

## Suffolk Men's Shed Toolkit

### *Men's Sheds are all about people*

The building of a shed encourages a group of people to come together, understanding and deploying their skills, firing their imagination and creativity, and developing a sense of shared ownership.

Every Men's Shed evolves in its own way because no two sheds will ever have the same mix of skills, interests, characters, and local conditions. However, there are several stages along the road that are common to the development of most sheds.



### **The Main Areas of focus in Building a Men's Sheds are:**

- 1) Raising Awareness.**
- 2) Forming 'The Steering Group'**
- 3) Adopting a constitution.**
- 4) Choosing The Officers.**
- 5) Setting Up Essential Organizational Structures.**
- 6) Finding Premises.**
- 7) Reaching Out & Engaging with the Community.**
- 8) Setting up the building.**



# 1 Raising Awareness

The life of a Shed usually begins with one or two people expressing interest in the idea. It is essential to connect with their wider community, to find like-minded people who are interested in the prospect of a Men's Shed. This can be achieved by promoting the idea through community organisations, local media, voluntary organisations, statutory bodies, and relevant businesses. The UK Mens sheds association recruits volunteer ambassadors.

A public meeting is the next important step to bringing everyone together.

# 2 Forming a 'Steering Group'

There are always people who would be interested in joining a shed when it is already up and running. However, the shed requires individuals who are willing to be actively involved in creating and running it.



At the public meeting it is a good time to get support from a small group of people who are interested in helping set it up. Many people coming to Sheds, including those willing to lead them, are often living with the side-effects of social isolation – loneliness, mild depression, self-esteem issues, poor physical or mental health, so time needs to be spent helping the group get to know each other and grow 'organically' at their own pace, whilst keeping them focused on the development of the Shed.

# 3 Adopting A Constitution

As most sheds are self-governing organisations, the first task for this 'Steering group' is to prepare and adopt a constitution, find a consiitution template [here](#).

In some cases, another body may be instrumental in setting up the Shed e.g. a church or a museum, thus the Shed may largely integrate into their existing structures and policies, although most will still need their own internal decision-making mechanism. But for most, ratifying the constitution is the first major step, and how they constitute is the first major decision the action group will take. Most sheds will start out with the simple unincorporated association model and may later opt to upgrade to Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) status as they grow, although some proceed with CIO status from the start whilst others remain unincorporated associations throughout their life! Click [here](#) to find out what charity status is right for you.



## 4 Choosing The Officers

The adoption of the constitution represents a significant point at which the 'steering group' takes on the responsibility of the shed. The roles of Chair, Secretary and Treasurer now need to be agreed (and any other roles the group feel would be helpful). Because individuals have all worked as 'equals' to this point, it lessens the risk of the officer roles becoming 'pedestal' positions, and the principle that the management committee/trustees are ultimately equally responsible is better understood and upheld.

Having signed the constitution, the steering group become the founding trustees/management group.

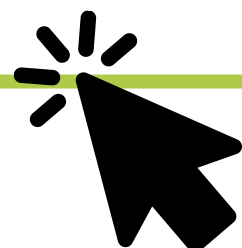


## 5 Structures

With the officers in place, the next step is to identify the essential structures that the shed will need and allocate the tasks. These will include:

- ✓ **Setting up a bank account**
- ✓ **Preparing and ratifying the necessary policies and procedures, including health & safety, safeguarding, financial controls, risk assessments etc.**
- ✓ **Identifying and applying for funding, click [here](#) to access Funding 4 Suffolk.**
- ✓ **Researching and obtaining insurance, click [here](#) to find out more**
- ✓ **Determining what 'Shed membership' will mean and any subs/contributions, adopting a Code of Conduct for the Shed. Click [here](#) to find out more about standard operation procedures.**
- ✓ **Joining relevant support bodies like UK Men's Shed Association, find out more [here](#)**

**Much can be done straightaway, but some items will depend on knowledge of the premises the Shed is going to inhabit e.g. insurance, risk assessments.**



