

Report

Report to:	Equal Opportunities Forum
Date of Meeting:	2 September 2020
Report by:	Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

Subject:	South Lanarkshire Men's Shed Programme
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ advise the Forum on the development of the Men's Sheds Programme in South Lanarkshire and the progress of the Mobile Men's Shed Project

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Forum is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the content of the report be noted.

3. Background

- 3.1. In South Lanarkshire, Seniors Together has been supporting the development of men's sheds for 6 years and, more recently through our Mobile Men's Shed Project, has been engaging isolated older men in the Programme. This has now resulted in the establishment of more static sheds taking us to a new total of 12 sheds in South Lanarkshire. Every shed has its own individual membership with an average of fifty men registered at each. One shed in Stonehouse is now going through the Asset Transfer process.
- 3.2. Seniors Together provides ongoing support to those established and developing sheds through continued engagement and guidance from the Men's Shed Development Worker and, in particular, through the peer support network. This was established by the Project to assist the men to share learning, knowledge and experience gained with others. Representatives from all of the sheds in South Lanarkshire attend the Men's Shed Network.
- 3.3. New funding received from the National Lottery Community Fund has allowed the Seniors Together Project to develop 'Shed in a Box'. This is a Tool Box full of the essentials required to set up a 'Pop Up' shed. Five Tool Boxes are available to support fledgling sheds and are loaned to any group wishing to start meeting while waiting for funding to be awarded for their premises. Once funding is received, the boxes are brought back into stock for others to use.

The 'Shed in a box' includes essential items such as:-

- ◆ hobby kits
- ◆ tea/coffee
- ◆ games
- ◆ Resource information pack
- ◆ Men's shed leaflets

These have been identified by the Men's Shed Network as key items for 'start up' to keep men interested and connected and have proved to be a successful way to start up a shed in South Lanarkshire.

- 3.4. International evidence supports the positive health benefits of attending men's sheds, while a growing bank of evidence under development in Scotland corroborates this. Seniors Together has established good working relationships with Glasgow Caledonian University which is undertaking the research project, 'Sheds for Sustainable Development'. The Project has been able to share practice and findings with them to inform their work. This partnership has facilitated engagement with lead officers at the Scottish Government who have supported further development of the Men's Shed Network and the ongoing support of events such as the South Lanarkshire Shedfest Event where over 100 older men from across South Lanarkshire attended to find out more about setting up a Men's Shed.
- 3.5. On health benefits specifically, sheds support mental health benefits of giving a sense of purpose and meaning in life; increased self-worth; increased confidence and self-esteem; decreased stress and increased happiness. On physical health, they support increased movement/decreased sedentary behaviour; decreased feelings of frailty and decreased drug and alcohol use. They also support a sense of social wellbeing, such as a sense of belonging, and decreased social isolation and loneliness.
- 3.6. In South Lanarkshire, the Men's Shed Programme has received support from local GPs and the Health and Social Care Partnership. Whilst there is no formal referral process, many of the 'shedders' have come to the project following discussions with medical practitioners e.g. GPs and or psychiatrists.

4. Impact

- 4.1. In South Lanarkshire, over 1,500 older people have been involved in awareness and engagement events around Men's Sheds and the Mobile Shed Project. Current estimates are that there are 2,250 people involved in the Mobile Shed Project, exceeding the original expectations. This has been achieved through promotional events by Seniors Together and an extensive media campaign provided by the Council's Corporate Communications Team.
- 4.2. With the Mobile Shed being located for up to 12 weeks in local communities throughout South Lanarkshire and with 60 older volunteers involved to encourage other older men to get involved, it provided an innovative way to get people out of the house and re-connected to their communities. It also encourages local men to come forward to find out more about setting up a shed. Families of men who were isolated felt confident to seek out information on their behalf.

- 4.3. The support and backing of the Mobile Shed and the Shed Network/community in South Lanarkshire has been highlighted as a critical component in the success of the Men's Sheds in South Lanarkshire. Examples include Kirkmuirhill and Biggar Sheds, who were supported by the Network. Both Sheds faced significant challenges in finding suitable permanent premises and to carry on as a functioning Men's Shed group.

