

# Setting up your Walkshop

A Resource for members of Men's Sheds



Healthy Carlow



Riálas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland



SláinteCare.  
Right Care. Right Place. Right Time.

Éiríde um Pháirtaíocht Poiblí Ábhaí  
Coimisiún na hÉireann um Fás Comhionann  
Carlow Local Community Development  
Committee

# Contents



<b>Welcome and Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>What is the Irish Men's Sheds Association?</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>What's the story behind the 'Walkshops'?</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>How to....</b>	<b>5</b>
Get Started	5
Form a Sub-Committee	5
Recruit Participants	6
Get Funding	7
Get Support	8
<b>Practical</b>	<b>9</b>
Planning your route	9
Health and Safety	10
Clothing	10
Weather	11
Refreshments	11
Feedback / Evaluations	11
<b>Sheds on Tour!</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	<b>12</b>
Five Ways to Wellbeing	12
Nature and Wellbeing	13
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>15</b>

# Welcome and Introduction



**This ‘Walkshop’ resource offers you and your fellow Shed members a way to support your health & wellbeing through walking and enjoying the great outdoors!**

Based on a collaboration with Carlow Men’s Sheds who hosted a number of ‘Walkshops’ in March 2022, this resource is intended as a guide to support you in organising your own ‘Walkshop’ for your Shed. It is designed to be practical and flexible (like a Walking toolkit) and can be tailored to your individual Shed needs. Use it as a planning tool for a ‘one-off’ Shed fundraiser or to promote the Shed within your community. Refer to the resource if your Shed is interested in setting up a permanent walking group, if you have health and safety queries or simply when planning a route.

There is practical information about health and safety, clothing, weather and how to plan walks. We have also provided suggestions around funding and resources – at regional and national level. Feedback tells us that many sought calm and space in outdoor settings over the past two years so we have included the ‘*Five Ways to WellBeing*’ and some information and ideas about Nature and Wellbeing. We would love to hear from you and your Shed about how you are using the resource and welcome your feedback.

Thank you to all the partners including **Mental Health Ireland** and **Get Ireland Walking** in developing the ‘Walkshop’ resource. The Carlow pilot was funded by **Healthy Carlow** in partnership with **Carlow Sports Partnership**. Special thanks to Borris, Carlow, Leighlinbridge and Tullow Sheds for their support and suggestions.



# What is the Irish Men's Sheds Association?



**The Irish Men's Sheds Association (IMSA) was formed in 2011 modelled on the Australian Men's Sheds movement.**

Following the formation of the first shed in Ireland in Tipperary, the Shed movement grew rapidly, with over 450 Sheds registered currently with the Irish Men's Sheds Association and at least 12,000 men visiting a Shed every week.

**'Sheds for Life'** is IMSA's flagship health & wellbeing programme - developed in collaboration with Sheddors. The aim of Sheds for Life is to **facilitate ways for men to enhance their wellbeing by building upon the strengths of the Shed and using the wealth of knowledge and experience that exists in its members.** Sheds for Life covers physical, mental and social wellbeing - including walking.



*“Great to have the chat.”*

Pilot Walkshop participant

# What's the story behind the 'Walkshops'?



In February 2022, the IMSA undertook a National Health & Wellbeing Survey to assess issues and needs amongst men. We posed the question '**How are you?**' to Sheddors across Ireland. Responses included health and wellbeing challenges such as **loss**, **bereavement**, **mental and physical health issues** and **social isolation**. We invited partners and collaborators to work with us to respond to these results in creative and innovative ways.

'**Walkshops**' (walking and talking as a group of Sheddors in your local area, possibly starting or finishing at your Shed) were suggested as a way to encourage connection and activity. Sheddors are encouraged to bring a buddy or to reach out to a fellow Shedder who you may not have seen or spoken to for a while and ask them to come along.

Shedders from Carlow, Tullow, Borris and Leighlinbridge (with a few 'blow-ins'!) completed two **Pilot Walkshops** and found that 'Walkshops' reinforced a sense of belonging, comradeship and sociability – and reminded them of what their Sheds were all about in the first place! The walks provided an opportunity to reach out to those whose confidence and trust had taken a knock over the Covid lockdowns and it also gave them an opportunity to attract new members to their Sheds. In County Carlow the walks took place in Altamont Gardens and Duckett's Grove with Shedders travelling to these stunning locations for joint Walkshops.

This guide is intended to support Sheds nationwide in organising their own Walkshop. This may be as part of the drive to re-connect and bring Shedders back to your Shed, or it could be used for other events or as a fundraising initiative to promote the Shed in the community and encourage new members to join. Carlow County Shedders unanimously felt that the Walkshops were a huge success and that scheduling regular and consistent walks within Shed timetables would be the ideal way to keep things going.



