

Future works to parish amenity spaces

The parish council has completed a number of projects over the past three years to improve amenity space available to parish residents, which include:

- A new multi-play and self-closing gate at Bury Road Pocket Park
- New fencing to the Multi Use Games Area at Cemetery Road
- A new Senior Football Goal End and Basketball Hoop at the Multi Use Games Area

Each project has cost in excess of £5,000, and whilst the parish council had reserves which it could draw down it has been difficult to access grant support, in part due to:

- issues of timing
- the requirements of the grant application process
 - evidence of demand
 - community engagement etc

There is a large grant available to apply for each year through West Suffolk (Community Chest) of up to £100,000, but the window for application over the summer is often only six weeks, which is not feasible to develop a full project bid by a parish council.

One option to address these difficulties is for the parish council to develop an outline bid, where all the elements of the proposal have the support of the parish council and evidence is collected in advance. Dependant on the criteria of any particular grant application process, elements of the bid could then be taken off the shelf and applied for, or, a full bid made for a larger grant. In this way, either small projects could be cherry picked to suit small grant funds, or a large scale project could be commenced, with a good understanding of demand, likely costs, ways to engage with the community.

The first stage would be to identify works/improvements which the parish council would like to make to its amenity spaces, and any partners it could or would need to work with to bring the project to fruition. For example, improvements to Six Acres might include some items or activities which would benefit from or need the support of Wickhambrook Memorial Social Centre.

Work could then be undertaken to scope out

- capital costs
- community engagement
- insurance implications
- legal basis for each element and any VAT implications
- where existing reserves might contribute to elements of the project, new reserves built for the future or smaller grants might be applied for
- priorities
- how proposals contribute to Community Actions in the Neighbourhood Plan

Some initial ideas include:

- Re-surfacing and Thermoplastic coating to MUGA space
- Resurfacing of Skate Park

WPC.EC.23.09.03 – Future works to parish amenity spaces

- Wet pour rubber safety surfaces under:
 - Cableway
 - Swingsets in Children's Play area and gateways (Cemetery Rd and Bury Rd) which would reduce risk of deterioration of wooden posts as a result of strimming too
- New bowtop metal fencing around children's play areas (reduced cost over time maintaining palings and chain link fencing)
- Improvements to surface (access onto Recreation Ground) – this gets very muddy – would need buy in from Trustees.
- Additional benches at Six Acres
- Developing Chapel of Rest as Men's Shed venue (see Appendix A)
- Memorial using cast iron memorials currently stored in Chapel of Rest (Min Ref EC.23.07.13).

Action:

Committee Members are asked to consider works/improvements to amenity space in the parish which could be developed as a template grant application.

Starting a Shed

This guide is for anyone thinking of starting a Shed, and it will also assist existing organisations adding to their range of services.

By now you've likely discovered that the Men's Shed concept started in Australia around 1999. It then spread to New Zealand, Ireland, the UK, Canada and, more recently, Europe and the USA with a total worldwide of around 2000 Sheds in 2020.

Sheds are mainly 'grassroots' community activities that come about in response to shared needs. These have mostly been for men to access tools, workbenches, skills and opportunities to make and mend in the company of others. Gardening, computing, electronics and other activities have been included according to members' interests. The UK Men's Sheds Association (UKMSA) regard a Shed as the group, whether or not it has a base for activity.

An alternative to grassroots, bottom-up development, is where an established organisation creates and takes full responsibility for a Shed as an additional part of its work. Occasionally, an organisation might provide one or more support functions to an independent Shed such as underwriting the finances or providing management services.

Sheds bring health benefits by encouraging physical and mental activity, and improved wellbeing by providing an enjoyable way to stay socially integrated in local communities, by being creative, and learning or passing on skills. Whilst most Sheds are for men, about a third involve women. There are now also some all women Sheds.

This guide covers the main issues involved in starting a Shed and things to consider based, on Sheddors' experiences. It is just a guide which we anticipate you will use as you see fit.

More general guidance on setting up an organisation is also often available locally through voluntary sector support organisations and sometimes from community development staff provided in local or county councils. Other resources are available, such as the National Council for Voluntary Organisation's (NCVO) knowledge bank. NCVO membership is free for small organisations.

In addition to written advice, the UK Men's Sheds Association (UKMSA) staff can offer one-to-one advice, as can experienced regional volunteer Ambassadors who have all run their own Sheds.

Later on, if you become a member Shed, you'll get more detailed support; all the resources you need to develop and sustain a thriving Men's Shed exclusive benefits including discounts on tools and equipment.

