



# Supporting men's health and wellbeing through Scottish Men's Sheds

2021 MANIFESTO FROM THE SCOTTISH MEN'S SHEDS ASSOCIATION



## The Scottish Men's Sheds Movement Continues to Grow...



**10,000+**  
MEMBERS



**190+**  
MEN'S SHEDS



**2,489**

SMSA  
MEMBERS



**133**

SMSA MEMBER  
SHEDS



**57**

IN  
DEVELOPMENT



**32**

LOCAL  
AUTHORITY  
AREAS





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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### *'A Men's Shed for every community in Scotland'*

This is more than just a manifesto. The SMSA does not feel that its plans are over ambitious but rather, they are SMART plans —specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely—to truly transform and commit to a better future for men's health and wellbeing in Scotland.

SMSA's vision is that every man in Scotland will, one day, have access to—and the opportunity to attend—their local Men's Shed if they choose to do so. To underpin the ongoing creation of a health by stealth and voluntary social wellbeing pathway for men requires strategic funding and support from several key funders and partners to make this come to fruition.

The Association is trailblazing this Movement to encourage a social change, raise awareness of the wealth of diverse benefits of Men's Sheds and ultimately secure its future growth and the national investment it rightly deserves.

Sheds provide a new opportunity for men's social and wellbeing needs whether that is escape from a present situation, calm, relaxation and respite and/or fun and friendship and/or to learn new skills, mentor or be mentored through kindness and healthy camaraderie.

SMSA supports Sheds to help create these environments in every locality in Scotland for a better quality of life for Scottish men, their families, circle of friends and communities. SMSA promotes the Movement to all sectors and the public across Scotland which results in the unprecedented growth of the grassroots movement in the charity sector.

The Scottish Men's Sheds Movement and its members are: transforming disused and vandalised buildings and

improving surrounding areas across Scotland; offering services to the community (e.g. repair services, allotments/shared gardens/community spaces); promoting health campaigns (e.g. cancer, healthy living); reducing carbon footprint through the recycle, reuse, reclaim and repair ethos; generating income through the selling of wares (bird houses, mud kitchens, planters, etc); sustaining traditional skills (woodturning, carving etc); offering training courses to educate/upskill members; and creating intergenerational bonds and relationships 'shoulder to shoulder'.

The time is now right – when Sheds will be needed more than ever in COVID-19 recovery – to expand the SMSA and its support mechanism in line with the growth of the Movement to support Sheds across Scotland in the long-term.

SMSA is urging the next Scottish Government and all politicians, as well as other funders, to heavily invest in us and achieve great returns fiscally and socially. The recommended five actions (on page 8), our unwavering commitment—over the past seven years—to play our part in achieving a wellbeing economy backed up by Scottish peer-reviewed and internationally-published research data clearly shows we are leaders in our field delivering measurable impacts and significant sustainable outcomes.

We now need your support to achieve this next three year growth phase for the Movement. Please join us and become part of the next chapter in this incredible journey and success story, we can't do it without you!

**SMSA pledges to continue making a real difference by empowering thousands of men (our sons, brothers, fathers, uncles and grandfathers) and their communities - over the coming years - to play their part in a system change towards a wellbeing economy.**



## INTRODUCTION

The [Scottish Men's Sheds Association](#) (SMSA) is spearheading the Men's Sheds Movement in Scotland. SMSA exists to inspire and support men over the age of 18 with time on their hands to become engaged, in a healthy way, by voluntarily creating—or attending—their own Men's Sheds in their local communities across Scotland.

SMSA's sole focus is to grow the Movement in Scotland and promote its life-changing impact and encourage more men to access their local Men's Shed to connect with their communities and improve their health and wellbeing. The membership organisation, founded in 2014, has created a fit for purpose framework, successful support pathway and two-tiered engagement strategy (through a national Shed and free Individual Membership scheme) for a new male health by stealth Movement to become an independent thriving success.

