



Project Evaluation

January 2016





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Introduction to Report

The Action Mental Health (AMH) Men's Shed programme aims to help combat social isolation, improve self worth, self esteem and mental and physical health of men aged 60+. This programme is being delivered with financial support from Big Lottery Fund and as such is subject to an independent external evaluation to evidence delivery impacts and outcomes.

This report aims to provide an in-depth summative evaluation of the Men's Sheds programme. This section will introduce the programme and provide an overview of lead and delivery partners as well as the programme focus, objectives and outcomes.

Introduction to Action Mental Health (AMH)

Action Mental Health is the programme lead partner and is a local charity which works to enhance the quality of life and the employability of people with mental health needs or a learning disability in Northern Ireland. Founded in 1963 AMH changes the lives of those living with mental ill health and promotes resilience and well-being to future generations. AMH is Northern Ireland's largest voluntary provider of vocational and employment training programmes for people with mental health needs and / or a learning disability.

Mission Statement

"To make a positive difference in people's mental health"

From humble beginnings in Downpatrick as the Industrial Therapy Organisation (ITO), AMH has grown to deliver services and projects across the country for all members of our communities. The organisation's health promotion work takes place in schools, cross-border counties and with local employers. AMH employment services assist people to remain in work as well as providing skills and sourcing opportunities for those who want to re-enter the workforce.

The charity have specific projects for young people, older people, people living with alcohol abuse, employees, employers, people managing long-term conditions, partnership work with other mental health and disability charities as well as working within our prisons.

AMH provides its clients with many opportunities, encouraging them to adopt healthier lifestyles and to widen their social networks. The organisation also perseveres to provide its clients with the skills to build a better future, set personal goals, develop coping skills, re-engage with society and become more employable. Over 1,700 people benefit from AMH services each year and AMH projects include:

- **AMH New Horizons:** Offers a wide variety of activities aimed at adults with mental ill-health who wish to improve skills and gain qualifications which will enhance their quality of life and their prospects of accessing employment. The project is available across Northern Ireland and they have project sites at Bangor, Derriagh, Downpatrick, Newry, Newtownards, Belfast, Antrim, Derry (Foyle), Lurgan, Fermanagh and Portadown.
- **AMH Employment Programmes:** Prepare and support people with mental health problems and/or a learning disability to undertake a range of employment opportunities including work placements, voluntary work, permitted or open employment and further training. AMH has a number of government funded contracts which promote the employability of clients including Workable and the Work connect.
- **AMH Promote:** Based in Bangor and supports adults with a learning disability to engage in accredited training and employment programmes. Social and recreational activities are part of the structured range of activities on offer.
- **AMH MensSana:** A mental and emotional resilience project delivered in schools, youth settings and communities across Northern Ireland. The project promotes sound mental health and encourages people experiencing mental ill health to seek appropriate help.

Partner Organisations

AMH has secured Age NI, Volunteer Now and South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust as project partners to support the Men's Sheds programme delivery. These partners were identified as having a specific interest in meeting the needs of, providing services to and / or wishing to target older men. Each partner offers knowledge, skills, experience and networks which can be utilised in a collaborative manner to support the delivery of outcomes and outputs and with a view to making a positive impact on the quality of life of older men. AMH also talked with statutory primary and mental health care staff in the target areas and have good on-going communication with statutory, community and private care homes in the area. Community organisations will benefit through having a service they can refer older men to and have been identified through existing community contact directories and networks.

Age NI

Age NI is the leading charity for older people in Northern Ireland. The charity was formed as the result of the merger between Age Concern and Help the Aged in 2009. Age NI's vision is a world where everyone can love later life.

Age NI believes that living longer should be celebrated and that those who need help should be supported. The organisation exist to support more people to love later life now and in the future.. The charity is dedicated to delivering bespoke care services, provide advice and advocacy, fundraise and influence those within a position of power to improve later life for all persons within Northern Ireland.

The charity tackle ageism where it presents itself fight for sufficient resources ,equity and enough money for older people to live in dignity and demand the quality of care that people in later life deserve. Through joint working with older people's groups, Age NI aim to strengthen the voice and the influence of older people in their communities by building eleven strong age sector networks throughout Northern Ireland. These groups are at the front-line delivering various practical services and creating important social contact opportunities. Age NI's roles are noted below.

- *Provide advice and care:* The charity deliver care services, provide advice and advocacy, fundraise and influence our decision-makers to improve later life for us all
- *Support local groups:* Age NI aim to strengthen the voice and the influence of older people in their communities by building strong age sector networks
- *Campaign and influence policy:* Age NI educates and lobbies the NI Executive, Assembly and Authorities to ensure that older people's issues are represented.
- *Offers products and services:* Age NI Enterprises, provides a range of products and services to support independent living and financial security.

Volunteer Now

Volunteer Now is the lead organisation which works to promote, develop and support volunteering across Northern Ireland. The organisation's work enhances recognition for the contribution volunteers make, provides access to opportunities, encourages people to volunteer and provides information and support to volunteer involving organisations on volunteer management and safeguarding vulnerable groups.

- Volunteer Now Enterprises Ltd supports the work and activities of the charity, Volunteer Now. Volunteer Now Enterprises Ltd delivers training and capacity building programmes, provides assessment against quality standards, consultation and research services, and all forms of bespoke support to volunteer involving organisations.
- Volunteer Now & Volunteer Now Enterprises Ltd provide a wide range of practical support to improve how organisations involve volunteers including information, research, consultations, membership and specialist volunteering services.

South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

The Trust is an integrated organisation, incorporating acute hospital services, community health and social services and serves a population of approximately 345,000 people with a budget of almost £500 million. The Trust covers the local government districts of Ards, North Down, Down and Lisburn.

The main hospital bases are: Ards Community Hospital, Bangor Community Hospital, Downe Hospital, Downshire Hospital, Lagan Valley Hospital and the Ulster Hospital. Community bases are located in many local towns and villages from Moira in the West to Portaferry in the East and from Bangor in the North to Newcastle in the South. The Trust employs in the region of 10,000 staff across a range of disciplines as follows:

- Admin & Clerical
- Maintenance
- Ancillary & General
- Nurses & Midwives
- Social Work
- Professional & Technical
- Medical & Dental

Men's Shed Programme Introduction

The AMH Men's Shed project was established to help combat social exclusion and improve the self-worth, self-esteem and mental and physical health of men aged 60+ who are at risk of social isolation and physical / mental ill health. AMH established "Men's Shed" projects at existing AMH premises at Antrim, Downpatrick and Enniskillen to address the following issues:

- Need to target 'hard to reach' and at risk men aged 60+ who are socially isolated e.g. recently retired, bereaved, living alone or in institutional care.
- Health and social care needs of men aged 60+ (including mental and physical health needs) who feel that existing social networks, activities and health and social care services are inaccessible and not relevant or appropriate to them.
- Men's low self-esteem and decreased motivation (through a programme planned and managed by the men themselves including volunteering / citizenship activities).
- Issues around lack of contact and misunderstanding between younger and older people and the promotion of inter-generational understanding.

Men's Sheds' are physical structures housing activity programmes for older men which vary according to the men's interests, a place where men feel at home and pursue practical interests with a high degree of autonomy. Men can become regular shed members and attend the programme on a regular or drop in basis. The Sheds are places of skill-sharing and informal learning, of individual pursuits and community projects, of purpose, achievement and social interaction, a place of leisure where men come together to work.

In all cases the shed programmes included physical and mental health monitoring for men at risk of ill health and promotional activities and opportunities for internal and external volunteering for men at risk of low self-esteem, decreased motivation and subsequent mental and physical ill health. The 3 sheds also incorporated inter-generational activity.



