

2010 Storeroom

Tel: 01983 298679

www.storeroom.org.uk

an Island charity dedicated to helping Island people



The 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 'Sheds' on the Isle of Wight; Monday to Friday, 10am-3pm. We give free membership to everyone aged 18+, so that no one in our community is excluded; and despite the name, at present, ladies currently form 25% of our total membership, which as of 31 December 2020 stood at 91. Currently we see up to ten people attending our shed at any one time, more if we hold an event.

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, exterior horticulture area with raised beds, two polytunnels, a covered decking area with seating, a picnic bench and red squirrel and bird feeding stations. 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 monies from various funders, both local and national.

Men in Sheds is a great concept and there is a national organisation which offers us support in making Cowes into the best shed ever! 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.

Men's Sheds (or Sheds) are similar to garden sheds – 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 Sheddies 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 renewed sense of purpose (often lost when people retire) and belonging. Typical activities in Sheds vary greatly, but at Cowes Men's Shed we can 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 some company and maybe become more active too. There is free parking locally and the Cowes Park and Ride Bus Stop is just a two minute walk along the road; so there is easy access for everyone.

Some quotes from Men in Shed's beneficiaries: - *'Good to get out regularly for social interactions' / 'It makes me feel useful again' / 'Getting out meeting new people learning new skills' / 'Gives me a reason to get up in the morning' / 'Love it! Great company and fun' / 'It gives me a place to go and it helps my mental health. Someone to chat to where I never see anyone where I live. Have a goal in life' / 'Something*



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to get up for in the morning' / 'My family are pleased I have found another niche' / 'I hope the project goes from strength to strength as it will help so many lonely people like myself. Loneliness is an illness'.

Predominantly, this community project addresses the issues of isolation and loneliness. It helps people from succumbing to boredom or depression through lack of social interaction. For those who are unemployed it helps with confidence and social skills. 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 of over 65 years of age is growing and with this growth are health and depression issues from retirees who feel they have lost their personal identity and purpose. 37,886 (27.1%) of people on the Isle of Wight are older than 65. This is the 15th highest level of any local authority in England and Wales.

According to the Royal College of General Practitioners, loneliness poses a greater risk to health than diabetes.

The Shed project's objective is to provide a comfortable, safe place where people who are in need of company can go to combat feelings of isolation and depression and can meet, socialise, practice hobbies and so on. They can enjoy the company of others, talk, engage in their hobby, make things and drink tea 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 and help them in many ways – and vice versa.

Our Shed project is an innovative response to the issue, as other Men in Sheds projects on the island are not really fulfilling the original concept of being there for people when they need company and provide somewhere they can go to make a positive difference by working on projects for other charities and good causes. This is why we are open 5 days a week, 50 weeks a year and welcome members over the age of 18. We enable people to dabble in carpentry and horticulture projects as they wish. Shedders participating may wish to help upcycle, repair furniture or complete horticultural projects where items could be sold for Storeroom charity, but this is not compulsory. Currently our members do make bird boxes and garden trugs for us to sell to support the Shed; all out of wood scraps and bits of old pallets. We never expect people to take on a project not of their own choosing.

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. Currently 27% of the national population are senior citizens, the client target group we are advertising to attract. Over the next ten years, it is expected that the number of 65 to 79-year-olds will increase by nearly 17%, while the over 85s will increase by 40%. One in six households on the Isle of Wight is occupied by a person aged 65 or older, living alone.

Many of this group are lonely or bored, some suffering with mental health issues which could be helped by getting out, meeting people and taking on 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.

During the pandemic, we have continued to supply a number of community facilities in a safe and well-supervised area and have also worked on our outreach programme. The outreach programme involves regular contact with members self-isolating, shielding or simply too afraid to go out after such long periods of lockdown. This contact has been online, by phone or even through windows. We know which of our members live alone and prioritise contact with members most in need. Outreach also entails delivering essentials to members whether this be groceries, medication, meals and so on. Our project leader has



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undertaken mental health and counselling training and is able to utilise this in communication with members. We have also been able to collect members who do not feel comfortable using public transport due to Covid-19 fears and provide a safer and psychologically less-daunting means of travelling to Storeroom2010's Cowes Men's Shed. If this were not available, many members would be isolated at home and would not come to our support group environment (at a safe distance with face coverings and hand washing stations) or engage in activities. We are supporting people who are falling through the cracks and, whilst not necessarily physically ill, are certainly suffering with mental health issues as a result of Covid-19 and its fallout.

