



# Independent Evaluation of Armagh Men's Shed



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“Men don’t talk face to face; they talk shoulder to shoulder” (Golding 2007)”

## **Background and context of Armagh Men’s Sheds**

Today, Men’s Sheds are a well-known concept, recognised throughout Northern Ireland, yet 10 years ago they were virtually unheard of.

### **Men’s Sheds - Australia**

The original Men’s Shed concept originates from Australia as a response to the recognised need to improve men’s general health, specifically through encouraging socialisation and the discussion of feelings and well-being. In 2005, there were an estimated 200 Men’s Sheds operating in Australia and today the Australian Men’s Shed Association has a membership base of over 930. The impact of Men’s Sheds has been recognised by the Australian Federal Government via its inclusion in the National Male Health Policy 2010 and via direct funding support to Men’s Sheds. Men’s Sheds are now active throughout Ireland, Uk, USA, New Zealand, Canada, Finland and Greece.<sup>1</sup>

### **Men’s Sheds - Ireland**

The Irish Men’s Shed Association was formed in 2011, to represent and promote the Shed movement; they welcomed their 400<sup>th</sup> member shed in 2017. There are currently 45 sheds located in Northern Ireland registered as members with the Irish Men’s Shed Association<sup>2</sup> (IMSA) and an additional 19 registered with the Uk Men’s Shed Association<sup>3</sup>. IMSA provides support for the Sheds and as numbers of Sheds continues to grow, individual Shed members are being encouraged to take on a Shed Support Volunteer role for a 2-year period. The purpose of this role is to support IMSA in the development of new and existing sheds in each county, supporting the delivery of IMSA programmes and be the first point of contact for shed queries.

### **Armagh Men’s Shed**

The Armagh Men’s Shed initially developed through funding from the Cooperation and Working Together Older People’s Project with additional financial assistance provided by the Department for Social Development’s (now Department for Communities) Neighbourhood Renewal funding stream. The staffing on the initial project was given on a voluntary basis by Stiofán McCleary. The Armagh Men’s Shed received longer term project funding from the Big Lottery Fund Connecting Older Peoples project in October 2013, enabling the Shed to continue and expand for a further 5 years. This funding enabled the recruitment of a full-time coordinator and part time administrator and an expansion into larger premises on the original site. This phase of the Armagh Men’s Shed is being project managed and delivered in partnership with West Armagh Consortium and with support from the Southern Health and Social Care Trust.

The Armagh Shed is located on the periphery of a Neighbourhood Renewal Area. The area covers much of West Armagh and includes the housing estates of Callanbridge, Mullacreevie, Drumarg, St Patricks Park, Callan Street, Railway Street and Drumbreda and many of the beneficiaries are from this wider area. The proximity of the shed to the bus station makes it also easily accessible to beneficiaries from other areas outlying areas.

Activities that have been offered within the Armagh Men's Shed since opening are: First Aid; Beginners IT; Digital Photography; Pottery; Joinery; Cook It Course; Wood Turning; Metal Work; Puppet Making; Dementia Awareness; Reminiscence and Health Project; Gym Project; Choir and Tin Whistle; Caravan Playhouse Build; Trips; Christmas Craft Making; Boccia; A range of Health Awareness Workshops; Model Making; Walking Club; Buddy Benches and Intergenerational Projects.

The men have also given much back to the community through delivering community projects with community organisations, groups, churches, schools and community gardens. Work carried out has been delivered free of charge and has included odd jobs, landscaping, repair work and providing window boxes and buddy benches. (See Appendix 1 for a full list of Community Project partners and Organisations worked with).

The Armagh Men's Shed Facebook page states that "Armagh Men's Shed is a community based, non-commercial organisation where the focus is on the provision of a safe, friendly and inclusive social environment. It is a place where men can share their skills and knowledge with others, learn new skills and develop old skills. It is open to older men regardless of background or ability. New members are always welcome and can be assured that there is something of interest for everyone as the men have ownership of the projects and decide their own programme of events."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://mensshed.org/about-amsa/history-of-amsa/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Men%27s\\_shed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Men%27s_shed)

<sup>3</sup> <https://menssheds.org.uk/find-a-shed/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://en-gb.facebook.com/armaghmensshed/>

## Evaluation Process & Methodology

### Objectives of the Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the effectiveness and outcomes of the Armagh Men's Shed. This evaluation is a general evaluation of service, incorporating information from service users in the period 2011 to end 2017 and including recommendations for future development.

The intention of the evaluation is to:

- ▶ Evaluate and document the quality, nature and impact of the Armagh Men's Shed.
- ▶ Consult with service users and family members to document their views on the impact and effectiveness of the services and its future direction
- ▶ Consider outcomes for service users.
- ▶ Gathering the information necessary for this evaluation will enable recommendations to be made that will guide the future direction of the services.

### Methodology for the Evaluation

It was agreed with West Armagh Consortium that an evaluation carried out by Blue Moss would include the following:

- ▶ Preliminary project discussions with West Armagh Consortium
- ▶ Desk research to gather contextual information
- ▶ Face to face interviews with 9 service users
- ▶ Focus group with service user family members
- ▶ Collation and analysis of service users' questionnaires
- ▶ Collation and analysis of findings from desk research, interviews, questionnaire responses and focus group with conclusions and recommendations; compiled into a comprehensive report.

The first part of the evaluation process involved a preparation meeting between Blue Moss and West Armagh Consortium. This enabled the exact process of the evaluation to be finalised and the arrangement of the meetings required to complete the evaluation.

Following the preparation meeting questionnaires were forwarded to 91 members of the Armagh Men's shed who had used the Shed's services at some point since 2013. Face to face interviews took place with 9 service users and one focus group was held with 5 family members of services users and a further family member gave a written response. [Appendix 1]

The direct engagement with service users was particularly important through this evaluation. Each engagement focussed on four broad themes:

- ▶ Consideration of the story and personal context of the service user.
- ▶ Reflection on the service users experience of attending the Armagh Men's Shed

- ▶ Discussion regarding the service users' views on the impacts of attending the Armagh Men's Shed.
- ▶ Their views on the possible future direction of Armagh Men's Shed and any improvements that might be made.

It was particularly important that a considered and a person-centred approach was used with service users ensuring that service users felt safe and comfortable as they discussed their own personal stories and current circumstances. One aspect of this was ensuring that service users understood that the information they shared would not be confidential but would be presented in report in an entirely anonymous way. It was also explained that if they expressed certain things that they then did not want used in any report then they can make this clear at any point. [Appendix 2]

A similar explanation was given at the beginning of the focus group with service user family members. [Appendix 3]

### **Surveys**

Of the 91 surveys distributed, 38 surveys were returned; a 42% return, which is recognised as an acceptable response rate. However, it is worth noting that there were frequent non-responses to individual questions within individual surveys which will decrease the percentage return. Analysis of survey responses represents percentages as the percentage of the total question responses, not as a percentage of the total 38 survey returns.

### **Interviews**

9 men were interviewed at Armagh Men's Shed. Those interviewed were a random choice as was dependent on who was present on the day of the planned interviews. As active members were asked to complete the survey it is an assumption that the 9 individuals who were interviewed also submitted a survey. The focus of the interviews is therefore to gain a more in-depth picture of individual's personal context and an understanding of the impact for them of Armagh Men's Shed.