# How to...



## Get Started

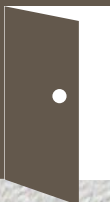
If you aren't already involved with your local Men's Shed, or aren't sure where your nearest Shed is, check out **Shed Finder** on [www.menssheds.ie](http://www.menssheds.ie) or call **01 891 6150**. If you are already a member, contact your fellow Sheddors to find out if other members are interested. Then carry on to the next section ('**How to Form a Sub-Committee**').



**FIND A SHED  
NEAR ME**

## Form a Sub-Committee

A Sub-Committee is a group of people who manage a specific project; in this case, Walkshops. Whether your workshop is a once-off or an ongoing activity, a Sub-Committee will help to organise your event/s and share the jobs. A Sub-Committee can be a mix of the Men's Shed Committee members and new recruits who have relevant expertise or are committed to the task at hand. You should appoint Chairperson of the Sub-Committee. You may like to give out other roles (such as Secretary – see role description [www.menssheds.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/MENS-SHED-TOOLKIT-FOR-UK-AND-IRELAND.pdf](http://www.menssheds.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/MENS-SHED-TOOLKIT-FOR-UK-AND-IRELAND.pdf)) or prefer to focus on giving people specific tasks rather than positions.



## Recruit Participants



**Spread the word! Be sure to tell all members of your local Men's Shed. Consider other ways you could let people know. For example:**

- Social Media (tag other popular local community social media pages in your post to reach new members)
- Community newsletters/local newspaper
- Word of mouth
- Contact other local clubs and organisations
- Flyers/posters
- Local Radio,
- GP's and Dentists
- Primary Health Care Centres
- Supermarket Noticeboards
- Other Men's Sheds in your region (there's nothing like swapping ideas amongst Shedders)

**Decide how best you can communicate with participants to inform everyone about the plan and any changes to it:**

- Phone calls / Text message
- WhatsApp or Facebook messenger group chat
- Email



## Get Funding

You may rely on Walkers to individually cover expenses such as transport, parking, refreshments, paying a guide (**see more about this under ‘Planning Your Route’**) and admission to locations (such as privately-owned parks). If you’re using a Walkshop as a fundraising opportunity, you should decide upon a set cost for taking part which would cover expenses and leave some additional money for the Shed. Your Shed may already have some funding which could go towards the Walkshops.

You could also apply for grants. The following organisations can advise on grants that you may be eligible for and whether they are accepting applications:

- **Active Link:**

[www.activelink.ie/community-exchange/funding](http://www.activelink.ie/community-exchange/funding) Tel: +353 (0)1 667 7326

- **The Wheel:**

[www.wheel.ie/funding](http://www.wheel.ie/funding) Tel: +353 (0)1 454 8727

**Here are some examples of grants that you could apply for:**

- **The Ireland Funds:**

[www.irelandfunds.org/grants](http://www.irelandfunds.org/grants)

- **The Community Foundation for Ireland Grants:**

[www.communityfoundation.ie/grants](http://www.communityfoundation.ie/grants)

- **Age and Opportunity Go for Life Grant Scheme:**

[www.ageandopportunity.ie/tag/go-for-life-grant-scheme](http://www.ageandopportunity.ie/tag/go-for-life-grant-scheme)



*“It’s the easiest form of healthy exercise.”*

Pilot Walkshop participant

## Get Support

There are many organisations around the country that can and would love to help you.