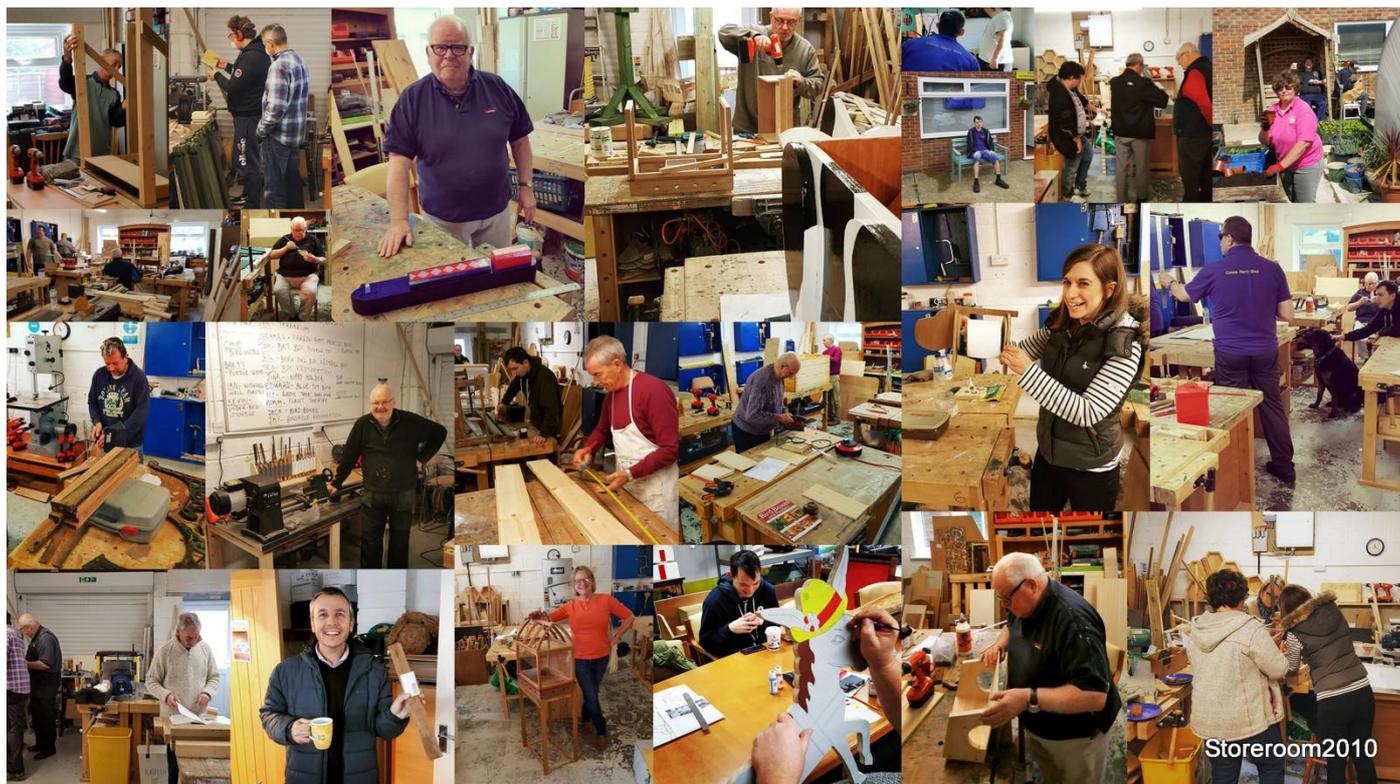
Engaging people in our gardens has had a noticeably therapeutic effect. Many members do not have access to a garden and are too frightened to travel to any public green spaces. Introducing them to the shed, allowing them to enjoy the sunshine, the bird song and other wildlife is a breath of fresh air that is having a positive effect on their physical and mental health. Inspiring people to participate in community projects in the workshop fosters a sense of togetherness and giving something back to the community. It really is about building up the confidence and self-worth of people who have faced a series of hardships during this ongoing period of Covid-19. We are stopping people from feeling totally alone, seeing that they are happy and have what they need. Letting our community know that there are people who care about them and care about their health and well-being.

Please do call me, or our project leader Adam, if you would like any further information about our work, or if you, a friend or relative wishes to visit The Cowes Men's Shed; please telephone during our opening hours on 01983 209734.

January 2021

Nick Miller
Manager / CEO
Storeroom2010

The photographs in this collage were taken prior to the pandemic



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