

An exploration into the popularity of Men's Sheds.

Patricia Sheehan

A dissertation submitted in part fulfilment of the requirement for the B.A.
(hons) Degree in Exercise and Health Studies.

April 2014



Waterford Institute of Technology
INSTITIÚID TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA PHORT LÁIRGE

Department of Health, Sport and Exercise Sciences

School of Health Sciences

Waterford Institute of Technology

Statement of originality and ownership of work

Department of Health, Sport and Exercise Science

B.A. (Hons) Health Promotion _____ (Please select one)

BA (Hons) Exercise and Health Studies _____

Name (block capitals).....

I confirm that all the work submitted in this dissertation is my own work, not copied from any other person's work (published or unpublished) and that it has not previously been submitted for assessment on any other course, in any other institution.

Signed.....

Date.....

Student Number.....

Address.....

.....

.....

.....

Word processor word count.....

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people who have contributed to the creation of this dissertation and to whom I would like to express my sincere gratitude. Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisor Elaine Mullan who always made herself available to answer any queries that I had for which I will be forever grateful.

I would also like to thank my fellow students and would like to especially mention my core group G/H. These are not only fellow students they are now friends who have been a major part of my life over the past four years and will hopefully remain part of my life. Thank you also to all of my lecturers over the past four years you have all impacted greatly on my life. Without your support this dissertation would not have been possible.

Thank you to the men of Dungarvan Men's Shed who always made me feel welcome and the cup of tea was always at the ready. To the young men of Youthreach Dungarvan thank you for your warm welcome. Your participation is very much appreciated and made this research feasible.

To my sisters Christine and Vicky, mother Myra, brother in law Mike and best friend Niamh for their continued support always checking in on me to make sure I was coping when it came to assignment deadlines and exams. You never stopped believing in me.

I would like to mention especially my husband Richard and my daughter Katie, thank you both for your ongoing support over the past few years. Your patience over the last four years is what has got me to where I am today and I know it has not been easy but I promise it will be all worthwhile. I love you both more than words can say.

Finally, to my father Nicky, I would like to dedicate this piece of research to you. As co-founder of The Dungarvan Men's Shed your work to date has been incredible. You have helped so many men in your community more than you will ever know. Finally, your dream has become a reality to provide a place where men can gather sharing their troubles and teaching and learning new skills. You are the perfect example of a community advocate. If I could sum you up in one word it would be "Hero". You never stopped believing in me and always encouraged me especially after Richard and I both lost our jobs. You always said there was life after losing your job and I hope I have proved this for you.

"Rock bottom became the foundation on which I rebuilt my life" (J.K. Rowling)

| Table of contents | Pages |
|---|--------------|
| Statement of originality and ownership of work | i |
| Acknowledgements | ii |
| Abstract | vii |
| <u>Chapter 1</u> | |
| <i>Introduction</i> | 2-3 |
| <u>Chapter 2</u> | |
| <i>Literature Review</i> | |
| What are Men's Sheds? | 5 |
| Why Men's Sheds are an ideal place for men to learn? | 5-7 |
| What are the health and well-being benefits of Men's Sheds? | 7-9 |
| Reasons for joining Men's Sheds | 9-11 |
| Summary & rationale | 11 |
| Research Questions | 11 |
| <u>Chapter 3</u> | |
| <i>Methodology</i> | |
| Research Design | 13 |
| Study population & sampling | 13 |
| Concepts | 13-14 |
| Data Collection methods & procedures | 14 |
| Measurement tools | 14-15 |
| Data Analysis | 15 |
| Ethical considerations | 15-16 |

Chapter 4

Results

| | |
|--|-------|
| Sample | 18 |
| Reasons for joining | 19-21 |
| Benefits of participation | 22-25 |
| Feelings attached to being a “shedder” | 26-27 |
| Continued involvement | 28-29 |
| Barriers to participation | 30-31 |
| Improvements | 32 |

Chapter 5

Discussion

| | |
|-------------------------------|-------|
| Introduction | 35 |
| The men that join Men’s Sheds | 35-37 |
| Reasons for joining | 37-39 |
| Benefits of participation | 39-42 |
| Continued involvement | 42 |
| Barriers to participation | 42-43 |
| Improvements | 43 |
| Conclusion | 43-44 |
| Limitations | 44 |
| Recommendations | 44-45 |

Appendices

| | |
|--|-------|
| Appendix 1: Topic guide for Men's Shed members | 47-48 |
| Appendix 2: Topic guide for Youthreach members | 49-50 |
| Appendix 3: Informed consent form | 51 |

Bibliography

| | |
|--------------|-------|
| Bibliography | 53-58 |
|--------------|-------|

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

| Tables & Figures | Page |
|---|-------------|
| Table 1 Overview of participants | 18 |
| Figure 1 Practical reasons for joining | 21 |
| Figure 2 Social reasons for joining | 21 |
| Figure 3 Themes concerning the benefits of participation in Men’s Sheds | 25 |
| Figure 4 Themes of feelings associated with being a shedder | 27 |
| Figure 5 Themes concerning why men continue to attend Men’s Sheds | 29 |
| Figure 6 Themes specifically relating to the barriers to participation | 31 |

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------|---|
| GAA | Gaelic Athletic Association |
| RE-AIM | Reach, effectiveness, adoption, implementation, maintenance |
| TILDA | The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing |

ABSTRACT

Overview: The Men's Shed is a recent phenomenon that has grown rapidly in Ireland since its introduction in 2009. The initiative has been recognised as a model of best practice for promoting men's health yet there is very limited research to support same. Most research has been carried out in Australia and seems to concentrate on men's learning through Men's Sheds. Additionally, Carragher, (2013) is the only Irish Study to have been carried out in Ireland and yet again this seems to have focused on the theme of learning. The researcher of the dissertation also noticed that Men's Sheds seem to be attracting mainly older men and hoped to explore why it was not appealing to younger men. It is for this reason that the research looked to explore who is attending, why men are and not attending and what men were getting out of the initiative and her research questions were as followed:

- Who are the men attending Men's Sheds?
- Why are men attending Men's Sheds?
- Why are men not attending Men's Sheds?
- What are men getting out of Men's Sheds?

Methods: Qualitative research methods were used. The information was gathered using two separate focus groups and the information was analysed using thematic content analysis.

Results: The findings suggest that mainly older unemployed men who recently experienced a significant life change attend the shed. The main reasons for attending were to learn, teach meet people, camaraderie and get out of the house. Reason for not attending included the misconception that Men's Sheds are for older men. Huge benefits were gained from being a member emphasising that the Shed helps reduce depression, isolation, loneliness and helped recreate bonds of fellowship. Physical health benefits were also noted men's physical activity levels increased and younger men reported a reduction in smoking and participation in other risky behaviours.

Conclusions: Findings from this research have highlighted the need for further research to be carried out into Men's Sheds. The initiative has huge potential to not only target older vulnerable and marginalised men but also reach vulnerable younger men with issues such as help seeking, delinquency and help in the prevention of suicide.

Chapter 1

Introduction

INTRODUCTION

A difference in health among genders has been a major research topic of late. Research has highlighted poorer health status among men and research suggests that life expectancy among men in Ireland is approximately five years lower than females (CSO, 2006). The annual mortality rate per 100,000 between 1989 and 1998 in Ireland was 1007 men compared to 662 women. This represents a 54% higher mortality rate for men and is described as a “fundamental inequality in health” (Balanda and Wilde 2001: p.11). Research has reported that men who are under-employed, unemployed or employed in blue collar employment have considerably poorer health status than those employed in white collar occupations or managerial positions (Turrell, Stanley, & Oldenburg, 2006). Research suggests that Irish men aged between 18-35 years are approximately four times more likely to die at a younger age than their females counterparts (Eurostat, 2006). Suicide is a major emotional and economic burden on individuals and society. Sadly suicide is predominantly common among young Irish men. Irish young males are committing suicide at a much higher rate than older males (White, Cash, & Keith, 2004). According to the World Health Organisation, suicide among young males in Ireland is the fifth highest in the European Union at present (HSE, 2010). There were 554 deaths due to intentional self-harm in 2011, 458 were men and 30% were men aged between 25 and 34 (CSO, 2012). More young men are dying from suicide in Ireland than car accidents (Corcoran, et al., 2001). However, fatal single car accidents being reported as accidents may be suicide missions hence, suicide figures may be higher. For this reason men’s health has become a major researched area and initiatives such as The Men’s Shed have been set up.

The first shed was open in Ireland in 2009 and there are now over 100 sheds open and the hope of this increasing to over 400 sheds by 2016. While the sheer increase of Men’s Sheds across Ireland; (from zero to 100+ sheds in 3 years) is phenomenal and itself a measure of their rapid take up and success, the Men’s Shed sector, communities, governments and community organisations involved in Men’s Sheds need evidence about who is participating and what impact it is having on their learning and health and well-being, especially with the absence of literature in an Irish context.

Men’s sheds benefits are not very well known or documented and are probably best known informally in men’s health circles. The majority of the literature has derived from Australian academics and concentrates on older men’s learning in community contexts. The only Irish

study to be carried out on Men's Sheds (Carragher, 2013) also focused on this topic area. The limited body of research into Men's Sheds consists of either descriptive surveys or small qualitative studies. Even though the benefits of the initiative are not very well known Men's Sheds are seen as an example of best practice for the promotion of men's health and well-being by health and social policy makers. So why are Men's sheds so successful? why do men participate in them and what do they get out of them? If this has tempted you to read on, many of the answers are in this research study.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

LITERATURE REVIEW

What are Men's Sheds?

Community Men's Sheds have been defined by the Irish Men's Shed Association (IMSA) as

'... any community-based, non-commercial organisation which is open to all men where the primary activity is the provision of a safe, friendly and inclusive environment where the men are able to gather and/or work on meaningful projects at their own pace, in their own time and in the company of other men and where the primary objective is to advance the health and wellbeing of the participating men'.

The first shed accessible to community members was in Broken Hill Australia and started in the mid 1970's. However, it seems they did not enter literature until about the mid 1990's. The Men's Shed is a recent grass roots initiative that is comprised mainly of older men. The sheds come in a variety of forms and are attended by a diverse range of men but some include younger men and even women but, are predominantly attended by older men. In Ireland there are presently over 100 sheds in operation. Men's Sheds are open to all men of all ages, abilities and background and are a place where men can teach their skills, learn new skills and make new friends. The main objective is to enhance the well-being of the men that become members. The organisation mainly targets men that are retired, unemployed or in part time work. The activities that take place within the shed are also diverse but usually cater for the needs that are specific to its members. These activities include: wood or metal work, furniture restoration, crafts, mobile health services, cookery and recreational activities such as pool, darts, chess and bridge. The sheds themselves act as a base for: men to gather and socialise, men's health and well-being programs They can also be used to meet the needs of specific male groups such as isolated men, older men, carers, men with Alzheimer's or dementia or day care for older men. According to Thorburn (2002) in his book *Men and Sheds*

"a shed is to a man what a handbag is to a woman – both contain all the essentials for surviving in the modern world No reasonable woman would dream of putting foot in men's shed"

Why Men's Sheds are an ideal place for men to learn?

