

A Men's Shed for Lockerbie and Lochmaben

Men's Sheds are started for a variety of reasons but these can be grouped into two main types.

1. The Top Down Model

These are started by one of several agencies in order to address a perceived need within a community.

They often have one or more development workers, often shared with other projects, occasionally dedicated to just the one Shed.

They generally have a fixed budget set down by the commissioning body be that NHS, local authority or one of the Third Sector bodies.

They are often set up to operate for a fixed number of years with the hope that the service users, or another group, will take over the running of the Shed at the end of that period.

Advantages:

Initial start up costs and ongoing costs are met out of a defined budget.

Disadvantages:

Political or policy aims can change over time and focus can move to another group seen to be disadvantaged.

Without volunteer support to take on the Shed at the end of the project, the venture will close down. This leaves the people it was intended to help back where they were in the beginning.

2. The Ground Up Model

These Sheds are started by volunteers who have identified, usually through direct personal experience, a need in their community for a place for men to go to. (See the testimonials attached for the reasons men need a space).

While they need help from the professional bodies, ie, NHS, council and

third sector agencies, to get set up, develop a constitution etc. they largely run themselves. The men using the service shape the service.

Many Sheds run on comparatively tiny budgets. Tools and materials are donated by the public, small grants come from various sources and the men themselves often provide the materials or kits that they want to work on during their Shed time.

There is a sense of ownership amongst the members of this type of Shed and this often extends to a comradery, albeit tempered with friendly rivalry, between different Sheds.

Advantages:

Comparatively low start up cost.

Largely self funding

Commitment from the members helps ensure longevity of the project.

The enthusiasm of the members for 'their' Shed communicates itself to new members and members of the public alike.

Disadvantages

A lack of experience in dealing with officialdom often creates concern.

It can be very frustrating for Shed operators to have to constantly reinvent the wheel when dealing with officials

Ongoing financial support in the form of grants mean that, from year to year, the Sheds finances could vary considerably.

Testimonials

In addition to the above there are different 'cultures' associated with the two Shed types. In the first model there is often a focus on quantitative evidence of need, progress and outcomes. There is a need to measure things, count attendances, extrapolate figures from government documents and try to attain targets that chime with various policy needs.

In the second model there's a leaning towards more qualitative evidence. Sometimes more difficult to measure but often far more directly accessible to the people affected.

To this end, we include a number of testimonials from Shed users, organisers and other people who Shed activities affect.

“I was recovering from a heart attack, was afraid to go out, was afraid to do any at all. I heard about this “Men's Shed” thing from a friend and thought “That sounds like something I could go along to... even just to hang out”. That was two years ago and now, on Shed days, I've got a reason to get up, washed and shaved, dress properly and I've got somewhere to go. On non Shed days? I have something to look forward to!”

“There's only so much time you can spend at home, shouting at Jeremy Kyle on TV, before you realise that you really do have to get out more”

“The hardest thing to do was walk in that door. I might not know anyone. They might not like me. I might not be able to do all the stuff they were doing and they'd just ignore me. It was scary but I went in. Somebody said “Hallo, the kettle is just on, do you want a coffee or a tea?” and everyone was really friendly. Now I look forward to going to see my mates every week”

“I was divorced. My kids were all grown up and moved away, I was stuck at home, alone. If it wasn't for the shed and the guys there, I'd not be here”.

We Are Shedders.

We are all Shedders. We come to the Shed for a whole raft of different reasons. We don't see statistics and demographics and extrapolations based on some social policy dreamed up in a committee somewhere. We are just a bunch of blokes who get together to socialise, support each other, keep an eye on each other.

We are there for the guy who wants to come to each and every session and make and build and craft. We are there for the guy who wants to have a cuppa and a natter with people like him. We are there for the elderly man who just likes to know there's somewhere he can come in when he's in town, say hallo and let us know that he's still alive and kicking.

We're there for the man learning to live with a life changing health condition who just needs to be among people who will talk about making things and help him adjust to the 'new normal' without constantly asking "are you sure you can do that?" "are you okay?"

We are also there for the recently widowed man who just needs a couple of hours away from the house that was for so many years his family home but is now just a place filled with cardboard boxes and neighbours who keep asking "How are you doing...?" Or for the husband who is a carer and, thanks to others taking over for a few hours, can get to go out by himself for a little breather.

Those of us who operate Sheds do it for all of the above reasons and because "if not us, then who?". We want to develop our Shed so that, when the day comes, that we can't be so actively involved and can't work in the workshop, there's somewhere we can go for a chat and a cuppa. We also want to know that, as the next generation comes up and become, like us 'men of a certain age' that there'll be a Shed waiting for them and they won't have to jump through all the same hoops we've had to.