### **Family member focus group**

A informal focus group for family members of those attending Armagh Men's Shed was advertised. The wife or daughter of 6 men attended and one other family member submitted a response by email.

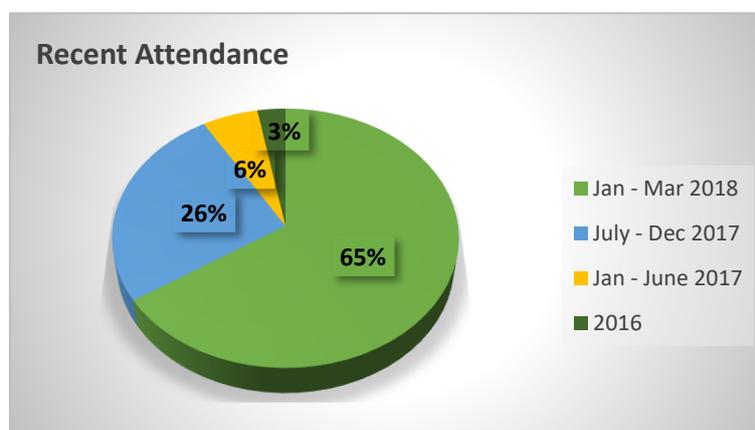
## Member Survey Responses

### Attendance

#### Attendance timeframe

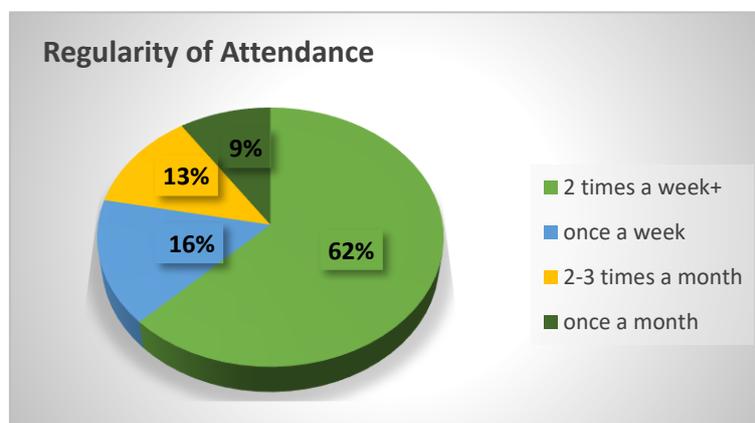
Responses indicated that the majority of the men were currently attending the Armagh Men's Shed regularly.

Of the 35 responses a total of 91% attended the Armagh Men's Shed within the last 9 months. 65% of respondents indicated that their last attendance was in Jan – early March 2018; 26% last attended between July - December 2017; 6%, Jan – June 2017 and 3% last attended in 2016.



#### Regularity

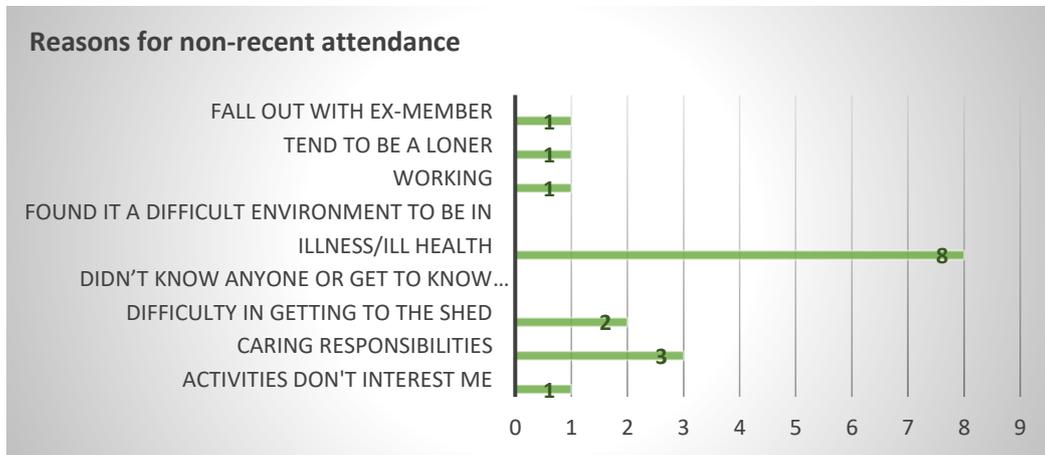
62 % of services users of the total 32 that responded attend Armagh Men's Shed at least 2 times a week; 16% attend once a week; 13% attend 2 to 3 times a month and 9% attend once a month.



## Non-Recent Attenders

### Reasons for non-recent attendance

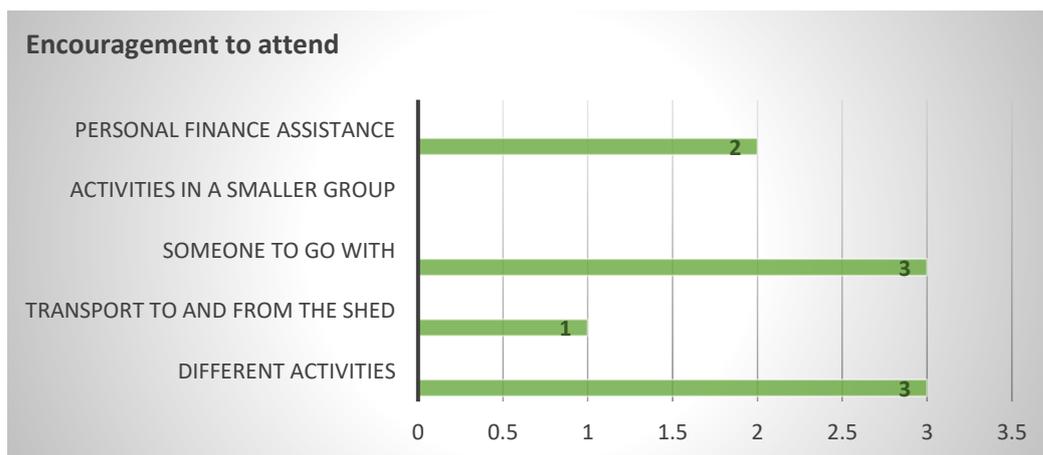
32% of the total respondents (12 individuals) indicated that they had not attended the Armagh Men's Shed in the previous 2 months and indicated reasons for this.



The predominant reason for non-attendance is illness or ill health indicated by 66% of respondents. The only other collective responses were that of caring responsibilities and difficulty in getting to the shed being reasons for not attending, although only 3 and 2 respondents indicated this respectively.

