

The Shed





Chelston Workshops aka The Shed was years in the making. It started with an invitation from, Tara Acton, the Chelston Community Builder to anyone who wanted to establish a repair café to get in touch. It was clearly a popular idea as requests came in thick and fast. A few meetings were held and the growing group decided to visit 'Men in Sheds' in Exeter. At the same time a group was gathering momentum in Paignton. Both collectives struggled to find a space they could afford and leave set up when not using it. Then one beautiful day Ben, a retired doctor, got in touch with Tara after reading her article in the Community Magazine.

Ben had always wanted to teach pottery in his dotage, to this end he bought a listed building which he planned to convert half of to use for pottery and asked me if I knew any groups that could make use of the other half – free of charge.

Tara and her colleagues, Christine and Katherine introduced Ben to the men they had been working with, seeking premises for a 'Men in Sheds' facility. A small group was formed and together they helped Ben to renovate the building. Ben was able to open his pottery and the men were able to build a suitable workshop.

Tara introduced them to Robin Causley, our funding guru, at the Torbay Community Development Trust, an Ageing Well partner, and he helped them to apply for funds to get the renovations under way. Tara helped them source free materials from local businesses and other charities. Like all ideas that work, the initiative had whatever it needed land on its doorstep; people gave unwanted tools left, right and centre, wood came flying in as did commissions. It was a true community effort.

The men were as happy renovating as they would later be making things in the workshops.

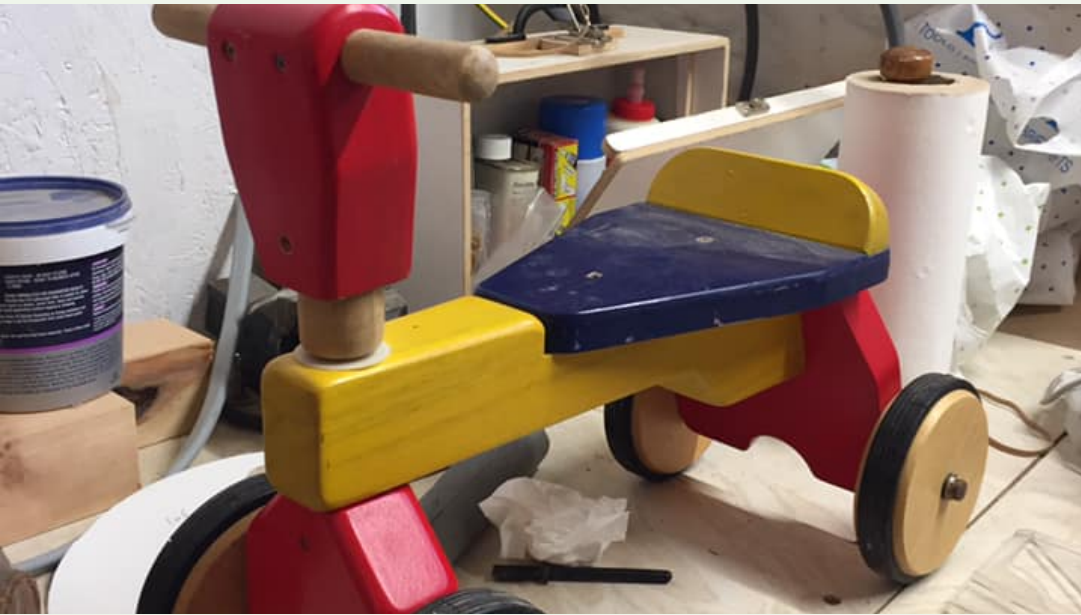
We even got some Time Bankers involved making clay tiles for the washroom facility.

Tara negotiated an insurance deal by connecting them to the local Community Partnership (CP) and helping the CP navigate how to facilitate this. Tara also continued extensive promotions.

The Chelston Workshops is the overall name which incorporates Ben's pottery and The Shed. The latter name chosen so it would be inclusive to all.



The participants do all kinds of work in the Shed
from renovating and making wooden toys...





...to cutting and replacing insulation boards.

Renovating tools for people is also popular, by renovators as much as tool receivers. This is Eric, who shares a story common to many 'shedders', he is retired, having worked as a carpenter all his life. Sadly his wife passed away a few years ago. He was at a loss and not so happy until he discovered The Shed. Now he fixes up tools 3 days a week, has made solid connections with other Shed users, has picked up more hobbies and even started attending a dance club with another shedder.





And some projects are still bigger! These are props for Bristol escape rooms.

The Shed project has been years in the making and has made a significant difference to people's lives. They share their knowledge and skills and get great companionship.

It has been hard having to close the facility during the pandemic, but we hope to see it open and flourishing again soon.



Learning Points

- Suitable venues are hard to find
- Community wide promotions makes 'using what we have' possible
- Having access to a funding guru was invaluable
- Communication was vital
- We looked at how other places had done it and took advice
- When projects gather their own momentum the Community Builder's role is to ensure the path is clear and obstacles are removed for a clear voyage
- Let the community lead the way
- Support may need to carry on over a number of years