Golding and Harvey (2006) carried out a study on men's shed participation in Victoria. The topic of research was adults learning and was a report to the Adult Community and Further

Education Board. They used a descriptive survey to carry out the research. 154 surveys were returned and 22 of the 27 sheds participated and reported a 62% response rate. Descriptive statistics were presented as raw percentages. However, no copy of the survey was presented or referred to and no inferential analyses were carried out. The most significant results however would suggest that 49% of the men had very limited formal school education with 68% not enjoying learning at school. Just over a third (32%) had either a trade background or no formal education after school. An interesting finding from the study was that 61% were advised by a health authority and 37% were referred to the shed by a health worker and a quarter of the respondents had reported having some sort of a disability. The participants of the survey significantly reported enjoying the shed, feeling better about themselves, acquired a sense of belonging and access to health information. This would suggest that men experience positive outcomes from being part of the shed. Conversely, there is no real data regarding the participants learning, which was the aim of the study; instead it seemed to provide more of a profile on who attends the shed.

Golding et al. (2007) examined men's learning through community programmes. They reported that many men that participate at the shed are retired or unable to find recent work. Once more a descriptive survey was used and sent to 150 different sheds with a 70.3% response rate. Focus group interviews were carried out and were conducted on 24 of the 150 sheds; however, the interview structure was not stated. Yet again, reported survey data was descriptive only and no inferential analyses reported. The survey strived to identify characteristics of men attending Men's Sheds, what they looked to gain from being part of the shed and whether or not the sheds were a useful learning space. Again, the shed was used as a setting for referral whereby a third of the men were referred to the shed by a health or welfare worker. Many of the men reported learning new skills but the knowledge transfer of these skills was generally only transferred to the home. Even though the Men's Shed was identified as preferred informal learning setting by most men 90% of the men felt that the shed was a good place to meet friends. Hence, the focus of the shed should not be solely as a setting for men and learning but as a location for men to gather and chat as it would seem from the above findings that men find comfort in their peers.

According, to Brown, Golding & Foley (2008) men prefer doing projects and developing peer monitoring and coaching relationships with others rather than having a tutor or teacher/learner relationship. Most of the men in this study again had limited education success but enjoyed the chance to learn in informal ways at the shed. This study was yet

again a descriptive survey plus the use of focus group interview and used 25 sheds. However, there was very limited data presented and the description of methodology was quite brief and vague. However a further study carried out by Golding (2008) reiterates that participation in communities of practice is more favourable to the learning of older men than engagement in formal adult educational courses. This is also supported by Mark, Montgomery & Graham (2010) research into men's learning through informal community contexts in Northern Ireland. Participants in the study were unemployed, older men experiencing challenges linked to poor health, a significant loss of a loved one and dissatisfaction with life. The authors found unemployed, older people appreciated a learner-centred approach which recognised and valued previous experience and acknowledged their diverse, individual needs. Participants were, therefore, found to be more likely to engage in a programme that was confidence-building, enhanced community skills and related closely to their everyday lives. Notwithstanding the limitations of the above mentioned studies this body of work proposes that Men's Sheds offer an informal learning environment that is preferred and better suited to men than traditional learning environments. Whilst the information has posited that the sheds are a key setting for men's learning in a community context and that informal learning works best when it is local, social and situated in a "shed" environment (Golding, 2011) there is still no evidence to suggest any sort on health and wellbeing affects. However, it would seem participants in Golding et al's (2007) showed signs of positive wellbeing experiences from meeting other men.

What are the health and wellbeing benefits of Men's Sheds?

The health and wellbeing outcomes of "sheddors" are a far smaller body of work with very little research carried out. No research has been carried out in this area in Ireland. Ballinger, Talbot & Verrinder (2009) explored how meaningful participation at a Men's Shed that was funded by the local health authority can affect men's health and well-being. The sample size was smaller and focused on just one shed with eight men. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were used and the research design and methods were very clear, concise and well described. The thematic analysis of the interviews produced five interrelated themes that would suggest that men's subjective wellbeing is enhanced through meaningful engagement at the shed and especially evident for men with mental health problems and substance abuse. Morgan's (2010) viewpoint paper provided further evidence that Men's Sheds are of benefit to men with mental health problems.

Divorce has increased in recent times in Ireland from 59,534 to 87,770 between 2006 and 2011. This is almost a 50% increase and can bring about stress and increase the incidents of isolation and loneliness all of which can have a negative effect on health (CSO, 2012). Women are more likely than men to engage in social activities such as visiting family and friends. Thus, isolation and loneliness is more prevalent among out older men. Men's Sheds can be used to prevent and reduce both social isolation and loneliness through integrating groups of older male adults, and allowing them the opportunity to build and foster meaningful relationships. A conference hosted by Mary McAlesse on 16th October 2007 chaired by Mr. Gay Byrne and titled "*Encouraging the Social Engagement of Older Men in Communities*" received a lot a attention and the key issue discussed at the conference was the isolation of older men especially those that were single and living in rural Ireland.

Misan, Haren & Ledo's (2008) report to Men's Sheds Australia suggests that Men's Sheds could be used as a strategy to improve men's health. Qualitative individual and focus group interviews were carried out involving 50 men and one woman with eight sheds used for the study. The report was commissioned by Men's Sheds Australia and is a one of the most substantial and methodologically rigorous reports the researcher identified. The interview data suggested that mental and social well-being were significantly more important to the participants than their physical health. The findings would suggest that feelings of increased social and mental wellbeing was thought to result from decreased social isolation and increased self-esteem. The author also highlights that the ways in which Men's Sheds engage with primary health services is an area that should be explored. This is in keeping with the conference mentioned above and therefore perhaps Men's Sheds could be proposed as an organisation that could help tackle this issue as the evidence would suggest that men's levels of social isolation decrease as a result of participating in Men's Sheds.

Misan, Haren & Ledo's (2008) research has also demonstrated that Men's Sheds Australia have helped older male adults with a variety of issues such as: excessive use of alcohol, boredom, inactivity, unhealthy diet, diabetes, heart problems, loneliness, arthritis, bowel cancer, and problems caused by smoking (Misan, Haren, & Ledo, 2008). Several participants in this study discussed the positive mental health implications of the program. One participant noted:

“I can't measure how much this place has benefited me. We get stress relief out of it . . . coming here having a regular banter with the people you see here at the table at the moment – it's good. (p. 44)”

Another participant expressed the mental health benefits of participating in Men's Sheds, noting that:

“. . . [Men's Sheds is] Good for self-esteem, confidence, has helped blokes who have been quite depressed and lonely . . . (p. 44)”

The impact of positive social interaction should not be underestimated. Social interaction, supporting social connectedness and involvement in community life are the basis to empowering people at the individual level and enhancing strong communities for health and wellbeing.

Reasons for joining Men's Sheds:

“Make new friends but keep the old. One is silver, the other gold”

However, as we age it is more difficult to make new friends. Bereavement, divorce, retirement and disability are all factors that can lead to loss of friendships. For these reasons, individuals can find it challenging to make new friends and develop new friendship networks. However, according to Ormsby, Stanley, & Jaworski (2010) Men's Sheds provide men with a place to adjust to the losses in retirement and an important place for socialising and mixing with other men. This can increase their opportunities to make new friends which could see a decrease in their levels of loneliness and isolation. This study was qualitative in design. Semi-structured interviews were used which involved five men and two sheds. Topics researched were reasons why men joined the shed, the activities they engaged in and their experiences of being part of the shed. A rigorous thematic analysis found six descriptive themes. The research design and methods used in this study were very clear and well described. From this research it can be assumed that Men's Sheds can be used as a strategy for stimulating new friendships in later life which would see a decrease in isolation and loneliness. A further research carried out in the Netherlands on an intervention called Stimulating Friendships in Later Life suggests that bringing older adults together in a way that enables them to discover what they have in common may lead to the development of new friendships and decrease levels of loneliness and isolation (Steven & van Tilburg, 2000). Therefore, by bringing men

together in a shed sharing and discovering common interests may also lead to the development of friendships and decreases in loneliness which could be why men join.

Carragher (2013) is the only study to date to be carried out on Irish Men's Sheds. The main aim of the study was to explore the learning that takes place by older men in Irish Men's Sheds. The study also hoped to identify the initiatives undertaken in sheds, by whom, for what reasons and with what outcomes. Mixed methods were used and the study was carried out among 52 sheds and a total of 445 questionnaires were distributed. There were many reasons given as to why men join the shed. One participant suggested:

"It's a totally different sort of meeting of men then you would normally have. You would normally meet your men friends in a pub situation so there would be alcohol more than likely. This is all sober. Everybody is as they are, it's totally real".

Another participant stated:

"I'd say the most benefit is social. And the second is the development of skills. I always had the interest in woodwork but I didn't have the machinery to do much and the opportunity is here and I want to develop that".

Whilst another noted:

"The biggest reason I came here is to annoy everybody, I love annoying them! I'm a bit of a fun person, but the benefits I get from this shed is health. I think it's health. Meaning I'm not down in the house vegetating, I'm here vegetating. But at least when you're here vegetating you can talk to somebody. But primarily that's it, it's the company. If they've got bad hearts, bad ingestion systems, etc when they come here they seem to forget that. They don't get too much of a sympathetic ear either, maybe they say to somebody 'I've got a sore stomach, aye okay'. You know what I mean but that helps instead of having your poor, lamented wife and you're laying into her ear from morning to night about how unwell you are, with your moaning face. Up here, it's different. No-one want to hear your moans or groans, you get what I mean. It's an open forum, you can talk, you can say what you want as long as you don't insult somebody".

From this evidence it would suggest that men join the shed for a number of reasons such as social aspect, company and friendship, camaraderie, health benefits, the activities at the shed

and just to get out of the house suggesting the importance of a third place for men other than home and work.

Summary and rationale:

It is clear that the participants of Men's Sheds are usually older retired men, not well educated and many of whom have been referred to the shed by a health worker. Even though the main objective of the Men's Shed organisation is to enhance the well-being of its participants, very little research has been carried out as proof this objective is being reached. While Golding has conducted most of the research on Men's Sheds, his focus has mainly been on the learning opportunities offered by the shed. Virtually all studies have been carried out in Australia. Only one study has been carried out to date on Men's Sheds in Ireland its main focus was on learning outcomes. No research has been carried out as to why men do not attend a Men's Shed therefore the researcher hopes to address this matter. Studies to date have only used participants of Men's Shed but this study shall also use non members to address this question. The overall aim of this research is to explore who attends the sheds, why men are attending the sheds, why men do not attend and what sort of impact the men's experiences are having on their health and well-being which may explain why the initiative has become so popular.

