

# Community Asset Transfer for Men's Sheds under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 (CEA)

This fact sheet has been produced to look at some of the issues particularly affecting Men's Sheds in the asset transfer process. These include finding funding for purchase of an asset, demonstrating wider community benefit and finding ways to "pay the bills". It complements the extensive general information on all aspects of Community Asset Transfer (CAT) to be found on the COSS website ([www.dtascommunityownership.org.uk](http://www.dtascommunityownership.org.uk))

## Introduction

The establishment of Men's Sheds across Scotland is increasing week by week. This can be attributed to the success of the movement in other parts of the world, and the recognised benefits to the wellbeing of men, which has been well documented. The [Scottish Men's Shed Association](#) has a wealth of information and expertise on all aspects of setting up and maintaining a shed, and when setting up a Shed we would recommend them as your first port of call. [Age Concern Scotland](#) has a support officer for Men's Sheds and provides excellent information. They conducted a report and survey to outline the positive impact that the growing men's shed movement is having on later life. Men from sheds across Scotland have told their story for [The Shed Effect](#). The report demonstrates how men's health and wellbeing has been lifted by getting involved in their local shed.

## The structure of your group

The Community Empowerment Act defines a community that can take over an asset as a community transfer body, which is either

- a geographic community – open to anyone who lives in a defined geographic area or
- a community of interest - a group that shares a characteristic or interest eg. faith groups, sports group, heritage groups etc.

A Men's Shed would normally be classed as a **community of interest** if the membership is restricted to men and your aims and objectives are for the benefit of that community. The preferred legal structure is usually establishing as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) – this gives you the benefit of charitable status with the protection of a company status. There is advice on what is the best legal model for you from COSS or Men's Shed Association.

However, some Men's Sheds are more of a community shed, with a more open membership. If this is the case and the aims and objectives are for wider geographic community benefit, then some do consider setting up as a geographic community group as it is often easier to get funding, particularly for purchase of an asset.

Whatever you decided it is important to recognise that any asset transfer request will be judged on the benefits it will deliver, so if you are a community of interest it is important that you engage local people in the area around the property and think about how your proposals may affect them. Relevant authorities are likely to take into account the wider benefits of impact on other groups. We will explore this further later on.

## The First Steps

### – finding a building for your shed

Many established Men's Sheds, as well as new ones that are starting up, want to have their own building. This is usually because they have different tools and machinery, need space to use them and don't want to have to put the tools away at the end of a meeting. They are looking to take advantage of the [Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Act](#) to take on a building. This legislation can work well for Shed groups as the case study of [Stonehaven and District Men's Shed](#) shows.

### Case Study – Stonehaven and District Men's Shed



In January 2019 an Aberdeenshire men's shed group finally got the keys to its own premises when it secured the 19-year lease of the town's Beach Pavilion with the help of a community asset transfer from Aberdeenshire Council. It had been three years since Stonehaven and District Men's Shed (SDMS) was created but in all that time, members have never had their own home. It will require an £80,000 renovation before the 180-strong group of shedders can finally move in. But there has already been good news on that front, with SDMS already securing significant grant funding for the revamp, which will include separate workshop and social areas. The building was formerly used as a community meeting space for various social and sporting groups and it is hoped that, once open, the refurbished social area will be used by other community groups involved in craft or hobby activities.



## Alternative ways to get a Shed?

But is this always the best first step? Although this legislation gives communities of interest (this is generally where Men's Sheds would fit), as well as geographic communities, the right to ask to manage, lease or buy assets owned by public agencies at less than best financial consideration, the criteria does not necessarily make this an easy task for group's such as Men's Sheds. So, it is useful to look at other options first.

### 1. Leasing a building outwith the Act

Although you can use the Community Empowerment Act to ask for a lease, it is often possible to negotiate the lease of a building outwith the Act, particularly with a local authority asset. The advantages of this for a Men's shed can be:

- a. As long as the group is demonstrating social, health benefits, it will not matter that a Men's Shed group may not fit the criteria of the CEA.
- b. The potential to get a little used building for a peppercorn rent per year, or at a preferential rate because of social benefit.
- c. The process of negotiating a lease can be quicker than through the Act
- d. Leasing allows you can see if you are going to bring in enough money to pay the bills
- e. It enables you to build up your membership before committing to owning it outright.
- f. You don't have the same level of ultimate responsibility for the building (although do note that leases can often be on a full-repairing basis).

### 2. Sharing space with other community groups

- a. Investigate if there is an existing community group that has a building with space you could lease, or be given use of free-of-charge. This would give you the chance to build up the membership of your shed, find out what your costs are going to be etc. while another organisation takes the strain of upkeep.
- b. You could partner with a geographically- based community organisation e.g. a Development Trust (DT). A DT would have the correct legal structure and access to funding to purchase a building, and be happy to lease part of it to a Men's Shed as an anchor tenant, whilst using the rest of the building for wider community benefit.