Over the years, SMSA has grown to provide a wealth of tailored development tools, support, guidance and advice (in accordance with Scottish law) for start-up and established Sheds to make them fit for purpose and sustainable including Shed-specific OSCR-approved constitutions; Community Asset Transfers; funding; health and safety procedures; and more recently, COVID-19 guidance.

In addition to its free support and advice, SMSA has developed a range of benefits for its Shed Members including discounted insurance, accounts package, electricity, tools and training. SMSA is the voice of the Movement and represents the sector in local areas through regional Shed meetings but also nationally at events and by sitting on cross-sector strategic groups.

A victim of its own success, the SMSA—as it stands today with a team of three—simply cannot continue to meet the needs of the exponential growth of the Movement. SMSA is the only dedicated organisation providing tailored support in the communities where Men's Sheds

## WHAT IS A MEN'S SHED?

A Men's Shed is a shared space where men – from all walks of life - attend voluntarily to work on practical projects or simply find camaraderie, conversation and friendship. Men's Sheds help to address social isolation and loneliness, regenerate and build sustainable communities and improve men's health and wellbeing.

Men's Sheds are changing people's lives – not just the men but also their families, friends and communities. Sheds have created a new preventative male health and wellbeing model as well as an avenue for effective engagement with a hard-to-reach group...men. Sheds reduce social isolation, loneliness, depression/anxiety and can increase confidence and the sense of purpose/belonging in an inclusive and supportive male environment.

This unprecedented support impacts positively on thousands of people's lives across Scotland by helping them become active citizens in their communities. This unique non-competitive and all-inclusive male socialisation model originated in Australia and is thriving in 12 countries. It uses purposefulness and kindness as its main drivers which impacts positively on all participants. It is a win-win situation for the men, the Shed, their family and friends, the community as a whole and aligns with Scotland's national wellbeing indicators.

are being set up across Scotland from the initial seed idea to the developmental pathway and to supporting established Sheds with mediation and sustainability challenges.

**This manifesto aims to put measures in place to support this thriving national, sustainable and voluntary-led male health movement and its 'bigger picture'.**



## THE MEN'S SHEDS MOVEMENT IN SCOTLAND

The Scottish Men's Sheds Movement began in 2009 and from the launch of the first Shed in 2013 (Westhill Men's Shed, Aberdeenshire), there has been domino-effect success across the nation resulting in 188 known open and developing Sheds to date, engaging over 10,000 men, and they are continuing to grow at a rapid rate (even during the pandemic).

Men can find it very difficult to talk about their feelings—especially regarding their health and loneliness. By offering a place where men can put the world to rights and offload their troubles amongst peers—without alcohol or drugs involved—creates a happy, healthy, inclusive, social environment that ultimately improves their quality of life both in and out of the Shed.

Men's Sheds are about creating healthy socialisation environments which support the masculine 'shoulder to shoulder' communication and engagement with purpose psychology. As Sheds are not prescriptive in their activities, each individual Shed is reactive to their own members' needs and are therefore attractive and sustainable in the long-term attracting men voluntarily to experience peer to peer kindness and supportive new friendships.

SMSA is here to support the future of Scotland's Men's Sheds by providing robust advice, relevant information, inspiring strategies, good practice models and guidance for a successful and sustainable grassroots Movement.

