

Eastleigh Men's Shed

Eastleigh Men's Shed is a community workshop for men to gather, discuss and create. Established eight years ago, the group moved from Hamble to Bursledon in 2018 and has supported over 80 members over the years. The group was meeting twice a week, with members able to drop in as and when they wanted. Most members are in their 70s and 80s. Some have a background in crafts or trades, others joined the shed for the friendship and laughs.

Part of a growing men's shed movement, each shed works differently. Eastleigh's members are largely involved in woodworking – though there is one member who does electronic repairs, and a couple who don't get involved in the crafting. The current shed was built by the group's members on a WW2-era

concrete slab.

During the pandemic, the group initially shut down for six months or so, pausing all activity. The group's leadership committee kept in touch with members, sending weekly check-in emails to see how each member was. Some members kept busy building bird tables and feeders to selling them to raise money for a local food bank.

In August 2020, the Shed reopened with reduced numbers (six members at a time). Many members were keen to return after lockdown, having missed the social interactions and banter at the shed, talking about football and taking the mickey out of each other. One of the main impacts the shed has is keeping people out of isolation, so getting back together was vital. Now the numbers are up to eight members per session, with three sessions per week. Members do tests before attending, though this will be more difficult with the ending of free tests from the government.





members contributing as well as commissioned work coming in and occasional donations. The group's current location is in a Scout hut, rent free, though they contribute to electricity and provide site maintenance, in a mutually beneficial arrangement.

Going forward, the group expects that numbers will go back to pre-pandemic levels soon, and that the pandemic won't have made much of a long-term impact at all. The group continues to need more volunteer leaders, and is currently seeking funding to purchase a defibrillator to be housed at the shed. The group continues to work collaboratively with other community groups and institutions including Eastleigh Community Garden and Townhill Park Residents Association, for whom they built a free little library box at the end of 2021.

Find out more about Eastleigh Men's Shed:
<http://www.eastleighmensshed.co.uk/>

The pandemic disrupted the group in a number of ways. Approximately half of the previous members haven't returned – some not confident getting together in person still, others found other ways to keep busy while the shed was closed and no longer have the time. In their place, ten new members have joined. At the moment, not wanting to increase numbers, there is a cap on new members, until possible to increase the numbers or add a fourth weekly session. To do so would require identifying more volunteers who can be session leaders, which is a challenge.

Otherwise, now the group has restarted, however, they are back to 'carrying on as we did do' with lots of requests for work coming through to support councils, schools and railway stations as it did before. The group is self-sufficient financially, with