Research Questions:

1. Who are the men that attend Men's Sheds?
2. Why are men attending Men's Sheds?
3. Why are men not attending Men's Sheds?
4. What are men getting out of Men's Sheds?

Chapter 3

Methodology

METHODOLOGY

Research design:

This study is explorative research and of qualitative nature. This design was the most suitable for this study and was carried out in the form of two focus groups. Mason (2002) refers to qualitative interviewing as an in depth, semi-structured form of interviewing. Furthermore, focus groups are an efficient way to explore individual's beliefs (Rabiee, 2004). Additionally, they help generate qualitative information in an interactive way which could be lost in a one to one interview. According to Gillham (2005) "disclosing personal details to an impersonal medium can seem like letting part of yourself go, but in an interpersonal situation where trust is established that disclosure becomes possible". The researcher made it her business to form a relationship with the members of the shed prior to this research taking place so that there was a sense of trust with the participating men.

Study population and sampling: Since only one Irish study has taken place and no Men's Shed from Waterford was used in the research it was decided to use a sample of men from the Dungarvan Men's Shed. The study population consisted of six members of the Dungarvan Men's Shed and five members of The Dungarvan Youthreach Project two of whom were also members of Dungarvan Men's Shed. All members of the Youthreach group were eighteen or over. The number of participants usually recommended for a focus group is between five and ten participants (Rabiee, 2004). Too many participants in a focus group make it difficult for opportunities to arise for each person to engage in the discussion. The sample was obtained by a visit to the Dungarvan Men's Shed where men were asked if they would be interested in taking part in the research. Due to the interest among the men names were put into a hat and the first six drawn were selected to take part. It was at the shed that I met a younger man and asked had he friends that did not come to the shed. This man suggested that a lot of his friends were unemployed and members of the local Youthreach group in Dungarvan so it was decided to use a selection of these members to take part in the study to identify reasons why some men are not members of the Men's Shed.

Concepts:

As this was an exploratory research the concepts for this research were quite broad. Some concepts were pre-determined however, there were many emerging themes and codes throughout the course of the research. The following are some pre-determined concepts that were used in the research:

- **Reasons** – an explanation or justification for an action.
Example question used – Why did you join to the Shed?
- **Barriers** – what is standing in the way of participation?
Example question used – What has stopped you from becoming a member of the Shed?
- **Benefits**- something that is advantageous or good.
Example question used – What benefits do you get out of participating in activities in the Shed?

Data collection methods and procedure:

Focus groups were used to gain a deeper understanding around the popularity of Men's Sheds and identify why some men do not participate. Written confirmation (appendix 3) was obtained from each participant even though all had agreed verbally to participate. A suitable and agreeable date for the researcher and participants was set to conduct the focus groups. Equally important is that the interview process was carried out in an environment where the participants were most comfortable; the shed and a Youthreach classroom. Chairs and tables were already present as was the use of tea and coffee facilities. The researcher had worked with the men of the shed prior to the study which allowed her to gain their trust and cooperation which can be advantageous when it comes to focus groups. This also allowed the researcher to identify reluctant participants and enhance their participation in the interview. Due to the fact that the researcher did not have the opportunity to get to know the men in the Youthreach focus groups ice breaker games were used to create a more relaxed atmosphere. The researcher summarised and replicated what was said during the focus group to confirm that her interpretation was similar to that of the participants. The researcher ensured that each participant was provided with the opportunity to express themselves. The focus group was recorded using two voice recorders in case one failed. This allowed the researcher to transcribe the data and note the tone of the verbal communication. It was decided to allocate 45-60 minutes per focus group.

Measurement tools:

A topic guide for each focus group was used (appendix 1&2). The topic guide was adapted from two published research studies: Carragher's (2013) Men' Sheds in Ireland and Grave's

(2001) report Shedding the light on “Men in Sheds Report”. Some of these questions were adapted to suit the men the researcher was targeting using simpler language. Open ended questions were used emphasising that there was no wrong answer. However, because no research had been done into why men do not join the researcher devised these questions herself. Below are list of sample questions that shall be used in the focus group with some concepts/themes highlighted alongside them which are also the main topic areas.

- What benefits do you get out of participating in the activities in the men’s shed?
(BENEFITS)
- What makes you come to the shed? (REASONS)
- What advice would you give to similar organisations in order to attract, involve and benefit younger men? (BARRIERS)
- Is there anything that stops you coming to the shed? (BARRIERS)
- Why have you not become a member of the Men’s Shed? (BARRIERS)

Data analysis:

Thematic content analysis was used to analyze the data. The information was transcribed then read and re read until the main codes and themes emerged this is the first level of open coding according to Corbin & Strauss (2008). As themes were developed, a working definition was assigned to each code. Hence, going through the transcript, the definition was repeatedly being challenged. The analysis took place on the same day of the focus groups so that important information during discussion was not forgotten. Different coloured pens were used to highlight the codes derived from the focus groups. Even though there were pre-determined codes: reasons, benefits and barriers other emergent codes emerged from the data such as: feelings, continued involvement and improvements.

Ethical Considerations:

Various ethical considerations were taken into account and guaranteed at all stages of the evaluation. Confidentiality was of utmost importance and participants were advised where

data was stored and the protection of personal information was ensured. The consent form used for the study explained each of the measures taken in order to keep their entire personal information completely confidential (appendix 3). The data from discussions and interviews disclosed to the researcher was not viewed by any other party apart from the primary researcher of the study and the researcher's supervisor. Participation for this study was completely voluntary and consent (appendix 3) was received for same. Participants were made aware that they could drop out at any time and were under no obligation to take part. Pseudonyms were used when referring to the participants in the findings. Full ethical approval for this study was sought from Waterford Institute of Technology.

Chapter 4

Results

RESULTS

Sample:

Table 1 below shows that eleven men took part in two separate focus groups, one with older men the other with younger men. Ages ranged from 18 to 67 and all participants were unemployed with many experiencing significant life changes. Most men involved in the study were members of the shed.

Table 1: Overview of participants

| Pseudo-name | Age | Reason for not working | Member of Shed |
|--------------------|------------|--|-----------------------|
| Alan | 61 | Illness | Yes |
| Brian | 56 | Cannot find job, relocated to new area | Yes |
| Colin | 65 | Redundant but now retired | Yes |
| David | 61 | Redundant but cannot work due to illness | Yes |
| Eddie | 55 | Cannot find job | Yes |
| Fred | 67 | Retired teacher | Yes |
| Greg | 18 | Cannot find job | Yes |
| Harry | 18 | Cannot find job | Yes |
| Ian | 18 | Cannot find job | No |
| John | 19 | Cannot find job | No |
| Kevin | 18 | Cannot find job | No |

Reasons for joining:

There were many reasons why men joined the shed. Figure 1 below shows the two main themes that emerged were the practical and social reasons. Many practical reasons for joining such as learning new skills and sharing skills were highlighted.

“I like to learn the more practical things like the woodworking and the mental work and I do a bit of art” (Alan)

“If somebody has something to fix you bring it in and you will get advice” (David)

“Learn a few skills share a few skills” (Brian)

Other practical reasons for joining the shed included the activities that take place at the shed

“The woodworking and the mental work” (Alan)

and the accessibility of machinery that would not be available if these men were not members

“different types of machinery which I would never had access to before like I can now and do the things that I want to do and I think that’s absolutely brilliant” (Brian)

Even though there were many practical reasons for men joining the shed their main reasons seemed to be more social reasons especially as many of the men had either retired or been made redundant. Many of the men highlighted their sense of boredom and need to be doing something. They also highlighted that going to the shed provided them with a chance to meet other men and have some fun.

“I came down here because I sitting at home in the house doing nothing probably getting depressed doing nothing no work doing nothing” (Eddie)

“To meet people and make new friends” (Brian)

“When I came down I think I met a whole bunch of old fogies like myself and I said I’d stay with them” (Colin)

“It would be the social aspect cos you can come down here and you can kind of have a crack give a bit a lip and take a bit of lip and things like that and under normal circumstances nobody seems to be offensive or offended that’s sort of thing” (Colin)

“Tis somewhere to go in the morning times and a couple of evenings a week like so it’s good help for me anyway” (Eddie)

“A great place to meet people and people from all walks of life” (Alan)

The whole sense of camaraderie that men miss due to unemployment was highlighted on numerous occasions during the focus groups as a reason for joining.

“What I found was the after losing my job and being used to camaraderie like Colin has said and Eddie of working and going into the canteen and having the crack I missed all that to be quite honest” (David)

“There is great camaraderie” (David)

“Well the lads are doing a project at the moment an outside project and from what I hear about it was fantastic cos I’d say if we had a video camera here the first day that you were moving the shed and moving that little project it would have made some television viewing because the camaraderie and the bit of fun” (David)

Another theme that emerged from the focus group is the men’s need to get out of the house and the need for another space.

“You need somewhere to hide from the wife” (Alan)

“Home away from home” (Brian)

“At home you are told lift your feet” (Fred)

Finally, for some men the fact they were joined other men’s groups and had an interest in men’s groups was the reason for their joining.

“I have an interest in men’s groups for a number of years I’m involved in another men’s group (Alan)”

Figure1: Practical reasons for joining.

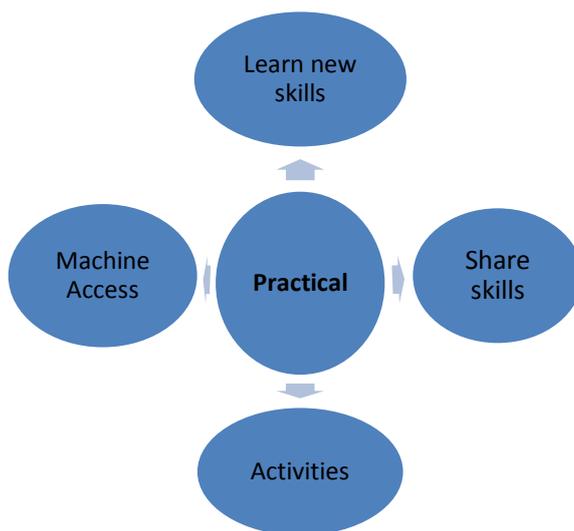
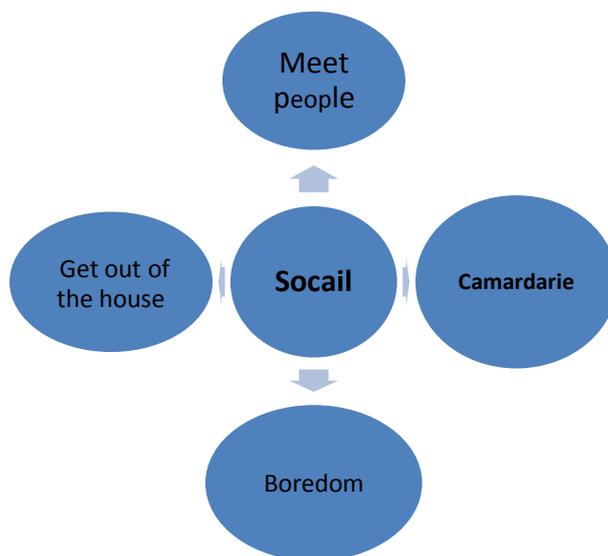


Figure 2: Social reasons for joining



Benefits of participation:

Figure 3 shows the benefits of participation in Men's Sheds. Additionally, participants discussed the benefit of sharing information with other participants and learning from each other.

