, their families and their communities.

The NMHP has incrementally focused on informing policy development and practice for engaging and supporting men. This has been achieved through key initiatives and a partnerships approach to the work.

- Developing and delivering resources and training modules that continue to be facilitated and disseminated nationally.
- Membership of the Healthy Ireland – Men Men's Health Advisory Committee
- Implementation of key actions of the National Men's Health Action Plan (HI-M 2017-2021) launched on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2016

### NMHP Key Achievements 2018

- Coordinating Engage training nationally and updating the Engage Training resources Units 1-5 for Autumn Training of Trainers and supporting the key partners in the delivery of the work
- Delivering the Engage National Men's Health Training Programme, to a broad range of service providers and front-line staff nationally
- Mentoring new Engage Trainers into the field of Men's Health Work
- Supporting & participating in the Symposium launch of Middle Age Men & Suicide in Ireland in March 2018
- Contributing to the WHO Men's Health gathering in Dr.Steeven's Hospital Dublin toward supporting the further development of men's health work, practice and policy on a European basis
- Facilitation of Engage Training of Trainers in Derry Autumn 2018 as a way of promoting the National Men's Health Programme on an all island basis
- Supporting facilitation of a new cohort of Engage Trainers to continue the facilitation and dissemination of the work nationally

- Working in partnership with the all island Men's Health Forum in Ireland promoting International Men's Health Week nationally alongside a large group of partners.
- Continuing our National & Inter-Sectoral Committee Work promoting best practice in Health & Wellbeing for men. Committees includes the HI-M National Men's Health Advisory Committee, Men's Health Forum Ireland Committee, Sheds for Life Committee (IMSA), Cancer Prevention Committee (ICS) Middle Age Men & Suicide Committee, International men's Health Committee
- Provision of support facilitation of the MDN's Annual National Men's Health Training & Development Summer School, facilitation of Health Workshop and dissemination of all relevant Men's Health resources from Men's Health week to all participants
- Supporting engagements with other National and Regional Organisations working toward the future development of resources and training with Teagasc, & Pavee Point
- Promoting MDN's ethos and practice nationally through facilitating training, presentations, health days, and the engagements with men in the community and workplace.
- Presenting on Men's Health at national and international conferences

#### Dissemination & Signposting Key Support Services

Throughout 2018 the NMHP continued through all its engagements and trainings to signpost and disseminate clear relevant information and materials for accessing a range of services for better health and wellbeing for service providers and men, guided by the 4 goals of Healthy Ireland:

- Increase the proportion of people who are healthy at all stages of life
- Reduce health inequalities
- Protect the public from threats to health and Wellbeing
- Create an environment where every individual and sector can play their part in achieving a healthy Ireland
- This information provides connections to key national agencies and supportive advice on dealing with issues such as testicular cancer, prostate cancer, colon cancer, heart disease, stress, addictions, anxiety, depression, national physical activity plan, obesity, healthy eating, tobacco free Ireland, healthy workplaces, sexual health strategy, alcohol and suicide.

Based on our experience in MDN of engagements with men and service providers the NMHP continues to develop its working practice. It also demonstrates through its training nationally that engaging men developmentally can be a support towards better health. Such an approach can act towards helping men recognise positive supports and resources within their lives.

As already highlighted above the NMHP through its broad range of engagements, trainings, committee work, research, presentations within academia and conferencing continued to contribute toward the development and implementation of best practice for supporting men with our health while supporting service providers in their important work.

Total numbers engaged with across the year were

- Engage trainings and Inputs for 2018 are 61 trainings to 1128 participants.
- Breakdown;
- Engage Units 1-5, 22 trainings to 271 participants.
- Engage Unit 6, 26 trainings to 341 participants.
- Engage Inputs, 13 Inputs/refreshers to 516 participants.

# MDN MEND REPORT 2018

## Overview

MEND [men ending domestic abuse] is a project of the Men’s Development Network, funded by Cosc, the National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence in Ireland, an executive Office within the Department of Justice and Equality, to deliver the National Choices Programme for men who have been abusive within their intimate partner relationships including an integrated partner support service, in six locations: Waterford, Wexford, Carlow/Kilkenny, South Tipperary, Laois/Offaly and Kildare.