### Encouragement to return to the Armagh Men's Shed

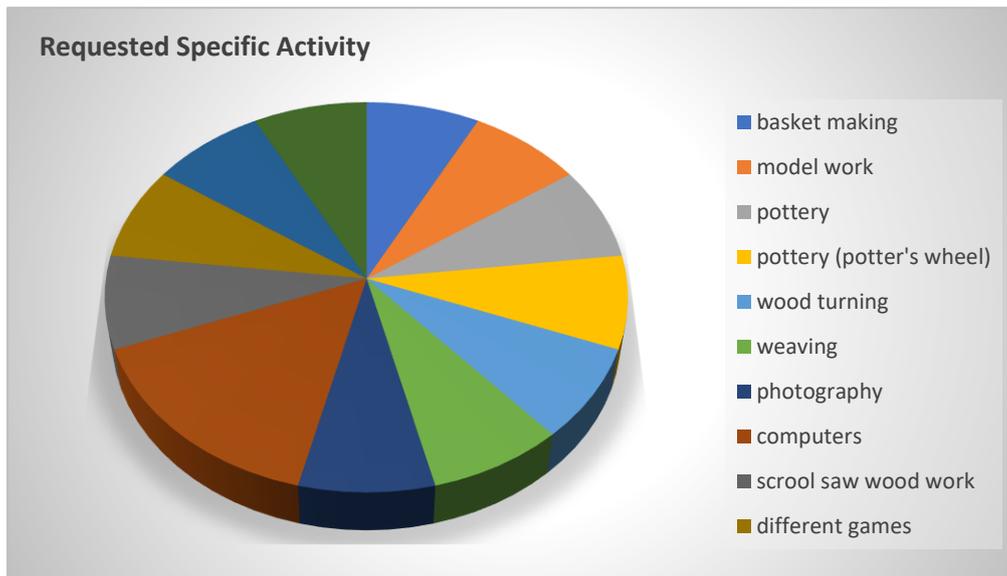
10 individuals of the 12 current non-attenders gave responses indicating what might encourage them to return to the Shed.



There is no one specific reason that respondents have indicated would encourage them to return to the Shed with nearly equal responses spread across 3 areas. 'Someone to go with' is one of the dominant responses given, yet none of the respondents had previously indicated that not knowing anyone was a reason for not attending. Although only 1 respondent indicated activities not interesting them as their reason for non-attendance, 3 have stated that different activities would encourage them to attend.

### Specific activities that current non-attenders would like to see

Although, only 1 respondent indicated activities not interesting them as their reason for non-attendance, 6 individuals from the 12 current non-attenders indicated specific activities that they would be interested in. The responses indicate a lack of any one specific missing activity as each of the activities are identified by one individual, indicating personal preference, with the exception of computers where 2 individuals indicated their interest.

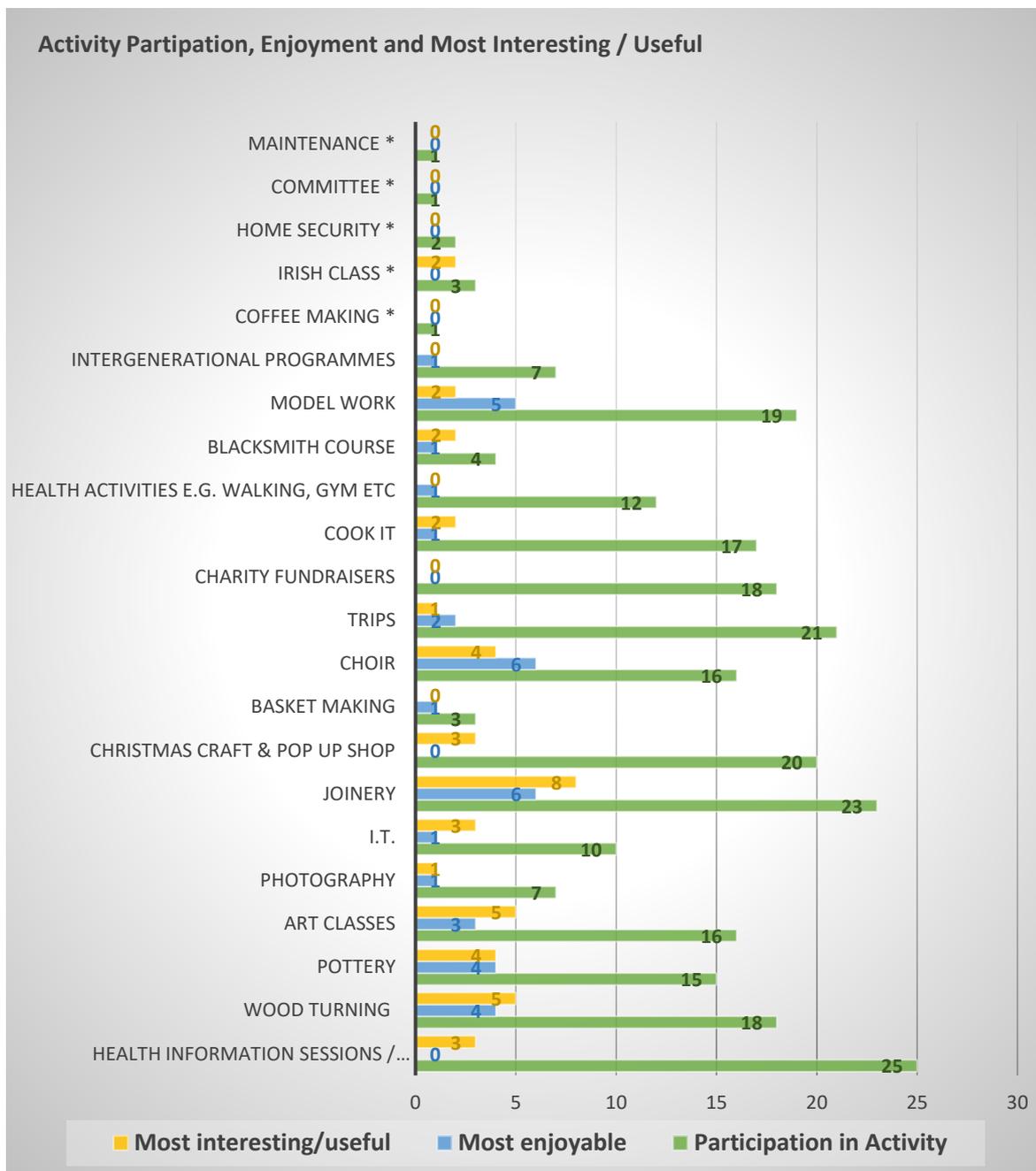


## Activities

### Activity participation

All 38 respondents identified activities that they had participated in while attending the Armagh Men's Shed. There is no one activity that stands out as encouraging greatest participation as at least half of respondents participated in 10 of the activities. Highest participation is in the health information and training sessions with over half, 66%, of respondents taking part and 58% participating in joinery. At least half of respondents participated in the Christmas craft and pop up shop, trips and model work. The blacksmith course and basket making are the least participated in with under 5 respondents indicating their involvement.

Please note that activities\* are additional activities added by participants and do not have true collective statistical responses as the other respondents did not consider these options.



### **Most interesting/useful activity**

Of 29 responses, there was no significantly most interesting /useful activity. Just over a quarter of respondents found the joinery the most interesting/useful. This was the greatest response with wood turning and art classes, both recording 17 % of responses, being the second most interesting/useful.