“There are so many different things you can learn in the shed” (Brian)

“There is a wealth of experience out there that we can tap into, each one has a point of view that have an experience of life, so in reality what you see with these so called experts in governments, and here is something the same that people here can help you in an awful lots of ways” (Fred)

“There is a multitude of experience here that you could of get hold of like you know things you'd say like that I wouldn't have dreamed of I'm after doing” (Colin)

“Teaming up together doing bird boxes for the school above St. Marys there we got a lovely little letter from the youngsters there yesterday just thanking us for it so they are aware that the men's shed is in operation” (David)

“You are contributing very much to society; Philippines Appeal every one of these men would have loaded the container; painting to be done on the lookout they went down and did it for the community; they go out to the hospital visiting; at present we are onto another thing with VEC; doing that the experience that you have a certain amount of satisfaction that I have contributed some small thing to my community” (Fred)

“Small things like the bird tables for the schools and for day centres and for old peoples place like you do feel good about doing it you know and people do be clapping you on the back I suppose you get the aul warm glow” (Alan)

Many participants in the focus group also discussed the positive mental and physical health benefits they experience since becoming shed members. Men who chatted about personal mental health benefits noted that being a member had lowered their levels of depression. One man spoke about his experience with depression, and how his participation in the Men's Shed has helped to improve this.

“I was down low like until I came here and I'm beginning to kick out of it now like” (Eddie)

“From a mental point of view and a health point of view it's a very very good thing” (Fred)

“Well the benefit that I found was just getting out of the house getting in here I’d say I’d be doing something stupid a long time ago if it wasn’t for somewhere to go, now on a Monday I’m getting up like you know and and I’m feeling great” (Eddie)

“To even get up and get out of the house and walk up here no matter where you live you are getting some bit of exercise” (Alan)

“You will get something to do up here even if tis only to walk around with the black bag and pick up a few papers” (Alan)

“Doing the walks there on the Tuesday night” (Fred)

“You’re up and down with wheelbarrows and that is better than any gym fellas there and there is sweat pouring off them” (David)

“Bit of occupying yourself and the bit of using your brain and interacting with people that does you more good than running a marathon I think” (Alan)

“Your brain is ticking over all the time and if the brain packs in what’s the use in having a super fit body if brain like a lead block you know” (Alan)

The younger men also reported both physical and mental health benefits where one participant noted that he has actually reduced his smoking since becoming a member.

“I usually just sit at home and do nothing now this it gives me a bit of exercise walking there and getting practical skills and that” (Greg)

“You are not sitting home bored and feeling depressed you are getting out in the fresh air and you can go up and talk to like others” (Harry)

“Even at home you could smoke like 5 fags in an hour like whereas when you are up in the men’s shed like you might not even smoke a fag cos your always up to something” (Greg)

The majority of participants noted that they had experienced great benefit from the friendships they had obtained as a result of their involvement in the shed. Some of the shedders were new in the area had made new friends in the area because of the shed.

“I was new to Dungarvan anyway so I didn’t really know nobody here so I have a load of friends now” (Eddie)

“I know he is not here there is another gentleman that came across came across the water we will say, he had no friends what so ever, he said this was his saving grace the shed he has more friends now he said than he has ever had. . He made more friends since the shed opened than he made in I don’t know how many years he has been living around and I don’t know long he is around but you know” (David)

“A great place to meet people and people from all walks of life” (Alan)

“People might not see eye to but sure isn’t that the true form of friendship; Somebody knows your faults and still likes you” (Fred)

“Something we found in jobs years ago that it was more than a job because you’d be there and you be and you’d all work in different jobs but you had friends in your jobs” (David)

“Each person will put themselves out totally to help the next person so between the arguments and everything at the same time people are so close here without even realising it maybe” (Brian)

“You can’t become friends if you don’t have some sort of an argument “(Colin)

When the younger participants were asked in what way the shed benefited them they reiterated that they too experienced the benefit of making new friends. Additionally, one noted the benefit of gaining from the older men’s knowledge and sharing of skills.

“Making new friends” (Greg)

“Making new friends getting in contact with new people that can help you out with the woodturning getting wood and stuff, basically passing down knowledge and stuff” (Harry)

When the younger members were asked if they felt welcomed and comfortable being part of the shed and among older men they all agreed age means nothing and all felt connected at the shed. Additionally, the younger men had huge admiration and respect for the older members.

“The age makes no difference up there everyone is the same” (Greg)

“You might think that ah they are all aul lads but when you go up there and actually get to know them they are basically the same as any young person in Dungarvan they are just all outgoing and hilarious” (Harry)

“They are all really sound especially Eddie, Eddie is a legend” (Harry)

“They don’t really seem old when you are with them because they all have the same personality as would myself like and there’s not ever been a day when I’ve gone in there and seen anyone of them angry or depressed or like miserable, it’s just lifting straight away” (Harry)

They also suggested that perhaps by being a member of the shed would help in developing resilience among younger men.

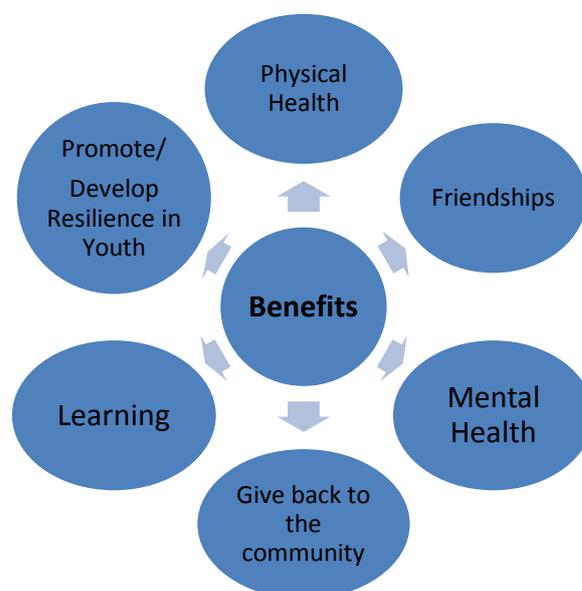
“Keeps you out of trouble as well if you didn’t have someplace else to be and didn’t have hobbies outside school I’d probably be off getting in trouble the whole time and it is just occupying the mind I suppose” (Ian)

For the younger members of the shed they suggested that prior to becoming members they had no sense of purpose and had nothing to occupy them and suggested that the shed addressed these issues.

“It was pure boredom, had nothing to do and I was sitting at home and I was just eating and smoking fags and doing nothing just basically rotting” (Harry)

“It’s a good way to pass time like if you have nothing to do and like I am learning new stuff every time I go there” (Harry)

Figure 3: Themes concerning the benefits of participating in Men’s Sheds



Feelings attached to being a shedder:

For some participants, their involvement affected them on a deep, personal level. Figure 4 displays the range of feelings expressed by participants. One participant noted that for him, being a member of the Men's Sheds meant it got rid of his feeling of inferiority.

“It reduces my inferiority complex; I was actually made redundant twice, and you’d never believe the amount of hassle I had to go through when I was made redundant the second time I couldn’t make a claim because they said I didn’t have a utility bill, but at that time everybody seem to be taken care of more than I was ya know that sort of way so came down here and nobody was awkward about anything” (Colin)

Other participants said that the shed provides them with a sense of purpose and a sense of being useful and productive.

“I would have had nowhere else to go like in all fairness when I was living in Waterford I was involved in the GAA club and that was me life but when I’m up here now I had nothing to do so this is giving me something” (Eddie)

“A reason to get up in the morning” (Alan)

“You don’t feel as much on the scrap heap you know that you are part of something” (Alan)

Whilst another suggested that the shed provided him with a sense of belonging, unlike some clubs where he was left feeling unwanted.

“I use to be involved with GAA and things like that but as you get on in the years then these organisations can leave you behind, there was never a place where if you came to a certain age there was a place for these people to go you can only play football for so long you can possibly play golf for a bit longer but it fills a void you know and if you 18 or 80 you are still useful in a men’s shed” (David)

Another participant felt the shed for him was somewhere where he could take the weight off his shoulders and leave down his baggage describing it as a waiting room; a place where problems are shared making men feel better about themselves.

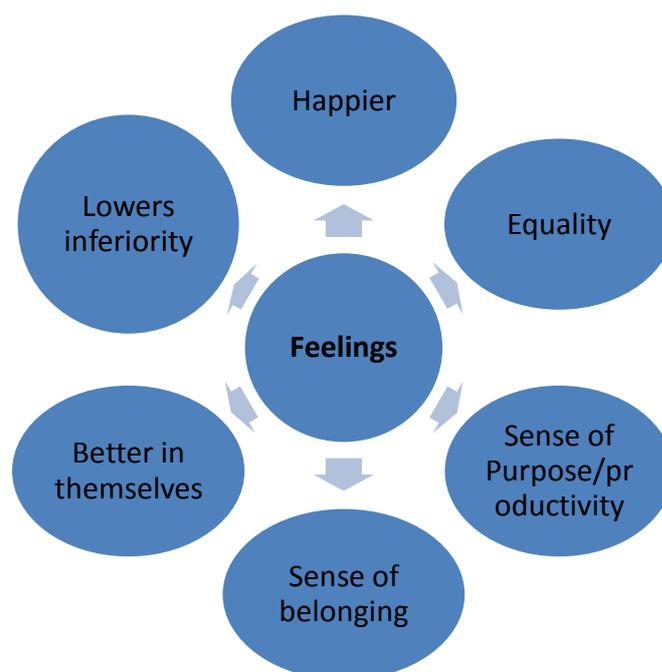
“I had a dream like you said there Fred in the CDP years ago I have a piece written at home and my dream was this that was my dream.”

“I didn’t know what it was going to be called I called it a waiting room where you would come in and you had your baggage with you twas like the fella waiting at the station he brought it in he left it there he sat down for a while like you were saying Joe and he rested and by the time he was ready to continue his journey he felt an awful lot better the load was we say Colin was after lifting one bag Brian after lifting another bag so you understand me you kinda learn the skill as Colin said you shared out problems and you were that much lighter going away and a bit of camaraderie (Everyone agreeing and nodding) It is something we found in jobs years ago that it was more than a job because you’d be there and you be and you’d all work in different jobs but you had friends in your jobs” (David)

One younger member suggested that the shed helps lift his mood just by being there thanks to the older members of the shed

“There’s not ever been a day when I’ve gone in there and seen anyone of them angry or depressed or like miserable, it’s just lifting straight away when you walk in through the door there is always someone laughing so ” (Harry)

Figure 4: Themes of feelings concerned with being a shedder.



