

**Men's Shed and Gardening Group,
provided by the Independence Trust**

People that attend the Men's Shed and Gardening Group told us
about how the great outdoors and nature helps them...

Interview with Trish from the Garden Group

Hi Trish, can you tell us a bit about yourself?

I live in Stroud, I have a part time cleaning job. I was doing English level 1 at Stroud College before lockdown. I am hoping to return to college as soon as I can. I have mental health issues, sometimes I can cope, sometimes I really struggle. Coming to the Independence Trust and the Garden Group has helped me a lot.

How long have you been coming to the Garden Group?

I have been coming to the Garden Group for a while now and I enjoy coming to the garden because it helps my mental health.

What's a typical day like when you come to the Garden Group?

We do seeding, digging, weeding and learning about different plants, I even have my own little veg plot where I grow food for me and my family.

How has the group helped you personally, particularly during lockdown?

It's been a very stressful time, coming to the garden has been very helpful to me during lockdown, I know it helps me feel less stressed. To know there are people who care about me.

How has the 'Great Outdoors' helped you?

Being outside, I feel calm.



Interview with Tom from the Men's Shed

Hi Tom, can you tell us a bit about yourself?

I live in Stroud and I work fulltime as a mechanic. I have a supportive boss who allows me to work flexibly so I can then take time on a Friday to attend the Men's Shed.

How long have you been coming to the Men's Shed?

I have been coming to the Men's Shed from when it first started about three years now.

What's a typical day like when you come to Men's Shed

It's the best day of the week, I suffer from high levels of anxiety. It is the only time I am able to feel relaxed. They have helped me in so many ways. I like making stuff, at the Men's Shed you can just get stuck in.

How has the group helped you personally, particularly during lockdown?

Friendships that I have formed through the group have been really supportive throughout lockdown and has made the isolation much more bearable.

How has the 'Great Outdoors' helped you?

I find the only time I feel refreshed and in a state of wellbeing is when I am in nature.



Interview with Paul from the Men's Shed and Garden Group

Hi Paul, can you tell us a bit about yourself?

I live in Eastington I am retired now, I like doing DIY jobs.

How long have you been coming to the Garden Group?

I have been coming to the Men's Shed for about 18 months.

What's a typical day like when you come to the Garden Group?

Oh, we have a laugh, exchange stories and build wooden things.

How has the group helped you personally, particularly during lockdown?

It's helped put me in a happy place again.

How has the 'Great Outdoors' helped you?

I love being outside when the weather is OK.



Interview with Rebecca from the Garden Group

Hi Rebecca, can you tell us a bit about yourself?

My name is Rebecca, I live local to Stroud. I have depression, anxiety, transient psychosis and bulimia. I manage myself very well by accessing support from Independence Trust, and NHS services. I am insightful of my mental health and am able to work 30 hours per week when I am well.

How long have you been coming to the Men's Shed / Garden Group?

4 years.

What's a typical day like when you come to Men's Shed / Garden Group?

The atmosphere is very relaxed yet structured. The day always starts off with a cup of tea and Dave running through the tasks and activities for the day. We are encouraged to participate yet there is no pressure if we wish to sit and observe the others.

If I am very anxious or tense, Dave knows that I enjoy intricate tasks like planting seeds or bulbs. This is the benefit of the support from the garden as the staff know our interests and skills and what benefits us to cope and manage our symptoms

How has the group helped you personally, particularly during lockdown?

We are all very close who attend the garden and we have maintained a social circle via WhatsApp and phone calls between each other. Just spending a short video call has been invaluable to keep our connection.

How has the 'Great Outdoors' helped you?

The outdoors is a sanctuary for me, I love to walk to clear my mind, particularly after work and always go out at dusk when the birds are singing their evening chorus and the sky is full of colour.

If ever I am stressed I go into my garden and touch the leaves on my plants and do some dead heading this calms me instantly. At times, I can struggle with motivation but I always remember it's just a few steps to outside or even to my plants by my front door.

During early spring I was isolated with diagnosed Covid-19 and my only outdoor activity I could manage was sitting in my garden. I was fortunate to apply to the Barnwood Trust Covid fund and was issued a grant to purchase a patio set to sit out and enjoy my garden.



Men's Shed and Gardening Group Independence Trust Overview

The need for a men's group had been identified through working with and listening to men across the county. We recognise that providing a safe space to be able to discuss mental health, meet like-minded people, as well as regaining the feeling of being useful is important to people. Having a purpose as well as producing an end product supports good mental health.

The Men's Shed work alongside the Garden Group, which has also become very successful. Both groups complement and feed into each other. For example, the Men's Group makes wooden compost bins for use by the Gardening Group, thus reducing the ongoing running costs of the group. The Men's Shed also upcycle products, such as old tools and used wood. They make wildlife friendly products, such as bird tables, boxes, feeders and bee hotels, which are sold at the local market in Stroud, together with plants, fruit and vegetables grown in the garden.

The local market gives us the opportunity to engage with the local community and reduce the stigma that surrounds mental ill health. Any profits made from the sale of these types of goods are ploughed back into the project, to make it independently sustainable. Reclamation, Restoration and Re-use features strongly in all that we do.

We are also lucky to have our own beehive; it's a Golden Hive, which is there to enable bees to pollinate and produce honey for the bees, not for humans. We are lucky to be able to work from such a magical space.

In addition to both the Men's Shed and the Gardening Group, the Independence Trust provides services to adults experiencing poor mental health. Our aim is to offer support and encouragement to people to either regain or maintain their independence, whilst also supporting them to access any additional services they may require.

One of the goals, which many of the people that we support have, is to become well enough to either become volunteers or to return to work. To support them in reaching this goal, individuals can also choose to become peer volunteers within the Independence Trust, which allows them to support their peers, whilst still receiving support themselves from the staff. The Men's Shed is run by a combination of staff, volunteers and peer volunteers.