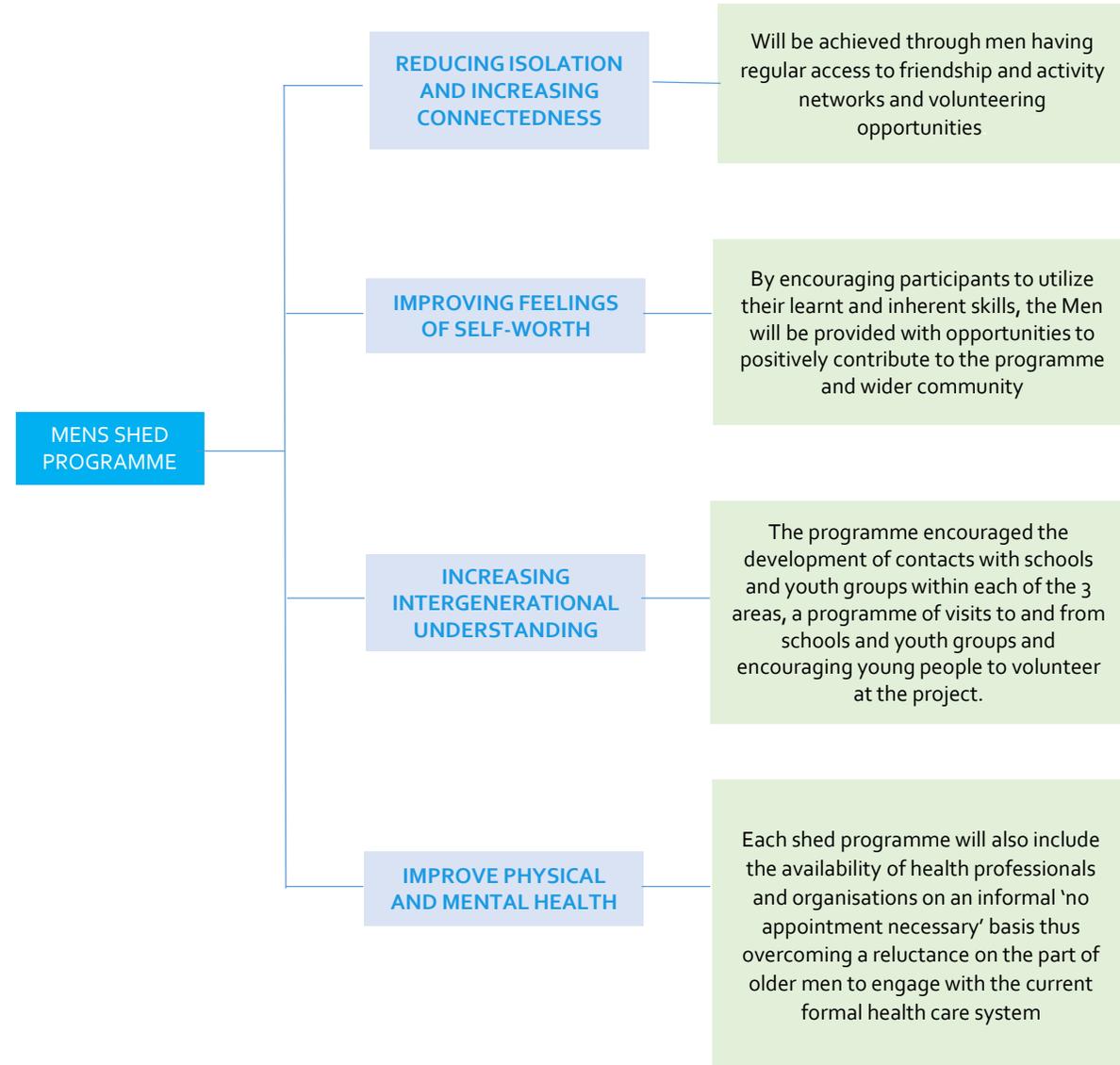
Men's Shed Programme Introduction (Cont'd)

The delivery method involved the establishment of an activity programme in each of the 3 sheds decided on and led by the men who would attend the Men's Shed programme with project staff support and facilitation. This helped to guarantee project relevance and 'buy in'.

The programme aims to address 4 key outcomes:

- Reduce social isolation and create more "community connectedness" amongst hard to reach socially isolated men aged 60+
- Improve inter- generational contact and better understanding between older men and younger people
- Enhance mental and physical well-being amongst hard to reach and socially isolated men aged 60+
- Improve feelings of self-worth amongst hard to reach socially isolated men aged 60+

The adjacent diagram outlines the proposed delivery method aligned to each outcome.



Introduction

This section outlines the process agreed by Action Mental Health and the external evaluator in completing the final evaluation exercise. It identifies the methodology used to collect and collate relevant information that has formed the basis upon which the programme is being evaluated. The methodology activity conducted to complete this interim evaluation report is presented below:

- Regular in-depth meetings with the Programme Co-Ordinator.
- Desktop review of programme information including data collected through the Men's Sheds programme and Action Mental Health.
- Dedicated visits to each of the three Men's Sheds locations in Antrim, Downpatrick and Enniskillen. At each site bespoke and direct consultation was conducted with:
 - Individual interviews with Programme Staff and Volunteers.
 - Focus groups with Programme participants (shedders).
 - Telephone consultation with family members.
- Direct face to face consultation with Steering Group partners.
- Dedicated presentation to Action Mental Health and Programme Coordinator.

This activity was conducted between June to September and utilised a mixture of methods to engage participants, but mainly focused on direct face to face contact. This allows scope to probe and elaborate on key information thus increasing the quality of information generated.



OUTCOME: IMPROVE FEELINGS OF SELF-WORTH AMONGST HARD TO REACH AND SOCIALLY ISOLATED MEN AGED 60+

Our project aims to help participants ignite past interests and provide opportunities for the men to utilise their inherent and learnt skills in order for them to still feel valued. Further, the project aims to encourage these men to think positively and increase their confidence with regards to actually contributing to the wider community.

Indicator	Actual (as of January 2016)	Commentary/Analysis
210 men actively engaging in project activities	234 men have engaged to date	234 men have engaged with the project to date, this exceeds the set target. 92% of participants have reported that they are continuing to use or improve their personal strengths, skills and talents. Since joining the shed, 78% of men have maintained or improved the belief that they can make positive changes in their lives. Comments include <i>"Its lovely to get out somewhere, to meet other men and have people to talk to."</i>
30 men taking on volunteer management and support activities	30+	This has happened organically with members taking responsibility for joinery, gardening, weaving, art, picture framing and bicycle repair using their individual skills to impart knowledge to their peers which is empowering for all concerned. Local advisory groups have been established in each of the sheds with thirty men taking part. Throughout the project the men have donated hampers to local charities, and taken part in a Christmas tree festival along with attending other community events.
350 men reporting improved self worth	215	Following external evaluations and consultation, it was found that a total of 98% of participants commented positively in relation to feelings of improved self respect. In addition to these findings, 92% of men reported maintained or improved feelings of self worth through engagement in the sheds. Below is a comment from one shedder: <i>"When I retired I felt my life had no purpose, like a nomad. Wondering about here to there with no purpose. When I found out about the shed I had no hesitation in becoming a member. I thoroughly enjoy the company & like learning new skills and learning new things I thought I wasn't capable of."</i>

Introduction

This section outlines a quantitative analysis of the programme over its three years of delivery (January 2013 to January 2016) in line with its projected targets and milestones as agreed with Big Lottery at project commencement. The following series of tables presents a quantitative analysis of each programme outcome and associated milestones. For ease of reference actual programme delivery is presented in relation to agreed indicators / milestones, followed by a brief analysis of performance against projected targets. This commentary / analysis is informed by on-going monitoring and evaluation carried out by AMH throughout the programme delivery and supplementary consultation conducted by external evaluators.

OUTCOME: REDUCE SOCIAL ISOLATION AND INCREASE “COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS” AMONGST HARD TO REACH, SOCIALLY ISOLATED MEN AGED 60+

Our project aims to reduce feelings and incidents of social isolation and help the men re-engage with arts and crafts, their peer group and their communities. It will support the men to realise their that they are not alone and to engage with a programme that will help them alleviate social isolation issues.

Indicator	Actual (as of January 2016)	Commentary/Analysis
100 men reporting increase in number and quality of friendships and other social supports	98	Following an evaluation of the survey that participants engaged with, it was clear that the Men’s Shed sufficiently helped address this issue. 44% (103 men) completed a minimum of baseline and stage 1 questionnaire. 95% of men state they have improved or maintained their friendships and social supports since joining the shed. Comments include; “I retired last year and was worried about being inactive. The shed has changed all that. I would be lost without the camaraderie and friendliness that the shed provides.” In addition to these positive findings, 100% of respondents stated that they made new friends through the project with the average number of friends made from the Shed recorded at 13, contributing towards reducing feelings of isolation amongst this cohort. In addition to these findings, 87% of men noted that the friendships they have developed are extremely positive.
300 men reporting less social isolation and more 'community connectedness	217 men noted maintained or improved feelings of community connectedness 187 men noted maintained or improved feelings of social inclusion 199 men noted they do not feel isolated at all	93% of men report they have maintained or improved their community connectedness, whilst 80% of the men have maintained or improved their level of social inclusion i.e. social isolation has been reduced. Further, 51% of respondents stated that they do not feel isolated at all post the project. Comments include 'I appreciate the company of others and I am always willing to learn and help. These figures indicate that the set target is close to being achieved with regards to this aim.
45 (15 per site per year) men engaging in external volunteering activities	100	A total of 428 separate volunteering sessions have taken place with men engaging individually or as a group. 100 men took part in 112 external volunteering activities. Activities ranged from making Christmas hampers, volunteering at the AMH cycling event and volunteer driving for the Trust.

