



HOW TO ATTRACT YOUNGER MEN INTO MEN'S SHEDS



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Background

Research has shown that men are more susceptible to heart disease, cancers, poor mental health and have a lower life expectancy than women. In particular, men from areas of disadvantage are more likely to take part in excessive drug and alcohol use, more prone to obesity, and less likely to engage in physical activity. Previous research has shown that Men's Sheds directly encourage positive health behaviours, support physical and mental health, tackle social isolation and increase self-esteem. However, the majority of this research is based on men over 65 years.



The **WIGWAM-S project** (Wellbeing in disadvantaged Working Age Men-Sheds) explored how Men's Sheds (Sheds) might impact on the health and wellbeing of working age men in areas of disadvantage and

whether the Sheds model may meet their wants and needs. 'Working age' or 'younger' men were defined as men between the ages of 16-65, and included, for example, those who are employed, unemployed, facing long term illness or disability.



Activities that appeal to younger men include music rooms, model making, bike repair and 3D printers.

What did we do?

1. We conducted a scoping review of evidence that already exists on the impacts of male orientated community interventions on the health and wellbeing of working age disadvantaged men.
2. We held a series of pop up 'cafes' with 117 men across Forth Valley and Ayrshire (Shedders and non-Shedders) to understand:
 - *What are the needs and wants of working-age men living in these communities?*
 - *What currently works, why and for whom for Sheds in these communities?*
3. We held an online sharing and learning event with individuals supporting men's health (e.g. representatives from charities, NHS, councils, voluntary groups).

What did the Shedders say?

What already works well in Men's Sheds for working age attendees;

Teaching and peer learning:

learning about machinery and how to make and fix things, opportunities to share intergenerational skills and knowledge, learning life skills

Giving men confidence:

including the confidence to get out of the house to socialise and meet new people, to open up about their struggles and to try new things

Offering support from other men:

especially for health and personal issues such as mental wellbeing, unemployment, and bereavement

Providing unemployed men a sense of purpose/ routine:

including somewhere they feel valued, somewhere to be and a routine that mimics employment

Sheds being accessible to men on a low-income:

including being free to use or a very low cost and being in a central location and easy to get to

Sheds being inclusive and welcoming of men who are facing/ have faced life challenges:

including those who may have had addiction issues, those with learning disabilities, and those who face mental health challenges

Providing activities that appeal to younger men:

in particular, men found music rooms, model making, bike repair and 3D printers to be appealing.

'THE YOUNGER GENERATION... THEY'RE NOT USED TO MEETING PEOPLE FACE TO FACE, AND IT'S MUCH MORE DIFFICULT FOR THEM TO COME ALONG TO SOMEWHERE LIKE THIS'

'IT'S A SENSE OF PURPOSE. IT'S SOMEWHERE TO GO TO DO SOMETHING WORTHWHILE... THE THREE DAYS OF THE WEEK THAT I'M IN THE SHED, I'M UP AND AROUND, AND I'M GOING OUT, I'M GETTING DRESSED'

'THE SKILLS ARE NOT NECESSARILY WORKING SKILLS. THEY'RE LIVING SKILLS...HOW TO GO INTO A SHOP...HOW TO TAKE PART IN A CONVERSATION SENSIBLY... IT'S PEER LEARNING'



What did the non-Shedders say?

What do non-shedders think about Men's Sheds;

What is appealing:

- ▶ Fixing and mending things
- ▶ Opportunities to be creative and artistic
- ▶ Intergenerational activity and chances to learn from each other
- ▶ Helping the environment through upcycling and saving things from landfill.

What is not appealing:

- ▶ That Sheds appear to be just for older men
- ▶ Sheds only running during the week when men are working.

What activities are working age men interested in?

- ▶ Indoor games (e.g. cards, darts, pool, table tennis)
- ▶ Food related activity (e.g. curry nights, breakfast, making food together)
- ▶ Computers and gaming (e.g. playstation games, retro gaming machines, digital design/arts)
- ▶ Football-related activity (e.g. playing football, watching football, talking about football)
- ▶ Indoor physical activity (e.g. fitness classes, body building, swimming, gym)
- ▶ Outdoor activity (e.g. walking, fishing, rock climbing, kayaking)
- ▶ Bikes/ cycling (e.g. group cycling, bike repair)
- ▶ Support and groups for Dads
- ▶ Group dog walking
- ▶ Music (e.g. DJ-ing, music production, guitars)

What is important to working age men when engaging in groups and activities?