**It is our vision that every man in Scotland will, one day, have access to—and the opportunity to attend—their local Men's Shed if they choose to do so.**

## FACTS AND FIGURES

- Sheds for Sustainable Development Project, Glasgow Caledonian University: Studies show that although men are more likely to face more illness than women, they are also less likely to use formal healthcare. Men's Sheds have been identified as a potential way for men to access support and take part in positive health behaviours in an informal 'male friendly' environment
- Men's Health Forum:
  - Suicide amongst men is rising in Scotland (78% of suicides are by men) and Scotland has the highest suicide rate in the UK
  - Men are nearly three times more likely than women to become alcohol dependent (8.7% of men are alcohol dependent compared to 3.3% of women—Health and Social Care Information Centre)

## RESEARCH

- SMSA's Social Return on Investment research based on Westhill Men's Shed showed that for every £1 invested in Sheds there was a social capital return of £9.34 in terms of health and social care and community learning outcomes
- Glasgow Caledonian University's Three-Year 'Sheds for Sustainable Development Project' (Funded by The National Lottery Community Fund—£150,000)
  - Briefing: Sustainable development of Sheds
  - Briefing: The health and wellbeing impacts of Sheds
  - Briefing: Sheds as an alternative route for male health engagement
- Publication: Men's Sheds: a conceptual exploration of the causal pathways for health and wellbeing—Health & Social Care in the Community
- Publication: Men's Sheds in Scotland the potential for improving the health of men—Journal of Public Health Policy
- Publication: Men's Sheds as an alternative healthcare route? A qualitative study of the impact of Men's Sheds on user's health improvement behaviours—Bio-Medical Central (BMC) Public Health



## THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MEN'S SHEDS

When the doors of our Men's Sheds were temporarily closed on the first lockdown announcement in March 2020, SMSA and Scottish Shedders had to adapt quickly to stay connected in new ways to prevent men feeling isolated in their communities during these unprecedented times.

Scottish Shedders rose to the challenge and together innovatively created new pathways to social connectivity amongst the Men's Sheds Movement in Scotland. The strong connections and relationships built between these men needed to be retained throughout the pandemic and as we adapted to a new normal.

The response from the Shedding community has been truly incredible as they supported each other online to chat, mentor, learn and stay connected through phone calls, door knocking, visits in gardens, buddy systems and even virtual quiz nights!

Some Sheds provided vital support in their local communities from delivering shopping and prescriptions to vulnerable and isolated people to creating and making thousands of units of personal protective equipment for frontline health workers from the safety of their homes and sheds.

Sheds stepped up to the challenge to reach non-tech-savvy Shedders and members of the community by becoming digital champions, repurposing old laptops and supporting people who did not have the confidence, equipment or connectivity to get online. Some Sheds also offered safe ways to meet outdoors in small physically-distanced groups to exercise, socialise and work together on gardening initiatives, e-bike projects, maintenance work and so on.

SMSA created COVID-19 specific guidance designed to support the safe re-opening of Men's Sheds across Scotland. A consultation of the guidance took place with its member Sheds and partner organisations to better inform Sheds with their individual decision-making process for reopening—when the time is right for them—to ensure the safety of the Shedders and their communities.

As part of the [Scottish Government's winter package funding to tackle social isolation and loneliness](#), the SMSA secured vital funds to support Men's Sheds in crisis in Scotland. Due to Shed closures and being unable to generate income through their usual fundraising activities, many Sheds are struggling with financial pressures and/or even facing closure. The £30,000 emergency fund is assisting Sheds, most severely affected by the pandemic, to pay for core running costs to ensure they are still here to support Shedders when they are able to safely open their doors once again.

The Association is also a world-leader in Men's Sheds initiatives following a successful trial with ten Men's Sheds as part of its COVID-19 recovery strategy. The SMSA received £67,000 from its partnerships with the Scottish Community Alliance and the Scottish Government to manage and co-ordinate the roll out of the [Pathfindr Safe Distancing Assistant device](#) to every Shed across Scotland. The simple but highly effective device, worn around the neck or clipped on to a belt, emits a short audible or vibrating alert when another wearer is detected within two metres, advising both wearers to check and increase their distance. This can bring back confidence to re-engage again socially in a non-confrontational way thereby relieving stress and anxiety.