OUTCOME: IMPROVE PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AMONGST HARD TO REACH AND SOCIAL ISOLATED MEN AGED 60+

Our project aims to create an environment that will foster and encourage social interaction, along with facilitating activities that will contribute positively towards the mental and physical health of the participants.

Indicator	Actual (as of January 2016)	Commentary/Analysis
160 men (75% of attendees) reporting improved mental and/or physical health	210 men improved their physical health (90%) 224 men improved their mental health (96%)	The target of 75% of attendees reporting improved mental and/or physical health has been adequately succeeded. External evaluations revealed 88% of men have maintained or improved their physical health, whilst 92% have maintained or improved their mental health since joining the shed. In relation to achieving this target, comments include: <i>"Since coming to the shed, my emotional health and well being has improved."</i>
210 men (50 regular/20 occasional x 3 sites) actively engaging with the project	234	234 men have engaged in the project to date. 151 have attended on a regular basis whilst 83 men have attended occasionally. Comments include; "The Shed has made a great difference to my life. I get up in the mornings and I have somewhere to go - 4 days a week! ". There are 151 regular and 83 occasional members. Such figures provide a great indicator of the success of the project. In relation to current participation rates comments such as, "I get a lot of friendship and plenty of banter and enjoy getting involved in activities, especially music and day trips. The shed gets me out of the house.", indicate the reasons for the success of the project to date.
350 individual men (allowing for some men continuing membership over 2 or 3 years) reporting improved mental and/or physical health	210 men improved their physical health (90%) 215 men improved their mental health (92%)	234 men engaged to date. 92% (215) of men stated their mental health has been maintained or improved since joining the shed. 90% (210) state their physical health has maintained or improved since joining the shed. In relation to target numbers, these percentages indicate that hypothetically 425 men have reported positive changes to mental and/or physical health and so provide further cause for optimism that the target could be achieved in a longer timescale. Further, following external consultation, 98% of men reported extremely positively in relation to levels of emotional and physical health.

OUTCOME: IMPROVE INTER-GENERATIONAL CONTACT AND BETTER UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN OLDER MEN AND YOUNGER PEOPLE

Our project aims to enhance opportunities for older men and younger people to interact and engage with each other in an environment that will foster understanding between the two cohorts and encourage reciprocal learning thus establishing adequate levels of respect and admiration between the two.

Indicator	Actual (as of January 2016)	Commentary/Analysis
1275 people (75 % of 350 older men and 1350 young people) reporting improved intergenerational contact and better understanding	220 men	94% of men have improved or maintained their intergenerational contact and understanding since joining the shed. Following their engagement with the project, 27% felt that they have an excellent understanding of how young people interact with the elderly. Further, 49% of participants noted they had a good understanding of today's youth and 24% replied with an average opinion in relation to their understanding of younger people.
1350 young people (aged 25 and under) per year, over 3 sites, actively engaging with the project	1402 young people engaged	83 men took part in 62 intergenerational activities linking in with 1402 young people. One local primary school teacher commented; "the men's help was invaluable to us when we built our bottle greenhouse." Many of the activities have engaged small groups of young people which has facilitated more individual engagement with the men improving the quality of the intergenerational contacts. Sheddars built beds for 'Big Telly Spring Chickens Teddy Bear Hospital and Picnic'. The men then volunteered on the day acting as porters and doctors to over 500 young people. A few weeks later two of the shedders attended a second teddy bear hospital in Banbridge.
54 young people (6 per site per annum over 3 years) becoming regular project volunteers	10	10 health & social care students have volunteered in the Fermanagh Shed and benefited from this experience. However, due to curriculum pressures in schools the programme has not been able to engage with schools as much as it had hoped and the opening hours of the sheds did not facilitate regular engagement with young people outside of school hours. Therefore, unfortunately the intergenerational outcomes have been lower; however, the quality of the engagement which occurred is arguably greater than anticipated because of the men to young people ratios.

Introduction

This section will provide a qualitative analysis of programme performance in line with the agreed programme outcomes. This qualitative information will present and outline real life impacts achieved by programme participants as a direct result of their involvement in the programme. Each programme component is taken in turn and an in-depth assessment is presented utilising all available information gathered through the existing evaluation techniques established by AMH upon programme commencement. This information will supplement the quantitative findings presented in section 3 and provide further evidence of programme performance and achievements.



Qualitative Evaluation Findings

Less social isolation and more "community connectedness" amongst hard to reach socially isolated men aged 60+

Reducing incidents and feelings of isolation were at the forefront of this entire programme. The first of four key outcomes primarily focussed upon directly lessening feelings of isolation and creating more community togetherness and cohesion amongst the targeted group and following extensive consultation and qualitative data collection, this outcome was adequately achieved across the board.

Initially, **many of the men got involved in the Men's Shed because they were retired and were feeling severely isolated, and many admitted to having a limited social life.** Although this particular cohort (men aged 60+) are historically viewed as amongst the hardest to reach in society, many displayed a common desire in that they wanted to get out and meet new friends, develop relationships and generally reconnect with the outside world once again. Many of those who participated in the programme were notified of the opportunity to help combat their loneliness and feelings of isolation by a family member or neighbour.

In addition, a consistent related finding throughout the programme **was the significant level of positive support and encouragement participants received from their wives, family members and others of significant importance** to the participants with regards to their involvement in the project.

Across the three locations, friendships and significant levels of camaraderie were established and developed between shedders. A significant contributing factor that enabled friendship development to take place was the type and variety of activities that were available for the participants to engage with.

" Workshops that focussed upon wood work and basket weaving rekindled many skills and interests that a lot of the participants had lost touch with over time."

" These classes encouraged reciprocal learning and subsequently facilitated initial dialogue and thus established common ground between shedders that greatly helped with friendship development."

Evidence suggests the programme allowed participants to develop lasting and meaningful relationships with other participants and created genuine feelings of community togetherness within the three locations.

A typical example of this is:

During the programme, one of the participants was forced to undergo surgery for a hip replacement, however, despite this unfortunate event, his fellow shedders arranged to visit him in the hospital without the help of Shed leaders. Following this, the same group then visited the man while he was recovering at home and brought groceries and provided assistance where they could. The man humbly noted that he, *“wouldn't have had anyone if he wasn't a part of the Men's Shed”*, and greatly acknowledged the efforts made by his peers.

Actions such as these highlight the levels of togetherness and connectedness that were developed across the three locations and reinforced the genuine levels of camaraderie amongst the shedders.

Further alignment with this outcome was shown throughout the programme across the three locations as following consultation, many participants noted that:

- They felt they were getting back to their full potential and reaffirming beliefs that they still can make a positive contribution to their communities. 80% of men reported a positive change in relation to their self confidence in making a positive contribution to their communities.
- Many eluded to difficulties that are associated with being retired and the uncontrollable feelings of isolation, irrelevance and disconnection that are associated with this period of life.

However, a common theme throughout the locations was that being surrounded by and engaging with people who are in a similar position and stage in their lives helped make the transaction easier.

- Following the initial stages of the programme, shedders across all three locations soon started sharing stories about their past with regards to family life, employment and various life experiences and many found commonalities with one another.

Such processes of interaction greatly helped to reduce levels of isolation and increase levels of togetherness and connectedness experienced by shedders across the three locations. To conclude, following a survey undertaken by participants, 51% of shedders stated that following the programme they did not feel isolated at all and 41% stated they now felt significantly less isolated.

Staff Opinion Regarding this Objective

Staff from across the three locations expressed agreement when consulted regarding this outcome and expressed their belief that the issue of social isolation was thoroughly addressed through the programme and incidents of isolation were greatly reduced as a result of the programme's initiatives and social nature. With regards to increasing community connectedness many staff members eluded to the levels of companionship that were developed within the Sheds. Staff drew attention to the social aspect of the programme. It provides the participants with an opportunity to integrate with men of similar ages and interests in an environment that is welcoming and inclusive. In addition, some staff compare shed settings to family environments.

A number of consultees noted the impact that losing loved ones can have upon people along with the notable impact of retirement and how these elements can contribute to loneliness. After building relationships with the shedders, a common response from staff was that the shed provided a great alternative for the men, a place to come at their leisure, make friends and engage with community activities again.



Improve Inter-Generational Contact and better Understanding Between Older Men and Younger People

Prior to the commencement of the programme, opportunities for many of the participants to interact and engage with younger people from within their communities were at a minimum for a variety of reasons. Modern living and society has increased the difficulty for older members of the community to interact with today's youth and advancements in technology and means of communication have all contributed towards developing a significant gulf between the two cohorts in today's society.