- **Get Ireland Walking** are our national experts on all things walking! [www.getirelandwalking.ie](http://www.getirelandwalking.ie)
- **Local Sports Partnerships** (LSPs) - Sport Ireland has a network of 29 Local Sports Partnerships across the country who help get people active and remove barriers to taking part in physical activities. You can find and contact your LSP here: [www.sportireland.ie/participation/lsp-contact-finder](http://www.sportireland.ie/participation/lsp-contact-finder)
- **Healthy County Coordinators** – there is a Healthy Ireland Coordinator in every County to implement the Healthy Ireland Framework - a roadmap for building a healthier Ireland [www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/healthy-ireland](http://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/healthy-ireland)
- **The Irish Heart Foundation** provide many resources about walking (see **Planning Your Route** below!) from helpful tips and ideas to Walk Leader Training [www.irishheart.ie/your-health/our-health-programmes/healthy-communities/slaite](http://www.irishheart.ie/your-health/our-health-programmes/healthy-communities/slaite)
- **Heritage Ireland** - part of the Office of Public Works. They manage and take care of Ireland's most important historic places. Their guide offers information on facilities and activities that they offer at their sites, including nature trails/walks, guided tours, parking, tea rooms and accessible toilets. [www.heritageireland.ie/assets/uploads/2021/10/heritage-sites-of-ireland-guide-2021.pdf](http://www.heritageireland.ie/assets/uploads/2021/10/heritage-sites-of-ireland-guide-2021.pdf)
- **Local History Societies** – can offer a wealth of knowledge and enthusiasm about local history, archaeology and folklore.
- **Coillte** – care for and develop over 440,000 hectares of Irish land! They specialise in maximising the potential of these natural resources. Their Recreation Map details the activities, attractions and events available in their 260 recreational sites around the country and their teams hold vast knowledge about these places. [www.coillte.ie/our-forests/recreation-map](http://www.coillte.ie/our-forests/recreation-map)
- **www.millenniumforests.com** - Over 607 hectares of native Irish woodland were restored and designated as 16 'Millennium Forests', and are dedicated in perpetuity to the people of Ireland. The forests form a lasting legacy for all to enjoy and include woodland walks, nature trails, interpretative and recreational facilities.



# Practical

## Planning your Route



Consider the abilities of all group members when deciding where to go. Start with a leisurely walk in the local area; use your local knowledge to pick a location. Plan resting stops along the way (e.g. benches). You may like to plan your walk so that it ends near a shop or café - all workers need to refuel! Maybe you want to plan a walk centred around an interesting or historically significant area or landmark. To make it really interesting you could enlist a local guide or a Shedder with an interest in heritage or nature to provide education and information along the way. Nominate someone in your group or take turns to share anything that you know about the place. Consider the use of public transport to get there and back.

The Irish Heart Foundation have mapped out and signposted over 230 '**Slí na Sláinte**' routes around the country. They assure that "**all routes are on a hard surface, not too long and not too difficult and there is signage in place to guide you along the route.**" Get Ireland Walking has a great detailed resource on 'Finding a Suitable Community Walk', which is available on their website: [www.getirelandwalking.ie/\\_files/201511618267\\_9eb81ade.pdf](http://www.getirelandwalking.ie/_files/201511618267_9eb81ade.pdf)

You may wish to contact your Local Sports Partnership to enquire about organising an 'ACTIVATOR POLES' walk (as can be seen in the photos throughout this guide). They are an adaptation of Nordic Walking poles and have been developed by Canadian therapists to promote balance & improve mobility.



## Health and Safety

Ask those going on the walk whether they have any specific health conditions or injuries that may affect them while walking or of any medications that they might need to take. Consider setting up a **buddy system**.



Discuss whether anyone in the group has completed first aid training. If not, consider this as an item to be discussed and considered by the Sub-Committee. Assign one group member to carry a **small first aid kit**.



Make sure that someone in the group has a mobile phone and check that where you are going has a **reliable phone signal**.



Be sure to let all walkers know roughly where you will be going and for how long you will be walking beforehand so that everyone can decide whether it is suitable for them and they know what to expect.



Finally, before setting off let someone know your estimated time of return (in case of emergency).



## Clothing

Ask participants to wear clothes and shoes that they are comfortable walking in. Maybe contact everyone a few days beforehand to let them know what weather to plan for (or recommend that everyone prepares for all seasons – this is Ireland after all!). You may also consider the use of hi-viz jackets where available.

## Weather

Consider assigning someone in the group to check the weather forecast beforehand. It is advisable to check multiple sources (e.g. radio/television forecast, weather app, websites, looking out of the window!). Decide as a group whether you will walk if it is raining.

## Refreshments

If you aren't planning your walk to start/end near a café, shop or your Shed, you could ask Walkers to bring a snack and drink with them – picnic style! Or you could provide refreshments for them using your funding. You could also ask a local business to sponsor snacks and drinks.

## Feedback/Evaluations

You might want to gather feedback from the participants which could help you to improve your Walkshops and cater to the needs and wants of the group. You may want to do this through conversation, follow up phone calls or by written questionnaires.

## Sheds on Tour!

Each Shed has something unique to offer in terms of expertise and local knowledge. Why not do a '**Walk Swap**'? Invite a neighbouring group to your area and suggest a return visit.



# Health and Wellbeing

## Five Ways to Wellbeing

The Five Ways to Wellbeing are a set of evidence-based public mental health messages aimed at improving the mental health and wellbeing of the whole population. We have included them below as we think you'll notice that going for a walk outdoors with fellow Shedders covers many of the suggestions!