**Post COVID-19, and the recovery years ahead, Men's Sheds are to be more important as safe havens than ever before...**



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

The Scottish Men's Sheds Association is launching its first-ever manifesto, ahead of the Scottish Parliament Elections 2021, to call upon politicians, invested groups and the general public as a whole to support Men's Sheds across Scotland and fully recognise the wealth of health and wellbeing benefits for men.

This manifesto sets out and recommends **FIVE ACTIONS** to improve the support available to men over the age of 18 in Scotland by having access to and attending a Men's Shed in their local community.

### 1. Investment to lead change

The 'bigger long-term picture' is reliant on sustaining the core staff team of the SMSA by securing stable long-term funding to enable the Association to continue its unique support in maintaining and co-ordinating a thriving grassroots Men's Sheds Movement in Scotland.

SMSA needs the support to be at the forefront of improving men's health and wellbeing through the benefits of Men's Sheds and strengthen the unified voice of 'Shedders' across Scotland to ensure they are heard and their needs are met. SMSA calls on the Scottish Government to take urgent action to support the SMSA and Men's Sheds in Scotland, in post-COVID-19 recovery and the future, to reap the positive results like the Australian (\$3.5 million per annum) and Irish (€500,000 per annum) governments are doing for our equivalent national Men's Sheds Associations.

### 2. Improved localised support for the Shed Network

To meet local need, SMSA has identified the need for the provision of seven Development Officers across Scotland

to provide bespoke strategies. This three-year initiative will embed enough grassroots development, localised partnership building and mentoring (through an SMSA Shed Ambassador programme) to create a model of self-sustainability and good governance across the national Shed network.

### 3. The creation of a start-up and development fund for Sheds

To provide a fund, co-ordinated and managed by the SMSA, for new and existing Sheds to access start-up and/or development monies (not running costs) for their group in communities across Scotland. This strategy of support continues to harvest good results over the past eight years as part of the Australian Mens' Sheds development plan.

### 4. A focused national awareness campaign

A focused promotion of the array of benefits of Men's Sheds and the recent Scottish research findings to health professionals and agencies (who can also social prescribe or community link) highlighting the value of Men's Sheds as community-based organisations that can create practical and social activities that encourage positive health behaviours and outcomes.

### 5. Improve reach to the Armed Forces and Veterans community and Blue Light services

To reach the Armed Forces and Veterans community and Blue Light services (police, fire services, emergency responders) by working in co-production with the relevant charities, agencies, community groups, Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs) and the Ministry of Defence to provide integrated support through the promotion of the 'choice' to access the Men's Shed as an active transition model back into citizenship.

**CHOOSE A PLACE TO CALL YOUR OWN, CHOOSE HAVING A LAUGH, CHOOSE FRIENDSHIP, CHOOSE SOCIALISING, CHOOSE HELP, CHOOSE QUALITY, CHOOSE SHEDS**

**A HAPPY CHOICE**

**OPENING**



**BEING SHEDS**

- Inspiring
- We already Scotland are involved living healthy lives.
- Community for camar work together to their live
- FIND OUT**
- 01334**
- info@scottishm...**
- www.scottishm...**

## FEEDBACK ON SMSA SUPPORT

### Aberchirder & District Men's Shed

"In 2016, our village librarian saw an article regarding the rise of the Men's Shed Movement in Scotland and contacted the SMSA. Without that first contact, I strongly believe that our Shed would not exist. Being Scotland-specific, Jason and his team had the knowledge and contacts to make things happen."

### Garnock Valley Men's Shed

"I wish to thank the SMSA for its assistance in helping to establish our Shed. From the outset, we were invited to a Shed Training Day where the process for establishing a successful Shed and the role of Trustees was clearly explained. As SMSA Shed Members, we are able to access the online library from which we receive the relevant documentation (constitution, health and safety policy etc) required to set up and run our Shed. Perhaps the greatest benefit is having a well-informed friendly voice at the end of a telephone when we need advice."

