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## Why every man needs a shed – Village Agent supports men's shed initiative

Community Council for Somerset (CCS) Village Agent Lucille Simms along with Susan Gerry-Riley, the Compassionate Community Networks Co-ordinator based in Weston Hospice, are spearheading a 'Men's Shed' group in Wedmore and will be holding a 'Forum' meeting at the Scout Hut in Wedmore (off B3139 Wells Road) on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> January from 2pm until 4pm.

The Men's Shed 'movement' started in Australia as a means of attracting this part of the community into an environment where the men can work together 'shoulder to shoulder'. It's a very hands-on approach and the emphasis is placed more on coming together to work on small projects (bird boxes, picture frames, furniture repair etc) than on talking. However, the result is often much more positive than many expect. Friendships are forged and a sense of camaraderie provides much needed company and support to its members. The quote 'Better Shed than dead' from an existing group demonstrates their belief that their 'Shed' had literally saved the lives of some of its members.

Everyone is welcome to this informal gathering which will provide the opportunity to assess local interest and gather the names of anyone who would like to get involved or receive more information. Come along to the meeting if you would like to become a member or show your support, if you're interested in volunteering for driving, providing training opportunities or equipment, or if you care for someone you think may benefit. This will be a dementia friendly group offering access to any level of ability or mobility.

Somerset Village Agents live and work in their local area, making them perfectly placed to support individuals to improve the quality of life of people living in rural areas and support groups to set up, grow and flourish.

Lucille Simms Village Agent said: "Studies have shown that when men suffer issues such as isolation, loneliness, vulnerability or bereavement, they are less likely than women to attend support groups or reach out for help. Certainly, I don't often see men attend coffee mornings or the various group activities offered around the region. I wanted to provide the option of an alternative to the usual group format and I hope that a Men's Shed will accomplish this."

A local resident who heard about the initiative has approached us and generously offered use of his land. If the site is suitable upon completion, it will contain a converted barn which will serve as a space for the men to work on their projects and will go on to contain a garden kitchen, bedding areas and an outdoor 'break-out' area with panoramic

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views for solitude or relaxation. Our aim is to arrange for regular Community transport to 'collect' the Men's Shed members who have limited mobility, drive them to the 'Shed' and then home afterwards.

We hope to see you at the meeting but if you would like to get involved, please email [lucille@somersetccc.org.uk](mailto:lucille@somersetccc.org.uk) for further information.

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Editors notes:

The Somerset Village Agent project is a project of CCS and now covers half of the county. The project uses paid, part time, highly trained individuals living in the parish 'clusters' they support. They help to bridge the gap between isolated, excluded, vulnerable and lonely individuals and statutory and/or voluntary organisations which offer specific solutions to identified needs.

Village Agents offer a signposting and referral service with a difference.

Village Agents work with all ages dealing with a wide variety of issues, although a considerable number of their clients are elderly and involves social care issues. Helping to solve these problems may, ultimately, help the elderly to remain living independently for longer. Village Agents also have the role of helping to shape services by feeding back to the appropriate body information about gaps in service e.g. transport provision. They can also motivate and support a community to respond to a local need by working together to address issues e.g. by helping them to set up a coffee morning for a group of lonely people or start a volunteer car scheme.

CCS supports people who live and work in Somerset communities. We do this through a range of diverse projects which bring together people who care about local community life in Somerset. We focus our energy on helping you and your community.

See [our work](#) to see what projects are running across Somerset.

Men's Sheds and other gendered interventions for older men: improving health and wellbeing through social activity. A systematic review and scoping of the evidence base. A report for the Liverpool-Lancaster Collaborative (LiLaC) and Age UK by Christine Milligan 1, Chris Dowrick 2, Sheila Payne 1, Barbara Hanratty 3, Pamela Irwin 1, David Neary 2, David Richardson 4 April 2013.

<http://sphr.nihr.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/SPHR-LIL-PH1-MIS-Age-UK-brief-report-FINAL.pdf>