# 6 Finding Premises

Whilst it is important not to let the search for a building become the 'be all and end all' of the development process, it is a pivotal stage in the lifetime of the shed. In many ways this must run parallel with every other stage outlined above and can potentially happen at any stage of the journey. However, if not already achieved, it becomes increasingly critical once the Shed has been constituted and has embarked on setting up its structures. Whilst it is helpful that someone on the steering group take responsibility for the process of finding premises, it is a key task that should involve everyone connected to the Shed. It is also the least predictable of all shed tasks and progress (or otherwise) towards this goal can have a significant impact on the morale of those creating the Shed. Sheds can move several times in their lifetime, if starting out in temporary accommodation it may not be possible to undertake practical tasks at first. If this this case start with meeting socially, growing the group and sharing the vision to develop the Shed.



It can be valuable to approach local business centers, pubs, community centers, warehouse locations and a wide range of local organizations to explore what opportunities might be available. Sometimes there can be space either as a blank canvas where a container or portacabin can be placed.

 **Click [here](#) to find out more about portacabins.**

Or others may be able to help find areas within existing or disused buildings. Local councillors, MPs and other local decision makers are also good stakeholders to discuss and present the benefits of Men's Sheds.

Joining local charity networks are often effective in discovering valuable local information. Sports clubs, sports centres, local football teams or activity centres may also have available space especially as they are aware of how valuable physical activity creates positive wellbeing. Existing Men's Shed are another good source of advice as they can help share their own experience of how they obtained premises.

[Click here for a map of Men's Sheds](#)



## 7 Reaching Out and Engaging with The Community

Once constituted, Sheds are actively encouraged to start building links within their local community, and to that end, an 'outreach officer' is recommended as a role within the action group. Outreach can involve:

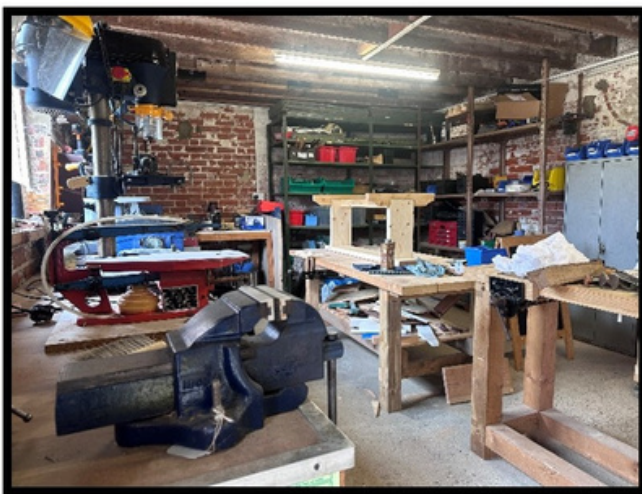
- ✓ Seeking potential new group members, both those who can 'come on board' now and help create the shed, and those who might wish to join once fully open.
- ✓ Engaging with the wider community to seek potential activities that the Shed might be able to get involved with e.g. Christmas festivities etc. or maybe even longer-term partners with whom larger projects might be worth exploring.
- ✓ Engaging with statutory bodies e.g. parish and district councils, to let them know you are there and to start a dialogue as to how each can help the other.
- ✓ Individuals and organisations may be able to help the shed – from supplying wood or tools to a potential building.

Reaching out also involves engaging with other Sheds in the county for mutual encouragement, support, information, and skill sharing. A network of Sheds is an excellent source of wisdom, not only for the individual Sheds but for the wider community as well. Click [here](#) for a map of Men's sheds.



## 8 Setting Up the Building

Most sheds reach the point where they have identified premises, made any arrangements necessary to obtain them (e.g. sign a lease) and they at last have the keys. The preparation of the Shed building is probably the final key stage to getting the Shed open and the collective endeavor of 'getting it the way you want it' is one of the most important activities that brings people together as a 'Men's Shed'. This is often the stage at which those who have thus far not been involved in the development process can be brought on board, as 'doing up your premises' is a major bonding activity for the Shed members that will set the tone for relationships and activities within the Shed for the foreseeable future.



