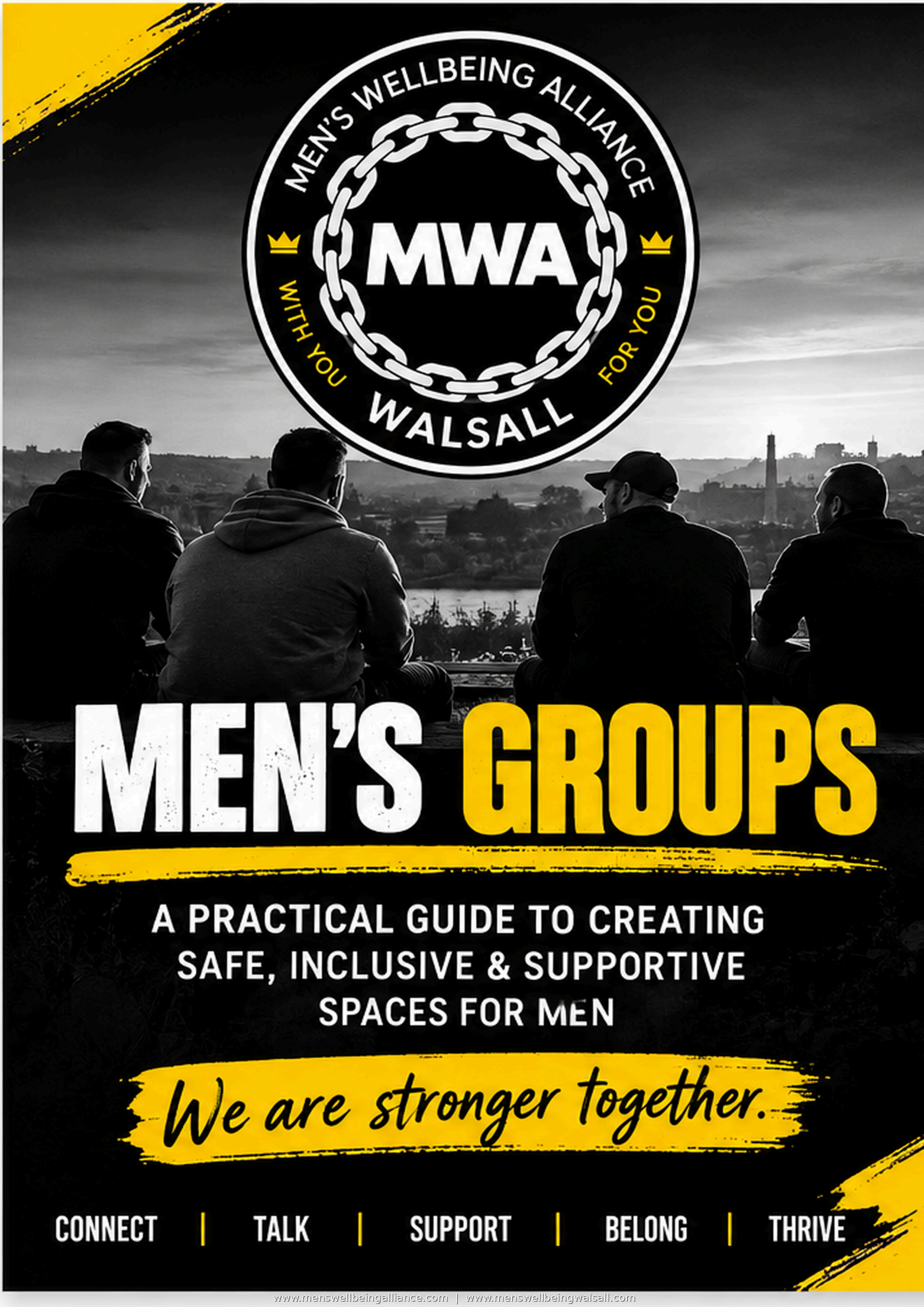

MEN'S WELLBEING ALLIANCE
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WALSALL
MEN'S GROUPS
A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO CREATING SAFE, INCLUSIVE & SUPPORTIVE SPACES FOR MEN
We are stronger together.
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MEN'S GROUPS

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO CREATING SAFE, INCLUSIVE & SUPPORTIVE SPACES FOR MEN

We are stronger together.

1. WHY MEN'S GROUPS MATTER

The benefits for individuals, communities and wider society.

2. SETTING UP A GROUP

Key steps, venue, resources and planning.

3. SESSION STRUCTURE

A simple format to follow.

4. STARTING CONVERSATIONS

Easy ways to get men talking.

5. TOPICS TO DISCUSS

Suggested themes and conversation ideas.

6. INCLUSION FOR ALL

Creating a welcoming and accessible group.

