

Background information to the Men's Community Shed

This is provided to give context to the project.

About the Linskill Centre

The Linskill and North Tyneside Community Development Trust was established in July 2003 to complete community asset transfer of The Linskill Centre (North Shields) from North Tyneside Council, following a successful community campaign to save the centre from demolition by the Council in 2004.

It is the only community asset transfer within North Tyneside, is the largest of its kind in the country, and is a thriving community resource serving some of the most disadvantaged communities in North Tyneside. It has achieved significant financial sustainability, with 95% annual running costs met by generated trading activities.

This very large centre [10,500m²] opens 82 hours per week and averages 8,000 visits per month. Linskill accommodates 30 permanent tenant organisations including North Tyneside Art Studio, Beacon Hill (supported learning) School, Show Racism The Red Card and PROPS Newcastle; providing care and support to most needy sectors of our community, plus a number of community focused small businesses and CIC's. Linskill has 10 rooms used weekly by community groups who collectively deliver a comprehensive range of arts, crafts, heritage, sports, keep-fit, educational, training and cultural activities. Linskill also operates an OFSTED Registered Nursery providing affordable, flexible childcare for up to 65 children per day, a Community Cafe providing healthy meals, and a Community Development Department delivering a range of community opportunities both at Linskill and Battle Hill site. The centre also hosts a range of music, theatre and arts projects, is licenced as a wedding venue and hosts other celebratory events.

This is the only community facility in North Tyneside with capacity to host such a large and diverse range of services and opportunities under one roof.

Context of the project

According to NHS North Tyneside CCG's Operating Plan 2019-2020, the Borough's population is getting older, with almost 15,000 people 65+ living alone and the number of 75 year olds living alone predicted to rise by 41.9% by 2030.

It is recognised that older men find it harder than women to make friends in later life and are less likely to join community based social groups tending to be dominated by women. The Borough's women then, may be more likely to seek social support as they get older; thereby remaining emotionally healthier than men who traditionally use fewer community facilities and health services than women, and are less likely to participate in social or preventive health activities. Surveys from mental health charities note that millions of people report feeling lonely on a daily basis, which manifest in some the need to present to GP's or A&E Departments for expected medical support. It is widely acknowledged however, that reducing social isolation and increasing engagement with others, or taking up a new hobbies or interest, positively impacts on a person's sense of wellbeing.

This project looks to positively influencing the Boroughs health-vulnerable older men's health and lifestyles, by providing gender relevant, creative activities aimed directly at engaging them.

** Whilst men are the projects engagement focus, the Shed will also encourage use by women and provision may extend into wider community involvement as the project develops.

Key bodies with whom this project has been discussed include:

AGE UK North Shields in context of older men's community engagement, WW1 Community Project veteran volunteers as potential beneficiaries, Linskill Shedders as potential beneficiaries, Men's Sheds UK for start-up advice, NT Art Studio service users as potential beneficiaries, VODA in context of older men and volunteering, Linskill's engage & Encompass male service users, plus LNTCDT Trustees - specifically NHS associates, in context of this project aligning with LNTCDT's Corporate Strategy and social impact commitments. All discussions positively endorsed the aims and objectives and its practical approach to addressing this problem.

About the Shed and the role of the worker

Men in Sheds is an international initiative focusing on "the need for a place to pursue meaningful, practical interests at leisure, to practice skills and enjoy making and mending". Garden sheds and activities they enable are often solitary in nature, whereas Men's Sheds are about gaining social connections, developing friendships, sharing skills and most importantly having fun. Over 400 Men's Shed function across the UK, operating from garages to disused warehouse, but there is nothing similar in North Tyneside; suggesting our older men are at a disadvantage when it comes to shed-health benefits, compared to counterparts in other areas.

Grant funding was secured from North Tyneside CCG October 2019 to convert Linskill Centre's large garage into a "Men's Community Shed" and to establish North Tyneside's first Men's Shed as a space for older men to meet, socialise, learn new skills and take part in activities with other men. Older, bereaved or retired men, veterans, carers or those in health recovery or experiencing mental health of physical debilitations will be the target sector.

Additional funding was also secured to appoint a skilled Project Worker/Technician to lead the project for two years to help establish The Shed. This will involve:

- developing and promoting provision in association with shed-users, Linskill's Community Development team, North Tyneside's VCS agencies and GP Practices for signposting and social prescribing.
- ensuring H&S standards are maintained in safely engaging "Shedders" in repair'n'recycle and make'n'mend and skill-sharing activities.
- recruiting/training/supporting volunteers to help manage and support other shed-users participation and enjoyment the shed experience.

The aim of the shed

- To reduce the negative impacts of social isolation and loneliness on the emotional wellbeing of health-vulnerable men and veterans (in particularly, but without exclusion of women).
- To improve social confidence through participation in meaningful, creative, practical and stimulating activities, towards members re-gaining sense of purpose and belonging.
- To invest an asset-based approach; encouraging skill-sharing whereby member are encouraged to take active roles in helping manage the shed and help others to access the space.
- To improve members health awareness, independence and promote self-efficacy, with the aim of reducing and/or preventing up-scaling.

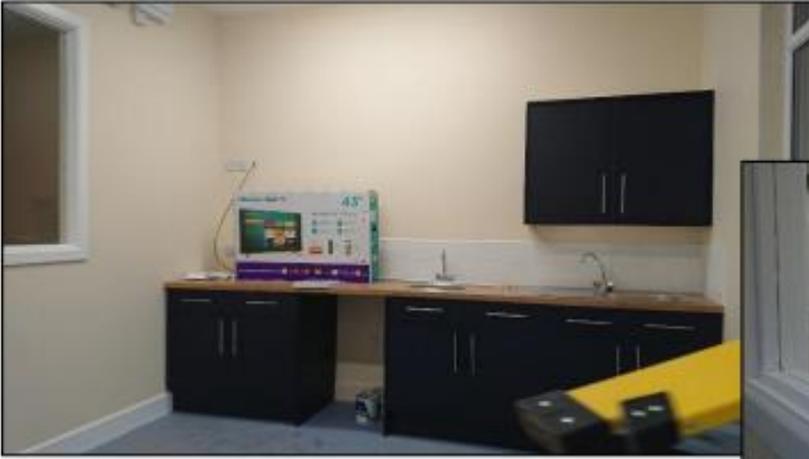
Up to date

Pre-Covid it was anticipated that the project could engage 80+ men per year in a rolling programme of induction, “make & mend” / “upcycle & recycle” technician-led activities (4 hours p/week over 4 weeks) plus volunteer-supported access to drop-in sessions and community-led activities. It was also anticipated that up to 1/3rd of each intake may go on to access the drop-in sessions. However beneficiary numbers are to be reviewed based on safe distancing guidelines.

Periods of lockdown over the past year affected building works being done. However, the conversion was completed in November 2020, but it was still not possible to have people on site to equip the shed until now. At the point of adverting this post Shed Volunteers are busy building work benches and sourcing equipment in preparation for the new worker taking up post.

The following images show how the space has been converted.





These images were taken as works were completing and before scaffolding was removed