Of course, setting up a Shed is never without its unexpected challenges, but hopefully the above presents a picture of the stages that a shed can go through when in development. Overall, with the right people and the right support, with a sense of direction and vision, most challenges can be overcome.

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## Income Generation and Sustainability

### *From rental costs to biscuits!*

It is important to consider all current and future finances required and there are various funding streams which can be accessed. Costs to consider when starting or sustaining a Men's Shed can include:

- ✓ **Rental costs of building**
- ✓ **Renovation of building**
- ✓ **Utilities: gas, electric, water**
- ✓ **Tools and equipment**
- ✓ **Insurance**
- ✓ **Printing costs for promotional leaflets and posters**
- ✓ **Tea, coffee, and biscuits.**

### Grant Funding

Grant funding can be an effective way to start a Shed with major capital purchases such as buildings, adaptations, or major plant of equipment.



**[Click here to access Funding 4 Suffolk.](#)**



## Donations/ Fundraising

Fundraising is an effective method for raising small amounts of money to cover start-up costs or buying equipment/tools. Examples include coffee mornings, or community raffles.

You may also receive donations of physical objects to fill your Shed (e.g. tools, kettle, wood, paint). Make your Shed known in the community and create connections with potential donors.



## Income generation

One of the easiest ways to generate start-up income is to charge members a small monthly, annually or per session. Some Sheds make and sell items such as bird tables, nesting boxes, planters at local events.

## Applying for grant funds

To stand the best chance of securing funds it is essential to do your research. Find out about the funders' objectives, application deadlines, eligibility criteria, who they might have previously funded, and their application form process.

### The type of information a funder will require is:

- ✓ Introduction to your organisation including your aims and objectives, charity number/ legal status, years in operation and how many members you have.
- ✓ A detailed description of what the money will be used for, including a statement about what the funds will address and what might happen if you didn't get the funds, and who the beneficiaries are.
- ✓ How you will evaluate the effectiveness of the funds and if the need has been met. This can be done by keeping records of the number of members who have benefited, recording stories/testimonies and surveys.
- ✓ Cost breakdown for the project and how the money will be allocated i.e. equipment, contractors, materials etc.
- ✓ How you will financially sustain the shed long-term. Funders want to see you will not be financially reliant on grant funding to ensure the project longevity and sustainability. Include any information about funds you already have secured.
- ✓ Support documents such as letters of support from the community, testimonials, and proof of awards received.



## Useful stats for funding applications

76  
%



76% of suicides in the UK are Men

(source ONS)

36 %



Only 36% of all NHS referrals for psychological therapies are for men. Men are less likely to seek help for their mental health.

52% of men would be concerned about taking time off work

52%



46 %



46% of men would be embarrassed or ashamed to tell their employer. (Men's Health Forum)

40%










40% of men have never spoken to anyone about their mental health.

**Suicide is the leading cause of death for men under the age of 50 in the UK. (Calm Zone)**

## Donations / Fundraising

Men's Sheds are an integral part of the community, doing great work helping combat loneliness, isolation and improving wellbeing, many people and/or businesses may be willing to help. Funds and materials can be raised in many ways through donations:



-  **Fundraising events in the community such as coffee mornings, quizzes, sponsored events such a running or cycling**
-  **Online donations page**
-  **Token funding with local supermarkets.**
-  **Stalls at community events such as fairs, take a donations box or contactless payment system.**
-  **Local suppliers may be willing to donate materials such as timber, paint, tools.**
-  **Use leaflets and social media to advertise for tool donations.**
-  **Contact local media to promote activities and request donations. Use your network of fellow Men's Sheds or community groups to see what fundraising they are doing and get some inspiration.**