We hope once you've read this guide you'll be as excited as us about your Shed journey. Happy Shedding!

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Forming the steering group

Most successful community Sheds have started by a group forming around the idea and then refining it to suit local need, enthusiasms, ideas about who it will be for, how it will be organised and funded, how it will connect with the local community, and much else. There is no 'typical Shed'.

Getting a group together can be exciting, frustrating, turbulent and fun, all at the same time. During this stage people get to know each other and discover each other's circumstances, strengths, attitudes and priorities. Some people will leave, others will stay and form a committed working group with a clearer direction - but hopefully remaining open to adaptation as it moves on and others join. Expect topics to be revisited as ideas are refined.

Although the group is likely to be led by one or more people, it is important that everyone is listened to and has opportunities to keep actively involved. It is a real risk to the survival of the project, and the benefit it can bring to the community, if it relies on just one person.

Many Sheds have started by one guy talking to people he knows who then talk to others. A group of five people would make a small workforce and allows for not everyone being able to attend every time the group meets. Three is a minimum, a few more could increase the range of skills and contacts.

You could spread the net wider by putting a free ad in the local newspaper saying what you intend to achieve and inviting people to meet up, by posting notices in places where people wait and have time to read, and by finding opportunities to give a short talk to existing groups. Often it is the women in a community that know who needs a Shed! Another option is to hold a public meeting (see later)

There will be plenty for members to do, as well as enjoying being together. One Shed, for example, had as many as 20 people meeting in a restaurant at 10am every second Saturday, at no charge, to discuss progress and ideas. Despite the work, it was usually enjoyed.

Connecting with the Shed community

At an early stage, it is very helpful to make contact with other Sheds. This will help the group sort out which issues those Sheds have faced and how they have dealt with them. Every Shed is different, but there are common factors. Discussions could be about the purpose of the Shed - for example, recreation or community service, who is it for – the age range, socially isolated, mixed sex, people with specific health issues? Other decisions to be made will include what premises will suit, how often to meet and when, the costs and how members contribute, and what activities are likely to be most popular.

You will find that almost all Sheds do woodworking if only because of the availability of tools and materials. Across the country, Sheds are also engaged in metalworking, electronics, 3D printing, model building, bicycle repairs, upcycling and repurposing, gardening and conservation work. One Shed even built its own full-scale roadworthy electric car!

Most of all, visits to Sheds should enthuse your group and power their efforts. Personal contacts will hopefully develop and enable further conversations and access to help. Other sources of ideas, advice and support include the free monthly UKMSA newsletter, UKMSA staff, and regional Ambassadors. Some areas also have regional Shed networks. For your nearest Sheds, go to the [Find a Shed](#) map on the UKMSA website.

Finding premises

'It's a great idea but where will it happen?' Almost all groups seek premises they know they can go on using, but more immediate solutions, such as hiring a room or using a double garage owned by a member, have been used to get something started quickly. Some have focused more on gardening, so access to land has been their priority. For those seeking some form of security, it takes on average a year to find something suitable.

The first option that will occur to a new group is to turn to their local authority for premises. However, you may soon discover that anything the council can let will be on the market to earn income, not available to be offered to you, even at a discount. The best approach is to seek out properties the council own that they cannot let because of lack of funds for repair, planning blight, lack of appeal, making it unsaleable. The same conditions might also apply to a privately-owned property where personal factors like illness or a dispute might prevent a commercial arrangement.

Searching and negotiating for unadvertised places takes the time, but it can have spectacular results. Railway buildings, sports pavilions, rooms in community centres, and even an old mortuary have accommodated Sheds. [Read more about finding a Shed premises.](#)

You may also consider getting a grant to pay for rent, but your group will then have to fundraise further when the grant expires or find other ways to raise a similar amount by that time. A Shed's biggest annual expenditure is usually its premises cost, so keeping that low is the best contribution to its financial sustainability.

A Shed's workshop premises will need the basics of safety, electricity, heating, being weatherproof, access to toilets, being able to make hot drinks, and extras such as somewhere to sit and chat. One place was as small as 4m x 5m (12 x 16ft) and successfully catered for six people, but more is better especially when considering storage of raw material and work-in-progress. Being near enough to public transport, but far enough away not to annoy neighbours with noise, are other considerations.