### **Most enjoyable**

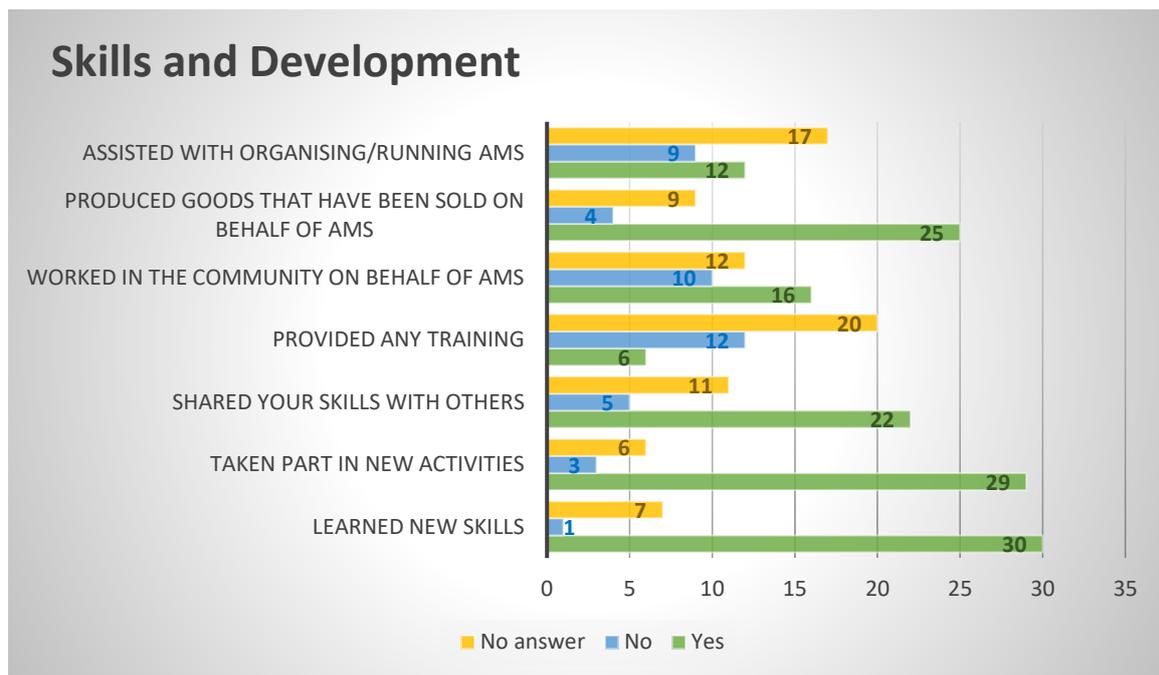
As with the most interesting/useful activity there is no one specific activity that stands out as being most enjoyable. Joinery had the most positive responses, 21%, therefore being recognised as the most enjoyable and the most interesting/useful by a majority of respondents. Model work was found to be the second most enjoyable with 17%. It is worth noting that there is no one specifically enjoyed activity which indicates that the range of activities are corresponding to individual preferences and likes.

## Impact of attending the Armagh Men's Shed

### Skills and personal development

Several respondents did not give answers to all aspects of questions therefore the number of none respondents for each element is also allocated to give a fair representation of the information.

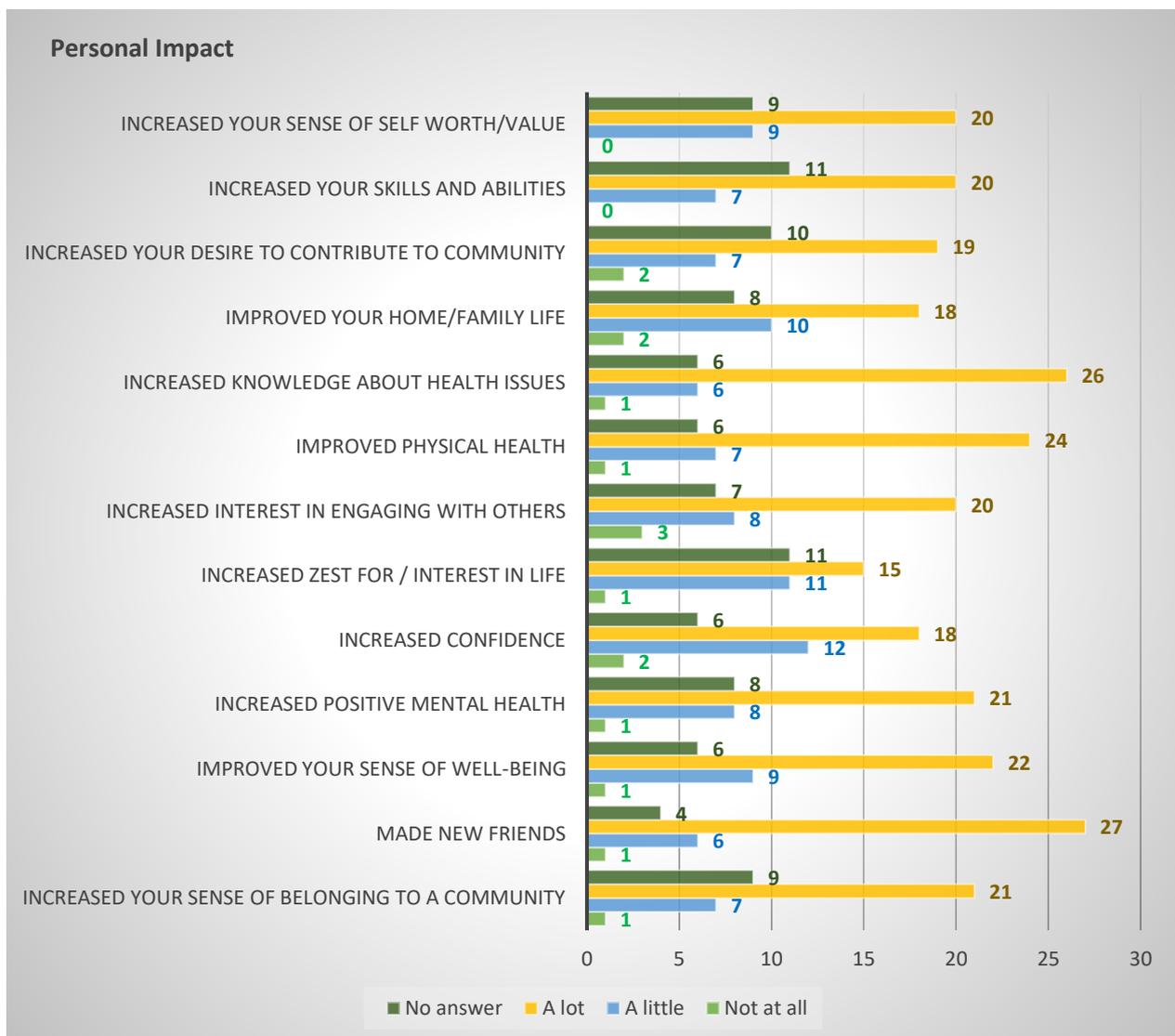
It is very evident that the vast majority of respondents, 30 of 31 - 97%, have learned new skills and 29 of 32, 91% of respondents have taken part in new activities. 86% of respondents have produced goods which have been sold on behalf of AMS and 81% shared their skills with others.