### Connect

**Connect with the people around you.** With family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. At home, work, school or in your local community. Think of these as the cornerstones of your life and invest time in developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.

### Be Active

**Go for a walk or run.** Step outside. Cycle. Play a game. Garden. Dance. Exercising makes you feel good. Most importantly, discover a physical activity you enjoy and that suits your level of mobility and fitness.

### Take Notice

**Be curious.** Catch sight of the beautiful. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment, whether you are walking to work, eating lunch or talking to friends. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.

### Keep Learning

**Try something new.** Rediscover an old interest. Sign up for that course. Take on a different responsibility at work. Fix a bike. Learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favourite food. Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident as well as being fun.

### Give

**Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger.** Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Look out, as well as in. Seeing yourself, and your happiness, linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you.

# Nature and Wellbeing

## Nature and Wellbeing

Many years of research has shown that spending time in nature can have a positive effect on your mental health and wellbeing. You may well have experienced this yourself. Taking the time to look around and appreciate the natural world can help you to focus on the present, rather than mulling over the past or worrying about the future. You could **look out for things that you may not usually notice** such as the shapes of clouds or different trees.

Use all **five of your senses** (sight, hearing, taste, touch and smell).

If you have a camera or camera phone, **take photos** of something outdoors. You could print it off afterwards or set it as your phone/computer background to remind you of this time/space/feeling.

You could listen to some relaxing music while you walk (classic, acoustic – whatever takes your fancy!) or try a walking meditation on an app like **Calm, Headspace** and **Insight Timer**.



**HAPPY WALKING!** .....



*“I love new walks.”*

*“Good for mind and body.”*

*“Very sociable.”*

*“I enjoy nature, fresh air and the freedom.”*

All quotes from Pilot Walkshop participants



## Special Thanks

Special thanks to our Walkers from Carlow Town, Leighlin Parish, Tullow and Borris Men’s Sheds in Carlow.





# Bibliography (Sources of information)

**Activelink: Funding**

[www.activelink.ie/community-exchange/funding](http://www.activelink.ie/community-exchange/funding)

**Age & Opportunity: Go For Life Scheme**

[www.ageandopportunity.ie/tag/go-for-life-grant-scheme](http://www.ageandopportunity.ie/tag/go-for-life-grant-scheme)

**Coillte: Visit our Forests**

[www.coillte.ie/our-forests/recreation-map](http://www.coillte.ie/our-forests/recreation-map)

**The Community Foundation for Ireland: Grants Support Hub**

[www.communityfoundation.ie/grants](http://www.communityfoundation.ie/grants)

**Create the Good: Start a Walking Group**

<https://createthegood.aarp.org/volunteer-guides/start-walking-group.html>

**Get Ireland Walking**

[www.getirelandwalking.ie](http://www.getirelandwalking.ie)

**Get Ireland Walking: Walking the Walk: Finding a Suitable Community walk**

[www.getirelandwalking.ie/\\_files/201511618267\\_9eb81ade.pdf](http://www.getirelandwalking.ie/_files/201511618267_9eb81ade.pdf)

**Gov.ie : Healthy Ireland**

[www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/healthy-ireland](http://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/healthy-ireland)

**OPW: Heritage Sites**

[www.heritageireland.ie/assets/uploads/2021/10/heritage-sites-of-ireland-guide-2021.pdf](http://www.heritageireland.ie/assets/uploads/2021/10/heritage-sites-of-ireland-guide-2021.pdf)

**The Ireland Funds: Grants**

[www.irelandfunds.org/grants](http://www.irelandfunds.org/grants)

**Irishheart.ie : Walking in your Community**

[www.irishheart.ie/your-health/our-health-programmes/healthy-communities/slainte](http://www.irishheart.ie/your-health/our-health-programmes/healthy-communities/slainte)

**Men's Sheds: Toolkit for the Development and Sustainability of Sheds in the UK and Ireland**

[www.menssheds.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/MENS-SHED-TOOLKIT-FOR-UK-AND-IRELAND.pdf](http://www.menssheds.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/MENS-SHED-TOOLKIT-FOR-UK-AND-IRELAND.pdf)

**Mental Health Ireland: Resources**

[www.mentalhealthireland.ie/resources](http://www.mentalhealthireland.ie/resources)

**Sport Ireland: LSP Contact Finder**

[www.sportireland.ie/participation/lsp-contact-finder](http://www.sportireland.ie/participation/lsp-contact-finder)

**The Wheel: Funding**

[www.wheel.ie/funding](http://www.wheel.ie/funding)