Although increasing intergenerational contact and understanding between older men and younger people was one of the programmes main objectives, the reality of its success did not necessarily match the intended levels of achievement that the programme coordinators had initially sought. Opportunities for the two cohorts to engage were limited when compared to other initiatives such as arts and crafts workshops and wood work sessions, however, the programme managed to facilitate a number of opportunities to increase intergenerational contact through the establishment of links with local schools for the intended work to take place.

One of the engagement activities included the production of a movie about the Men's Shed.

- This initiative was implemented to increase partnership working between the two concerned cohorts and to encourage reciprocal learning and acknowledgement of the skill sets both the older and younger groups possessed.
- Participants from both cohorts partook admirably in such initiatives and consultation revealed that although the quantity of intergenerational activities did not match that concerning other activities, what was delivered proved to be very worthwhile for all those who engaged and participants thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity.
- One participant noted how, *"This movie was shown in the movie house in Downpatrick and I thoroughly enjoyed this, opportunities to engage with today's youth are limited so this opportunity was a valuable experience"*.

Although duly noted that out of all the programme outcomes, this particular anticipated outcome did not meet the expectations of programme co-ordinators, the initiatives that were delivered were thoroughly worthwhile and extremely valuable to the shedders.



Of the 55 shedders who responded to the participant survey the top right graph presents the percentage of programme participants who had got to know / engaged with young people through their involvement in the programme. In total 73% indicated they had with 27% indicating they hadn't.

The below right graph presents responses from the shedders regarding their opinions of how understanding they are of today's youth following their interaction with young people through the Men's Shed programme. Of the 55 shedders who responded to this question, 27% feel that they have an excellent understanding of how young people interact with the elderly. Further, 49% of participants noted they had a good understanding of today's youth and 24% replied with an average opinion. Importantly no one indicated they had a poor or no understanding of how young people engage with older people.

What these figures reveal is that although interaction between the two noted cohorts was limited and may have not met expectations, the processes that were engaged with were of significant value to the shedders in relation to enhancing their appreciation of today's youth and increasing their understanding of how young people view the elderly, what interests them and acknowledging their access to technology. Furthermore, there was an understanding of the importance of the role that aspects of modern life such as social media play in their lives, which contribute to significant lifestyle differences.

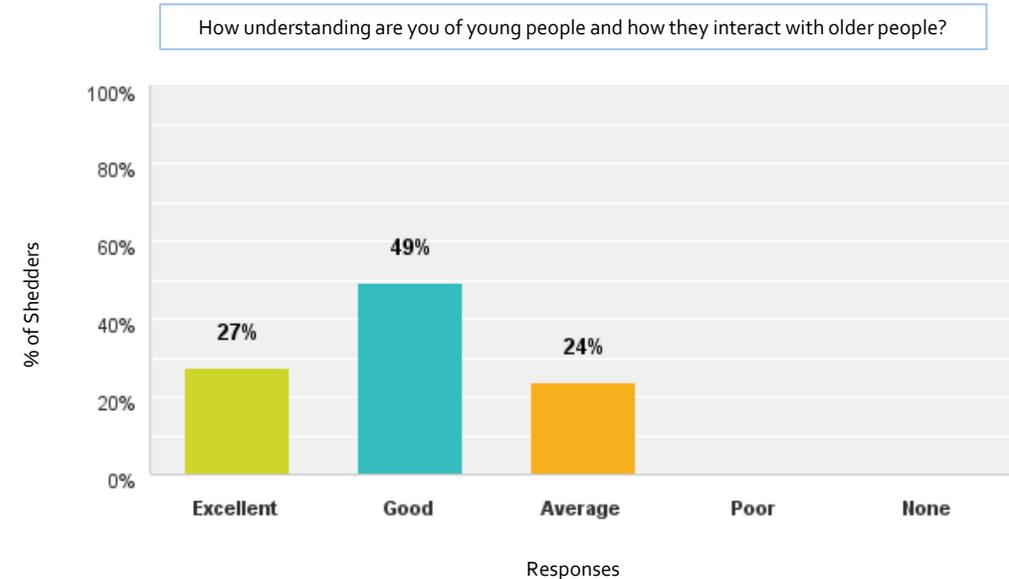
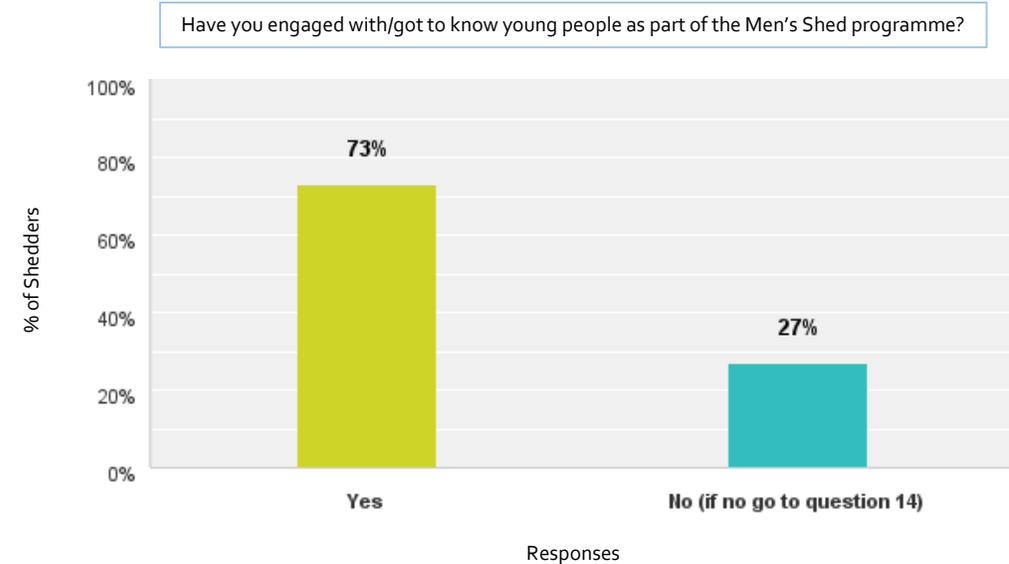
Outside of the immediate initiatives that were planned to improve inter-generational contact and enhance understanding between older and younger people, workshops that focussed directly on IT and computer skills enhanced some shedders knowledge and understanding of the technology that is available for today's youth. Many shedders expressed their enjoyment at learning and engaging in IT classes and many highlighted how they used their new IT skills outside of the shed.

Staff Opinion with Regards to this Objective

A number of staff noted how keen shedders were to engage with the younger generations. This keenness was driven by the fact that a lot of these men reside within the local community who feel strongly connected to their local area and are proud of where they come from. Such factors contributed positively to participants showing great interest in the opportunity to give back to the community (e.g. the Garden Show) thus linking in with what they are passionate about and mutually beneficial for both young people, children and shedders.

Staff also highlighted how the project has enabled shedders to use their skills to help them engage with younger generations in ways that the participants may have not felt possible. In particular, well established creative and innovative skills has enabled the participants to get involved with activities such as the Teddy Bears Hospital and engage with younger people, thus positively benefiting the wider community.

Qualitative Evaluation Findings



Hard to Reach and Socially Isolated Men Aged 60+ Experiencing Improved Mental and Physical Health

For many participants, the programme was a lifeline in terms of improving their mental and physical health. Due to individual life experiences and unfortunate passing of family members, a significant number of shedders were falling into early signs of depression and poor physical well-being prior to their involvement with the programme. Participants praised the inclusion of exercise classes, IT and computer classes, basket making, joinery workshops, danderball, arts workshops, weekly golf and wood carving as bringing about significant improvements in their physical and mental well-being. One participant who suffered from Parkinson's disease noted the difference such classes made to his life, stating that, *"Life is brighter when I go to the Men's Shed"*. Further, a shedder who struggled with arthritis highlighted that he felt, *"100% better with the keep fit class"*.

A surprising finding from the opinions expressed by a number of participants was the possible wider impacts the provision of such health and well being enhancing classes can potentially have in relation to social services and the NHS. Many participants agreed that such initiatives could save Social Services a lot of money and appropriately direct the increasingly limited resources available to such services elsewhere there is a greater demand for them.

They noted classes and workshops enabled participants to engage in activities that promoted health and well being through obvious means and also provided the men with regular health checks, in an environment that encouraged cooperation and one that limited the associated intimidating factors that many men of that age can relate to with regards medical check ups with local GP's and doctors. Following a recent survey, 96% of participants noted an improvement to their emotional and mental health.

Following consultation feelings of happiness, delight, contentment and relief were commonly displayed on behalf of the participant's family members. As noted previously, the Men's Shed was recommended by many family members who were concerned about the mental and physical health of the men. Many family members were happy to see their fathers or husbands in an environment that fostered and encouraged physical activity and integration.