Continued involvement:

The flexibility of the program and the huge sense of equality that men experience are among the main reasons why the men stay going to the shed. These can be seen in Figure 5.

“The thing about the shed is you can walk in and you can walk out no problem at all nobody asks questions where you are going, what time you will be back, how long you will be do you know what I mean there’s flexibility” (David)

“Anybody can come in you can spend an hour you can spend half an hour you can leave something there on the lathe and say I won’t touch it now I will wait till tomorrow” (Fred)

“There’s nobody inferior to anybody” (Fred)

“Everybody’s opinion is listened to” (Fred)

“When we are doing something for the community or something like that none of take the credit but you know that it’s a joint thing” (Fred)

“You are treated as an equal” (Fred)

“Everyone is equal when they come in here we all drink out of the same mugs” (Alan)

Another major theme that emerged as a reason why men continue to go to the shed would be the use of informal learning. The men enjoyed the informal way of teaching and did not want to feel like they were back at work.

“We all learn inside in the workshop again the teaching and learning would be very much informal” (Fred)

“This is very conducive you know cos it’s informal” (Fred)

“I hear and I forget I see and I remember but I do and I understand” (Fred)

“The old romans used to say; Repetitio mater memoriae repetition is the mother of study” (Fred)

“It isn’t rammed down your throat up here” (Alan)

“If somebody is rabbiting and rabbiting on at you do it this way you do it this way you do it this way like after about the second or third you do it this way I start thinking about what film

is on” (Alan) “That’s right you turn off the off button” (David) “You start thinking you are back in work” (Eddie)

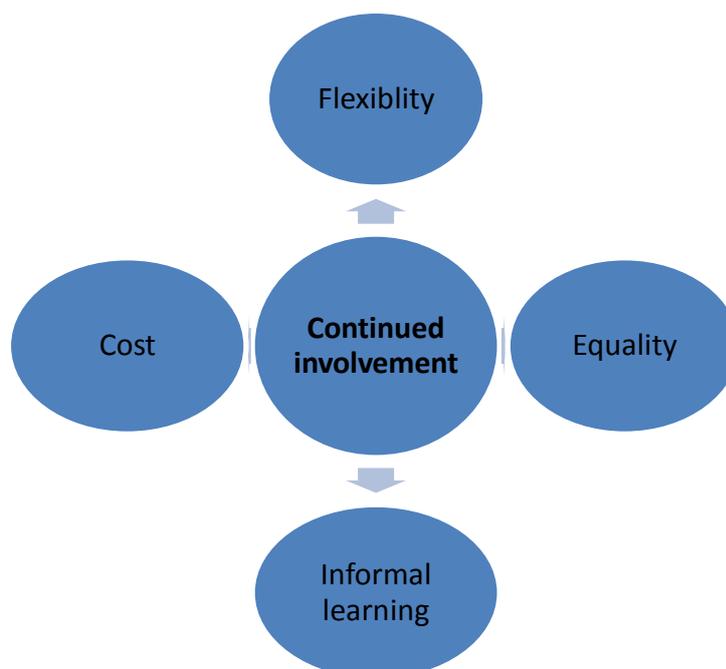
“The way it is up here if you don’t want to do something you go in and you sit down” (Alan)

“I’ve seen it even in industry I’d meet a few lads down the town and I feel so sorry for them now today cos I’ve noticed some of those young fellas got an awful life when they were serving their time with different people and it left its mark; it was shook into them but thanks be to god this is a different set up” (David)

The younger non-members pointed out the very fact that there is no cost involved to join is very appealing and could be seen as a reason why some men continue to be involved.

“It would be handy for people as well cos its free isn’t it because like these days like we are in here we or on a €160 a week it’s like the dole basically and you know if we want to go off and do something it’s going to cost money like you know” (Ian)

Figure 5: Themes concerning why men continue to attend the shed



Barriers to participation:

The barriers can be seen in Figure 6. Some participants noted that there was a misconception that the shed is only for older men this may be a reason as to why young men do not join.

“I said it to a few chappies up at home you know do you want to come down but they were under the illusion that you had to be an old man” (Colin)

“A lot of them were under the opinion that you had to be as Alan said ready for the scrap heap” (Colin)

The younger focus group echoed this misconception.

“They are only going on what they are hearing it’s a bunch of lads doing woodwork its basically the idea what people get but I’d recommend don’t judge just go there and if you don’t like it go and if you do like it stay” (Harry)

Others suggested that some men may associate the shed as a form of work; a more formal environment than it actually is which may turn some men off.

“Might be afraid of joining because they might have thought twas like maybe going into a job so that you have to be kind of careful that you encourage somebody to do something” (David)

Some of the younger men who are not members noted that being part of other activities was stopping him from joining even though he would consider joining.

“I would consider becoming a member of the shed but I’m too caught up in other activities” (Ian)

Whilst another suggested the types of activities that take place at the shed were not of interest to him. However, he would consider becoming member if there were activities to suit him.

“I’m not really interested in woodwork” “I would like to do welding” I’d like to learn the skill so I could get a job” (John)

The younger group felt that the name is suitable as The Mens Shed and this would not be a drawback or a barrier to participation.

“The name actually suits obviously you can’t join something like that unless you are over 18 with safety with machinery and that stuff and insurance but I’d say the Men’s Shed names

suits it because it is all men and all are over 18 like you can't be 16 and call yourself a man" (Harry)

One of the younger participants suggested that the opening hours of the shed need to be extended as they are quite restricted which may be a barrier for men to participate. They also suggested that younger men find the weekend the most difficult time to occupy themselves suggesting opening also at the weekend.

"I'd prefer if it was open more often like two nights a week like if it was open every night of the week like I'd go" (Harry)

"I'd agree with Darren I'd prefer if it was open every night of the week" (Greg)

"I was working on a project last night and that was Wednesday and I got my project done but there was another person wanted to use the lathe and he can't use the lathe now until next Tuesday so I'd recommend opening it at least one or two more evenings during the week if not all week or the weekends maybe" (Harry)

Figure 6: Themes specifically relating to the barriers to participation



Improvements:

The main improvements highlighted were the need for extended opening hours, access to recreational activities and better advertising of the shed. Although the vast majority of participants refrained from identifying weaknesses in the Men's Shed one of the younger members suggested perhaps making a video about the shed to make people aware of what exactly goes on in the shed.

“I'd recommend doing a shed video day get a video camera and just leave it there and watch what people do and their stuff and gather all of them up at the end and wave into the camera it would be a bit of advertisement for people to see what way the shed is run like” (Harry)

“Basically a view of what goes on at the shed and put it on the Facebook” (Ian)

Another younger member highlighted that by being open at the weekends would make younger people more resilient keeping them away from risky behaviours such as drinking alcohol.

“If it was open on the weekends like people of 18 are more likely to be drinking at weekends and if they joined the men's shed it would keep them away from the drink on the weekends at least anyway” (Greg)

“Younger people have more free time at the weekend so they are more likely to go at the weekend” (Greg)

“Saturdays and Sundays are really boring especially if you wake up early 13 and 14 hours of just doing nothing” (John)

“There is nothing to do in this town at weekends and it is always cold outside so you can't really do any sport types of things” (Greg)

Again it was suggested that by providing activities that were appealing to younger men would be a means of attracting them to the shed such as the use of more recreational activities.

“A games rooms, a few dart boards” (Harry)

Others felt that a lot of young men do not know about the shed and suggested ways of targeting them through advertisement. The younger men also felt that the location of the shed itself could be better and advertised more appropriately.

“Flyers, posters stuff like that you don’t see much of that around” (Greg)

“More advertisement outside the actual place there is only one sign on the side, that would be handy more signage around the place especially on the two front gates cos people are just walking up and down thinking it’s just the VEC and they don’t know what it is going on in the back of the place ” (Harry)

“It’s kind of hidden so it’s kind of hard for people to notice it” (Greg)

“Like I’ve said to people do you know where the Men’s Shed is and they have said no” (Harry)

“Leaving booklets in pubs and shops spread the word” (Harry)

“Use Facebook most young people don’t really read the newspaper so there is no point is just using the newspaper if you are trying to attract young people so Facebook would probably be the best way the target them maybe an actual advertising page of Facebook showing all the activities that go on in the shed”(Ian)

Chapter 5

Discussion

DISCUSSION

Introduction:

The main purpose of this study was to explore the increased popularity of Men's Sheds in Ireland with a focus on: who attends the shed, why men are attending, barriers to participation and the benefits its members experience. Overall, the main findings suggest that the members are mainly older unemployed men who experienced a recent significant life change. Participants in the study had many practical and social reasons for joining the shed that ranged from wanting to meet new people to learning new skills. Members expressed an array of health, wellbeing and educational benefits from participating in the shed but also noted some barriers to participation the most significant being the misconception that the initiative is for older men only. The men also mentioned some improvements that could be implemented especially when trying to engage younger men. However, the older men were a little reluctant to discuss weaknesses of the initiative. The key themes to be discussed shall be: who the members are, reasons for joining, benefits of participation, continued involvement, and barriers to participation and improvements that can be made to Men's Sheds. Each of these themes shall be discussed in turn.

The men that join Men's Sheds:

Even though there are no actual age restrictions to becoming a member of the shed the members are mainly made up of older men and do not seem to be attracting younger men. However, the one theme that did emerge was that all members of the shed were unemployed no matter what their age. Additionally, members believed that participating in the shed activities may enhance their possibility of paid work. All the members came from an array of different backgrounds and occupations: retired teacher, quality control technician, corporate manager, lorry driver, tradesmen and student which may contribute to the success of the Men's Shed as the men often made reference to the wealth of experience available at the shed. Furthermore the vast majority of members had recently experienced a significant life change such as: retirement, redundancy, relocation to a new area and health issues. This coincides with Carragher's (2013) findings that three quarters (70%) of men attending the sheds were over 50 years of age, almost a fifth (18%) were aged between 30 and 49 years, and a mere 10% were under 30 years of age. Whilst it is fair to say that Men's Shed are reaching older men it is evident from this research that they do not seem to be reaching a large cohort of younger men and no research to date has mentioned this fact.

As already noted suicide among young Irish males is currently a major problem. Rises in suicide rates have also been associated with a lack of connectedness to the social fabric of life (Ryan, 2003). However, interventions such as the shed can enhance protective factors in young men and offset these vulnerabilities and promote their health. The shed can provide young males an opportunity to develop positive relationships with other men through peer mentoring. It can also give these men a second chance of learning and create a sense of social connectedness all of which can help with increasing self-esteem. In January 2005 the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Arts, Sport, Tourism, Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs published its report *Volunteers and Volunteering in Ireland*. This report was published to emphasise the significance of voluntary and community work. Moreover, it highlighted the value of volunteers and the necessity to support true partnerships. The Men's Shed is a community programme whose volunteers could be utilised to support and reinforce community based suicide prevention, mental health promotion and bereavement support programmes for young men.