## Personal Impact

It is evident from the following graph that a distinct majority of men recognise a high level of positive personal impact from attending the Armagh Men's Shed as is represented by the dominance of yellow bars which relate to respondents identifying a lot of impact. The highest impact is seen within the 'making new friends' and 'increasing knowledge about health issues' with 79% and 78% of responses, respectively, being 'a lot' of impact. All categories have 56% + responses being recorded as 'a lot'.

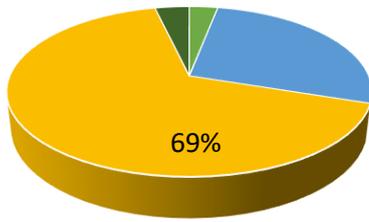
It is noteworthy that there was a minimal number of responses acknowledging no personal impact: 1 respondent within 7 categories; 2 respondents within 3 categories and 3 respondents identified no personal impact within 1 category. The highest recording of no personal impact of 3 responses represents just under 10% of the total responses for that category; an increased interest in engaging with others.



To enable a clearer representation of impact, individual categories are represented via individual charts. There are two distinct groupings: direct impact of the attending the Armagh Men's Shed on the respondents themselves and direct impact of attendance on the respondents' relationships.

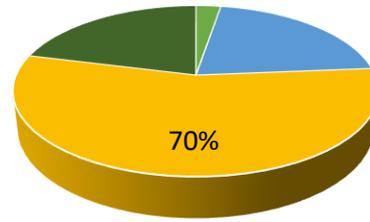
## Direct Impact on Self

### Improved your sense of well-being



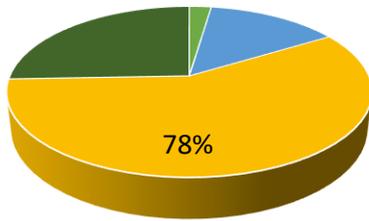
■ not at all ■ a little ■ a lot ■ no answer

### Improved Positive Mental Health



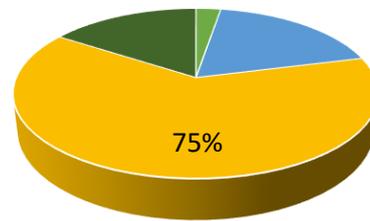
■ not at all ■ a little ■ a lot ■ no answer

### Increased Knowledge of Health Issues



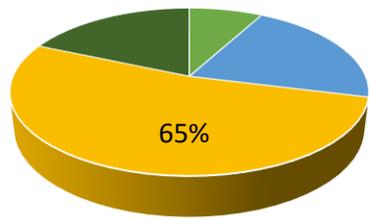
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### Improved Physical Health



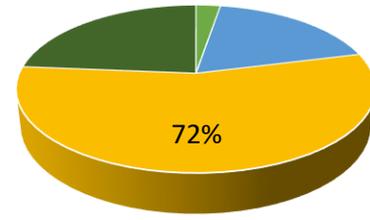
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### Increased Interest in Engagement with Others



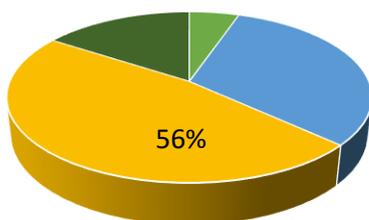
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### Increased Sense of Belonging to a Community



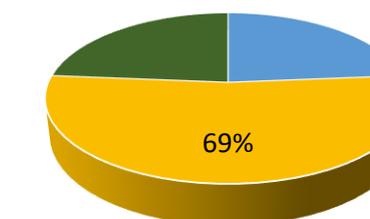
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### Increased Confidence



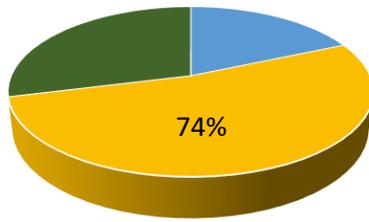
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### Increased Sense of Self Worth / Value



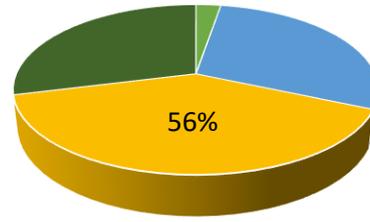
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### Increased Skills & Abilities



■ not at all ■ a little ■ a lot ■ no answer

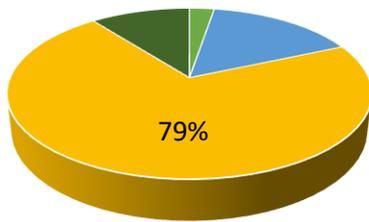
### Increased Zest for / Interest in Life



■ not at all ■ a little ■ a lot ■ no answer

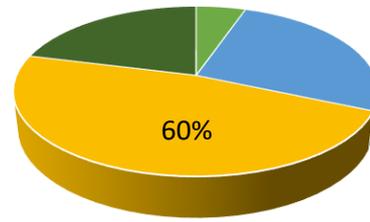
## Direct Impact on Relationships

### Made New Friends



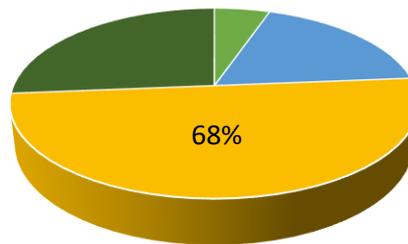
■ not at all ■ a little ■ a lot ■ no answer

### Improved Home & Family Life



■ not at all ■ a little ■ a lot ■ no answer

### Increased Desire to Contribute to Community



■ not at all ■ a little ■ a lot ■ no answer

N.B. % takes into consideration the number of non-responses and states the percentage in relation to the number of actual responses.

The most frequently recognised impacts by respondents, by over 75%, are an increased knowledge of health issues, improved physical health and have made new friends. Additional frequently recognised impacts with 70% + of respondents are improved mental health, increased sense of belonging to a community and increased skills and abilities.

## Individual Statements of Personal Impact

Quotes from the surveys responding to the question: How would you describe what being part of the Armagh Men's Shed means to you?