## Summary 2018

In 2018 the primary focus of the MDN/MEND Programme was the rollout of Choices, the national Programme on our 6 sites, including selecting candidates for the 5<sup>th</sup> wave of Choices Facilitator Training, attendance at Practice Supervision in Dublin, selecting candidates for the Practice Supervision Training and devising Recording/Review Forms and Contracts for the Supervisees. MEND also set up an interagency local steering committee to support a very successful and well-attended launch of the new Kildare MEND Programme the New Choices Programme. Challenges this year included increased engagement with statutory agencies, increased complexity of cases, the new GDPR regulations, managing referrals where we are oversubscribed and sourcing referrals where we don’t have sufficient referrals. We continue with regular administrative task, managing of the programmes, gathering statistics, engaging with Cosc, our funders, linking in with statutory and non-statutory services. 2018 saw the arrival to the Men’s Development Network of a new CEO Sean Cooke.

## MDN MEND Programme Statistics 2018

### Male Participants 2018

Q12. How many men completed each of the Programmes?					
					Total no. of men who completed the programme
Programme 1 Name		Waterford			6
Programme 2 Name		Wexford			7
Programme 3 Name		Carlow/Kilkenny			5
Programme 4 Name		South Tipperary			5
Programme 5 Name		Laois/Offaly			3
Programme 6 Name					

			11. Total no. of men applied to join the programme	11a. Total no. of men assessed to join programme	11b. Total no. of men who passed their assessment	11c. Total no. of men who commenced programme	11d. Total no. of men who "dropped out" from the Programme	11e. Total no. of men who were removed from the Programme
Programme 1 Name		Wexford	55	33	12	9	2	0
Programme 2 Name		Waterford	45	42	29	8	0	0
Programme 3 Name		Carlow/Kilkenny	18	18	14	13	4	0
Programme 4 Name		South Tipperary	24	22	17	10	0	0
Programme 5 Name		Laois/Offaly	14	14	14	5	1	1
Programme 6 Name								

## Partner and ex-partner contacts 2018

			7a. No. of partners/ex-partners of men who had commenced a programme
Programme 1 Name		Wexford	6
Programme 2 Name		Waterford	7
Programme 3 Name		Carlow/Kilkenny	6
Programme 4 Name		South Tipperary	6
Programme 5 Name		Laois/Offaly	3
Programme 6 Name			
Programme 7 Name			

			No. of partner contacts	Number of Face-to-Face contacts	Number of Telephone contacts	Number of Other contacts	Please specify
Programme 1 Name		Waterford	471	91	380		
Programme 2 Name		Wexford	398	32	366		
Programme 3 Name		Carlow/Kilkenny	351	28	379		
Programme 4 Name		South Tipperary	369	30	339		
Programme 5 Name		Laois/Offaly	256	16	240		

In terms of our statistics for 2018, the primary aim of MEND is the safety of women and children our most significant statistic therefore is that 21 partners or ex-partners engaged consistently with our integrated partner support service for the duration of the programme and up to 3 months following the man's completion of or dropping out of the programme. It is important to note that engagement in this service is at the discretion of each partner. Of the 156 men who engaged in MEND in 2018, 25 completed a full programme in that year. Other men and women had different levels of engagement with MEND with many families availing of opportunities to take the next step in dealing with the presence of Domestic Abuse in their lives. The issue of domestic abuse is complex, generational and often exacerbated by underlying experience of trauma and so the process of change is rarely smooth or taken at the first opportunity. We acknowledge the courage it has taken all those who engaged with MEND to take the first step in this process.

## Plans for 2019

As per our Service Level Agreement with Cosc in the Department of Justice and Equality the primary focus of our work is the delivery of Choices Intervention Programmes with integrated Partner Support Services at our 6 locations in Waterford, Wexford, South Tipperary, Carlow/Kilkenny, Laois/Offaly and Kildare. This entails overall management, including financial, administrative, case and risk management, practice supervision, oversee

and, where appropriate delivery of assessments, one-to-one pre-group sessions. Identifying and providing on-going training.

