

# STARTING A MEN'S SHED

# TOP TIPS TO START A MEN'S SHED

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Starting a Men's Shed is a great journey. We know that each shed is unique; however, there are certain steps that every Shed has in common.

This document will guide you through these steps and provide you with a broad idea of what you need to consider when starting a Men's Shed.

## WHAT TO CONSIDER FIRST?

Your Shed's character will be a result of the skills and needs of the men involved in it.

So, in this section we will look at how to engage your community, where to get support and which things to consider at this stage.

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**"STARTING A SHED IS A LEARNING CURVE"**

FRED, CHAIR OF CARRICKFERGUS MEN'S SHED

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# PEOPLE



The core of a Shed is the people who are part of it. Before beginning your plans for your Shed, it is important that you connect with others. People, like you, who are interested in creating a space for men to get together.

## HOW TO ENGAGE WITH LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE?

- **Connect with existing groups:** Pay a visit to groups which have activities for the community in your area. Ask for a time in their slot to talk about Men's Sheds and keep an eye out for interested men for a later date.
- **Host a coffee morning:** Do you know of people who might be interested in this idea? Then host a social morning, afternoon or evening to talk about it with them. At this point, you might not be looking for big numbers, but people who are genuinely interested.

**Tip:** Your local supermarket might have a Community Champion, who organises the use of the community room. You can also ask if you can use their café space to host this meeting. Libraries might also have a suitable free space.

- **Open meeting:** This is a good way to get your message across to as many people as possible. You need a plan of where to host it and what to say, as well as how you will capture details of interested people.

**Tip:** Remember to clarify in the invitation that this get together is to talk about starting a Shed, and not to launch a new Shed. See our template flyers on our website to promote an open meeting.

After you have gathered interest, it is important to keep it going. The next stage will be to write down a general plan. This plan should include ideas on what type of activities the Shed will do, where should you meet and how.



# SHED ACTIVITIES

Not all Sheds are the same or do the same activities. The key to understand what to do is to start with what you have at hand.



- **Ask the group:** If you have several people interested in the Shed, this is a great opportunity to do a skills assessment. You will find out what type of abilities the Shedders have, and work from that to decide what activity to do.

**Tip:** You can gather this information using a membership form. Visit our website for downloadable templates you can use.

- **Visit other Sheds:** This is the best way to learn. Talking to others about their Shed's journey. We host events and meetings for Men's Sheds in Northern Ireland.

**Tip:** Visit our website to check out other Sheds in NI and what they do.

- **Map your community:** What is on offer for men in your area? Perhaps there is something missing, like a chance to grow an allotment, or have a fix hut for bikes.

**Tip:** This does not need to be an exhausting task. A good way to do this, is by asking attendees, what kind of activities they know about happening already in the village/town/city?

**Tip:** You can use our template mapping tool on our website to help you with this.

## ➤ Examples of activities:

Existing Sheds in Northern Ireland offer a wide range of different activities. See the list below for some examples to inspire you:

- Woodworking.
- Walking groups.
- Painting classes.
- Gardening.
- Furniture upcycling.
- Bicycle repairs.
- Gardening.
- Metalworking.
- Model building.

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**"THE UNIQUENESS OF YOUR SHED COMES FROM THE EXPERTISE AND SKILLS OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED IN IT"**

**JIM, NORTH BELFAST MEN'S SHED**

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# PLACES



The venue where you meet will become your Shed. Sheds can be anything, from a front room in a house, a hall, an upcycled container or even an actual shed.

If you are starting from the ground up, consider having a first venue that is free, or at a very low cost and accessible.

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**“START SMALL AND SIMPLE. WE RENTED A HALL FOR TWO HOURS EVERY OTHER WEEK AND BUILT FROM THERE AS WE GOT MORE MEN INVOLVED.”**

PORTGLENONE MEN'S SHED

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- **Accessibility and location:** Although it is not always possible to have a perfect venue, some points should be considered - that the venue is in a central area, that public transport is available, that the venue is accessible for those with disabilities or limited mobility, that there are toilet facilities and that the venue is safe.
- **Don't be shy:** The more you tell people about your idea, the more support you'll get. This is an opportunity to ask for help, so do not be shy to ask for reduced rates, peppercorn venue charges and contributions towards promotion (flyer printing, social media shout outs), refreshments and materials.

**Tip:** Contact your local council and ask if they have an upcycling process. Sometimes, they might give equipment or material to you instead of binning it. You should also consider contacting local warehouses, supermarkets and businesses who might be able to provide you with equipment or materials. Also, consider visiting charity shops, they usually have good electrical equipment at low costs.

- **Think about the activity:** Depending on the type of activity you would like to do in your Shed, you might need to consider the characteristics in your venue.

For example, if you are planning to host a manual activity, you need a shed with space, working tables, sockets for electricity and storage. If instead you are interested in discussion/talks events, you will need a venue with catering facilities and chairs.

- **Forecast cost:** The running costs of your venue need to be considered, in deciding which activity and venue. Your Shed should be welcoming and safe. Some Sheds would cover these costs from memberships, donations and selling of their crafts. Others will be under the umbrella of a bigger organisation, who will contribute towards the running costs of the Shed.

**Tip:** If you are uncertain about this subject, you can sign up for a workshop about managing personal finances, and then scale it up.