The more recent increase in suicide rates in Ireland also coincides with the economic downturn and increasing levels of unemployment. A recent meta-analysis of three studies showed that job insecurity is associated with 33% greater risk of common mental disorders (Stanley & Candy, 2006). In 2012, Ireland's unemployment rate was the fifth highest rate in the European Union (CSO, 2012). In April 2011 there were 82,000 men under 25 years of age unemployed up from 47,122 in 2006. Furthermore, in April 2011 there were 34,166 people looking for first time employment 57% were male and over 60% were between the ages of 15 and 24 (CSO, 2012). As younger Irish men are more likely to be unemployed and commit suicide it is incontrovertible that Men's Sheds must become more appealing to younger men to tackle such problems.

Depression is associated with over 50% of suicides (Moller-Leimkuhle, 2003). Winkler, Pjrek, & Kasper (2006) highlights that even though more women are diagnosed with depression men are almost twice as likely to die from suicide. This highlights the issue of men's poor help seeking. Smith, Braunack-Mayer, & Wittert (2006), state that men and boys are less likely to participate in help-seeking behavior than females and girls. In September 2007 at the second Men's Shed Conference Professor Barry Golding stated that "men don't talk face to face they talk shoulder to shoulder" and soon became the motto of The Men's Sheds Association. This further stresses the need for the shed to be more appealing to

younger men. As is already evident from the results of this research the shed helps with issues such as depression and men feel more comfortable talking with other men.

Rhodes (1994), suggests that a positive relationship with extra familial adults is vital to promoting resiliency among youth from at-risk backgrounds. The shed and its supportive environment can provide a positive social support through mentoring which can improve youth functioning. Theories of juvenile delinquency posit that youth acquire delinquent behaviour patterns due to the fact that they have not identified with suitable role models in their environment (Hawkins & Weis, 1985). Again the older members of the shed can mentor these younger men. They can serve as role models, with whom youth might identify leading to increased socially appropriate behaviour and reduced delinquent behaviour. Young men in this research noted since becoming members it not only kept them out of trouble they were not participating as much in other unhealthy behaviours such as smoking. Bulman & Hayes (2011) is the only study to date to discuss mentoring at Men's Sheds. The results from the study suggested that the environment and accessibility to mentors had a major impact on creating positive lifestyles. Additionally the results reported a reduction in unemployment, domestic violence, and alcohol dependence. Unfortunately, the study did not report how the study was determined or measured. However, the positive results again suggest the potential for Men's Sheds to provide mentoring programmes for younger men. However, this is not going to be possible if Men's Sheds are not attracting younger men.

Reasons for joining:

Many of the men joined the shed as a result of a significant life change. Loneliness and social isolation resulting from retirement, being made redundant, relocation to a new area and health issues were contributing factors to the men joining. These findings are similar again to findings in Carragher's (2013) study where 33% of respondents had experienced retirement, 26% had experienced a major health predicament, 14% had suffered a recent impairment or disability, 41% faced unemployment and a further 13% had suffered difficulties with their business or work. What was interesting from speaking to the men was that most came to the shed of their own accord and were not referred by health personnel as is the case for many joining in Australia. According Golding et al. (2007) a third of men were referred to the shed by a health or welfare worker while Golding & Harvey (2006) found that over two thirds were sent by a health authority and almost 40% referred by a health worker. This is something that perhaps Irish Men's Shed need to focus on to reach more men.

The two main themes that surfaced as reasons for joining were practical and social reasons. The practical reasons included: sharing and learning new skills, the activities that took place at the shed and having access to machinery that would not be possible without the shed. Whilst there was evidence of practical reasons for joining the main reasons why men joined were social reasons and consisted of: an opportunity to meet people, the comradeship, and boredom where men discussed the need to get out of the house. These findings were similar to that found by Misan, Haren & Ledo (2008). The shed environment facilitates coping during life changes such as those outlined above. Many of the participants discussed in depth about how being a member of the shed helped alleviate their loneliness, social isolation, depression, and promote social engagement and connectedness. The most well-known theory under the Sociological Theory is the Disengagement Theory (Cummings & Henry, 1961) which posits that ageing persons naturally “withdraw” or “disengage” from public and personal relationships. However, remaining socially connected has been proven to reduce mortality rates (Giles, Glonek, Luszcz, & Andrews, 2005), increase cognitive functioning (Ertel, Glymour, & Berkman, 2008; Ybarra, et al., 2008) reduce the risk of dementia (Wang, Karp, Winblad, & Fratiglioni, 2002) and depression (Hays, Steffens, Flint, Bosworth, & George, 2001). Social engagement which is somewhat comparable to social connectedness is concerned with the participation in activities in one's social environment (Herzog, Ofstedal, & Wheeler, 2002). Social engagement can be grouped into various categories such as: social activities, helping activities and educational/intellectual activities (Herzog, Ofstedal & Wheeler, 2002) all of which take place at Men's Sheds.

Social engagement has also been described as an important component of successful aging (Depp, Vahia, & Jeste, 2010) which is vitally important especially as life expectancy has increased greatly in the past decade. Themes of social engagement were repeatedly evident when speaking to the men. This enhances the opportunity of successful aging by facilitating coping during life's transitions. It should also be noted that young men are also experiencing many life changes especially in the world of work. Many men have seen changes in employment due to recession and now see themselves unemployed and in short term or part time employment. These men also have time on their hands and may need a place to go. Macdonald, Brown, & Buchanan (2001) highlighted that a large part of men's self-identity comes from work. Additionally, he suggests that this does not have to be paid work again

highlighting the importance for younger men's participation in shed activities to help with such life changes.

The need to stay busy was another evident theme that emerged as a reason as to why men join. The men often discussed their sense of boredom and need to keep occupied highlighting that being at home doing nothing was a contributing factor to their depression. The Activity Theory is a successful aging theory established by Havighurst (1961) which was further developed by Lemon, Bengston, & Peterson (1972) and Longino & Kart (1982). This theory suggests that in order to maintain well-being, older adults should continue activities from middle-age as long as they can before replacing these activities. According to this theory, keeping busy is a successful way to cope with changes associated with aging and to enhance life satisfaction (Lemon, Bengston & Peterson, 1972). Older people can still remain active providers to their families and communities even if they retire from work, have become ill or are living with a disability and this can be enhanced by participation in shed activities. Whilst it is important for older men to keep busy, the younger men in this research also emphasised their need to stay occupied. By participating in activities at the shed it could help prevent younger men from becoming depressed which may also help to reduce the numbers of young men taking their own lives.

The older men often mentioned how they missed the camaraderie that goes along with being employed and an important reason why some joined which is comparable to Carragher's (2013) findings. This emphasises the importance of the shed to recreate bonds of fellowship through activities in the shed highlighting the significance social connectedness means to men. The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA, 2011) found evidence to suggest that quality of life increased with social interactions. Fellowship is not only important among older men who have retired but also important for younger men who may have been made redundant, lost their jobs or just left school.

Benefits of participation:

Most of the men in the research reported negative previous experience of formal education but also noted that they still wanted to learn. However, it was clear from speaking with the men that this needs to be in an informal manner. Sheds offer opportunities for learning that are more in tune with the way men like to learn (Golding, 2006). As already mentioned men

favour doing activities and developing peer mentoring and coaching relationships with others over having a teacher learner relationship (Brown, Golding & Foley, 2008). Golding's research into men's sheds assesses the ways in which the nature and organisation of the Men's Sheds affect the informal learning experiences and lives of the men who participate in them (Golding, Brown, & Foley, 2007; Golding, Brown, Foley, Harvey, & Gleeson, 2007; Golding, 2007; Golding, 2006). This body of research found the shed to be more conducive to men's more practical, 'hands-on' learning. This was particularly evident when speaking to the men in this research who highlighted their preference for informal learning stating that by doing they learn more.

There is no measurable evidence that participating in Men's Sheds has any major effect on the physical health of its members. This absence is quite surprising as literature suggests that one of the main benefits of sheds is taking part in physical activity. Milligan, Payne, Bingley, & Cockshott (2012) posited that older men's physical health might be improved by participating in Men's Sheds however, their hesitant conclusion warrants more thorough longitudinal research. Physical inactivity is costing the Irish economy and average €1.6 billion annually (Condon, 2010). Research has shown that by participating in up to 60 minutes of moderate activity or half an hour of vigorous activity per day can reduce a person's chance of developing cancer (Cancer Council Victoria, 2011). Additionally, there is growing evidence for physical activity in the management of depression among older individuals (Sims et al., 2006). People over 50 years of age who participate in moderate to high levels of physical activity can reduce the odds of having depressive symptoms by over 50% (Morgan et al, 2011). In spite of the fact that exercise is one of the most effective tools with the potential to influence and enhance health in old age it improves the body's mechanism for protection and repair (Kirkwood, 2012). With our population living longer interventions such as the shed can help reduce the risks or even prevent illnesses from occurring in the first place. These are extra costs on our economy that can be prevented. Many members had suggested that prior to becoming members of the shed they led quite sedentary lifestyles sitting at home and watching television for hours but since joining the shed they were more physically active. The older men suggested a number of ways in which their physical activity levels had increased since their participation in the shed: walking to and from the shed, activities at the shed such as pushing wheel barrows, gardening and being part of a walking group. Younger members stated that they were not smoking as much which

also has physical health benefits. It is evident from the above results participation in shed activities appear to have fuelled greater physical activity levels.

Preventing and eliminating boredom is quite important as it has been linked to depression and loneliness (Coalter et al, 2000). An interesting statement by one of the participants suggested that by keeping the mind occupied and being socially active was better than participating in a marathon suggesting that men are more concerned about their mental health than their physical health. This suggestion is further reinforced by Missan, Payne & Ledo (2008) that older men “were less concerned about physical health and more worried about social, emotional and mental health and well-being”. Some of the older members mentioned how their symptoms of depression had decreased since becoming a shedder am may be as a result from decreased levels of boredom. Ballinger, Talbot, & Verrinder’s (2009) study also supported this evidence suggesting that participation at Men’s Sheds was a life changing support for men recovering from depression. Additionally, the younger members of the focus groups discussed how they were less likely to be depressed because the shed provided them the opportunity to talk to others. This not only suggests that the shed helps alleviate symptoms of depression but also provides men the opportunity for help seeking which are major issues among men that have already been discussed.

Wellbeing benefits such as social engagement and social connectedness that the shed provides have already been discussed. Additionally, many participants saw their involvement in the Men's Shed facilitating a greater: sense of purpose through learning new skills and sharing skills, a sense accomplishment by contributing and giving back to the community through various activities such as those outlined in the results section, a sense of control due to the fact that all participants are involved in decision making and the activities that take part at the shed and a sense of belonging unlike the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) which one member suggested had left him behind due to his age, evidence that ageism exists in the organisation. Feelings of a sense of belonging and men feeling better about themselves were also evident in Golding & Harvey’s (2006) research. All the above wellbeing benefits will help improve participant’s self-esteem, self-worth and self-image as the men highlighted numerous times that every member is valued and respected.