Each year provides the challenge of promoting programmes where referrals are low and/or inconsistent. The first port of call is to engage with the key statutory agencies in the area i.e., Tusla and Probation. For 2018 depending on our agreed Budget with Cosc we will prioritize promoting our newer programmes in Laois/Offaly and Kildare.

The integration of Practice Supervision into our MEND Programmes will be a critical area of our work in 2018. We've had teething problems initially due to limited availability of both facilitators and practice supervisors alongside technical issues regarding the viewing of videoed sessions off site. The satisfactory resolution of these issues will be critical in the first half of 2019.

To achieve a more streamlined, effective and sustainable management of the MEND programmes into the future, we need to increase our permanent staff from 2 ½ members to 3. This will facilitate the National MEND Coordinator focusing on key issues to do with Clinical Practice, Programme Development and Research.

With the arrival of the new GDPR legislation and following feedback from Facilitators and Partner Support workers there is a need to revise critical documents (e.g., Assessment Forms) and Policies (e.g., Consent re secure holding of personal data).

Nationally and within the Men's Development Network many facilitators have completed the Choices Training and have gained some experience in the delivery of the programme. In 2018 we intend to organize, in partnership with MOVE and the NEDVIP a two day follow up training event on the Choices Programme for September.

Tracking contacts for the purposes of the timely arrangement of assessments, one-to-ones, partner contact, collating statistics for MDN and Cosc and matching sessions done with invoices received all require a fit-for-purpose CRM system. In 2019 it is planned that the MEND Project will be integrated into a new CRM system within MDN.

Engaging in inter-agency events and conferences locally nationally and internationally is an important way of promoting the MDN approach and practice in working with perpetrators of domestic violence as well as a way of developing referral pathways to our programmes. In 2019 we will continue to initiate opportunities to present our work and respond to invitations.

The national rollout of the Choices Programme relies to a large extent on the partnership between the three organisations delivering the programmes and so again in 2019 working closely with MOVE and the NEDVIP will be critical to the successful rollout of Choices. One example of this working together is our decision to host the Working With Perpetrators Annual Meeting in Dublin in 2020. Much of the preparation for this International event will be done in the Autumn and Winter of 2019.

## *Challenges to face*

The Choices programme has introduced one-to-one pre group work which has proved to significantly increase the cost of the programme, this includes the cost to the organization of

“no shows”, increased costs regarding essential interagency contact during men and women’s engagement with the Choices Programme. This increase may not be reflected in the budget we receive from Cosc and so we face a challenge of prioritizing the areas of work to which we can commit. This is exacerbated by the number of men being referred or self-referring to the Waterford MEND Programme, in 2019 we will need to have 2 programme running concurrently in Waterford.

The retention of facilitators is a challenge perhaps because the amount of work we can offer to any one individual facilitator is limited and therefore they may well need to take up other work and not be as available to us as we might like or need. It is not sustainable to be losing facilitators on a regular basis who have been recently trained and have valuable experience gained.

Prior to Choices the Men’s Development Network through its MEND staff members invested significant time, energy and resources into developing our work with male perpetrators of domestic abuse, indeed some the areas we identified influenced the eventual decision to agree on Choices as our new National Programme, in particular the approach of Paul Wolf Light to focus on developing an atmosphere of mindful awareness as a prerequisite to challenging men’s abusive behavior echoed our approach which recognizes that many of the men we work with have come from abusive childhoods and carry within them, consciously or unconsciously the trauma associated with this experience. Therefore, we need to build respectful, transparent, mindful relationships with these men so that these relationships can provide a solid ground on which men can be challenged to face the impact of their violent or abusive behavior on those they would claim they love.

It is crucial that we the advent of Choices that individual organisations with many years of experience in this work are not discouraged from continuing to reflect and explore ways in which this important and complex work needs to develop.