Getting premises is a two-way affair; you also need to be an acceptable user. Apart from looking like a responsible group with a well-thought out and achievable plan, you will have to overcome the concern that as a group you have no track-record or assets to reassure a landlord. Personal reputations and contacts may help. Both parties will have to consider how your group can meet the 'tenant obligations' in any agreement.

Some ways to search for premises: It may look daunting, but this is how Sheds have succeeded:

- Seek out organisations that specifically want a Shed on their premises – a museum, a city farm, a community garden, or maybe a community centre wanting to improve their gender balance. You may find landlords that will exchange use for repair work, a retirement home or college wanting to improve its community involvement, a school willing to have out-of-hours use, a repair/reuse organization with spare capacity.

- Walk your area to spot disused properties - a builder's yard, a farmer's barn, a double garage, spare land. Ask estate agents what commercial premises they know that can't be let.
- Networking with other voluntary organisations for ideas – this has revealed under-used property which are difficult to identify from the outside.
- Speak with large landowners - railway companies, fire brigades down-sizing, housing associations. A developer once considered including a workshop to 'add community value' to its bid for regeneration funding!

Forms of tenure:

- **Renting:** This option usually involves commitment to a set period at a set rent and complying with the tenant's obligations though beneficial rental agreements, which can include a peppercorn rent. A tenancy gives the tenant the right to occupy for the stated period subject to meeting the terms which should be carefully checked by a solicitor before signing. If you are concerned about meeting your obligations you might seek a guarantor, but such a person or organization may apply their own conditions to ensure the guarantee is not called upon.
- **Licence to occupy:** This is usually a short-term commercial let allowing the use of the premises on a non-exclusive basis. As the owner, the landlord can enter or use the property at any time and may even be using a different part of the same building. Notice periods are kept short, a month maybe, and are either way, but the contract is often left to run as long as it suits both parties. The terms of the licence are agreed between the parties.
- **Hiring a room** – There is little responsibility other than paying the room rate and putting things away after each session. This can be a great way to start if there is adequate storage for tools. Places that hire rooms often have gaps between bookings, so a block booking should get a discount. If you book more than a day a week, on consecutive days, you may not need to put things away at the end of the first day.
- **Purchase:** When established, some Sheds have bought or built their own premises.

Connecting with your local community

The best thing about doing a premises search is that you are also getting known in your local area. The more you are known, the more opportunities appear. Some other ways to get known include making a website, using social media, and holding a public meeting. UKMSA can help with speakers, slideshows, local contacts, social media promotion.

Holding a public meeting: benefits include...

- It gives you a fixed point to work to and something tangible to tell people.

- You can spread the message to a large group 'in one hit' which should get people in the community talking and may lead to people who were not at the meeting approaching you later.
- You may get surprise results such as people mentioning possible premises, people offering financial support, professionals willing to advise if needed later, or people offering tools or materials.
- Questions will be asked that you may not yet have thought of; it can prompt your own thinking.

If you are holding this meeting to get a steering group together it is essential that the publicity does not give the impression that people will be able to take part in Shed activities at this stage, other than research and planning. You need to manage expectations.

As an informal community group of two or more people you may need help to hold a public meeting. The essentials are a convenient venue, publicity and a programme for the session.

Venue: When looking to get free help, you might well ask yourself which people or organisations could be interested in the community benefits of a Shed; these are your natural supporters. It is surprising how much goodwill the Shed idea can generate. Apart from approaching churches, pubs, village halls and community centres, it has been possible to get a free venue from a supermarket or another business aiming to increase its community profile, and they may even supply the refreshments. Book the venue and promote the event well in advance.

Publicity: How are you are going to interest people in coming – it will not be as obvious to them as it is to you. An article in the press can accompany a small advert. Social media and networking through other organisations' newsletters can reach a lot of people. Allow enough time for the most important 'word of mouth' to get around the community via friends and relatives. If you were a professional you would promote different angles on your event to attract people – health benefits of Sheds, community service, a celebrity attending, free refreshments - and 'drip feed' this through media outlets. [Read more about approaching the press.](#)

Programme: What will inspire attendees to help or join the Shed? Incentives have included getting a local 'name' to introduce the topic, get an external speaker, and invite Sheddors from a nearby Shed to take part, or be available to answer informal follow-up questions at the meeting. Make sure there are enough people able to respond to anyone expressing interest and plan a follow-up meeting date to offer them in the near future.

A public meeting can also be great at a later stage, for recruiting new members when the same considerations apply. You are also likely to get offers of tools and materials so it would be handy to have somewhere to store them.