Benefits from peer mentoring were also evident but have already been discussed in depth. The majority of men mentioned they had gained huge benefits from the friendships they had made from reducing loneliness and isolation to saving one man’s life which could also

explain why the shed has become so popular. The benefits from the friendships made are also supported in Ormsby, Stanley & Jaworski's (2010) research which found that socialising with other men decreased the incidents of loneliness and isolation. It is incontrovertible that there are numerous physical, mental and wellbeing benefits to be gained for men young and old through participation at the shed. This poses huge potential for sheds to promote the health and wellbeing of men which has also been accredited in recent health policies in Ireland (Department of Health and Children, 2008). However, the limited amount of research into the health and wellbeing benefits Men's Sheds may offer its participants warrants further investigation.

Continued involvement:

There were many themes evident as to why men continue to attend the Men's Shed. Participants described flexibility as fundamental to the success of the program. When listening to the men it became clear that the men feel comfortable coming and going as they please and there was no pressure put on anyone to take part in activities, expressing their need for freedom. Furthermore, as already discussed the use of informal learning contributed greatly to men's continued involvement. Cost was another contributor; the very fact that it was free was seen a positive factor to men's continued involvement especially when all members were unemployed. Another reason which may explain men's continued involvement was the huge sense of equality and empowerment all men were treated the same and all involved in decision making. This may also explain why Men's Sheds have grown in popularity recently.

Barriers to participation:

Another aspect discussed among both focus groups was the barriers to participation. This was not only an important issue to discuss among the older men but was certainly important among the younger group to gain insight into why younger men were not participating. The younger men noted that restricted opening hours at the shed was a huge problem. Should young people lack stimulation and have nothing to do they often undertake their own antisocial activities (Crabbe, 2000: Felson, 1998) as was admitted by the younger men. Some men expressed how difficult it was to pass time at the weekend and a reason why they engage in antisocial behaviour. Restricted opening hours may also pose problems for men who are on short term or part time work something that should be looked at if other marginalised men are

to be reached. Other barriers noted were the activities that take place, its hidden location and the advertising of the initiative.

Both focus groups agreed the misconception that the Men's Shed is only for older men is also a barrier to participation. This is something that needs to change especially if the Men's Shed is appeal to younger men. After reading through a copious amount research it would seem that even the authors are misled by this misconception also. In Milligan, et al. (2013) systematic review the authors state that Men's Sheds are "voluntary and social organisations providing hands-on activities for men aged 50 years of age and older". Furthermore, most of the research into Men's Sheds is focused on older men's experiences which may lead to the misconception that the shed is in fact for older men.

Improvements:

The final aspect to be discussed among the focus groups was improvements that could be made at the shed. The researcher felt that because the men were in a group among peers it held them back from identifying weaknesses. The researcher suggests that if interviews were used to obtain the information the men may have opened up more. The researcher felt the men were reluctant to speak but could see that there was potential to obtain this information if she were to speak to the men on a one to one basis. The main improvements to be identified were ways in which to target younger men such as extended opening hours, better advertising and the availability of recreational activities such as: darts and pool.

Conclusion:

From the copious amount of research looked at even if limited and with the addition of the results generated from this dissertation it is incontrovertible that Men's Sheds provide an overwhelming amount of benefits for men having a positive effect on their health and wellbeing. The findings have also confirmed that Men's Sheds are mainly attended by older unemployed men with the majority having experienced a recent significant life change but lack the engagement of younger men. Additionally, it is indisputable that the use of informal learning and the programs flexibility has led to its success and popularity.

Men's Sheds can work in a maintenance manner but also in a preventative manner it terms of physical and mental health. Not only can the initiative help lengthen older men's lives and improve their mental health and possibly delay the loss of cognitive function they could also help improve younger men's physical and mental health and in turn lower health care costs

not only on an individual level but for the country as a whole. Older individuals provide valuable support to society, and younger men can benefit from their experience. Not only could sheds be used to develop and promote resilience among young men they could be used as a setting to tackle young men's help seeking behaviours which could also aid in tackling problems such as suicide among young men. Even though Men's Sheds have been recognised in policy documents as a setting to promote health and wellbeing among men, primary health care services, general practitioners and members in welfare authorities need to be aware of these benefits and refer vulnerable and marginalised men both young and old to their nearest shed. The Men's Shed is a key setting to enhance the health of men after all "a shed is to a man what a handbag is to a woman both contain all the essentials for surviving in the modern world" (Thorburn, 2002).

Limitations:

The sample size for this study was quite small. Furthermore, the use of focus groups alone may have hindered the researcher's possibility to gain information from shed members especially when they were asked to discuss the weaknesses of the initiative. The participants in the older men focus group were known to the researcher and may have provided skewed answers to avoid lowering the status of the shed. The older men's focus group were from one specific shed. If the group consisted of members from other sheds the results may have differed. However, due to time restraints and other assignments this was difficult to carry out.

The limited amount of research on Men's Sheds, the poor methodologies being used, the omission of themes from thematic analyses and the failure to use quotes to illustrate the author's conceptual themes made this dissertation difficult to use sound research as a basis the point the researcher in the correct direction to enhance her own research.

The younger men's focus group had initially looked for participants that were not members of the Men's Shed. However, on the day of the focus group only three of the group were non-members. Even though, it was good to gain information from younger members and this did help with results the researcher felt that sample size of non-members was too small and she may have gained more information if more non-members were included.

Recommendations:

Having carried out the dissertation the author has identified a number of recommendations:

- Further research into the health and wellbeing benefits of Men's Sheds
- Research into how meaningful participation may positively affect mental health.
- Research needs to include rigorous methodologies that incorporate inferential analyses and the need to include the social determinants of health and wellbeing within the study design.
- The use of longitudinal studies to determine the efficacy of sheds as an example of best practice for promoting men's health
- The need for further Irish research on Men's Sheds
- A full evaluation of all Irish Men's Sheds should be undertaken using the reach, effectiveness, adoption, implementation, and maintenance framework (RE-AIM) to identify if the targeted population are being reached and help to highlight how the shed could be adapted to appeal to younger men.
- Use the Men's Shed as a tool to promote men's health, promote successful and active aging among men and a return to work tool by upskilling men.
- The need for mental health services and suicide prevention services to be gender specific to encourage help seeking among men especially young men. The Men's Shed is the ideal environment to educate men about the risk factors for suicide which may in turn help prevent its occurrence.
- Due to the lack of safe social environments and recreational facilities for young men the Men's Shed could provide such recreational facilities seeing a decrease in the number of young men undertaking risky behaviours.
- Use Men's Sheds to promote and develop resilience among young men.
- Funding should be readily available for vulnerable and marginalised men as was advocated in the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPinclusion 2007-2016).
- Vulnerable men should be referred to the Men's Shed from health authorities as is the way in Australia.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Topic guide for focus group

Men's Shed Members

Running the focus group sessions:

- Refer to notes before the group meet to refresh memory
- Takes notes during session
- Try to get everyone involved in the discussion
- Make sure everyone is comfortable and can see one and other

Introduction:

My name is Patricia Sheehan I am Nicky's daughter who I know you all know very well. As you know I am currently in my final year of Exercise and Health Studies and doing my dissertation on the Men's Shed.

Informed Consent

Today is a once off interview and there will be no follow up after this. The interview will be recorded and you are under no obligation to talk or answer questions and you can leave at any stage during the interview. Therefore, by taking part in the focus group discussion, you have consented to be part of the research.

Confidentiality statement;

Opinions expressed shall be treated in confidence among the research team with all responses remaining anonymous. Confidentiality is of utmost importance your names will only be seen by the researcher and the researcher's supervisor.

Ensure there are no objections to the use of a recording device; then go ahead and switch on device.

Start by repeating the reason of the meeting:

Thank you all so much for taking the time to talk to me about your experiences and perceptions of being a participant in the Men's Shed. [Today I want to concentrate on discussing.....

Please note there are no wrong opinions, so please feel comfortable saying what you have to say and how you really feel.

Sample Questions:

- 1) What were your reasons for joining the shed? (REASONS FOR JOINING)
- 2) What motivates you to come to the shed? (MOTIVATION)
- 3) How do you feel when you are at the shed? (FEELINGS)
- 4) What benefits do you get from being a shedder? (BENEFITS)
- 5) How have you made new friends because of the shed? (FRIENDSHIP)
- 6) In what way has the shed has helped improve your health and well-being in any way?
(HEALTH & WELLBEING)
- 7) What (new skills) have you learned from being at the shed? (LEARNING)
- 8) What things would like the shed to do differently? (IMPROVEMENTS)
- 9) Why do you think the Dungarvan Mens Shed has become so popular? (REASON FOR POPULARITY)

Prompts to help

- Tell me more about that
- So what you're saying is
- Yea, really
- It sounds as if you

Participants' names and time, date and location

Appendix 2

Topic guide for focus group

Youthreach members

Running the focus group sessions:

- Refer to notes before the group meet to refresh memory
- Takes notes during session
- Try to get everyone involved in the discussion
- Make sure everyone is comfortable and can see one and other

Introduction:

My name is Patricia Sheehan I am currently in my final year of Exercise and Health Studies and doing my dissertation on the Men's Shed.

Informed Consent

Today is a once off interview and there will be no follow up after this. The interview will be recorded and you are under no obligation to talk or answer questions and you can leave at any stage during the interview. Therefore, by taking part in the focus group discussion, you have consented to be part of the research.

Confidentiality statement:

Opinions expressed shall be treated in confidence among the research team with all responses remaining anonymous. Confidentiality is of utmost importance your names will only be seen by the researcher and the researcher's supervisor.

Ensure there are no objections to the use of a recording device; then go ahead and switch on device.

Start by repeating the reason of the meeting:

Thank you all so much for taking the time to talk to me about perceptions and awareness of The Men's Shed. |Today I want to concentrate on discussing.....

Please note there are no wrong opinions, so please feel comfortable saying what you have to say and how you really feel.

Sample Questions:

1. Have you ever heard of the Men's Shed (**AWARENESS**)
2. What do you think about the initiative (**PERCEPTIONS**)
3. Why have you not become a member of the shed (**REASONS**)
4. Do you think the name of the initiative is attractive (**MARKETING**)

Prompts to help

- Tell me more about that
- So what you're saying is
- Yea, really
- It sounds as if you

Participants' names and time, date and location

Appendix 3:

Informed Consent Agreement

Interview Process: I will ask you some questions about your perceptions and awareness of The Men's Shed initiative. I may read some quotes back to you to make sure it properly reflects what you are saying. Our research team will use this information to put together a report about Men's Sheds

Time Duration: 45 – 60 minutes

Voluntary Participation

- Your decision to be in this research is voluntary.
- You can stop at any time.
- You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

Confidentiality: Your participation in this research is confidential. The information you give me will be recorded, typed and stored on my computer in a password protected file.