One consultee noted that, *"Dad has more routine now. He has reason to get up in the morning and something to aim for. He really enjoys coming here and talks about it afterwards. He tells us what he has been doing and wonders what he will be doing next. I feel he has a better outlook in his life now and at 83 is happier in himself."*

Qualitative Evaluation Findings

Others eluded to the notable difference the Shed made to some participant's recovery, *"To my mind the shed set Jim on the road to recovery, the crutches were ditched at the earliest opportunity and his enthusiasm for his own and other men's projects filled his mind. Because of the contentment the activities in the shed brings him he seems to be sleeping better than he has in years and the spring is back in his step."*



Staff Opinion with Regards to this Objective

Staff from across the three locations were keen to express the benefit of exercise initiatives that were implemented throughout the programme. Staff stressed the importance of keeping the mind alert, continually learning new skills and pushing the boundaries to what they can achieve. One staff member alluded to the fact that there was an 82 year old man at one of the locations who had tried painting for the first time and the benefit such an experience had upon the mental well-being of the individual. The importance of building participant self-esteem and cognitive health and subsequently not allowing the men to settle in a mental state of unhappiness of general 'rut' was highlighted by staff. Further, a number of employees noted the difference in shedders after trying new things and emphasised their keenness to get involved and sustain their participation.

In relation to improving participant's physical health, one staff member noted, ***"They are taking on different role's looking after their physical, emotional and mental wellbeing. We have a trainer come in twice a week to the gym for the Shedders where they would get individual training programmes, they do walking, golf, we got them free swimming. Complementary treatments to keep their stress levels down"***.



Case Study Rodney McKeown, Downpatrick

My story is slightly different. Prior to my involvement with the Men's Shed I lived in Lisburn with my partner for 18 years, however she took ill and died. I was grieving for my partner and my daughter told me that I need to get out more. My daughter got me a new house in Annalong. I moved from the Maze where all my friends were to a place where I knew no one. I started to go to the doctors as I felt like I was losing my head. The doctor talked about Men's Shed but I didn't know anything about it. The same doctor then made me an appointment to meet Hazel. The first few sessions it was hard to mix but the men were so helpful and friendly that I soon got more and more involved.

The main reason for my decision was to look after my mental health, as my daughter was starting to worry about it, and in a way, so was I. I needed to get out of the house and be with people and that was the main priority. There was a period of about a year and a half where I was very lonely but now I can speak about my wife without breaking down.

I like to repair bicycles, paintwork for St. Vincent de Pauls and the woodwork. I like to try my hand at everything. I think it is also important to listen to other people in the group. My relationships with the other men is really strong, there isn't one man in the group who I would be afraid to ask for help. I really enjoy coming here. It's very seldom that I would miss. It has changed my life as before I was so down and depressed with grieving. At the start, I would have broken down about my wife and the men would all rally around me and make me feel better, probably more so than my family, a harsh statement but very true. The opportunity to come to the shed has definitely been life changing and really helped improve my mental health along with physical health.

The programme has had a big impact on my life. I don't know what would have happened to me if I hadn't attended. I always look forward to coming to the shed. The whole experience has changed my life around. Terry rang me about the Irish Open. I would love to have went. Terry's sister offered to give me two tickets (over £60 each), I said it was too much but his sister insisted that I take them. This amazed me and I was genuinely appreciative, something like that has never happened to me before. They must have been thinking about me and what has happened in my life

Improve Feelings of Self-worth Amongst Hard to Reach Socially Isolated Men Aged 60+

From the surveys undertaken by the shedders, it was clear that prior to the programme many felt that skills and qualities that they had developed throughout their lives were now being extremely under utilised and this contributed to many of the men expressing low feelings of self-worth.

Through their programme engagement, many men across the three locations felt that they had rekindled many former interests and with the help of activity provision, they found a place where they could display many of the skills and crafts that they had developed throughout their lives. This is evidenced in the graph opposite (top right) where, in total, 98% indicated they had always (47%) or sometimes (51%) used their personal strengths, skills and talents in the programme.

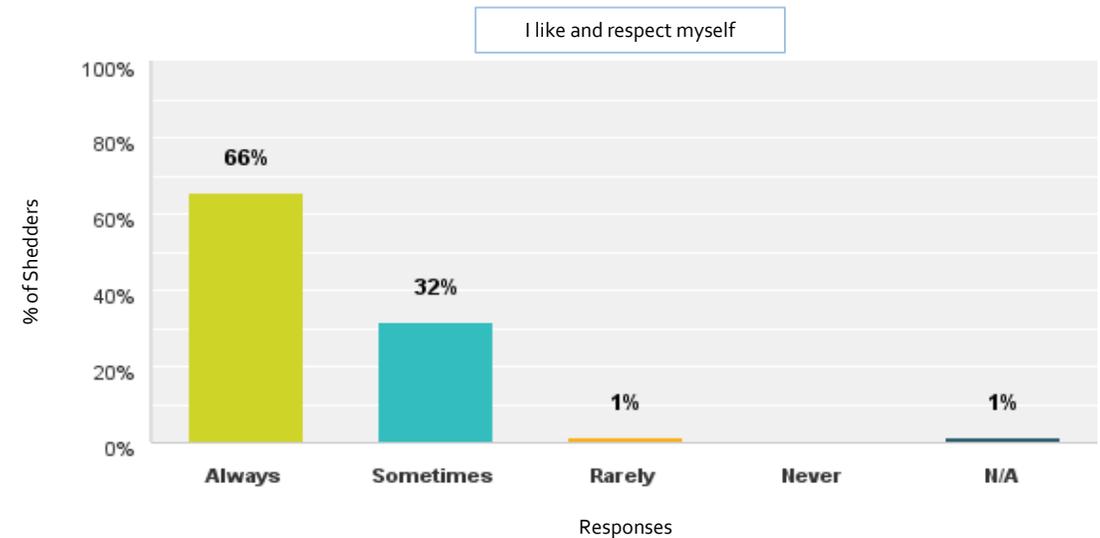
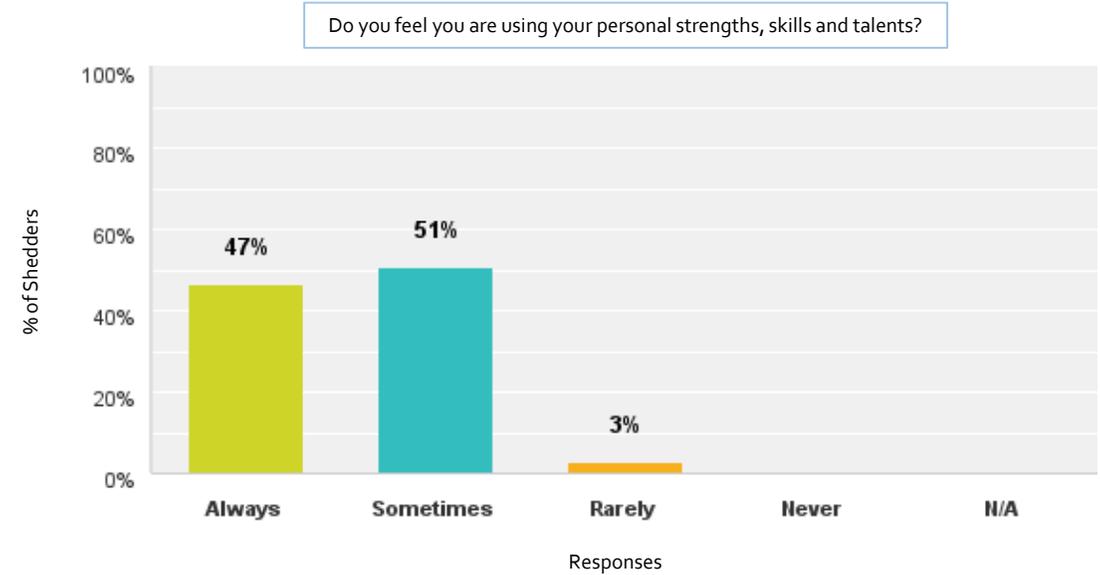
As noted previously, due to the Men's Shed, many participants felt they were getting back to their former selves and maximising their full potential in relation to being active and utilising learnt and inherent skills as well as learning and developing new crafts. A recent survey indicated the 94% of men noted an improvement in relation to being able to use personal skills and talents

Many participants highlighted that their outlook on life had improved along with the general quality of life as direct results from their engagement with the programme as highlighted in the graph below right. Again, 98% indicated they now like and respect themselves post their involvement in the programme.

One man noted that, *"My wife was diagnosed five years ago and I felt for so long that no one gives a damn about my situation, thanks to the Men's Shed and the lottery funding, I feel I can have a reasonable lifestyle through the Men's Shed"*.



