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Pull up a workbench — it's time for your February Shoulder to Shoulder.

Fresh from the workshop floor, this month's edition brings you news and stories from across the Shed network — from a brand-new resource we're proud to launch, to big birthdays, bold beats and health conversations happening Shoulder to Shoulder. It's been a busy few weeks of building, celebrating and occasionally thinking inside the box.

As always, it's proof that when you give people tools, tea and time together, good things happen.

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## New Guide: Thinking Inside the Box

We're proud to announce the launch of our brand-new [Shipping Container Set Up for Sheds](#) guide — a resource shaped by Shed experience, practical know-how and a lot of collaboration behind the scenes. It's been a real team effort, drawing on the wisdom of Shedders, leaders and volunteers who've already turned containers into thriving workshop spaces. We're delighted to now be able to share it with the wider Shed community.



Let's be honest — finding the right space for a Shed isn't always straightforward; community premises are hard to come by, and rent can sometimes be eye-watering. Shipping containers offer an alternative way for new or developing Sheds to get started, and are proving to be practical, affordable and surprisingly versatile.

Our new [guide](#) covers everything from siting and insulation to power, planning and future expansion, packed with honest advice and lessons learned to help you decide if it could work for your community.

[Find out more](#) by downloading your copy below — you might just start thinking inside the box.

[Download the guide](#)



# London Sheds: Growing Stronger Together



Ian Francis, Development Officer – Greater London, has now been in post for a year, and has been making significant progress towards building a stronger, more connected London Shed community. With support from [City Bridge Foundation](#), the London Shed Network has brought together 25 Sheds to share resources, celebrate successes and support one another more easily. From extended opening hours and new Shed openings, to growing UKMSA membership and fresh partnerships across the capital, the momentum is building.

In his full article, Ian also shares developments around national representation, new collaborations with organisations including [Diageo](#), [Young Lives v Cancer](#) and [Royal Museums Greenwich](#), and exciting news about upcoming media opportunities to showcase the impact of London Sheds. It's a year marked by growth, connection and ambition — and this is only the beginning.

[Read the full article](#)



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# Shoulder to Shoulder: Better Drinking, **DIAGEO** Better Living at Broadstairs **DRINKIQ**

Earlier this month, our Health and Wellbeing Lead, Arshad Siddat, travelled to [Broadstairs Town Shed](#) on the Isle of Thanet to deliver a [Better Drinking, Better Living](#) session as part of our ongoing health and wellbeing work. What unfolded was exactly what Sheds do best — open, honest conversation Shoulder to Shoulder. Alongside practical information about alcohol units and moderation, there were powerful personal reflections, thoughtful questions and real moments of connection that remind us all why these spaces matter so much.

In his update, Arshad shares insights from the visit, including the impact of lived experience shared on the day and the reflections from members who took part. Broadstairs Town Shed — recently recognised with a UK Men's Shed Health and Wellbeing Award for 2025 — continues to demonstrate how trusted community spaces can support meaningful conversations about health and wellbeing.

[Read Arshad's full update](#)



## Shed Stories



## From Workbench to Wheels: Supporting the Daisy Ring Bus



Nettlestone and Seaview Shed





**Members of Nettlestone and Seaview Shed (NaShers)** have been designing and producing a variety of original hand-crafted wooden gifts and products for a number of years. Donations received from the purchase of these products at local events have resulted in the members of the Shed making a generous donation towards the **Daisy Ring bus**.

The Daisy Ring bus is a vital voluntary service that enables Isle of Wight Cancer patients to reach hospitals in Southampton and Portsmouth from the mainland ferry and hovercraft terminals safely and free of charge.



Michèle Le Quesne Newton, representing Daisy Ring bus, thanked members of Nettlestone and Seaview Shed for their generous donation.

She commented 'Without donations of this kind the service would not be able to run. We are now carrying just under 2,000 patients a month between both Portsmouth and Southampton operations. All done with dignity, love and compassion'. Michèle also wished to mention and thank the team of dedicated Island voluntary drivers who transport the patients.

Shed Chairman, Rob commented: 'We had recently read about the plight of the Daisy bus services in Southampton and Portsmouth and realised how serious the loss of this vital service would be to Island residents. We contacted Michèle Newton who was establishing the new Daisy Ring bus service to offer financial support.

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## Backstage Support:

### Cowes Men's Shed Steps into the Spotlight



[Cowes Men's Shed](#), part of [Storeroom2010](#), is proud to have recently completed the restoration of three information boards for [Trinity Theatre](#), home of the [Cowes Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society](#).

The Society, one of the longest surviving amateur dramatic groups in the country, has been entertaining audiences since the 1880s and continues to do so in its own much-loved theatre. Entirely volunteer-led, the group offers opportunities for people to get involved in every aspect of theatre life, from acting, directing, sound and lighting, to set construction, wardrobe, make-up, front of house and box office - alongside a lively calendar of social events.



When the theatre required careful restoration of its outdoor information boards, members of Cowes Men's Shed stepped forward. Using the Shed's carpentry workshop and practical skills, the team refurbished the boards to ensure they remain attractive, durable and fit to represent one of Cowes's most cherished cultural institutions.

Adam Martin, Project Leader at Cowes Men's Shed, said:

'We're always proud to support fellow good causes on the Island, and Trinity Theatre is such an important part of Cowes's heritage. Projects like this give our members a real sense of purpose. It's not just about restoring boards, it's about restoring pride in our community and giving our members the opportunity to contribute their skills in a meaningful way.'