7. CODE OF ETHICS

Our values, group agreement and what is not acceptable.

8. SAFETY & SAFEGUARDING

Creating a safe space and knowing when to take action.

9. GDPR & DATA PROTECTION

Managing information responsibly.

10. SUPPORT & SIGNPOSTING

Where to get more help and local services.

11. FACILITATOR GUIDANCE

Tips, skills and managing group dynamics.

12. EVALUATION & NEXT STEPS

Measuring impact and keeping it going.

MEN'S GROUPS

A practical guide to creating safe, inclusive and supportive spaces for men

WE ARE STRONGER TOGETHER

CONNECT ● TALK ● SUPPORT ● BELONG ● THRIVE

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1. Why men's groups matter
2. Setting up a group
3. Recommended session structure
4. Starting conversations
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9. GDPR and data protection
10. Support and signposting
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12. The first session
13. Activities beyond talking
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1. WHY MEN'S GROUPS MATTER

Men's groups provide places where men can meet other men without judgement, build friendships, share experiences, explore wellbeing and feel that they belong. A men's group does not have to be a therapy group. It can simply be a place where men can turn up, connect, talk, listen and belong.

Core principles

- Safe – people can speak without being mocked, judged or ridiculed.
- Welcoming – new members are made to feel part of the group from their first visit.
- Inclusive – men are welcomed regardless of age, background, disability, sexuality, faith, employment or life circumstances.
- Respectful – people can disagree without disrespecting each other.
- Non-judgemental – we do not have to agree with someone's experience to listen to it.
- Confidential – personal stories are treated respectfully, subject to safeguarding limits.
- Practical – conversations should lead towards connection, understanding, information or positive action.
- Community-focused – encourage relationships and connection beyond the session.

2. SETTING UP A GROUP

Be clear about who the group is for and what it offers.

Example: "A welcoming group for men aged 18+ who want to meet other men, talk, connect and explore wellbeing."

Choose a venue that is:

- Accessible and safe
- Welcoming and private enough for conversation
- Affordable
- Easy to reach by public transport where possible
- Suitable for the activities planned

Before launch, agree:

- Purpose and audience
- Frequency and session length
- Facilitator roles
- Safeguarding arrangements
- Emergency and referral procedures
- How information will be collected and stored

- How members can give feedback

3. SUGGESTED SESSION STRUCTURE

TIME	ACTIVITY
0–10 mins	Arrival, tea/coffee and informal conversation
10–15 mins	Welcome and check-in
15–25 mins	Warm-up activity or conversation starter
25–55 mins	Main discussion or activity
55–70 mins	Open conversation
70–80 mins	Local information and signposting
80–90 mins	Check-out and close

For a 60-minute group, shorten the discussion and check-out sections. Keep the overall rhythm predictable.

4. STARTING CONVERSATIONS

Start with everyday life rather than immediately asking about mental health.

- What's been happening in your world this week?
- What's gone well this week?
- What's been difficult?
- What's something you're looking forward to?
- What keeps you busy?
- What do you enjoy doing?
- What makes a good friendship?
- What does being a good mate mean?
- What helps you switch off from work?
- What does looking after yourself actually mean?

Facilitator tip: model the behaviour. If you ask members to share, answer the question yourself first.

5. TOPICS TO EXPLORE

Friendship and belonging	**Mental wellbeing**	**Physical health**
Stress and coping	**Sleep**	**Work and money**

Relationships	**Fatherhood**	**Retirement**
Loneliness	**Confidence**	**Identity**
Purpose	**Grief and loss**	**Change**
Resilience	**Hobbies and interests**	**Being active**
Nature	**Creativity**	**Learning new things**
Asking for help	**Looking after someone else**	**Building community**

6. INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY

A good group actively considers who may be missing and what barriers might prevent participation.

- Welcome men from different ages, cultures, backgrounds, abilities and life circumstances.
- Do not assume that every man wants the same thing or communicates in the same way.
- Consider disability, language, transport, cost, digital exclusion, neurodiversity, hearing/visual needs and working hours.
- Participation does not always mean talking. Listening is participation.
- Nobody should be pressured to disclose personal information.
- Use accessible venues and provide reasonable adjustments where possible.

A useful facilitator question is: "Who isn't currently in the room, and why might that be?"

7. GROUP AGREEMENT & CODE OF ETHICS

- Respect each other – everyone deserves dignity.
- One person speaks at a time – give people space to finish.
- Listen without judgement – we do not always need to fix someone's problem.
- Confidentiality – personal stories should not be repeated outside the group, subject to safeguarding limits.
- Choice – people decide what they share.
- No pressure – nobody is forced to participate.
- Challenge ideas, not people – disagreement can happen respectfully.
- No bullying, intimidation or threatening behaviour.
- No racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic or discriminatory language.