*It has greatly helped me with depression, without the Shed I don't know where I'd be.*

*Good craic with purpose*

*Participation in activities with other likeminded males*

*Friendship, extra knowledge of community and others' abilities and issues. learned how to support people – camaraderie*

*Being a part of something*

*Make a lot of friends and means a lot to me*

*The friendship and being able to learn new skills that I always wanted to do*

*Gets me out of the house and somewhere to go*

*Interaction with others and social friendship*

*To me it gets you out to meet new people who have the same types of problems as yourself*

*This means you have new friends*

*For me it is important that I can engage with Armagh Men's Shed alongside my other commitments as a Grandfather and husband*

*It gives me somewhere to go, activities to be involved in. I am in the company of others*

*Everything*

*A place where being part of a group improves my health and well-being, given me a purpose and makes my family happier*

*Being part of Men's Shed has improved both mental and physical health through involvement in activities. I cannot think of life without it*

*Somewhere to go*

*It has been very important to me and I always get a laugh and mental 'lift' when I attend*

*Fellowship – being wheelchair bound I don't get out much and this place is great, and the men treat me normal*

*Sense of belonging*

*I do enjoy being part of the Men's Shed. It helps me in so many ways, to me it's life*

*Increases feeling of self-worth and improves mental health*

*Very enjoyable, puts a smile on my face*

*I have lapsed quite a few months and finding it hard to get back in*

*A sense of belonging to the community and most enjoyable*

*Joyful, relaxing place to be that inspires creativity and friendship*

*Meeting new friends*

*Made new friends. Call in when I can help out in new projects*

*I'm pleased to be accepted as part of Armagh community, but from Tyrone it took me time to adapt*

*A sense of belonging and community and getting out of the house to help others*

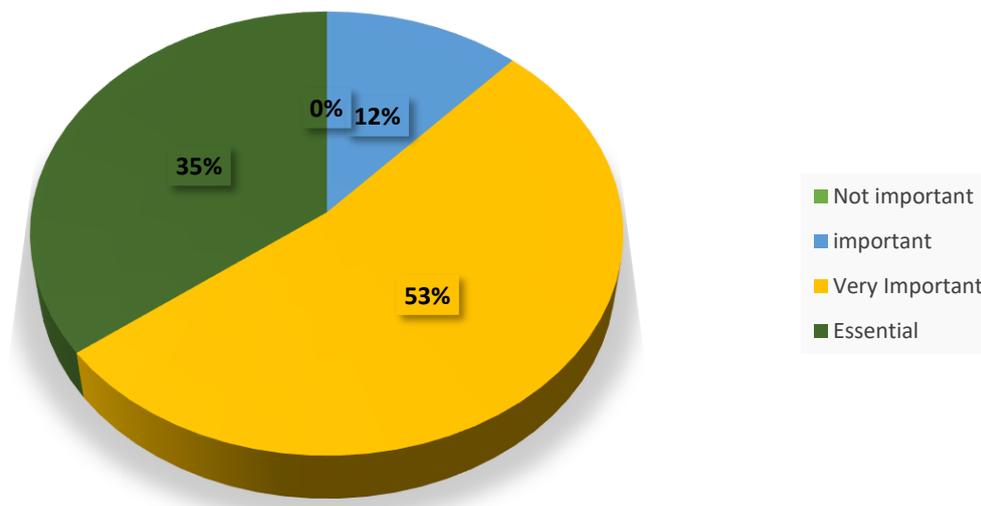
*It was very interesting*

*A great friendly family community*

*A good feeling of belonging even when I don't get too often. Somewhere to learn new skills*

## Future of Armagh Men's Shed

How important is to you to keep the Armagh Men's Shed open and running into the future?



37 of 38 respondents gave an answer to this question, with 100% indicating a positive response; that it was important for the Armagh Men's Shed to continue. A total of 88% of respondents recognised it as very important to maintain the service with 35% stating it was essential that Armagh Men's Shed is retained.

### Suggestions of how to keep Armagh Men's Shed 'Alive and Well'

There were 28 responses to this question, with 4 respondents stating that they were happy with how things were or had no suggestions. Of the 24 other responses, there was no one definite common suggestion; suggestions fell into 6 themes:

- Outside space, garden or allotment - 6 respondents
- Increase the number of members – 6 respondents
- Work within the community (including schools and with young people) – 6 respondents
- Various other activities including different games, wheel pottery, fishing trip and art – 6 respondents
- Generate income from Shed produce and shop sponsorship – 5 respondents
- Increase engagement with / involvement of members – 4 respondents

Other additional responses that were indicated by one respondent only:

- Bigger premises
- Minibus &/or roof rack for transferring goods
- Use of Armagh Men's Shed outside of hours

## Interview Responses

### Personal context

When asked to consider their personal situation prior to attending to the Armagh Men's Shed; 5 men responded that they had retired from employment and 4 were not working due to health issues. 5 men indicated that they had specific mental ill-health issues and 3 had specific physical health issues with 2 men making specific reference to the feeling of being 'trapped in the house'.

### Impact

#### Positive mental health

Although the men's contexts and circumstances were different there was one very evident common impact. All of the men emphasised the ability to share their stories and feelings to the other men within Armagh Men's Shed in a way that would not otherwise happen. There was an acknowledgement of being considerably more open and being able to "get something off my chest" as there was always someone to talk to and a recognition that there were "people who were in the same boat and therefore understood".

*"It's the people that make the place... the most important thing is the kettle"*

*"Men are very secretive, I've never been as open...there's a much higher degree of openness among the men... we sit and listen to other people's problems as well as share."*

*"It's amazing how we would tell each other about ourselves and our own home life that we would never say to anyone else."*

A strong sense of friendship, camaraderie and good craic were repeatedly referred to and the acknowledgement of support from the other men, including practical support during long term physical illness.

The majority of the men interviewed also referred to the importance of Armagh Men's Shed as enabling them to get out of the house as this was somewhere to go and look forward to, where they had purpose and something to do via a range of activities. This was mentioned as specifically important during the winter months.

5 men directly stated that attending the Armagh Men's Shed has had an extremely positive impact on their mental health and there is evidence from all 9 interviews of the Armagh Men's Shed having a positive impact on mental health. 2 of the 5 men who acknowledged specific mental health issues stated that their health professionals have remarked on the positive difference in their state of mental health.

*"... my medication has been reduced as I can cope. I don't think this would have happened without coming here."*

“In a dark place and needed something, for me, my wife, for everyone, to put a smile back on my face. Things were tough you know... Right place, right time.”

### **Personal development**

The importance of having “something to do” and a purpose was stated by the majority of the men interviewed. 2/3rds of interviewees directly referred to the importance of the activities; reawakening old skills, improving on existing skills and learning new skills. There was a distinct sense of pride in the produce made within Armagh Men’s Shed, with many of the men referring to specific items that have been produced.

The choir was mentioned by 3 men with a great sense of pride in their achievement of singing in front of the Irish President. Each acknowledged that singing was not something that they imagined themselves ever doing. 3 men also specifically referred to using their skills within Armagh Men’s Shed via transferring craft skills to other men, promoting the work of the Shed and maintenance of the Shed.

The underlying idea throughout conversations regarding activity participation was the benefit of having something productive to do. There was also a strong sense of collective achievement voiced whether via large scale production of smaller items or production of a large singular item.

“...I like the courses, keep my brain going, don’t want to be sitting watching tv”

“...working with my hands and using my brain and doing things collectively with other like-minded people.”

“... the skills you learn. What you make is fantastic.”

### **Family relationships**

4 interviewees made specific reference to the impact of attending Armagh Men’s Shed on their family relationships. The men acknowledged that they did not wish to be at home all the time; there was a need for space outside of the family home where the men could go to, both for themselves as well as for their families or wives. 2 men specifically referred to their wives noticing a positive difference that Armagh Men’s Shed has made to their lives.

“My wife says, I am brighter, have more go. Thinks it’s the best thing.”

### **Suggestions for improvements to Armagh Men's Shed**

4 interviewees indicated a need for bigger premises so that more work could be done, and bigger projects undertaken. There was a statement of "everyone being on top of each other" in the current premises as space is limited. 2 men suggested the need for outdoor space to access in good weather and possibly a gardening space to draw in men with different interests. One man interviewed stated the need for better dust extraction and the need to reach out to men who would benefit from attending.