- ▶ Being able to help others and engage in problem solving
- ▶ Activities being inclusive to all men (e.g. those with physical or learning disabilities, those in recovery from addiction)
- ▶ Having an outlet to chat about health and life issues or an escape from them
- ▶ Opportunities for intergenerational learning and peer support
- ▶ Being able to take ownership and have a voice when often they don't have one
- ▶ Activities being fun, having a laugh and sharing banter
- ▶ Having activities that provide an alternative to the pub (e.g. activity on a Friday or Saturday night).

Why aren't working age men engaging with groups and activities in their community?

- ▶ Men are working during the week, or working shift patterns that are unpredictable.
- ▶ Money/ cost (e.g. for fees or transport)
- ▶ Having to look after children/ prioritising their kids attending groups and activities
- ▶ Transport issues (e.g. irregular services, groups being far away)
- ▶ Groups and activities aren't well advertised in the places that men would see
- ▶ Ongoing mental health challenges (e.g. anxiety and depression that prevents them leaving the house)
- ▶ Men having the confidence to attend a group or admit they need help and/or support.

'YOUNG PEOPLE CAN FEED INTO THE OLDER GUYS...I DO THINK THAT YOUNG MEN THEY MIGHT NOT HAVE POSITIVE ROLE MODELS IN THEIR LIVES'

'IF YOU CAN CREATE DIVERSE ACTIVITY TO STOP PEOPLE GETTING DRUNK, WE SHOULD DO IT SEVEN DAYS A WEEK'

'THERE'S GUYS THAT ARE MY AGE THAT ARE STILL GAMING... SO THEY MIGHT LIKE TO PLAY WITH SOMEBODY SAT NEXT TO THEM RATHER THAN ONLINE'

'MEN ARE JUGGLING...FAMILIES ABSORB TIME...MEN CAN BE SEEN AS SELFISH IF THEY SPEND MONEY ON THEMSELVES... THERE'S A GUILT IN BEING A HUSBAND AND A PARTNER''

'YOU NEED TO HAVE AN INTEREST AND A CURIOSITY TO INITIALLY GO OVER THAT HURDLE. I'VE LOOKED AT A MAN'S CLUB SO MANY TIMES, BUT I'VE NEVER TOOK A STEP TO GO'


'I'M AT COLLEGE DURING THE WEEK...SO IF YOU DO IT ON A WEEKEND AT A SET TIME YOU MIGHT FIND PEOPLE WOULD DROP IN'

'LOTS AND LOTS OF MEN HAVE DOGS... AND A LOT OF MEN HAVE USED DOGS TO OVERCOME THE SOCIAL BIT BECAUSE THEY CAN TAKE IT ON WALKS ALL AROUND ABOUT THE COMMUNITY'

'BLOKES LIKE DOING THINGS LIKE THAT... THEY LIKE TO TAKE THINGS TO BITS AND TRY AND PUT THEM BACK TOGETHER'

If you are interested in attracting working age men into your Shed, here are a few key takeaways:

- ▶ Men need to be reached where they are, or they may not find you. Try using social media pages, putting up posters in job centres, or even in local pubs
- ▶ Men might perceive that Sheds are just for older men, and that they only offer woodwork. It's about letting men know that a Shed can be whatever local men want it to be
- ▶ You might think you know what local working age men want, but have you actually asked them? You might be surprised!
- ▶ There is a lot of value in intergenerational learning, but it isn't one way- think about what you might learn from younger men and what value they can bring to your Shed, rather than just thinking about what you can offer them
- ▶ Always consider the barriers that working age men are facing, for example juggling work and childcare, or men lacking confidence in their abilities, and think of innovative ways address these.



'MEN MIGHT PERCEIVE THAT SHEDS ARE JUST FOR OLDER MEN, AND THAT THEY ONLY OFFER WOODWORK. IT'S ABOUT LETTING MEN KNOW THAT A SHED CAN BE WHATEVER LOCAL MEN WANT IT TO BE.'

Contact details

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