



When Men's Sheds thrive,  
they change lives.  
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## General information about Cowes Men's Shed

We are members of the UKMSA (UK Men's Sheds Association) and our Shed has the longest opening hours of any on the Isle of Wight; Monday to Friday, 10am-3pm. We offer free membership to everyone aged 18+, so that no one in our community is excluded. Despite the name, at present women currently form 30% of our total membership, which as of February 2025 stood at around 180.

The Shed opened on 14 May 2018; a community project brought to you by Storeroom2010 furniture reuse charity and supported by various local and national funders. The Shed has a carpentry workshop, which is very well equipped, an exterior horticulture area with raised beds, two glasshouses, seating area, red squirrel and bird feeding stations. Over the years we have received many kind donations of items such as chop saws, pillar drills, a table router, lathes and more for the carpentry workshop, also some shrubs and plants for the horticulture areas from our members. We have purchased larger equipment with money from various funders who were happy to help.

Men in Sheds is a great concept and there is a national organisation (UKMSA) which offers us support in making Cowes into a great Shed! The negative impact of loneliness and social isolation on mental and physical health are well documented. Surveys from Mental Health Charities have found millions of people feel lonely on a daily basis. Men typically find it more difficult to build social connections and rarely share personal concerns or worries. Sheds are about meeting like-minded people and possibly having someone to share your worries with too. Men are more likely to talk about their troubles when working shoulder to shoulder with others.

A Men's Shed (or Shed) is similar to a garden shed – a place to pursue practical interests at leisure, to practice skills and enjoy making and mending. The difference is that garden sheds and their activities are often solitary in nature, while Men's Sheds are the opposite. They're about social connections and friendship building, sharing skills and knowledge, and of course, a lot of laughter. Sheds are whatever the members (or Shedders as they are called) want them to be. Whatever the activity, the essence of a Shed is not a building, but the connections and relationships between its members.

Sheds can also mean having fun again, sharing skills and knowledge, gaining a renewed sense of purpose (often lost when people retire) and belonging. Typical activities in Sheds vary greatly, but at Cowes Men's Shed we offer carpentry and horticulture activities all year round. People can try out new activities or rediscover old hobbies, utilise their skills and share learning, enjoy the company of others and maybe become more active too. There is parking locally, and the Cowes Park and Ride Bus Stop is just a two minute walk along the road; so easy access for everyone.

Our most recent anonymous survey of Shed members provided some enlightening responses: 90% agreed or strongly agreed that attending the Shed improved their general health and wellbeing.

100% agreed or strongly agreed the Shed had made them more active and that they had made new friends at the Shed.

85% agreed or strongly agreed that attending the Shed helps reduce stress, anxiety and/or depression whilst 100% agreed or strongly agreed that their quality of life had improved.

Some of the survey feedback we've received includes:

It's such a positive amenity to the many people that choose to come along.

Since joining the Shed my mental health has improved and I've made new friends and learnt new skills.

Since losing my partner I've found a sanctuary here. I can't live alone. I missed having company.

I have really enjoyed myself at the Shed. Meeting people from all over the country makes it really interesting. It has made me try a talent I didn't know I had.

Since I have been a member of the Shed, I feel a sense of belonging to a group that will help me improve on making things.

Thank you everyone here. I love it. I have lost everything, and I miss my late wife. That was the end of everything but here has saved me. Thank you.

Predominantly, this community project addresses the issues of isolation and loneliness. It helps prevent people from succumbing to boredom or depression through lack of social interaction. For those who are unemployed it helps with confidence building. There are over 800,000 chronically lonely people in the country and their situation impacts on their health. Nationally the ageing percentage of our population who are over 65 is growing and with this growth are health and depression issues from retirees who feel they have lost their personal identity and purpose. According to the Royal College of General Practitioners, "Loneliness poses a greater risk to health than diabetes".

Of the 71,290 households currently on the Isle of Wight, one in six is a person aged 65 or over living alone. Older people, aged 70 years and over, make up 21.4% of the population compared to 13.6% nationally. We are tackling the stigma surrounding mental health and suicide by providing a space for members to feel comfortable and confident in discussing their mental health whilst being creative and productive.

The Shed Project's objective is to provide a comfortable, safe place where people who need company can go to combat feelings of isolation and depression and can meet others, socialise, practice hobbies; they can make things and drink a cuppa together! 'Shedders' are often retired, but anyone aged 18+ is welcomed. We have seen unemployed people gain confidence and be able to establish new routines and social skills, which have helped in securing paid work. Retired people have a wealth of knowledge they can pass onto the younger generation, helping them in many ways – and vice versa.

Our Shed Project is an innovative response to the many issues mentioned within this document. We find that other Men in Sheds Projects on the Island are not really fulfilling the original concept of being there for people when they need company. We are providing somewhere people can go to make a positive difference by working on projects for other charities and good causes. We are open 5 days a week, 50 weeks a year and enable people to dabble in carpentry and horticulture projects as they wish. 'Shedders' participating may want to help upcycle, repair furniture or assist with horticultural projects where items could be sold to raise funds for the Shed, but this is not compulsory, we never expect our members to take on a project not of their own choosing. Some members decide to make bird boxes and garden trugs all out of wood scraps and bits of old pallets, ready for Storeroom to sell to support the Shed, along with plants grown in the gardens and glasshouses.

We believe Storeroom2010's Cowes Men's Shed will continue to gain in popularity, providing companionship and company for people of all ages over 18, but especially to retired people who suffer from loneliness and isolation, the client target group we are advertising to attract. We target social isolation in a community where, looking forward, the ageing of the Island's population is set to continue with projections suggesting that by 2030 almost 34.5% of the population will be aged 65 or older, 17.3% aged 75 or older and 4.9% aged 85 or older. The proportion of the 85 years and over population is expected to increase from 5,378 to 7,358 people by 2030 – an increase of 36.8%.



Many of this group are lonely or bored, some suffering with mental health issues which could be helped by getting out, meeting people and participating in projects for community good causes. The UKMSA, believe older people, especially men, can benefit from the company, conversation, creativity and connections that a Shed environment can provide. It is said that Sheds are playing a particularly important part in meeting the needs of older people – particularly older men, who often feel that traditional services targeted at older people are not right for them. The creative, productive nature of Sheds provides an activity around which people can form bonds and networks, which go on to benefit them outside of the Shed itself.

Engaging people in our gardens has had a noticeably therapeutic effect. Many members do not have access to a garden and do not wish to travel to any public green spaces. Introducing them to the Shed, allowing them to enjoy the sunshine, the bird song and other wildlife is a breath of fresh air that has a positive effect on their physical and mental health. Inspiring people to participate in altruistic projects in the workshop fosters a sense of togetherness and giving something back to their community. It really is about building up the confidence and self-worth of people who have faced a series of challenges. We are helping people who may be feeling totally alone, seeing that they are happy and have what they need and beyond; letting our community know that there are people who care about their health and well-being.