## Case Study - Black Isle Men's Shed (BIMS)

### – Leasing space to create a Shed



Black Isle Men's Shed built their own shed within a building. Their Shed is set within the Avoch Sea Scouts Community Centre with whom the group have a signed agreed tenancy.



After the Sea Scouts took over running the building from Highland Council, they were keen to encourage local groups to use the building, both as a way of lending their support to them but also to bring in rent to cover some of the running costs of the building. This fitted well with BIMS as it meant they could get space to create their own Shed without the responsibility of having to find or finance their own building. The Centre was a big space, and as it was used for other community activities, the best way forward was to build an internal shed within the space, where their equipment and tools could be safely secured.

Having formed a committee, obtained charitable status and found funding to build the internal shed, the group then set about refurbishing and extending a container outside the building that they use as a store and auxiliary workshop. BIMS also use a small room for socialising and can hire a larger area within the building for bigger meetings.

They pay a fixed monthly rental for three days use per week of the Shed. The Sea Scouts supported the Shed to get started by giving a concession year in which BIMS paid very little rent. The group then agreed to a rent increase to a level that they are just about sustaining by a combination of donation and sales of work.



## Finding Funding

**Capital funds:** It is sometimes difficult for a Community of Interest (like a Men's Shed) to access funding for the capital purchase of a building. The main funder of asset transfer, the Scottish Land Fund, only funds purchase by geographic communities. Some of the other funders to look at would be [The Robertson Trust](#), which does support Men's Sheds and [Awards for All](#), a lottery fund with a broad criterion. It is a good idea to find out from other Sheds how they have found funds and to search through [Funding Scotland](#) website where you can search by category and area.

## Other fundraising:

[The Scottish Association for Men's Sheds](#) has some suggestions for funding for sheds. It is also a good idea to contact other local and national sheds to get tips as to how they are raising funding.

COSS has produced a useful publication called '[Beyond the Usual Suspects](#)' which makes a range of suggestions for alternative methods of raising funds beyond the more traditional grants and loans in these challenging fundraising times

**Income generation:** the nature of the membership of a Men's Shed and the need to have your own space often makes it difficult to generate income for the upkeep of your building. However, there are ways Sheds do raise funding by, for example:

- making articles that can be sold eg. planters, bird tables etc.
- taking on commissions from the public e.g. for picnic tables for schools, or hanging baskets for a Community Council or schools for picnic tables
- delivering skills training courses on behalf of public sector body eg. the Council

However, you will need to bear in mind that this may put a burden on to your group members, which might not be helpful for their wellbeing

## Consulting your community

The CEA requires groups to show that they have consulted with their "community" about their plans and to have their support. But who is the community for a Men's Shed? Do you have to ask everyone in your geographic community or only men interested in a shed? From our experience, we would advise that you consult the immediate neighbourhood around the asset to share what you want to do with them and to gain their support.

If you want to take over a building that already is being used by the wider community you will want to ask them what they think and perhaps reassure them that they will still be able to use the building if you take ownership.

## Demonstrating wider community benefit

In terms of the CEA, a Men's Shed group would be termed a "community of interest". The purpose and nature of a Men's Shed means the members of the shed will predominantly be men – and this is OK! Public Agencies who may be transferring a public asset will want to see that a Men's Shed has support of the community but also that they are open to involve or benefit the wider community in different projects. There are many examples of how this can work, as with the Westhill Men's Shed in this case study

### Case Study - Westhill Men's Shed, Aberdeenshire

"The shed has a well-equipped wood and metal working workshop where you can do the things you would in your own shed but with company. Not only someone to chat to but to get ideas from or pass on some of your own knowledge. You can bring your own projects to work on, or help the shed with ours. You don't have to use the workshop, some guys use the coffee table to set the world to rights, others build models, use the computers and 3D printer or play bridge.

We keep ourselves afloat by integrating with the community, doing projects as requested by the residents, schools, other charities and others. We also take in unwanted tools to refurbish and lawn mowers, strimmers etc. These are sold to the community at knockdown prices and through all of that, we keep the lights on.

The thriving Sheshed has a session every two weeks. The She shedders are doing their own projects and working on shed projects.

We have talks, usually on Wednesday evenings during the dark nights. Most are health related; we have had talks on prostate cancer, Alzheimer's, Heart disease and many others given by experts in each field. Local history talks are also given by an expert. These are announced through our mailing list or a poster at the shed.

Social events are held at the shed when family and friends are invited for a burns supper, pizza night, BBQ, Xmas lunch etc."



Best of luck with setting up your Shed and don't hesitate to contact the [Community Ownership Support Service](#) on 0131 225 2080 if we can be of further assistance in any community asset transfer query.