### Hawick Men's Shed

"Our Shed joined the SMSA in 2016 and as a result, have enjoyed advantageous rates for insurance and general running costs; access to a wealth of contacts with other Sheds in the Borders and beyond; assistance with the establishment and promotion of Borders Shedfest; receipt of The Scottish Shedder newsletter advising us of activities in other Scottish Sheds and offering the chance of free promotion of our activities; and access to the SMSA website."

### Kinross and District Men's Shed

"The SMSA has been a wonderful support and a great centre of information and advice. Without the SMSA, it is safe to say, we and some other local Sheds would not exist without their help steering us in the right direction—through the obstacles and bureaucracy that is thrown at you especially when starting something new—and enabling us to become self-sufficient."

### Lockerbie Men's Shed

"We have found the SMSA to be an extremely helpful partner organisation—both in starting up the Shed and in the years following—we simply would not be running without them. The online resources have been invaluable. Having a national body promoting Shedding and helping to publicise the activities of other Sheds, through The Scottish Shedder newsletter, is a good way of getting positive support and affirmation. The newsletter has also inspired members to try activities they've seen other Sheds getting involved with. Knowing that SMSA is there, with support tailored to helping run a Shed in Scotland has been a great help. Sometimes, we just need a friendly, knowledgeable voice to help keep us on the right track when dealing with councils, government bodies, funders etc."

### The Men Of Leith Men's Shed

"The SMSA delivered a template constitution which we used successfully to gain charitable status—saving us considerable time and effort."

### Orkney Men's Shed

"Our original committee were new to the Movement and we are very grateful for the support and encouragement we received from SMSA. As members, we are able to access their comprehensive library of paperwork, procedures and resources, which is a vital part of any Shed and can be burdensome. This library made our set up much easier."

### Penicuik & District Men's Shed

"When trying to set up a Shed in my area, I contacted Jason who from the outset has been totally supportive in assisting me to set up the local Shed and still continues to offer support whilst building up the network."

### Roslin Men's Shed

"We value the support of SMSA who are a phone call or email away and The Scottish Shedder newsletter and online resources are excellent. The insurance discounts are an area we also benefit from."



### Fred Brown, Garnock Valley Men's Shed

"I had been in the building game all my life before losing the sight in one eye in an accident. It felt like the end of my world. I sat at home – kept myself to myself – and got seriously down with not being able to do what I did before. I kept being told to go along to the Men's Shed by friends and the job centre. The Men's Sheds and the introduction of model building gives these men the opportunity to experience the kind of banter and camaraderie that they are used to and hopefully also result in them enjoying both a practical and sociable new hobby. The biggest buzz I get is seeing the progress made by these men. This mentoring is changing lives and I am just being me!"

### Derek McLaren Dow, Broughty Ferry Men's Shed

"The Shed has changed my life. I didn't retire at 65, but continued as I felt I could go on, however ill health hit and I went from the daily work routine to being confined to the house for the next 12 months. My good lady encouraged me to find out about Men's Sheds and the rest is history. It has been my saviour and given me a purpose. So, look for a Shed in your local area and pop in and have a chat – it could change your life."

### Stewart McLean, Roslin Men's Shed

"Men's Sheds get people out of the house—it is a win-win situation for me, the Shed and the community. Going along to the Shed gave me a new outlook on life. Sheds have such a positive impact on men. Here, I am making friends for life, keeping active, passing on my skills to others and learning new ones at the same time. I would urge other men to pop along and check out their local Shed."

### Stuart Paton, Garnock Valley Men's Shed

"I am very open about the fact that I have made several attempts to end my life. The Shed and my newfound Shredder friends have definitely saved my life without a doubt. I have found real, meaningful friendship and these men don't realise how much they have done for me. I can't say enough good things about the Shed."

### Richard Potts, Paisley Men's Shed

"The Shed has opened up new horizons for me. I am full of civic pride and joining has allowed me to share my passion, skills and knowledge with a great bunch of guys in my community and be a catalyst for change. It is an absolute joy to be a part of this Movement."

