

14th March

## Swindon's first Ladies' Shed opens in Penhill<sup>1</sup>

WOMEN are being given the chance to develop practical skills at Swindon's first Ladies' Shed.

Husband and wife team Dawn and Kevin Prosser, who currently run Renew Men's Shed, have reopened the Chippenham Close Community Centre and now host weekly sessions at Penhill Valley.

"A lot of ladies of a certain age weren't allowed to do things like woodwork at school," said Dawn. "So they have few skills in this area.

"Also what we've found is that there are women out there who are now in the position of maybe caring for a partner or someone who used to do all the DIY around the house and who now can't. "With the Ladies' Shed, not only are they learning stuff that they missed out on at school, but also they can learn the DIY skills they need now. Things like using a drill, putting up a shelf, all of those things that you need to know," she said.

"We believe we're the first Ladies' Shed in Swindon, which is exciting," said Kevin. Like the Men's Shed, it provides the opportunity to learn how to restore and repair furniture, repaint items, upholster and learn woodworking skills including making bird boxes, garden benches and dog lead holders.

"You don't need to any skills or experience to come along," said Kevin. "I'll be on hand to help with the tasks. "We help people to not be excluded from these activities. I can give them skills that they are able to take home with them."

He continued: "We're a place where men and now ladies can come, newly-retired people, people who are isolated, lonely or people who haven't used their skills for a while, haven't got anywhere to use those skills or would like to share them with others."

The idea for the women's shed came from a six-week course the pair put on at the request of Swindon Carers. Kevin said: "This was for ladies who were all carers for people. They asked us to do it to give these ladies a respite from that and to give them a space they could come to do something different." "Some of the ladies had never used any hand tools before and they were really proud of what they were able to do by the end," said Kevin.

As part of the project Dawn and Kevin have coordinated the renovation of the community centre since July 2019. With the help of local businesses and volunteer groups a new wall has been installed, the guttering cleaned up, new LED lighting put in, and the kitchen renovated.

"The community centre has been disused for five years," said Dawn. "So it's been amazing to have this opportunity of a permanent home. It's like we've landed."

Owned by Swindon Borough Council, Renew Men's Shed has a working relationship with Penhill Community Association, who lease the building, to run the centre for their work shops.

The couple are keen for other community groups and people to make use of the hall for events.

Renew Ladies' Shed takes place on Wednesdays between 10am-1pm. For details email [dawn@renewswindon.org.uk](mailto:dawn@renewswindon.org.uk)



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.swindonadvertiser.co.uk/news/18304705.swindons-first-ladies-shed-opens-penhill/>