Following publicity, you are likely to get requests for people with special needs to attend the Shed. You will have to decide what you can offer, without your members becoming 'carers'.

Formalising your Men's Shed

Naming

A discussion about a name for your Shed usually happens early on and it can be very helpful. It makes an amazing difference to have an identity when talking about it, rather than being a group of enthusiasts. Take care not to choose a name that can be confused with another local Shed otherwise UKMSA may not be able to promote it.

Getting constituted

This means adopting an agreed purpose and a set of operating rules. There are different legal structures available, but Sheds normally choose between being an unincorporated association (UA) or a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). A UA is easily formed and moving from that to a CIO is a well-trodden path. One advantage of a UA is that the rules are simple and easily understood. It also does not need to register as a charity.

Whichever legal format you choose, you will need to complete a statement of purpose called the Objects Clause. If you think you might choose to be a charity later on, using an Objects Clause already approved by the Charity Commission for a Shed will help with registration; UKMSA can help with examples of these.

One advantage of constituting is that it can help you to get a bank account in the group's name. There are always small expenses to meet and initially group members will pay. As the expenditure grows, so does the need to record it more formally, with a view to getting it covered from unrestricted funds.

Unincorporated Association: This is a democratic structure where the committee members are elected by the members at the first Annual General Meeting (AGM) and then lead the organization until the next election. It is set up through an agreement (a constitution) between a group of people who come together for a reason other than to make a profit. It costs nothing to set up and doesn't have to register with any other organisation. Individual members are personally responsible for any debts and contractual obligations.

Charitable Incorporated Organisation: There are two types – Foundation CIO and Association CIO. Sheds tend to choose the Association model

as it is governed by a wide membership and not just its trustees. It involves registration as a charity and offers the managing committee some protection from liability for debts. It acts in its own name and not those of the trustees. It reports to the Charity Commission.

Registering as a charity: This has the benefits of public recognition, some tax reliefs (especially 80% of business rates), being able to reclaim Gift Aid on donations, assets are 'locked in', and access to a wider range of grant sources. It is not difficult to register if you follow precedents for Sheds already approved by the Charity Commission. Ask UKMSA and other Sheds for advice.

Officers: The committee will need at least three officers – Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. Other roles covering membership, maintenance, publicity, health and safety, may or may not be committee members.

Bank account: Your constitution will require two signatories on the bank account, but three allows for an absence of one of them. In an age of online banking, getting expenditure approved by two signatories shouldn't be a problem. Choose an account that is for community groups or 'clubs and societies' and is free. 'Free banking' means you won't have to pay any charges simply for having the account, although other charges may apply.

To open an account, you may be asked for a copy of your constitution or the meeting minute authorizing the account, the signatories and the signing requirements. Once you have an account, membership income, donations and grants can be easily kept secure. Cash income can be paid in electronically by the recipient from their own bank account. UKMSA has an excellent [accounting template for Sheds available to members](#).

Insurance: As soon as your group starts meeting and carrying out even basic activities, you'll need Public Liability Insurance in case there is a claim against the Shed and, therefore, the trustees/ committee. If you make things for other people you might also need Product Liability. Shed volunteers are usually, but not always, treated as employees for insurance purposes, so Employer's Liability may be considered. Other insurances could be Property Damage (or Buildings and Contents) or Trustee Indemnity. Check the insurance you choose covers you if working off-site. It is important that you explain your activities to your insurer as fully as possible and follow their requirements to ensure they don't find reason not to meet a claim.

What it costs and how it's paid for

Sheds vary in size and so do their costs. However, most Sheds cost £2-4,000 more than their premises and insurance charges to run each year. Premises costs vary enormously, consult

other Sheds about their insurance costs. Income sources are members' contributions, earnings, donations and grants.

Member contributions: These vary between Sheds - some only ask for donations, others charge per session, or week, or month, with or without an additional annual membership charge. A Shed that is registered for Gift Aid can claim tax back on donations, even if they are in cash.

Earnings have occurred from sales of products, services or training courses. Product sales vary a lot, take care not to generate a 'production line' requirement as this may stress Shedders who don't want that pressure. Services can include taking on commissioned work or offering services like tool-sharpening or wood-cutting. Offering training courses can be fun and quite profitable even if you hire the trainer.

We recommend that Sheds aim to cover their basic costs from member contributions and sales, using donations and grants for extras and development costs, both start-up and ongoing. Sheds often raise funds through events or gifts from local businesses, especially where they are well-connected with their community. There are many guides on raising grant funding, joining the National Council for Voluntary Organisations for free is a good start. Once established, Sheds can be self-funding and hence financially sustainable for the longer term.