### Bruce Newlands, The Inverclyde Shed

"I see the physical and mental health benefits of Sheds and for me it is about making things, the camaraderie, the banter and seeing other guys achieving things and the pride that they feel. I believe that Sheds are places that can accommodate many different perspectives and experiences and we should celebrate this."

### Jon Searle, Wee County Men's Shed

"For me, my new idyllic leisure-filled low-pressure life in retirement was not so idyllic. Where was the excitement, the responsibilities, the challenges that I was used to? Yes, I now had the time to work on all those projects I had put off for so long and complete those I had started and not finished, but... I was bored. So, if you feel as I did before I joined my local Shed then why not come along and find out more?"

### Eric Box, St Andrews Men's Shed

"I was persuaded to 'try' the Shed and after my first visit, I was hooked. Initially, I was put to work helping to make dozens of wood planters, some of which are now on display at Leuchars Railway Station. However, I quickly gravitated to the wood lathes. I had some experience using them, but we are lucky to have some excellent wood turners in our Shed and they were only too happy to teach me the skills required to turn out some decent pieces. I progressed from making wooden apples and pears, to turning out small Christmas trees and then bowls. I was in the middle of turning a bowl made from laminated plywood boards stuck together, when bang, we were in COVID-19 lockdown! My bowl is still in place in the lathe chuck and I look forward to finishing it one day soon."

### Keith Johnston, Moffat & District Men's Shed

"Since our inception, our Shed has undertaken many tasks in the community through which we have earned great respect and appreciation in the process—and became a valued local resource. One of our highlights was being able to help some of our local children, who would otherwise have missed out at Christmas, by supplying them with gifts. Also, at the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, we were able to supply £500 worth of emergency food to be distributed within our community—and we are immensely proud of our Shredders for providing this type of support in a time of great need."

### Nick Pilbeam, Westhill Men's Shed

"First and foremost, we are here for our Shredders. One of our much-loved members, Bob Owen, passed away at the age of 94 and we will always remember what he said when asked to reflect on how the Shed, and his fellow Shredders, had impacted on him. Bob shared that the Shed not only gave him a new lease of life following the death of his wife - who had encouraged him to go to the Shed - but getting in that workshop took away all his aches and pains. When you hear feedback like this, it makes everything that we are doing worthwhile."

# Meet the team behind the SMSA



**David Gardner**  
CHAIR



**Jon Searle**  
TREASURER



**Wilson George**  
SECRETARY



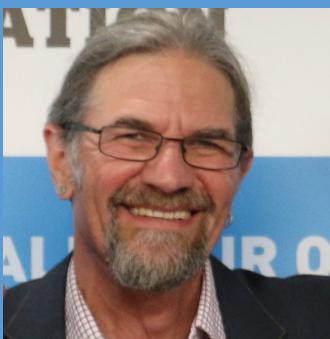
**Charlie Miller**  
TRUSTEE



**Dick Monaghan**  
TRUSTEE



**Archie Peebles**  
TRUSTEE



**Jason Schroeder**  
EXECUTIVE OFFICER



**Michelle Wibrew**  
COMMUNICATIONS  
& PR OFFICER



**Sue Salter**  
ADMINISTRATOR



**Sir Harry Burns**  
PATRON

**ARE YOU PASSIONATE ABOUT IMPROVING MEN'S HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN SCOTLAND? DO YOU SUPPORT THE SCOTTISH MEN'S SHEDS MOVEMENT?**

**ALL INDIVIDUALS (MEN & WOMEN—AGED 18+)  
CAN JOIN THE SMSA FOR FREE AT:  
[WWW.SCOTTISHMSA.ORG.UK/JOIN-SMSA](http://WWW.SCOTTISHMSA.ORG.UK/JOIN-SMSA)**



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**SMSA is registered as a Scottish Charity, SC045139**

