

LANCASTER MEN'S HUB NEWSLETTER



Issue 2 October 2021

The next steps

The last few months have seen a massive increase in the work and reach of the Lancaster Men's Hub. Since its formation in April the Hub has concentrated on two main areas. The first of these was setting up a structured organisation with properly defined roles, careful administrative support and coherent aims and objectives, leading to eventual recognition of the Hub by the Charity Commission as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. The second of these was to develop a series of small-scale activities which would begin to fulfil our commitment to providing support in social and practical activities for vulnerable and isolated men. Although the Lancaster Men's Hub has reached out to a number of organisations within the Lancaster district and has developed plans to work with and for these groups, progress in this



area has been difficult because of a lack of any funding, apart from personal donations by the trustees. The news that we have received a grant from the Lancaster Community Fund has enabled us to approach at least two of these projects. Lancaster Men's Hub hopes to build and install benches for Claver Hill Community Farm's nature trail and construct compost bins for the Ambleside Allotments.

It must be stressed that these project will be undertaken to help the Community Farm and the Allotments to improve their facilities, but also, and more importantly, to provide opportunities for guests of the Hub to meet and work together for their mutual benefit. Since we currently have no workshop base, most of the fabrication will have to take place off-site but the construction and finishing of the benches will be undertaken by guests working together with members of the Hub. This being the case, we would invite any of the organisations receiving this newsletter to let us have the names of men who would like to be involved and who would benefit from being part of a significant community project; you can contact us through any of the channels on this newsletter.

Big Green Week Fair

Lancaster Men's Hub attended the Big Green Week Fair at the Cornerstone on Saturday 25 September. The event was a great success in which several potential guests were signed up, some useful contacts made and some of our products from the practical sessions sold. Thanks to David Smith and David Mace who manned the stall throughout the day.



Funding for the Hub

Lancaster Men's Hub is delighted to announce that a bid to the Lancaster Community Fund has resulted in a substantial grant which will enable the Hub to consolidate its activities for the present and undertake at least two of the major projects that we have planned to conduct with our community partners.



LMH 'Elevenses'

Friday 24 September saw the first Lancaster Men's Hub 'Elevenses'. This regular social coffee drop-in is designed to give men in Lancaster and the surrounding district the chance to meet with old friends or new acquaintances in a relaxed and safe atmosphere. Not only are coffee and cakes available but there are board games, newspapers and, most importantly, conversation and a social atmosphere. The



event was shared with the Band of Brothers and there was an excellent turn out, which we hope will grow in future. As with all Men's Hub activities, there is no charge and anyone who feels they would benefit should feel able to come along. We hope that the Elevenses will enable us to talk to guests and find out what they would ideally like to do so that we can plan to provide relevant and interesting activities.

LMH works with the RSPB

On Friday 1 October David Mace, the Chair of Lancaster Men's Hub, handed over an Owl Box to Alisdair McKee, the RSPB's Volunteer Coordinator for the North of England. The handover took place at the Lancaster Men's Hub's base in the Cornerstone on Sulyard Street following a request from Alisdair McKee to the Lancaster Men's Hub for help in providing a nesting box for Barn Owls. The Owl Box is destined for a farm in the Forest of Bowland where the farmer is keen to establish a safe habitat on his land. Barn Owls will nest in trees but will also use suitable accommodation in old buildings and barns, providing that they have free passage in and out. The Owl Trust stated that Barn Owls are not currently endangered, but that they are an iconic farmland bird, and every effort should be made to encourage them.

Lancaster Men's Hub exists to provide opportunities for men of all ages to meet together and engage in social and practical activities. David Mace said, "The Men's Hub is delighted to undertake projects like this. If funding allows, we will continue to work with community partners on projects of all sizes in order to expand opportunities for vulnerable or isolated men in the Lancaster area."



