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MAN UP – A groundbreaking performance co-created with men in Stoke-on-Trent from their lived-experiences of masculinity and mental health.

Suicide is the single biggest killer of men aged under 45 in the UK. Stoke-on-Trent's Restoke are co-creating a performance looking at how and why men can reach crisis point.

On the hottest weekend in April for 70 years, 23 men, from all walks of life, participate in their first Man Up 'Creating Weekend'. The session was centred around masculinity; what does it mean to be a man in a rapidly shifting society?

“I was interested immediately in the subject matter” comments one of the project’s participants, Adrian. “It almost called out to me, as someone who has been told by others from a young age that I was not masculine”

Another participant Matt adds, “The shadowy subject of how men deal with their masculinity and mental health has always meant something to me as I’m not what might be considered to be a traditional type of man”.

Restoke, an arts company based in Stoke-on-Trent specialise in co-creating performances that tell the most pertinent and engaging stories within the community.

Co-director Clare comments, “We have wanted to carry out a project about mental health for a long time. We're all affected in some way and we all have a part to play in asking, why is it that men don't ask for help?”

Restoke directors Clare Reynolds and Paul Rogerson have been overwhelmed by the response to the project, “we’ve had contact from over 170 men, many have spoken to us directly about their experiences or shared them through our creative activities so far. Our work always involves dance, so we thought it would be a bigger challenge to find men willing to step outside of their comfort zone. But we’re excited that over 20 have committed to making the Man Up performance with us”.

The artist team includes Derby based Spoken Word Artist and Poet, Jamie Thrasivoulou who defines his work as ‘raw, energetic and often highly politicised’. “I was instantly attracted to the subject content. Mental health and the relationship with masculinity is an area I'm keen to explore and learn more about. So far, the project has been a great and hugely enlightening experience. I'm very excited about the rest of the project.”

Man Up will offer a gritty and humorous insight into the issues surrounding male mental health. The venue – which will be announced closer to the date – is a community setting in the north of the city. “In previous performances, Restoke have transformed local landmarks across the city; Wedgwood Institute, Tunstall Baths, Bethesda Chapel and Spode. The venue which will play host to Man Up is sincere and unassuming - much like the men who will take to the stage - and I’m certain audiences will recognise it as a place where the story of male-ness has played out in all its colour, vigour and grace time and time again” adds Paul.

Further information about the project can be found on Restoke’s website. www.restoke.org.uk Tickets will go on sale in July. All previous Restoke performances have sold out therefore people are advised to book early to avoid disappointment.

Notes to editors:

Restoke is a registered Community Interest Company and not-for-profit arts organisation based in Stoke-on-Trent. (CIC No: 10791456).

Man Up is funded by Arts Council England.

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