

SBS – A Retrospective



The **SBS (Step-by-Step Project)** was co-designed to address a common need: health inequalities and greater risk of poor physical and mental health of men due to social isolation, loneliness and unemployment.

Statistics indicate that men have higher rates of certain non-communicable diseases, poorer mental health, and, with age, greater risk of loneliness. In addition, men are less likely to seek help, compounding the risk of late detection and poorer outcomes. Recent research indicates that even when men seek assistance, they are not satisfied with the service received (Seidler et al., 2018), therefore withdrawing early from treatment and reducing the likelihood of seeking future help.

SBS delivered a model of community engagement to empower men to move from poor health and/or isolation to healthy social participation or active engagement in the labour market. The **SBS** Model adapted the Men's Sheds concept, incorporating peer champion (health and employment focused) training and deployment within the Sheds and their communities; outreach with their communities and other organisations; and use of health technology to assess health status.

Between September 2017 and November 2021, 101 Sheds were established with a total membership of approximately 2000 individuals. Robust evaluation demonstrated that, economically, the **SBS** Model led to reduced expenditure on mental and physical healthcare; less public spending on welfare transfer payments and other support agencies; and up-skilling and greater self-esteem, reducing unemployment and enhanced productivity in the workplace.

SBS clearly demonstrated the acceptability, feasibility and effectiveness of the co-designed, community, male-centric model of development. **SBS** also showed that Sheds have the potential to offer a community asset that, with minimal investment and running costs (notably compared with

traditional health and social care settings), can enhance the social capital and resilience of the community whilst providing physical, psychological, social and skills benefits to those who come through the door. With time, Sheds expand their offer to meet the needs of Members and the community in which the Shed is situated, and keep men active for longer, and out of emergency health and care settings.

In terms of **SBS**'s economic effect, the economic evaluation concluded that it is likely to have a marginal positive impact on sustainable GDP/output. When non-monetarised effects are also considered, the benefit to the regional/national economy and society are undeniable. This is particularly the case since the movement is largely grassroots-driven, and self-funded, thus placing minimal fiscal demand on the national or regional authorities.