Roberto Pascoe, a member of the Shed who worked on the theatre project, said:

“Being involved in projects like this makes a real difference. You’re working alongside others, sharing skills and having a laugh, but you’re also giving something back. For many of us, that sense of belonging and usefulness is incredibly important. It’s great to see things we’ve worked on standing proudly across the Island. Eccelente!”



With almost one in six households on the Isle of Wight made up of someone aged 65 or over living alone, and with the Island having a significantly older population than the national average, the Shed plays a vital role in supporting mental health and wellbeing. A recent survey of members shows that 94% of Cowes Men’s Shed members feel the Shed has had a positive impact on their mental health, and 92% report improvements in their physical health.

By taking on projects for other charities and good causes, Storeroom2010’s Cowes Men’s Shed continues to foster connection, camaraderie and confidence, proving that practical work, shared purpose and community spirit can be a powerful antidote to loneliness.

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## Men's Shed: The (Unexpected) Soundtrack

### North Colchester Men's Shed

[North Colchester Men's Shed](#) have officially entered the music industry, with their fundraising rap "Better Shed Than Dead". Their original track was written by Shed member "WhiskeyBays" — penned late one evening after "careful reflection" over a bottle of whiskey (hence the name). The lyrics are surprisingly poignant, the vocals are courtesy of "AYE EYE" (AI — because of course the Shedders can keep up with modern tech... they invented it), and the whole project is about raising awareness of men's mental health while having a good laugh along the way. It was either this or a nude calendar — and, we think they made the right call.



For £1 you can download the song, the video and the lyrics PDF — and more importantly, support the Shed. The proceeds are going towards improving facilities (yes, we're talking flushing toilets — rock and roll indeed). While the video is publicly available to watch, purchasing the download is about backing the Shed, backing the message, and owning what may one day become a collector's item... if not the mp3, then certainly the receipt.

[Download now](#)

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# Ten Years of Tea, Talk and Togetherness



By Emily Willey – Head of Community Wellbeing Initiatives, Age UK Bexley



This morning, I was sitting in the [Men in Shed's Bexley](#) office, planning our Shed's upcoming celebration for the 10-year anniversary of having our permanent location. Facing my laptop, struggling to work out how much cake and tea will suffice, I could overhear our members discuss a range of subjects, from the small talk of football to the more personal subjects of family worries and health.

This got me thinking about the countless conversations that have taken place in our Shed over the past ten years, and how many of them may have quietly shaped, comforted, or made a difference in someone else's life.

One of our members Terry, 83, noted "I was so pleased to get back after Christmas. Not so much to talk to people but being surrounded by people who are talking. The sound of human voices not coming through television or a phone. The Shed provides that in abundance. Just men talking. It's uplifting to have male to male conversations."

Another of our members, Dave, 62, mentioned, "Following the premature death of my daughter from a car crash, I fell off the rails. I felt that I did not want to do anything or mix with anybody. After finding Men in Sheds, I have rebuilt my life, and I have found a group of new and diverse friends. It has also renewed my love of woodwork. The group talk about many subjects, and it feels like a safe place to discuss many difficult subjects."

As someone who has worked at this Shed for seven years, I still find it a privilege to be a part many of these conversations. As I sit in the office day to day, I can hear new friendships being made, troubles shared and the many laughs. This is what our Shed is a testament to: 10 years of companionship and support.

I see members arrive at the Shed carrying visible stress or anxiety, and by the time they leave, there is a noticeable calm. This happened just this week: after one member left, having shared the stresses he was carrying, another member turned to the group and said, “that was just what he needed.”

## Upcoming Events and Opportunities



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**Easyfundraising** are pleased to announce their **easyfundrasing Impact Fund**, offering 20 UK not-for-profit organisations grants of £500. The grants are unrestricted, so it can be used wherever the money is needed most to support your work.

**When to apply: 23rd February - 5th April**

[Apply now](#)

**Easyfundraising** is a simple way for your Shed to raise extra funds from everyday online shopping.

When your Shed community shops with over 8,000 retailers through easyfundraising, the retailer makes a donation to your Shed — at no extra cost to anyone. From a weekly grocery shop to booking a holiday, it all helps generate free donations.

[Find out more](#)

# Marriage Allowance



## Are you one of the 2.1 million yet to apply?

Since April 2015 a new tax break has been available. Out of 4.2 million eligible couples, as April 2024, only 2.1 million have so far taken advantage.

## What is this tax break?

Money back from HMRC in the form of the ability for certain people to make better use of their personal tax allowances.

## To qualify:

- You must be married or in a Civil Partnership.
- You must both have been born on or after 6<sup>th</sup> April 1935.
- One person needs to be a basic rate tax payer i.e. income less than £43,000 pa.
- The other needs to be a non-tax payer i.e. income less than £11,000 (2016/17)

## Who is eligible?

The Marriage Allowance is specifically for married couples or civil partners where one partner earns below the Personal Allowance (£12,570) and the other is a basic rate taxpayer.

### Example Scenario:

If one partner earns £10,000 (non-taxpayer) and the other earns £30,000 (basic rate taxpayer), the lower earner can transfer £1,260 of their allowance. The lower earner's taxable income remains below the threshold, while the higher earner's tax bill is reduced by 20% of £1,260 (£252).

Potential Savings are up to £252 a year, but claims can be backdated for up to four previous tax years, which could be worth up to £1,220 for eligible couples.

[Check if you're eligible](#)

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