Qualitative Evaluation Findings



The attitudes of staff and facilitators was highlighted on numerous occasions as major contributing factors to improving feelings of self worth. Such individuals valued the men's opinions and facilitated activities that enabled them to express their creative talents as well as challenging them to learn new skills, thus entrusting belief that they still can make a positive contribution to their lives and communities. Further, as noted previously, many men showed signs of struggling to come to terms with retirement.

One participant stated that, ***"Since retirement, there was a void in my life; with only golf to get me out of the house. Winters therefore could be pretty miserable, sitting indoors wishing the weather would perk up. I now set the alarm! "***

Following retirement, many of the participants had little to occupy themselves with. The Men's Shed provided those struggling with such issues with a place to congregate with others in similar positions, interact and engage with activities that were mentally stimulating and challenging, thus significantly lessening feelings of a lack self worth and deterioration that were expressed by many shedders prior to the programmes commencement.

To conclude, the Shed provided both a mental and physical outlet for the participants that enabled them to engage and participate at their own rate and tackle issues within their lives in an environment that fostered relationship development along with continual personal development as one man enthusiastically noted, ***"I think the Shed is a wonderful idea! Men get to feel important and have a purpose again!"***

Staff Opinion with Regards to this Objective

Motivation displayed by the shedders was highlighted and admired by a number of staff members. It was generally felt that the sheds provided the men with an opportunity to express themselves and engage with others who share similar interests and life experiences, aspects of the programme that many staff attributed to the increased feelings of self-worth experienced by many of the participants. In terms of the overall programme, one staff member stated, ***"The Men's Shed programme is very purposeful because I see the benefit for the men – a lot of these men are carers, isolated, bereaved and alone the shed gives them a purpose"***.

Across the board it was felt by staff that the programme gave the men a purpose. A number of staff referred to the lives of participants prior to their respective retirements. In particular, one employee noted that, ***"A lot of the men were in very high profile jobs and coming to terms with retirement was difficult for many of them and so the shed now gives them a different purpose. The men are being challenged again, they've been given a reason to get up in the morning, wash their face, put on their shirt and come in to the centre."***

Case Study

Martin Magorrian , Downpatrick

Before the Men's Shed I was living in England following retirement at 53, then moved to Northern Ireland in 2007. Previous to Men Shed I didn't have much to do. My brother died in 2011 and I started going downhill mentally from there. I received treatment for two years before the nurse told me to try Men's Shed. I found the first few times difficult as I was used to being isolated throughout my years of employment and the last number of years of my life. The people at Men's Shed tried to get me more involved and got me out of my shell, it took me a while to fully integrate.

Prior to joining the programme I knew nothing about it. The nurse whom I was dealing with in relation to my treatment gave me a leaflet about it as she had heard good reports. The nurse arranged my first day and she came with me. That day I met Hazel and they asked me standard questions concerning my background and interests etc. I decided to get involved as I needed something to pick me up. I was becoming more and more of a hermit and I knew myself that I needed to get out of that way and mind set.

My personal role is helping the men with computers, I'm the go-to guy when it comes to computers for all the men and that in itself tends to open up more conversations and get me more involved. I have been interested in genealogy and have loved finding out more about my family. Group activities help me to mix with everyone and there's always plenty of laughing and joking. I get a buzz from helping other people as it helps me and it helps them. One of the guy's bus routes was cut so I now bring him into the shed. It's another reason to get out of bed in the morning.

The programme has made me feel a lot better, it has brought me out of myself a lot. It has given me other interests and more confidence in the different things that I do. When I make something and bring it home and people then ask me about it, I tell them that I've worked hard on it and that makes me feel proud. It has given me other interests. All of the participants have developed. There's always something going on here so we always come back. It's gave me something a lot more outside my front door that I didn't have before. There's always a lot of banter and relationships with other men/participants have evolved fairly well. There isn't one that I wouldn't have a good laugh and a joke with.

Staff Consultation

In addition to the outcome based consultation findings, other findings emerged from the consultation process that are important to be reflected / presented in this report. The table below and adjacent diagram display staff opinion from across the three locations regarding positive aspects of the programme that they personally felt, with how they felt it benefited the participants along with a number of identified unintended outcomes that were derived from the programme.

Positive Aspects of the Programme for Staff	Positive Aspects of the Programme for beneficiaries from Staff perspective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vast majority of men were a joy to work with. They had a desire to be part of the programme which made the role of Staff slightly easier. • Very purposeful project and there were visible, tangible benefits for the men. • The working environment was supportive, helpful and cohesive which contributed to a nice office culture. • The men were able to give something back. They received a lot of aid from the Big Lottery Funding however, the men gave their own skills back into the group / other shedders. • Every day was different and presented a new and welcomed challenge. The role required full utilisation of existing skill sets and also enabled staff to develop new skills and adapt to new situations. • The role of the Project Coordinator is critical to the success of the programme, in that this role provides the gel that brings all three sites together, and engenders a consistent and coordinated approach to service provision at each site. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social aspect / companionship that was developed throughout the project. • The Shed gave the men a purpose and helped keep them mentally in tune with the world through utilising existing skills and learning new crafts. • Self-worth was enhanced for the vast majority of men. Participants took pride in the activities they engaged with. • The programme achieved its original aims and delivered on what it promised participants. The men respected this commitment to delivery, hence the number of friendships that were developed and the subsequent levels of camaraderie that were evident across the three locations. • The project positively impacted upon the participant's physical, emotional and mental wellbeing. • The Shed's facilitated opportunities for the Men to be challenged again. The project gave many of the participants a purpose to get up in the morning and embrace the day ahead.



Staff Consultation (Cont'd)

Staff indicated the following regarding programme performance and meeting targets:

- "10 men come regularly, but there would be days where about 16 / 17 men would turnout - dynamics change depending on their personal circumstances (e.g., grandchildren, family etc.)."
- "Good progress with one school but not so much with the other".
- "Exceeded the targets in relation to the recruitment side of the programme".
- "Referral (informal) is the best form of promotion – asking the men about friends / family members / neighbours".
- "External volunteering target is going well, where men go out and volunteer with other groups, deliver talks etc..".
- "Overall target is 80... I would have about 54 men attending regularly but the quality of the experience is excellent".



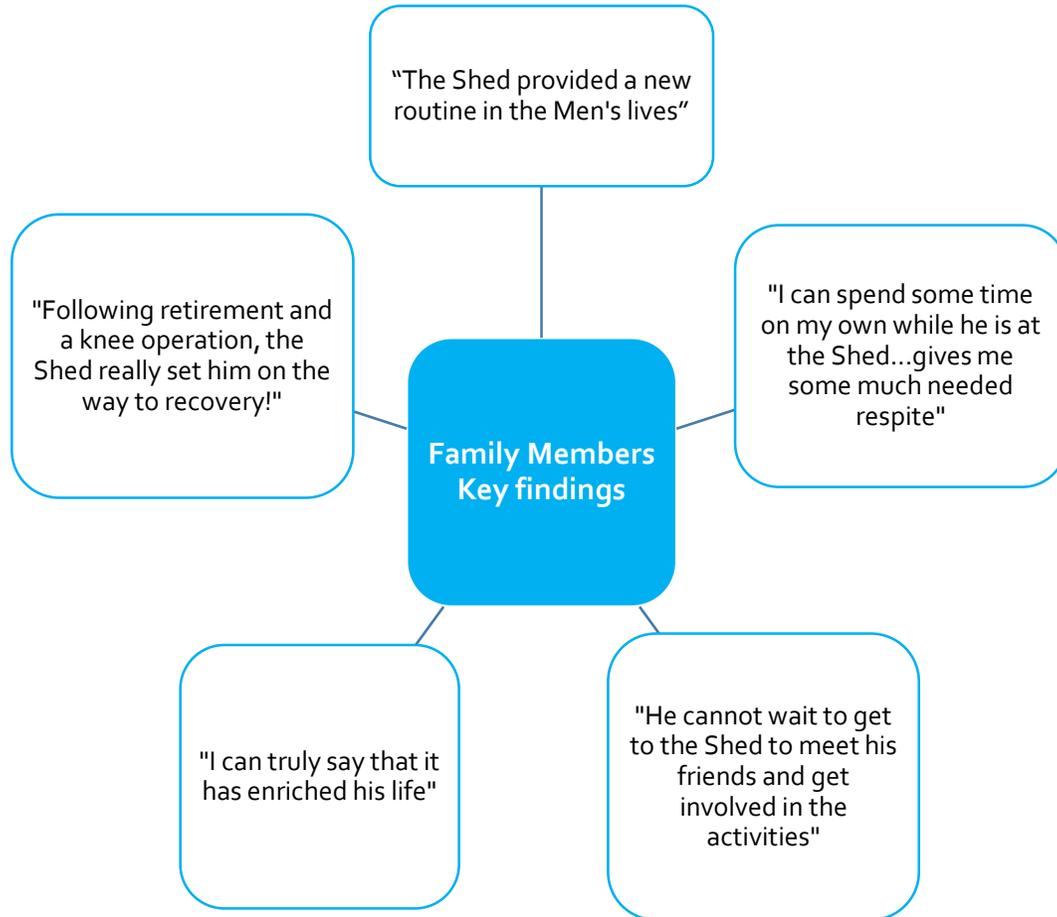
Staff highlighted a number of issues they experienced across the three programme locations.

