



UK Men's Sheds connect with radio show

The UK Men's Shed's Association is keeping its members connected with a new weekly radio show called "Shed Happens".

The show is broadcast each Wednesday from 10am to 12pm on Frome 96.6FM and relies on a great deal of audience participation from Shedders dialing in to discuss a range of topics, such as what they do in different Sheds across the UK and how they are dealing with isolation and restrictions imposed by the coronavirus pandemic.

"We aim to have a level of light-heartedness and humour," says UKMSA, adding that COVID-19 is not central to the show; remaining connected is.

Listeners are encouraged to comment, chat and ask questions at home via the technology of their choice: text, Facebook, Twitter.

Around 600 men's sheds across the UK have closed following the coronavirus. Shed Happens radio is recorded with 'none of the people contributing actually meeting' assures Frome Shed founder and UKMSA Ambassador Patrick Abrahams.

Guests on the first show, recorded on March 25 at a social distance up to 200 miles, include:

UK Men's Sheds Association National Shed Development Manager **Kate Gordon**, musician and Westbury Shed founder **Dan Gmaj** and **Chris Lee**, who set up Repair Shed in Hemel, Hempstead, and mentors long-term unemployed.

There are pre-recorded segments from multiple Men's (and Women's Shed) groups, as well as comic relief provided by Australian comedian Sammy J.

This week's instalment includes interviews from Sheds on Islands around Great Britain in Guernsey, the Isle of Wight and Shetland.

"We figured that Island based Sheds are probably better at dealing with isolation than the rest of us, and what lessons can we learn from them," say the producers.

In Australia, the peak men's sheds organization AMSA (Australian Men's Sheds Association) has partnered with the Irish and American Men's Shed Associations to develop an online portal to maintain connection between its members.

In addition to Men's Sheds Online, AMSA has released some **handy tools to help members stay connected** with Shed mates and the Victorian Men's Shed Association has also developed a local radio show in Melbourne's eastern suburbs but would like to go further.

"The VMSA's Executive Officer runs a small radio show, "Hangin' out in a Men's Shed", on the first Saturday of each month in Box Hill, but it only reaches a small metropolitan audience," explains VMSA president Lindsay Oates. "We'd like to see a weekly radio talk back program that reaches all across Victoria, as many of our Shedders do not have computers or mobile phones and some do not have a phone."

"As we deal with the closure of around 360 sheds in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are looking at ways to keep men informed and sharing their concerns as they do either 'shoulder-to-shoulder' or 'over-a-cup-of-tea'. Men need to share, listen to other men, to contribute, to listen and to seek advice, and to feel valued. In feeling valued they feel they can participate."

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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