

# ‘Ahead of The Curve’: An Evaluation of Imagine a Man in Dundee

July 2024

This briefing outlines key findings from the evaluation of the rollout of Imagine a Man in Dundee. This research has greatly increased our ‘how to’ knowledge, particularly around the support and resourcing of the local partnerships needed to properly implement a ‘national’ programme on positive masculinity.

## Key Findings

### 1. Perceptions of Positive Masculinity

The Imagine a Man programme is at the forefront of addressing positive masculinity, though it has not yet become a mainstream focus in education, or as one participant put it, ‘it’s ahead of the curve.’ While the programme is pioneering in redefining masculinity and addressing harmful stereotypes, schools and teachers struggled to prioritise the initiative, as it was overshadowed by other pressing issues like exam goals. The evaluation suggested that more awareness and time are needed for educators to fully integrate these concepts.

### 2. Impact on Participants

The programme’s limited rollout in Dundee made it challenging to evaluate its full impact on young people. Staff who did implement some activities with students reported mixed success, with some experiencing particularly meaningful discussions around masculinity, while others found it more difficult to engage participants.

For partners, the programme raised greater awareness of positive masculinity, influencing their approaches in professional contexts as well as their future plans. Organisations like Police Scotland awarded the initiative an Equality Award. Plans are in place to redesign the Dundee PSE curriculum to include Imagine a Man activities from 2025.

### 3. Toolkit and Training Feedback

Feedback on the Imagine a Man Toolkit and training was generally very positive, though some suggestions for improvement were made such as bespoke lesson plans for teachers. Training sessions were seen as practical and engaging. Youth workers particularly found the face-to-face sessions beneficial, but time constraints posed a challenge for teachers to attend, hence the development of e-learning options.

The Toolkit itself was viewed as flexible and adaptable, but sometimes groups were harder to engage and often dependent on the individual skills of facilitators. Participants suggested the development of more age-appropriate resources, especially for children aged 8-12, to ensure the early integration of positive masculinity concepts. This has been incorporated into plans for 2024-25.

### 4. Rollout of the Programme in Dundee

The programme’s rollout in Dundee faced multifaceted systemic challenges due to limited time, resources, and school capacity. Although headteachers supported the initiative, crowded curricula and competing priorities hindered implementation. Only three schools responded to the evaluation, with just two having delivered toolkit activities. More direct engagement between the Imagine a Man team and schools was suggested for future rollouts.

Youth workers expressed enthusiasm and commitment to continue the work, with early feedback indicating positive engagement from young people. Revisiting Dundee in 2025 will check to see how far concepts, plans and implementation were embedded into CLD-related plans.

## Challenges

Key challenges included the short timescale for rollout, lack of capacity within schools, and the difficulties of adapting a youth work approach to a formal education setting. To overcome these issues, the evaluation recommended involving schools and delivery partners more in planning, providing tailored resources for schools, and allowing for more time. It would be helpful if local strategic leads (Directors of Education and CLD heads, for example) could set realistic goals and targets and include these in local implementation plans.

## Recommendations

### **Involve delivery partners in detailed planning:**

Future rollouts should involve schools, teachers, and delivery partners early in the planning phase. There should be more time for planning, training, and development. Clear outcomes and outputs must be defined.

### **Increase local support capacity:**

More resources are needed for training and supporting local young people. A coordinator in each local authority could organise activities and manage training, supported partly by Imagine a Man through future funding proposals. Proper implementation nationally will not come cheap.

### **Partner with local youth work teams:**

Local youth work teams should be key partners in planning and delivering the programme. Youth workers engaged well with the programme and could (on the whole) adapt it to suit their own and group needs.

### **Develop school-focused resources:**

Tailor resources for schools with links to curriculum areas like equalities and wellbeing. Teachers, unlike youth workers, need more specific resources and support to engage more deeply with the programme. Imagine a Man is very youth work focused and teachers were often unable to adapt this to their setting and skill set.

### **Further develop training and workforce development:**

Align training with national standards for teachers and schools. Initial training should ideally include face-to-face sessions.

### **Explore peer-led approaches:**

Consider peer-led models where older students or young people could train to deliver the programme to younger peers, fostering engagement and relatability.

### **Produce resources for a younger age group:**

An earlier intervention was needed in order to challenge harmful versions of masculinity from becoming the cultural and social norm. This work needed to start at primary school if not before.

### **Creativity and fun:**

More sports, arts-based, music-based activities that are fun and engaging.

### **Adopt a systematic approach:**

In addition to schools and youth work, involve other community partners, such as parents, sports clubs, and services like social work, to create consistent conversations around masculinity across young people's lives. Positive masculinity is everyone's business and consistent messaging is the only way we will shift cultural and social norms and reduce 'harmful' versions of masculinity.