- Meeting the programme targets and ensuring programme activities meets the men's needs, in particular intergenerational activity.
- There were a number minor interpersonal issues as there were strong personalities in the shed. Being able to manage these personalities and keeping everyone happy was proved difficult at times.
- Sometimes enforcing the health and safety protocols was a big issue, particularly at the beginning as many of the men were set in their ways and less inclined to follow protocol.
- There were a number of shedders who's behaviour was at times not entirely appropriate towards the clients at New Horizons, such behaviour caused for immediate action and was dealt with. This has been identified as an opportunity for staff to deliver mental health awareness training for shedders. This has been extremely successful and has led to shedders taking part in further training, not only to manage behaviour but also raise awareness of their own mental health issues.
- The process of getting to know the men, building trust and rapport was slow during the initial stages. As the project progressed so too did staff / participant relationships.



Family Consultation

The diagram below outlines family members' feedback regarding programme impacts for their family member accessing the shed and its various services:



Family members also felt that:

- The Shed gave their loved one a reason to get up in the morning
- The participants derived huge enjoyment from their involvement in the programme
- The men eagerly anticipated their next activity or session and contributed towards a better outlook on life and increased happiness
- Their loved one met great friends and many of these relationships have continued outside of the Shed, *"One shedder came to our house at Christmas, it is great that they have that in their lives."*
- Brought contentment and enjoyment of the activities
- The Shed sparked new interests and hobbies that the men would never have previously engaged with, *"He now has a love for gardening! He's got to the stage where he is researching these topics online as well as getting involved at the Shed"*.
- The men are in better physical and mental shape as a result of their continued involvement and this has had a positive impact upon wider family life, relationships etc.
- The men found the staff very helpful and access to activities reinvigorating their enthusiasm in life.



Steering Group Consultation

A key element of the evaluation was engagement and consultation with the Programme Steering Group. The consultation mainly centred on what they felt were the most beneficial aspects of the project, possible improvements and future intentions of the group.

The Steering Group's **programme involvement** incorporated their core organisation focus, including:

- Providing volunteering opportunities.
- Supporting older peoples access services.
- Promotion and referral of services to their own service users (i.e. Benefits Advice Days).
- Effective partnership working helping to coordinate end user experience.

Most beneficial aspects of the programme for Steering Group partners included:

- Other opportunities available for their service users.
- Access to a high quality, credible and trustworthy service for users through the Men's Sheds.
- Good outcomes for clients accessing this type of support.
- Very good partnership working particularly in Antrim (Age NI).
- Great publicity and profile for Men's Sheds and associated partners (BBC TV and Radio Ulster).
- Vital resource for clients to access at the Men's Sheds.
- Significant improvement in client's health and wellbeing.



Programme improvements suggested by the Steering Group:

- There was an identified need to encourage and develop greater means of communication across all partners to ensure greater levels of programme cohesion and ultimately contribute to greater levels of participant enjoyment.
- Greater support from Steering Group partners to the programme to ensure greater levels of enthusiasm that will ultimately positively contribute to the programme.

Future intentions of the Steering Group:

- Improve, sustain and capitalise upon partnership opportunities when and where they arise. The group noted that it is essential to work in partnership given the efficiency of resources that can be achieved through effective and cohesive collaboration and delivery.
- Continue to be noticeably involved and play an active role in the programme in order to provide opportunities that will enhance the experiences had by all participants.
- Provide a coordinated service to members to ensure maximum results are being derived from the applied resources.



Introduction

To present a clear and understandable financial analysis the financial management of the project will be examined over the 3 year funded lifespan. This will outline the financial performance against that proposed in the original letter of offer (and subsequent amendments based on annual spend in previous years) and provide a critique of that performance.

The Men's Sheds programme received support against revenue, overheads and capital cost elements and the following sub sections will examine each in detail. It is important to state this analysis does not take account of the funding secured from other sources unless necessary / appropriate to provide context.

Financial Analysis

The following tables outline the financial summary of the expenditure against budgeted costs and the variance thereof taking the revenue, overheads and capital funding streams in turn. A brief explanation is also provided for each following the presentation of the financial information.

REVENUE COSTS	Total project costs for 3 years		
	Agreed budgets	Actual expenditure	Variance
	£	£	£
Salaries	£229,494	£221,470	-£8,024
Recruitment	£3,000	£5,558	£2,558
General Running Expenses	£87,163	£82,361	-£4,802
Training	£3,709	£2,496	-£1,213
Consultancy	£5,000	£4,511	-£489
Travel	£10,818	£8,052	-£2,766
Total Revenue Costs	£339,184	£324,448	-£14,736

Generally there was a under spend across all budget lines with the exception of Recruitment. The under spends against the Salaries and General Running Expenses was relatively minimal at £8,024 and £4,802 respectively. This represented a 3.5% and 5.5% variance from the budgeted amounts. The variance in the Training and Travel budgets represented a higher level of variance at 33% and 26% respectively.

The Recruitment budget experienced an over spend which was attributed to the need to recruit project staff during the life of the project at two of the sites. Whilst not planned or budgeted this is not surprising for a project of this nature and duration.

Overall Revenue variance was £14,736 which equates to an underspend of 4% of the total budget spend for the three year programme. This is very minimal and demonstrates effective and efficient financial management.

OVERHEADS COSTS	Total project costs for 3 years		
	Agreed costs	Actual expenditure	Variance
	£	£	£
Staff	£30,908	£30,000	-£908
Utilities	£3,709	£3,115	-£594
Audit / Insurance	£3,090	£4,411	£1,321
Total Overheads Costs	£37,707	£37,526	-£181

Similarly with Overheads costs the project experience an under spend across two of the three Overheads budget lines. The highest percentage under spend was recorded against Utilities equating to 19% of budget v actual spend with Staff reflecting a 3% variance. There was relatively generous overspend in Audit / Insurance reflecting 30% of variance. Whilst a relatively high percentage the amount is minimal totalling £1,321.

Overall the variance represented 0.5% of overall Overheads costs, which again evidences sufficient experience and expertise in managing budgets and programme spend.

Financial Analysis (cont'd)

CAPITAL COSTS	Total project costs for 3 years		
	Agreed budgets	Actual expenditure	Variance
	£	£	£
Refurbishment	£4,500	£2,200	-£2,300
Office Equip	£3,000	£1,647	-£1,353
Furniture	£750	£702	-£48
Activities Equip	£6,500	£10,201	£3,701
Total Capital Costs	£14,750	£14,750	£0

Interestingly, whilst relatively considerable underspend was experienced in three of four budget lines; Refurbishment (£2,300), Office Equipment (£1,353), and Furniture (£48) this was cancelled out by relatively significant over spend in Activities Equipment of £3,701. Resultantly, no variance was recorded for the overall Capital Costs spend area.

Taking account of the overall spend analysis of actual v budgeted expenditure the programme experience an underspend of -£14,917 over its duration across all spend areas. For a programme of this scale and expenditure (£376,724) this represents an overall variance of 4%. Again, this evidences sufficiently the ability of Action Mental Health to adequately manage and oversee financial delivery of the programme effectively and efficiently. This should be recognised and Action Mental Health complimented as a result.

Demonstrating Impact – The Value of Programme Delivery

The following information presents a rudimentary calculation of the per participant cost associated with the programme delivery. This has been calculated using the overall costs associated with project delivery (including capital, staff salaries, training delivery, equipment etc.) divided by the number of beneficiaries taking part in the programme across the three sites. Some key figures are outlined in the table opposite:

- Total programme participants = 234 and total actual spend = £376,724. Approximate spend **per participant** could therefore be calculated at **£1609**. Whilst this at first appears to be high this calculation does not reflect the number of participant visits.
- Analysis of the number of visits across the 3 year programme indicates a total of **14,943** across the three sites by 234 men. Therefore the **per visit cost is £25.21**. This figure more accurately reflects the true cost of accessing the Men's Sheds project by participants.
- In total 1402 young people engaged in the programme's inter generational activities. This represented a cost of **£268.70 per inter generational engagement**.
- In total **112 separate volunteer sessions were undertaken by Shedders**. Assuming average volunteer expenses are £10 per hour and each volunteer session last on average 2 hours, this demonstrates a **monetary return of £2,240** to the wider community not withstanding the nature and purpose of volunteering and social return on through increased volunteering.