The Biggar Shed lease was ending and the Network supported the group to locate and secure alternative premises. In Kirkmuirhill, although premises had been identified, lack of appropriate space was the issue. The Network supported them to come up with alternative solutions. With this support, the group purchased a converted shipping container that was craned over the fence into the back garden of Thornton Road Community Centre and is now the home of the Kirkmuirhill and Blackwood Men's Shed.

Members of both groups voiced how much of a factor the support of the Network, the promotion of Men's Sheds in their area and support from Seniors Together benefitted the members and continued to give them the confidence to continue to fight to retain their Shed.

5. Communication and Support During the Covid-19 Pandemic

- 5.1. The impact of Covid-19 caused the closure of all sheds and the decommissioning of the mobile shed, however, the 'shedders' have been supported remotely by Seniors Together to stay in touch, keep busy and stay well using social media platforms such as:-

- ◆ WhatsApp
- ◆ Zoom
- ◆ email
- ◆ Facebook

- 5.2. To ensure continued engagement and that no-one slipped back into isolation, the Men's Shed Development Worker delivered training and support sessions in the use of Social Media and facilitated weekly chats using Facebook, Zoom and WhatsApp. This meant that 'shedders' could stay in touch with and look out for each other.
- 5.3. The Seniors Together Facebook page often has a reach in excess of 1,000 people and it has proven to be an excellent way to communicate with shedders and prevent loneliness and isolation. Older men were encouraged to share photographs of their DIY projects to ensure that communication continued and that essential information was shared with them during the lockdown period.
- 5.4. The creation of a new international Shed Facebook page '[Sheds Sans Frontières](#)' (Sheds without Borders) was launched to share good practice and keep shedders connected. The Men's Shed Development Worker was invited to share the work in South Lanarkshire on this new platform to inspire others.
- 5.5. The South Lanarkshire Men's Shed Programme has enjoyed a high profile throughout the UK partly due to the innovation of the mobile shed. Organisations such as UK Shed Radio Stations have led on the promotion of the Mobile Shed Initiative in the UK with the work being admired by many local authorities up and down the country. Seniors Together has been contacted by organisations in USA, Canada, Wales and England seeking more information and advice.

6. Next Steps Summary

- 6.1. Going forward, the Sheds in South Lanarkshire will be supported by Seniors Together to come out of lockdown safely. Through established connections with the UK Men's Shed Association, a Resource Toolkit that provides the appropriate safety guidance and measures required will be distributed and monitored by the project.
- 6.2. The mobile shed will be reviewed for the purposes of coming back out of lockdown to complete the time left of the Project and a new funding search will begin to identify potential finance to secure extension of the Project beyond January 2021.
- 6.3. Work has begun to identify a long-term sustainability plan and support for the men's shed development programme in South Lanarkshire.

7 Employee Implications

- 7.1. The Men's Shed Development Worker is a part-time post located within the Seniors Together Team.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1. The Funding provided for the Mobile Shed Project concludes in January 2021.

9. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

- 9.1. There are no issues in terms of climate change, sustainability and environmental implications.

10. Other Implications

- 10.1. Taking part in this initiative will allow the Council to deliver on its commitment to improve later life and helps tackle isolation and loneliness in older people.
- 10.2. There are no implications for risk in terms of the information contained within this report.

11. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 11.1 This update does not introduce a new policy or strategy, therefore, an Equality Impact Assessment is not required, however, the Project is about ensuring equality of opportunity for older people.
- 11.2. There was no requirement to undertake any consultation in terms of the information contained in this report.

Paul Manning

Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

19 August 2020

Link(s) to Council Values/Ambitions/Objectives

- ◆ Improve later life
- ◆ Support communities by tackling disadvantage and deprivation and supporting aspiration

Previous References

- ◆ Equal Opportunities Forum – 20 September 2017
- ◆ Finance and Corporate Resources Committee – 15 November 2017

List of Background Papers

- ◆ None

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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