Equipping your Shed

The tools and materials you will need obviously depends on what you agree to do. Initially, Shedders may donate tools, but public appeals can usually bring you all the tools that you would normally find in a home. These may be mainly woodworking, hand and DIY electrical tools, but could also be metal-working equipment from say, a motor-cycle enthusiast or engineer. If you collect more than you need you can donate smaller items to tool charities such as Tools for Self-Reliance who send them overseas. Anything substantial can be donated to another Shed using the UKMSA [Toolcycle](#) facility. Sheds have successfully appealed to local companies for equipment donations and equipment costs are often covered by grant aid.

Purchasing includes private sales, e-bay, and dealers. Buying secondhand tools is OK so long as you can check their safe operation. Look online for user manuals if they don't come with donated equipment. Use the tool manuals to get safety information for each item and use that in your inductions for new users. UKMSA members can access discount offers with Axminster Tools and Triton Tools.

Wood can be reclaimed from individuals and business waste - kitchen fitters and timber yards will usually have off-cuts. Pallets are often used by Sheds and no pieces of timber is too small if used creatively. You can cut pieces to regular shapes and glue together to make interesting patterns for, say, box lids. Online sites like Freegle and Freecycle can provide usable items as well as those in need of refurbishment.

Top Tips for getting affordable tools and materials

- Talk to local schools, universities and colleges. Some are closing departments and may have equipment available.
- Hold fundraising events for larger equipment. This has the added bonus of raising the Shed's profile.
- Consider funding applications to grant-makers that have aims related to your purpose. UKMSA can give advice on funding applications if you need it.
- Scaffold companies are required to replace any scaffold boards with minor defects which can be great for things like worktops and bird boxes.
- Always ask for a discount!

Health and Safety

Sheds have a duty of care under civil law towards their volunteers and Shed members. They are not required to comply with HSE regulations unless they employ someone, but you should still aim for that standard where practicable.

Your main aim is to keep people safe, but you should also consider what would happen if you were in court over an accident. How could you show you had tried to create a safe working environment?

Health & Safety policy: you should think through what you need to do to keep people healthy and safe, write it down and agree how it is implemented. This is both an action plan and evidence. Make sure it's clearly displayed and adhered to.

Machine safety: It's the Shed's duty to ensure equipment is safe to use. Sheds usually appoint the most suitably experienced member to do this checking and to record when it happened. Checklists for each machine are helpful as records. Portable electrical goods should be Portable Appliance Tested (PAT).

Member training: It is your responsibility to ensure that each member is trained to safely use any machine and you should keep a record of that training signed by the member. Many

Sheds put reminder tips on the machines and run refresher sessions. Safety videos are also available online on, for example, how to safely use a table saw. Impress people with what can happen with unsafe use. Advise people what Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as goggles, dust masks, and gloves is required.

Supervision: Nothing beats observation of members' use of equipment by other members to maintain safety. Even trained/ experienced people get frustrated or distracted and can overlook a quick word like 'STOP'. It's wise to appoint Safety Supervisors to 'keep an eye out.'

Special needs: Often people using the Shed have 'special needs.' This can be as simple as being 'ham-fisted' or easily distracted, but is more often people with physical and mental medical conditions. Closer supervision is required but may not be feasible without additional measures. You may need a Safeguarding Policy.

Premises safety: All of us risk-assess continually to stay safe and healthy. If you are in a workshop the same awareness should apply. Know what risks to look for, ensure everyone else knows, remind people if they ignore them. Record formal assessments for evidence that you maintain awareness, including what you do to mitigate the risk.

In addition:

- Check dust levels and clean extractors frequently.
- Check the fire regulations and comply including maintaining extinguishers and clear escape routes to a safety point.
- Get several Sheddors First Aid trained, have a suitable kit available, and an accident book.
- Have some agreed purposeful aims or rules such as 'do not talk to someone who is using a machine', 'clear surfaces are safer', 'ask for help if lifting'.
- Have everyone sign a disclaimer which you keep on file. This will include a statement that if the member does not comply with training he has been given, then he will bear responsibility for any consequent damage to himself or others. Also have them declare any relevant health issue (UKMSA will have an example on a disclaimer form).

Finally, please do not be put off by this list of things to consider. Not everything gets achieved at once; there is time, and other people will help. 500 Sheds have been set up since 2013 and most have been set up by people like you.