Introduction

The Men's Sheds programme led by Action Mental Health and supported by Age NI, Volunteer Now and the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust has been successfully delivering services and activities that address social isolation and improve self esteem, self worth for men aged 60+. This programme has been successfully delivered across three sites in Antrim, Downpatrick and Enniskillen attracting 234 men.

This independent external evaluation has highlighted and evidenced a range of impacts and outcomes for direct and indirect beneficiaries. The scale and scope of these benefits are wide ranging and extensive. By way of summary the following conclusions have been drawn from this work:

- The outcomes accrued by shedders have been extensive including, reduced social isolation, improved self worth and self esteem, increased social interaction and community engagement. This in turn has led to improved mental and physical health and well being amongst those shedders accessing the programme.
- Shedders developed friendships and lasting relationships with other shedders, staff, young people and local community groups which would not have been possible previously given their social isolation issues and lifestyle prior to getting involved in the programme.
- The scale and range of activities shedders have been able to access in the sheds has been a major contributing factor for the levels of engagement, friendship development and interaction amongst shedders at each site.
- The development and re-use of previously redundant skills and techniques that shedders used to use in the professional life has been common place across many shedders. This has allowed greater shared learning amongst shedders within their own and across other sites, as well as allow these skills and techniques to be used for the benefit of community groups, local residents and young people across the Sheds catchment areas. Importantly, this engendered a feeling of getting back to their full potential and reaffirming beliefs that they still can make a positive contribution to their communities amongst shedders.
- Family members also gained significant benefits from the programme including respite from caring responsibilities, improved family life environment and relationships amongst family members, enhanced health and well being including recuperation from surgery and illnesses, and greater contentment and enjoyment from life. In essences this has genuinely changed men's lives giving them a new zest for life and a reason to get up in the morning!

- A staff team and overarching staffing structure has been developed that is very effectively managing programme implementation across all sites. The commitment of the staff team has added significant value to the overall programme experience for shedders and their families.
- Significant profile and promotions have been generated from the programme with shedders attracting interest and coverage from local, regional and national TV and radio media outlets including.
- Action Mental Health have developed the capacity and a credibility to deliver men's sheds programmes to a high standard of service delivery and have evidenced this through this programme. This experience will allow AMH to manage future programme of a similar nature to a higher standard as well as provide assistance, guidance and support to others who wish to undertake similar work.

Overall the evidence supports the assessment that the Men's Sheds programme has allowed men aged 60+ to gain significant benefits and genuinely life changing experiences outside of those anticipated at the commencement of the programme and the agreed BLF programme outcomes. This has also resulted in wider indirect outcomes for others that have again have made positive differences to their lives. The future delivery of the programme should focus on how these outcomes can be both maintained at the existing sites as well as provision of greater opportunities for more men to access these services and activities. This report will culminate with a recommendations section that will outline a suggested way for ward for the programme post its current BLF funded period.



Introduction

This evaluation process has generated a range of findings that have, in turn, been used to inform the development of practical and logical recommendations. Outlined in the following table these recommendations aim to provide advice and guidance to improve and enhance the programme delivery beyond the current Big Lottery funded period. Each recommendation is outlined with a description / rationale for its inclusion in this report.

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION	DESCRIPTION AND RATIONALE
Continue to promote and include intergenerational activities in any future programme.	Intergenerational engagement was less than originally anticipated. Whilst this may appear disappointing those that did engage in intergenerational activity (young and old) accrued significant benefits and worthwhile impacts. This demonstrates the value of pursuing this engagement over the longer term and it is with this in mind it is suggested any future programme should include engagement between children and young people and the shedders.
Continued drive to increase shedder numbers at each of the three sites.	The number of men regularly accessing the sheds at each of the sites fell a little short of the anticipated targets agreed at the outset of the programme. This could reflect negatively on the programme performance. However, it should be viewed in the context of evidence presented in this evaluation that clearly outlines the high quality of services delivered and accessed by shedders at each site and the significantly positive outcomes achieved by those accessing the services. In many ways this aspect of the programme far exceeded AMH and its partners expectations at the commencement of the programme. With this high quality service now established the drive to allow more men to avail of and participate in this programme the drive to increase number of regular users at each site should continue.
Improvement of communication across all Steering Group members.	It appears the Steering Group could have benefitted from greater and more focused communication between partners. Whilst it is acknowledged the programme may take a different format post Big Lottery support it should be noted more effective partner participation and greater partner contribution could be generated through greater programme specific communication between lead partner and other delivery / support partners.
Examine sustainability options for the programme beyond BLF support.	It is fully expected that due to the many and varied impacts delivered by the programme for shedders, their families, AMH and its partners that an extension to the BLF support will be secured. This will hopefully see the BLF support prolonged by up to a year. This presents an opportunity for AMH and its partner organisations to further examine and secure appropriate and adequate sustainability options for the programme post BLF support. Whilst there is a natural programme legacy through the participant capacity building, development and sustainment of relationships across communities, organisations and individuals there are key elements of the programme that require financial support including for example, equipment / material purchase, insurance costs, dedicated staff at each delivery site etc. It is recommended these costs should be secured through a variety of means. All available avenues should be explored including as a minimum, absorbing key programme costs into core provision from lead or support partners, developing social economy elements of the sheds provision (i.e. selling garden materials), and securing additional funding from other non-BLF sources.
To review the appropriateness of AMH sites as sites for the Men's Sheds.	Whilst the placement of the three Men's Sheds in existing AMH sites was logical and sensible at the time, there have been some instances where issues have arisen between AMH and Men's Sheds users whilst accessing the same site. This, it would suggest, requires a review to fully ascertain if these existing AMH sites are fully appropriate and accepted by both user groups. This review should provide evidence to support or otherwise the inclusion of Men's Sheds sites / facilities at AMH sites.

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION	DESCRIPTION AND RATIONALE
Retain the current staffing structure across the existing Men's Sheds sites	Each of the Men's Sheds sites has a project officer who is responsible for local programme support and delivery. This role is essential to ensuring a consistent and high quality service is delivered at a local level, as well as, managing shedders participation, involvement and engagement with wider community sector. The position provides the programme with a dedicated neutral structure through which the programme can be delivered locally.
Maintaining the programme coordinator role to provide consistency and gel across all sites	The findings clearly indicate the critical role the Project Coordinator plays in managing programme delivery across the three sites and the integration of Men's Sheds with AMH services. The Project Coordinator provides a central vehicle through which information sharing, quality assurance and consistency of programme delivery is effectively delivered. Essentially this position is the gel that knits the three sites together providing practical support to local staff and shedders. This is an essential element of any future programme delivery.
Expand the number of Men's Sheds	The benefits accrued by shedders directly and those impacted indirectly (shedder's family members, community groups and other AMH service users) is evidenced in this evaluation report. Given the scale and range of impacts achieved it is recommended that similar impacts could be achieved at other sites across NI and as such opportunity to replicate this service across other sites should be explored with the view of securing similar funding to develop Men's sheds. This should reflect the findings of the exercise to assess the appropriateness of other AMH sites as options for Men's Sheds developments.
Giving the men more opportunity for programme influence (advisory groups)	AMH has a structure of advisory groups to influence and input into its service delivery. This has worked very effectively and has allowed service users to inform service delivery but also built a commitment to the programme /service and secured buy in and commitment to the programme / service. This could reap similar benefits for the Men's Sheds programme as well as providing a consistent approach to service provision across AMH delivery.
To become more proactive in outreach to local communities	Where shedders interacted and engaged in activities outside of Shed based activities there were clear benefits for both shedders and those groups, organisations and schools engaged in the activity. Additionally, there is a clear desire from shedders to 'give back' to the communities they reside in or those local to the sheds locations. It is therefore recommended that this outreach or local community engagement should be continued and further developed where it has been delivered previously, but importantly initiated where it has not been delivered previously.
Implement a recognised standard approach to assessing health and wellbeing and wider programme impacts	Much of the assessment has focused on measuring impact in line with the BLF outcomes. Whilst this has been important and provided a basis of performance assessment it is recommended a recognised standard of performance assessment would be implemented that assesses general health and wellbeing across a number of generic indicators (Warwick Edinburgh mental wellbeing scale).
Continue to maximise opportunities through social enterprise.	There are numerous examples of how the products made by the shedders at each of the sites (i.e. wood sculptures / carvings, paintings, plants / shrubs and furniture) has allowed income to be generated through their sale. Whilst modest and in no way intended to cover full programme costs this income could have the potential to contribute to programme costs and thus support ongoing sustainability of the programme.