### **Future of Armagh Men's Shed**

The clearly dominant statement from interviewees regarding the future of Armagh Men's Shed was that it would struggle to exist without funded staff input. All interviewees acknowledged the invaluable contribution of Kathleen and Stiofán and questioned Armagh Men's Shed's sustainability if staffing no longer existed. 2 men felt that there were the skill sets within the group and they could get a group of men to take responsibility if required; however, it was acknowledged that this would require a huge change in mindset from the existing environment.

## Family Member Focus Group Responses

### Impact

#### Reducing isolation

Family members recognised a key impact of Armagh Men's Shed as 'getting men out of the house'. One family member referred to their father as being previously very isolated and withdrawn. Armagh Men's Shed is recognised as providing a space for having company and good craic and recognised as more than a building; a family.

*"... the opportunity to escape from loneliness, isolation and depression, and to have a reason to get up in the morning as their day has purpose."*

*"The change for our family is huge, Daddy is happy, he has a purpose and looks after himself a bit better, he wants to stay healthy because the shed needs him"*

#### Increased positive health

All the family members emphasised the importance that Armagh Men's Shed had in raising awareness about health issues. They acknowledged that their men explored and learned about health issues that they otherwise would not have access to; as they would not attend GP appointment for preventive measures. One family member emphasised that this literally saved her husband's life, as a health session at Armagh men's Shed identified a serious health issue that needed immediate treatment. The positive impact of Armagh Men's Shed on mental health was also recognised as the men share their feelings and look out for each other.

*"... back to being himself; happy and chatty"*

#### Personal development

Family members referred to the range of activities that Armagh Men's Shed enables their men to explore, especially the opportunity to engage with the more non-stereotypical male activities such as art and the choir. There was also acknowledgement of transfer of skills learned at Armagh Men's Shed to the home via increased confidence in home maintenance

#### Impact on family members

The family members identified that Armagh Men's Shed also had an indirect impact on them, enabling them to have their own space and get their men "from out under their feet". The importance of the men having their own space that they, the women, did not intrude upon was also emphasised. In conjunction with increased independence for all parties, participating in separate activities was also recognised as having a positive impact on returning home as there were things to talk about and share.

#### Suggestions for improvements to Armagh Men's Shed

Family members stated one improvement necessary was with specific reference to catering for mobility issues when outside of the Shed premises, on trips etc. There could be increased

planning and consideration of mobility issues, specifically wheelchair access, to external venues so that all members can participate in events. Information regarding venues etc needs communicated to members with mobility issues.

### **Future of Armagh Men's Shed**

Family members also queried whether Armagh Men's Shed would continue without funded staff as Kathleen and Stiofán are recognised as the leaders and motivators. Although it was agreed that the men work well as a team and can work things out amongst themselves it was felt that there needed to be someone to lead Armagh Men's Shed forward.

It was acknowledged that the men have great fundraising ideas and another suggestion was to monopolise on the "beautiful handmade items" produced with the Armagh Men's Shed. Increased promotion of the social enterprise aspect could help with financial sustainability with a more visible presence in the town with street frontage.

## Conclusions

**Attendance:** The majority of men are regular attenders of the Armagh Men's Shed although there is the occasional incidence of individuals not returning, often due to ill-health of themselves or family members. In conversation with the men, the difficulty in first attending the Shed was referred to on several occasions. It was stated that some of the men who now attend regularly found it difficult to first walk in the door and the men were aware of others that they thought would benefit greatly from attending the Armagh Men's Shed yet don't.

**Activities:** Armagh Men's Shed offers a wide range of activities as outline previously. It is worth noting that there is no one specifically enjoyed activity which indicates that the range of activities are corresponding to individual preferences and likes. Information gathered indicates that there are no specific activities identified as lacking although there were suggestions made by individuals that would most possibly be of interest across the membership.

The choir stands out from the other activities offered as being a challenge and different from men's 'normal' activities. The choir is spoken proudly of by the men, with a great sense of achievement as they have risen to a new challenge and performed to prestigious audiences, including the President of Ireland.

**Importance of health awareness workshops:** Conversations with the men and the men's family members emphasised the importance of the health awareness sessions. The health workshops within the Armagh Men's Shed have vastly increased the members knowledge of their own health and clearly act as ill-health prevention measures that the men would otherwise not access; only going to the doctor once an issue/problem was identified.

**Positive impact:** Information gathered shows with clarity the considerable positive impact of attending the Armagh Men's Shed, on the lives of the men directly and their relationships with others. The visual pie chart representation of the level of impact survey responses clearly show the dominance of a high level of recognised positive impact across all 13 questioned areas of impact. It is impossible to question the positive impact on the men's personal development, mental and physical health and their relationships with each other, their families and their community. As accounted previously, several of the men interviewed acknowledged significant mental health issues; for these men, Armagh Men's Shed is a very necessary space. There is a fundamental sense of belonging and recognition of the Men's Shed as being a safe space for those that attend; it is this environment that encourages openness and support within the men that would not otherwise exist. Being in the company of others as a collective, as part of a community, enables opportunities for life to be more than about oneself - this is extremely valued by the men. There is a clear sense of being the supporter as well as the supported, across the membership.

**Future of the Armagh Men's Shed:** There was a unanimous response that it was important for the Armagh Men's Shed to continue, with the majority of men stating that it was very important or essential that the Shed continues. It is important to connect this level of response to the degree of positive impact that the Shed has and recognise what the men would lose if the Armagh Men's Shed were to close.

It is clear from conversations with the men that the two Armagh Men's Shed staff members are highly respected and valued by the men and their family members for the work that they carry out as well as the relationships that they have built with and the support they give to the men. There is also a high level of dependence upon the staff within the Armagh Men's Shed which is recognised by the men and their family members. Armagh Men's Shed is one of the less common staff supported Sheds and not run solely by the members. Staff have enabled a strong Shed to be established and develop. Members are involved at decision making levels via the management committee, but it is the staff that the men and their families recognise as running the Armagh Men's Shed. The majority of men interviewed, and the family members did not think that the Shed could continue without staffing support. Of those men that did think that the men themselves could run the Shed without staffing support, they did acknowledge that there would need to be a considerable mindset shift. Change in staffing would require a change in culture within the Shed, a change that would need to be proactively encouraged over a considerable length of time. It is also important to acknowledge that not all members would have the desire or capacity to be involved in collective responsibility for the management and development of the Shed.

## Recommendations

### Attendance

- Implement a buddy system for bringing new members. As potential new members are identified it could be beneficial to encourage one of the existing members to collect / walk with new people to their first few visits with specific support for that individual if required.
- Staff consider increased outreach to other potential members and increased promotion of the Armagh Men's Shed. Staff already have a good relationship with the SHSCT Promoting Wellbeing Team and the ABC Council. It could be beneficial to further promote the impact of the Shed to and increased linkages with the Community Mental Health Team, other community health teams and local doctors' surgeries.
- Hard copy promotional materials could be printed and placed in key Community focal points. These materials should ensure that they counteract the perception of "old men's" Shed and promote the positive aspects and impacts.