# PROCESS



## WHAT IS A CONSTITUTED GROUP?

A constituted group is a group that comes together to address an issue and have decided to write down an agreement or a constitution. Another characteristic of a constituted group is that they have a committee.

Please enquire about our 'Running your Shed' guideline for more information on this topic and tips on good governance, email [mensshed@groundworkni.co.uk](mailto:mensshed@groundworkni.co.uk). We also have a sample constitution template for you to use on our website.

## PROTECTING DATA

Data is general information and personal details that could be used to identify an individual. It includes

name, address, e-mails or telephone. It also includes information about next of kin, photography and/or film or statements or interviews.

If you're collecting this information, you need to tell people how are you going to use this information, how are you going to keep it safe, for how long are you keeping it, and how will you safely dispose/remove your details. You also need to make sure you gain permission from people before collecting this data.

The legislation that outlines your responsibilities to protect data is the General Data Protection Regulation (2018) which is more commonly known as GDPR.

**Tip:** On our website you can download a sample GDPR privacy notice which you can use to inform people of how you will use their data and to collect their consent. [NICVA](#) (the Northern Ireland Council for

Voluntary Action) often run GDPR training, keep an eye on their website to keep their training schedule, [www.nicva.org](http://www.nicva.org).

Please note that this is not a comprehensive list of your duties to protect data. Please visit the Information Commissioners Office website for more information, [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk).

## SHARING YOUR STORY

Deciding whether to have an online presence or not can be a difficult decision. Whenever you share things online, they can be seen by a huge number of people, and they might be there for a long time.

Take your time in choosing if your Shed should have an account online, but do not forget that there are ways to safely promote your Shed online.

Many Sheds in Northern Ireland have benefited from having an online presence.

They have found a Facebook/Twitter/Instagram account offers some benefit, for example:

- Spread the word about their shed to more men.
- Connect with other sheds, even from other countries.
- Find out funding and event opportunities

If you would like to promote your shed online, please read our 'Using Social Media to Promote your Shed' guideline which you can access on our website.

## **DUTY OF CARE/ HEALTH AND SAFETY**

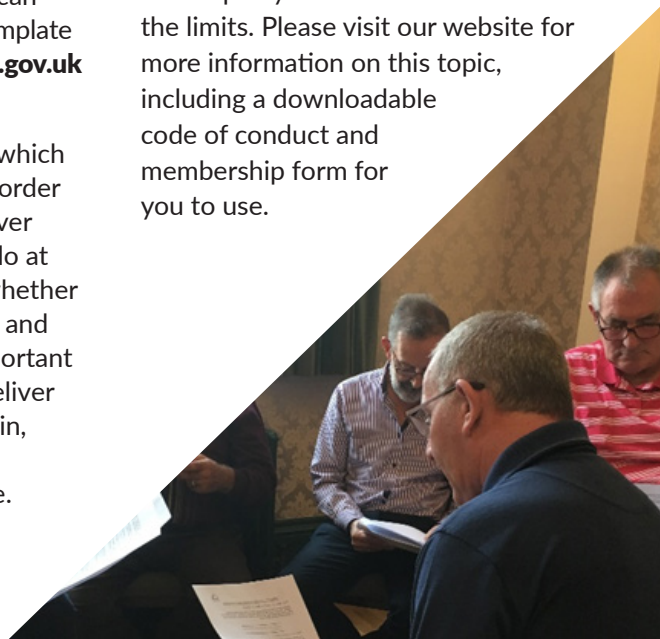
Health and Safety might be something you are familiar with, or something you are overwhelmed by. Whichever your relationship with it, health and safety plays a vital role in the running of a men's shed - from enabling all members to feel secure and safe, to having good practice in place for the using of machinery.

What to consider on this topic, will depend on the stage where you are in running the Men's Shed.

As we mentioned in 'places' it is essential to have accessible venues to your men's shed. After you find such a venue, we recommend you do a risk assessment of the place. To get you started on this, please visit our website resources, where you can find an easy risk assessment template to follow. Also visit [www.hseni.gov.uk](http://www.hseni.gov.uk) for more information.

You will also need to consider which other steps you might need in order to have a safe activity. Whenever thinking about the activity to do at the Shed, you must research whether this activity requires insurance and training to be in place. It is important to talk to other sheds which deliver the activity you are interested in, please visit our NI Men's Shed interactive map on our website.

Just like any other group, your Men's Shed might have in place other rules or codes to help new members get a grip with the environment of the group. Having a list of roles and descriptions, having an easy to follow code of conduct or having a set of statements with what is considered against the values of the Men's Shed, will help any newcomer understand the limits. Please visit our website for more information on this topic, including a downloadable code of conduct and membership form for you to use.





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Thanks to all the Men's Sheds in Northern Ireland who contributed their time, knowledge and skills to this guidance. Please note that this guidance is not comprehensive and is only intended to provide general information on starting a Men's Shed.

You should not, under any circumstance, regard the information in this guidance as constituting legal advice and it should not be relied on as such.

This guidance was printed in 2020, for more up to date information, please visit [www.groundworkni.org.uk/projects/menssheds](http://www.groundworkni.org.uk/projects/menssheds)

All resources mentioned in this guidance can also be accessed on that link.