A final report on this research will be made. You will not be identifiable in the report.

Recording

- I will record this interview on a recording device.
- I will delete the recordings from my computer once the research is completed
- The only people who will have access to your recording is the researcher and researcher supervisor
- You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study.
- You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Participant Signature:</p> <p>Date:</p> | <p>Interviewer Signature:</p> <p>Date:</p> |
|---|---|

Bibliography

Bibliography

- Balanda, K., & Wilde J, (2001), *Inequalities in Mortality: A Report on All-Ireland Mortality Data*, The Institute of Public Health in Ireland, 6 Kildare Street, Dublin
- Ballinger, M., Talbot, L., & Verrinder, G. (2009). More than a place to do woodwork: a case study of a community-based Men's Shed. *Journal of Men's Health*, 6, 20-27.
- Barrett, A, B., H, C., Kamiya, A, H & Kenny, R., et al. (2011). *Fifty plus in Ireland 2011: First results from The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA)*. Dublin: Trinity College Dublin.
- Béland, F., Zunzunegui, M., Alvarado, B., Otero, A., & Del Ser, T. (2005). Trajectories of cognitive decline and social relations. *Gerontol B Psychol Sci Soc Sci*, 60(6), 320-330.
- Brown, M., Golding B. & Foley A. (2008). Out the back: men's sheds and informal learning. *Fine Print*, 31 (2), 12–15
- Bulman, J., & Hayes, R. (2011). Mibbinbah and spirit healing: fostering safe, friendly spaces for Indigenous males in Australia. *International Journal of Men's Health*, 10(1), 6-25.
- Cancer Council Victoria, *Cut your cancer risk*. 2011, Cancer Council Victoria: Melbourne
- Carragher, L. (2013). *Men's Sheds - learning through life*. Dundalk: Netwell.
- Central Statistics Office. (2006). *Measuring Ireland's Progress*. Cork: Central Statistics Office.
- Central Statistics Office, (2012). *Statistical Yearbook of Ireland*. Cork: Central Statistics Office.
- Central Statistics Office. (2012). *This is Ireland: Highlights from Census 2011 Part 2*. Dublin: The Stationery Office.
- Coalter, F., Allison, M., & Taylor, J. (2000). *The Role of Sport in Regenerating Deprived Urban Areas*. Edinburgh: The Scottish Executive Central Research Unit.
- Condon, D. (2010, September 21). *Irish Health*. Retrieved January 30, 2013, from Irish Health : www.irishhealth.com/article.html
- Corbin, J. M. & Strauss, A.L. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Corcoran, R., Bedford, D., Devine, M., De Souza, N., Hegarty, M., Jackson, T., et al. (2001). *Suicide in Ireland: a national study*. Dublin: Department of Social Health.

Crabbe, T. (2000). A Sporting Chance? Using Sport to Tackle Drug Use and Crime. *Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy*, 7 (4), 381-391.

Cummings, E., & Henry, W. (1961). *Growing Old*. New York: Basic Books.

Department of Health and Children. (2008). *National Men's Health Policy*. Dublin: Department of Health and Children.

Department of Health and Children (2002). *National Anti-Poverty Strategy Building an Inclusive Society 2002-2007*. Dublin: The Stationery Office.

Depp, C., Vahia, I., & Jeste, D. (2010). Successful aging: Focus on cognitive and emotional health. *The Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, 6, 527-550.

Ertel, K., Glymour, M., & Berkman, L. (2008). Effects of social integration on preserving memory function in a nationally representative US elderly population. *American Journal of Public Health*, 98(7), 1215-1220.

Eurostat. (2006). *Life expectancy at birth (years)*. Retrieved April 2013, from Eurostat: <http://eppeurostat.ce.europa.eu/>

Felson, M. (1998). *Crime and everyday life*. Thousand Oaks, C.A.: Pine Forge Press

Fortune, S., Watson, P., Robinson, E., Fleming, T., Merry, S., & Denny, S. (2010). *Youth '07: The health and wellbeing of secondary school students in New Zealand: Suicide behaviours and mental health in 2001 and 2007*. Auckland: The University of Auckland.

Giles, L., G. G., Luszcz, M., & Andrews, G. (2005). Effect of social networks on 10 year survival in very old Australians: the Australian longitudinal study of aging. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 59, 574-579.

Gillham B (2005) *Research Interviewing: The Range of Techniques*, GBR: McGraw Hill Education

Golding, B. (2006). *A profile of men's sheds in Australia: patterns, purposes, profiles and experiences of participants: some implications for ACE and VET about engaging older men*. Woolongong: Averta.

Golding, B. & Harvey, J. (2006). Final report on a Survey of Men's Sheds Participants in Victoria: Report to Adult, Community and Further Education Board. Adult, Community and Further Education Board of Victoria, Melbourne, FL

Golding, B., Brown, M., & Foley, A. (2007). *Old dogs, new shed tricks: an exploration of innovative, workshop-based learning practice in Australia*. Education and Training Research Association Conference: 10th. Victoria : Averta.

Golding, B., Brown, M., Foley, A., Harvey, J., & Gleeson, L. (2007). *Men's sheds in Australia: Learning through community contexts* . Ballarat : NCVER.

Golding, B. (2008). Researching Men's Sheds in community contexts in Australia: what does it suggest about adult education for older men? *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education*, 14 (1), 17–33.

Golding, B. (2011). Social, local, and situated: recent findings about the effectiveness of older men's informal learning in community contexts. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 61 (2), 103–120

Graves, K. (2001). Shedding the Light on "Men in Sheds" Report: Community Health. Bendigo.

Gunnell, D., Middleton, N., Whitley, E., Dorling, S., & Franke, S. (2003). Why are suicide rates rising in young men but falling in the elderly?—a time-series analysis of trends in England and . *Social Science & Medicine*, 57(4), 595-611.

Havighurst, R. (1961). Successful aging. *The Gerontologist*, 1, 8-13.

Hawkins, J., & Weis, J. (1985). The social development model: An integrated approach to delinquency prevention. *Journal of Primary Prevention*, 6, 73-97.

Hays, J., Steffens, D., Flint, E., Bosworth, H., & George, L. (2001). Does social support buffer functional decline in elderly patients with unipolar depression? *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 158(11), 1850-1855.

Herzog, A., Ofstedal, M., & Wheeler, L. (2002). Social engagement and its relationship with health. *Clinics in Geriatric Medicine*, 18, 593-609.

Houston, K., Hawton, K., & Shepperd, R. (2001). Suicide in young people aged 15-24: a psychological autopsy study. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 63(1-3), 159-170.

HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention. (2010, October 22). Retrieved February 2014, fromHealthServiceExecutive:http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/Find_a_Service/Mental_Health_Services/Suicide_Prevention/

Kashani, J., Reid, J., & Rossenberg, T. (1989). The hopelessness for children: psychometric characteristics and concurrent validity. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 57, 496-499.

Lemon, B., Bengston, V., & Peterson, J. (1972). An exploration of the activity theory of aging: Activity types and life satisfaction among in-movers to a retirement community. *Journal of Gerontology*, 27, 511-523.

Longino, C., & Kart, C. (1982). Explicating activity theory: A formal replication. *Journal of Gerontology*, 37, 713-722.

Macdonald, J., Brown, A., & Buchanan, J. (2001). *Keeping the balance, older men and healthy*. Sydney: NSW Committee on Ageing.

Mark, R., Montgomery, V. & Graham, H. (2010) 'Beyond the workplace: An investigation into older men's learning and wellbeing in Northern Ireland', Report for the Changing Ageing Partnership (CAP), Queen's University Belfast

Mason, J. (2002). *Qualitative Research*. London: SAGE Publications Limited.

Milligan, C., Dowrick, C., Payne, S., Hanratty, B., Irwin, P., Neary, D., et al. (2013). *Men's Sheds and other gendered interventions for older men: improving health and wellbeing*. Lancaster University : Age UK.

Milligan, C., Payne, S., Bingley, A., & Cockshott, Z. (2012). *Evaluation of the men in sheds pilot programme*. Faculty of Health and Medicine . Lancaster : Age Uk.

Misan, G., Haren, M. & Ledo, V. (2008). Men's Sheds: A Strategy to Improve Men's Health. Mensheds Australia Ltd, Parramatta, NSW

Moller-Leimkuhle, A. (2003). The gender gap in suicide and premature death or: why are men so vulnerable? *European Archives of Psychiatry and Clinical Neuroscience*, 253, 1-8.

- Morgan, N. (2010). A room of their own: men's sheds build communities of support and purpose. *Cross Currents: The Journal of Addiction and Mental Health*, 13 (4), 12–13.
- Morgan, K., O'Farrell, J., Doyle, F. & McGee, H. (2011). Physical activity and core depressive symptoms in the older Irish adult population
- OECD. (2003). *Society at glance*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Publications Service.
- Ormsby, J., Stanley, M., & Jaworski, K. (2010). Older mens participation in community-based men's sheds programmes. *Health and Social Care in the Community*, 18 (6), 607-613.
- Rabiee ,F. (2004). Focus group interview and data analysis. *Proceedings of the Nutrition Society*, 63, 655–660.
- Rhodes, J. (1994). Older and wiser: Mentoring relationships in childhood and adolescence. *Journal of Primary Prevention*, 14, 187-196.
- Sims, J., et al., National physical activity recommendations for older Australians: Discussion document. 2006, National Ageing Research Institute for Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing: Canberra.
- Smith, J., Braunack-Mayer, A., & Wittert, G. (2006). What do we know about men's help-seeking and health service use? *The Medical Journal of Australia*, 184(2), 81-83.
- Stanley, S .& Candy, B. (2006). Psychosocial work environment and mental health--a meta-analytic review. *Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment & Health*, 32(6), 443-462
- Steven, N.L. & van Tilburg, T. (2000). Stimulating friendship in later life: A strategy for reducing loneliness among older women. *Educational Gerontology*, 26 (1), 15–35.
- Thorburn, G. (2002). *Men and sheds*, New Holland Publishers, UK
- Turrell, G., Stanley, L. D., & Oldenburg, B. (2006). *Health inequality by occupation*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
- Wang, H.-X., Karp, A., Winblad, B., & Fratiglioni, L. (2002). Late-life engagement in social and leisure activities is associated with a decreased risk of dementia: A longitudinal study from the Kungsholmen Project. *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 155(12), 1081-1087.

White, A., Cash, & Keith. (2004, May). The state of men's health in Western Europe. *Journal of Men's Health and Gender, 1*(1), 60-66.

Winkler, D., Pjrek, E., & Kasper, S. (2006). Gender-specific symptoms of depression and anger attacks. *The Journal of Men's Health & Gender, 3*(1), 19-24.

Ybarra, O., Burnstein, E., Winkielman, P., Keller, M. C., Manis, M., Chan, E., et al. (2008). Mental exercising through simple socializing: Social interaction promotes general cognitive functioning. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 34*(2), 248-259.