City's tragic suicide toll

The Lancaster Guardian (16 September) published an article under the above, arresting, headline. The article stated that the Office for National Statistics had published figures showing that 55 people had died by suicide in Lancaster between 2018 and 2020. This figure, representing a rate of 15.1 per 100,000 people, placed Lancaster in a higher category than the rest of England and Wales, who had a rate of 10.5 deaths per 100,000. Although there has been an overall decrease of 8.2% in deaths by suicide in England and Wales between 2019 and 2020, the article warned that the reduction could be attributable to several factors including reporting delays during the pandemic. The Samaritans were quoted as asking the government to account for the "strong connection" between economic deprivation and deaths by suicide in its post-pandemic recovery plans. The Samaritans also called for funding to develop and deliver practical services to groups at the highest risk, particularly middle-aged men.

The lesson to be drawn from this is that all organisations working with vulnerable or isolated people need to redouble their efforts to identify and support those potentially at risk of suicide. In Lancaster there are many organisations working hard in this field, ranging from informal and voluntary groups through projects funded and supported by Lancaster Council to national projects like The Samaritans and the Citizen's Advice Bureau. Lancaster Men's Hub is proud to be a small part of this project and will continue to make every effort to work with and support men who urgently need our help.

Meet the Trustees

Hi, I'm David Mace, author and translator, now retired, and current Chair of Lancaster Men's Hub. For almost nine years, pre-Covid, I was a member of Lancaster Footlights, where I helped run the Grand Theatre, worked backstage on Footlights' own plays and pantomimes and was assistant producer on six studio productions. I served on the Board of Management and, for a short period, as trustee. Since then, I've done voluntary work at the Barton Road Centre and have spent the past twelve months as a volunteer at the Eggcup food co-operative. LMH now takes up all my time. We men seem particularly vulnerable to a loss of confidence when faced with issues such as bereavement, financial trouble, ill-health or any form of mental or physical impairment. We lose our self-esteem and risk a spiral into isolation and worsening health. LMH aims to assist men in re-connecting with their fellows and regaining a belief in their own worth. I hope that women will also become involved in running and developing LMH. While men often find it difficult to reach out and help one another, women seem better at handling such concerns. We need their help.



opened in 1978. The movement has now spread world-wide and there are currently over 600 Sheds in the UK and another 150 Sheds in development. Most of the Sheds in the UK are run by the men that use them, in a bottom-up approach. This grassroots model can often bring about stronger feelings of fulfilment and achievement in the men that develop them and may lead to better sustainability as they often don't start with large cash injections. This isn't always the case though, a small number of Sheds are run by organisations like Age UK and have been around for years.

Many of the men that attend them are retired. This is because a life after employment can be difficult, and men often feel that they've lost their sense of purpose and place in the world. They can miss the routine and camaraderie between colleagues that often comes with working life. This can lead to feelings of loneliness and isolation which can be dangerous for their health and wellbeing. However, age isn't the only factor in loneliness and isolation, and many Sheds have younger members.

Men's Sheds exist for the benefits they bring to men's health and wellbeing but there are many Men's Sheds in the



UK with female members. Some men find it easier to open up when it's just men, but that's not always the case. One of the best things about Men's Sheds is that they facilitate conversation about subjects that men might usually find difficult to talk about, therefore, it's down to each individual Shed to determine the optimum mix of members.

Lancaster Men's Hub
Weekly event

Free coffee, free company, free conversation

LMH Elevenes

Every Friday from 11am to 12noon
Drop-in hour at
The Cornerstone
Sulyard Street, Lancaster LA1 1PX
www.thelmh.org.uk
email: info@thelmh.org.uk

In order to provide a regular point of contact and support for men who would like to come along and meet up with the Hub members and other guests, we are running a regular social meet on Fridays, 11.00 am at the Cornerstone on Sulyard Street.

ORGANISATIONS WE WORK WITH

UK Men's Sheds Association

Lancaster Men's Hub is not primarily a Men's Shed but shares that organisation's aims and objectives, which are to provide places where men can feel included and safe, in order to improve their health and wellbeing, often with an emphasis on practical work. LMH is affiliated to the UK Men's Sheds Association, which provides advice and support for Men's Sheds throughout the country. The Men's Shed movement originated in Australia. One of the precursors of the movement began in the 1980s in Broken Hill, New South Wales, involving former miners. Another was the Albury Manual Activities Centre,

Visit our Facebook page or our website - thelmh.org.uk
or contact Simon Stewart on 01524 840027 or John Strivens on 07842 826482