### Activities

- The range of activities is broad but there may be an opportunity to introduce new or different activities via a suggestion board for activities, kept in the tea room. Members can add activities or acknowledge their interest in an already stated activity by adding a ✓, allowing the level of interest in any activity to be gauged.

### Future of the Armagh Men's Shed

- Increased involvement of men in the day to day management of the Shed should encourage a shift from dependence on staff to interdependence across the members. This would need participatory discussions with the men leading to identification of key activities/roles with identified potential persons of responsibility for each activity. This would enable staff to focus on sustainability and succession with active mentoring of the next leaders of the Shed.
- When the men are confident in running their own Shed there is additional opportunity for personal development through sharing their learning and supporting new Sheds through the IMSA Shed Support Volunteer programme.
- There is an opportunity to seek funding, possibly through Awards for All, for the support of organisational development and exploration of succession planning for the Armagh Men's Shed, enabling exploration of roles, committee training etc by an independent facilitator. This would encourage the beginning of a culture shift moving away from being a staff led Shed.
- Some of the members were focused on the bigger premises being the future of the Armagh Men's Shed. A feasibility study of possible premises that continue to offer ease of access and neutrality could be carried out. This will define whether new

premises are a possibility and if not, be removed from discussions. An option of a split site could be explored, maintaining the current premises with an additional site for specific activities.

### **Income generation**

- Armagh Men's Shed is continuing to work towards the development of a social enterprise model. It is recommended that this be explored with the members being involved in developing strategy and implementation of a mini business plan. Independent facilitation of this process could be included in an organisational development grant application.
- Fundraising is not the focus of the choir and nor should the primary focus become this. However, the choir has great fundraising potential; a secondary function could be income generation through a performance 'fee/donation' or the encouragement of donations to the Armagh Men's Shed via a donation box at performances. A concert fundraiser alongside another community group / young people could also be a potential opportunity and promotional tool.

### **Funding**

- Armagh Men's Shed has been extremely successful in project funding via the Big Lottery Fund. The positive impact on men's mental health is very evident and there is opportunity for funding via mental health project grant funding. Staff could also consider exploratory conversations with the local mental health service commissioners as to what funding might be available to the Armagh Men's Shed; both via mental ill health prevention and restoration of positive mental health.
- In line with decreasing staff responsibilities for day to day management of the Shed, staff could increase their focus on linking with the Southern Health and Social Care Trust; promoting the Shed and its impacts, promoting the Shed for Life model (IMSA) and advocating for a commitment of funding.

## Final Comments

It has been an extremely interesting piece and positive piece of work to be involved with. The Armagh Men's Shed is a special place that nurtures friendship, camaraderie and support, encourages personal development and sharing of skills sets and ultimately, has a high level of positive impact on the mental and physical health of the men who attend. It was a pleasure to meet the men and be welcomed into their space, see their craft skills, listen to their individual stories and hear of the personal value and importance of the Armagh Men's Shed to them and their family members.

Thanks to the members of Armagh Men's Shed and their family members for their participation, openness and candour and Kathleen and Stiofán for their assistance in ensuring member and family member responses and support.

Evaluation undertaken by Clare Cuthbert



## APPENDIX 1

### Community Project Partners

Clay Primary School  
Darkley Primary School  
Foley School  
St Patrick's Primary School  
Lisnally Special School  
Mount St Catherines Little Buds Playgroup  
The Appleby Trust  
Run for Autism  
Scotwell House Day Nursery  
Station Road Resource Centre  
Coláiste Chaitríona  
Naíscóil na Caille

St Patricks's High School Keady  
St Patricks College Armagh  
Amma Centre  
First Presbyterian Church Armagh  
St Patrick's Ballymacnab  
St Malachy's Armagh  
Apple Mews Care Home  
Children's Kidney Fund  
Macmillan Cancer Support  
Southern Area Hospice Services  
Armagh Theatre Group  
Mullinure Care of the Elderly

### Groups AMS has worked with

Aware Defeat Depression  
Chest Heart and Stroke  
Public Health Agency  
Advice NI  
Volunteer Now  
Cancer Focus NI  
Patient and Client Council  
Southern Health and Social Care Trust  
Bowel Cancer UK  
Diabetes UK  
Action Cancer  
Armagh Banbridge and Craigavon District  
Council  
Moneypenny Blacksmith Workshop  
Armagh Library  
Aontas  
Hidden Hearing

Sean Hughes SPH Consultancy  
Heart Start  
Southern Regional College  
Mount Ida Pottery  
Action Mental Health  
Action Cancer  
BBC Radio Ulster  
Big Telly Theatre Company  
Fab Lab  
Marty Rafferty School of Music  
IMSA  
Northern Ireland Housing Executive  
Irish Department of Foreign Affairs  
Co Operation Ireland  
PIPS Newry and Mourne  
Numerous Men's Sheds in both Ireland  
and Scotland



Which of the above did you find most interesting / useful? .....

Which of the above did you find most enjoyable? .....

5. Through attending the Men's Shed have you....?

	Yes	No
Learned new skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taken part in new activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shared your skills with others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provided any training e.g. Keady Men's Shed or St Catherine's	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked in the community on behalf of the Men's Shed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Produced goods that have been sold on behalf of the Men's Shed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assisted with the organising / running of the Men's Shed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Through attending the Men's Shed, what impact has this on had on you?

Have you ...	Not at all	a little	a lot
Increased your sense of belonging to a community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Made new friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved your sense of well being	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased positive mental health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased confidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased zest for / interest in life	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased interest in engaging with others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved physical health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased knowledge about health issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved your home/family life	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased your desire to contribute to your community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased your skills and abilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased your sense of self-worth / value	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. How would you describe what being part of the Armagh Men's Shed means to you?

.....  
.....

8. How important is it to you to keep the Armagh Men's Shed open and running into the future?

Not important  Important  Very important  Essential

9. What ideas do you have that might make Armagh Men's Shed even better and keep it alive and well into the future?

.....  
.....  
.....

**THANK YOU!**

**We greatly appreciate you taking the time complete the survey.**

### **APPENDIX 3**

**The key questions for face to face interviews with members are as follows. Subsidiary questions were asked as relevant to each specific interview.**

- Describe your personal circumstances before attending the Armagh Men's Shed?
- What does the Armagh Men's Shed mean to you?
- What impact has the Armagh Men's Shed had on you, your family?
- What suggestions do you have to improve the Armagh Men's Shed?
- The Armagh Men's Shed currently receives funding that enables staffing support via Kathleen and Stiofán. How do you see the future of the Armagh Men's Shed if that funding no longer exists?

#### **APPENDIX 4**

**The key questions put to the family members' focus group are as follows. Subsidiary questions were asked as relevant to each specific interview.**

- What do you see as the main successes of the Armagh Men's Shed?
- What difference has the Armagh Men's Shed made to your family member?
- What impact has your family member's attendance at the Armagh Men's Shed made to you?
- What words would use to describe the Armagh Men's Shed?
- What ideas do you have to sustain &/or improve the Armagh Men's Shed?



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