- Respect personal boundaries and physical space.
- Take responsibility for your own behaviour.
- Look out for the wellbeing and safety of the group.

The group should remain non-political and non-partisan.

Political campaigning, party-political arguments, political recruitment, religious persuasion, hate speech, personal attacks and discriminatory behaviour are not appropriate. Members can hold their own beliefs; the group is not a place to impose those beliefs on others.

8. SAFETY & SAFEGUARDING

The facilitator is not expected to solve every problem. Their role is to notice concerns, maintain boundaries and follow the organisation's safeguarding procedure.

If someone becomes distressed:

- "Thanks for telling us."
- "That sounds like it has been difficult."
- "Would you like to take a moment?"
- "Would you like to speak to me privately?"

Avoid minimising statements such as "don't worry", "stay positive" or "things could be worse."

Never promise absolute confidentiality. If there is a serious concern about someone's safety or the safety of another person, the group's safeguarding procedure must take priority.

Alcohol and drugs

Members should not attend under the influence of alcohol or drugs where this could affect behaviour or the safety of others. The group should not supply, promote or encourage illegal drug use.

9. GDPR & DATA PROTECTION

Only collect personal information that is genuinely needed. Be clear with members about why information is collected, who can access it, how it is stored, how long it is retained and who to contact about it.

Good practice

- Keep personal information secure and password protected.
- Restrict access to people who genuinely need it.
- Do not record sensitive details unnecessarily.
- Avoid discussing personal information in public places.
- Use appropriate consent and privacy information for mailing lists and evaluation.

- If using WhatsApp, explain that members may be able to see each other's telephone numbers.

This guide is practical guidance, not legal advice. Groups should operate under the data protection and safeguarding policies of the organisation responsible for the group.

10. SUPPORT & SIGNPOSTING

Maintain a current local directory covering:

- GP and NHS services
- Mental health and talking therapies
- Crisis support
- Samaritans and other appropriate helplines
- Bereavement support
- Substance misuse support
- Domestic abuse support
- Housing and financial advice
- Employment support
- Men's organisations
- Physical activity and community groups

The facilitator should normally signpost rather than diagnose. Where there is immediate danger or serious risk, follow emergency and safeguarding procedures.

11. FACILITATOR GUIDANCE

- Welcome people personally.
- Explain the group to new members.
- Model openness without oversharing.
- Keep the conversation moving.
- Make space for quieter members.
- Prevent one person from dominating.
- Bring conversations back when they move away from the group's purpose.
- Notice changes in mood or behaviour.

- Maintain professional and personal boundaries.
- Know the local support and referral routes.

Useful phrases

- "Let's hear from someone who hasn't had a chance to come in yet."
- "That's an interesting point. How does everyone else see it?"
- "We can disagree without disrespecting each other."
- "You're welcome to listen; join in whenever you're comfortable."
- "That sounds like something that might be better supported outside the group. Let's talk afterwards."

12. THE FIRST SESSION

TIME	FIRST SESSION
0–10 mins	Welcome, refreshments and informal introductions
10–20 mins	Explain the purpose, boundaries, confidentiality and group agreement
20–35 mins	Getting to know each other: "What do you enjoy doing?"
35–60 mins	Main conversation: "What would make this a group you want to come back to?"
60–75 mins	Activities and topics members would like to explore
75–90 mins	Check-out and agree the next session

13. ACTIVITIES BEYOND TALKING

Conversation often happens more naturally when people are doing something together. Consider:

- Walking and nature activities
- Tai Chi, Qi Gong or gentle movement
- Fishing
- Gardening
- DIY or practical projects
- Football and other sport
- Cycling

- Photography
- Art and music
- Cooking
- Volunteering
- Quizzes and games
- Guest speakers
- Community improvement projects

Golden rule

Don't build a men's group around problems. Build it around connection. Mental health conversations can happen naturally when men feel comfortable.

14. EVALUATION & CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Keep evaluation simple and useful.

- Attendance and repeat attendance
- Who is attending and who may be missing
- Member feedback
- What activities people want
- Signposting and referrals
- Examples of increased connection or confidence
- Suggestions for improvement

End-of-session questions

- What was useful today?
- How did you find the session?
- What would you like to do next time?
- Is there anything we could do differently?

15. MEN'S GROUP PROMISE

We come together as men, not because we have all the answers, but because none of us should have to face everything alone.

WE LISTEN.

WE RESPECT.

WE SUPPORT.

WE INCLUDE.

WE LOOK OUT FOR ONE ANOTHER.

WE ARE STRONGER TOGETHER.