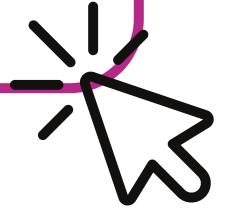
Income generating activities may not be a key goal of your Shed, however, it can be a quick and easy option for raising funds:

- ✔ **Membership fees, monthly, or annually. Or a fee per session to cover expenses such as tea/coffee.**
- ✔ **Making items to sell by donation at local events or online (e.g. fairs, markets, Gumtree, Facebook marketplace)**
- ✔ **Producing or restoring items for your local community (e.g. planters or benches for schools).**
- ✔ **Renting space in your Shed to other community groups**
- ✔ **Providing training, mentoring or apprenticeship schemes (seek advice from your local voluntary support service). If you are a charity, you can trade if the activity is in the pursuit of the primary purpose or aims of your organisation (for example selling products made by Shedders), and profit is reinvested back into the organisation. In addition to generating money, it can also be rewarding to see that the outputs of your work are wanted by your community. As most Sheds are not VAT registered, products could be made for a suggested donation, rather than a 'sale'.**



*It can be a quick and easy option for raising funds*

Something to consider is becoming a charitable status and the advantages of different types. Click [here](#) to find out what charity status is right for you.



### Charity and the benefits of this can include:

- ✓ **Public recognition and trust**
- ✓ **The locking of assets for charitable/ social use.**
- ✓ **Tax benefits and reduced rates.**
- ✓ **Being looked on more favourably by funders/ more access to funding.**

There are legal obligations that come with being a charity, for example having a set of charity trustees, providing annual financial reports to charity regulators, and creating a constitution. You will also need to decide what legal form your charity will take. There tends to be four main types of charity structure, however this can differ across the UK and Ireland:

- 1** A charitable incorporated organisation (CIO) - Trustees have limited or no liability for charity debts or liabilities. All actions are taken under the charity name as a single entity. An advantage of becoming a CIO is having independent examiners report rather than a full audit, which is a quicker and cheaper option.
- 2** A charitable company (limited by guarantee) - an incorporated charity that also trades, employs staff, regularly enters contracts etc.
- 3** An unincorporated charitable association - Trustees do have liability for charity debts or liabilities. You can't employ staff or own premises.
- 4** A charitable trust - a group of people (i.e. trustees) who manage assets such as money, land, or buildings under a governing document.

For information on charity structures and how to become a charity please visit your national charity regulator webpages listed in the resources section at the back of the toolkit. You can also contact your national Men's Sheds Association for advice or speak to other Men's Sheds who have been through this process. Click [here](#) to access a map of Men's Sheds.



## Creating a business plan

While this may seem a little strange for a voluntary organisation, a business plan can be important to plan, and to be accountable to your members, funders, and the public. It will help you to clarify your aims and objectives, identify potential risks and issues, set out goals and strategies and measure your progress. A business plan is also required if you wish to become a charity, and you will likely be asked for a business plan from funders.

### A typical business plan will include:

- 1** A history or background to your shed?
- 2** What future activities are planned and how you will achieve this?
- 3** How will you source funding and become financially sustainable?
- 4** How you will assess/deal with potential risks to your Shed?
- 5** How will you monitor budgets and spending?

It is likely that plans might change as new opportunities or unexpected challenges arise. Similarly, different funders might ask different questions. Therefore, it might not be appropriate to produce a single formal document, but rather to regularly evaluate where your Shed is and what its plans are. The key is to be as honest as possible and not to set unachievable goals. For more information about how to create a business plan, please visit the national voluntary organisation support webpages listed in the resources section at the back of the toolkit. You can also contact your national Men's Sheds Association for templates and examples of previous Shed business plans.

## Getting a bank account

If you are a constituted group generating funds through memberships or donations you will require a bank account in the Shed's name. Accounts are available from most banks for small voluntary organisations/charities, so contact your bank to see what they offer. You will need to provide proof of your voluntary or charity status and that you are not a private business, this could be your constitution or charity number.

