

CASE STUDY

Mulhuddart Men's Shed



Blakestown LCDP outreach office has provided *pre-community development supports* as identified in the publication *Insights 11: Community Development Strategies and Actions* within the Integrated Local Development Programme to the **Mulhuddart Men's Shed** over several years. The Men's Shed is situated in a RAPID area and a number of organisations have been central to the development of the project since its foundation. Critically however, the Dunne Family (Anthony and Paul) handed over a trance of land next to Mulhuddart Village on which to allow it to operate from that is leased on an annual basis. This land was originally a scrap yard that the men who came to engage with the project over a period of several months helped clear up.

In 2011, two staff members from Blanchardstown Area Partnership were invited to the Annual General Meeting of Aontas, where John Evoy of the *Irish Men's Shed Association* (IMSA) gave a presentation about the vision and ethos of the Men's Shed. Following this Blakestown LCDP maintained contact with the IMSA and exchanged telephone and written correspondence. Staff in the LCDP outreach office in Blakestown had been engaging with some isolated men living in the local community over a period of time prior to this that on occasion came together in Blakestown Community Centre.

The Community Worker for Blakestown outreach office arranged for John Evoy of the Irish Men's Shed Association, to visit Blanchardstown and give a talk about the concept of Men's Sheds that 52 men attended along with *Safer Blanchardstown* and *Fingal County Council*. A significant amount of work went into this organising the event with men being approached in local bookmakers and bars and flyers dropped off in different settings. In the intervening 3 years Community Worker for Blakestown outreach office has provided on-going group supports to facilitate the project link in with local businesses to help with fundraising activities and learning exchanges with other Men Shed's projects in Athy and north Fingal. In addition she has provided one-to-one mentoring supports for several of the men by making contacts with the *Institute of Technology Blanchardstown* and *Blanchardstown Adult Education Service in Dublin 15*. Blanchardstown Area Partnership also allocated LCDP funding for insurance and electricity set up costs for the Men's Shed when it was officially launched in December 2012.

The **Men's Shed** in **Mulhuddart** has developed and changed considerably since it was set-up. "*It is more structured and there is more stability to the project itself*" according to Hans who completed his Tus Community Work placement through Blanchardstown Area Partnership with the Men's Shed. Since approaching the Men's Shed several of the men have returned to full-time education to complete their Leaving Certificate with the *Blanchardstown Adult Education Service* and training courses in Horticulture through *Crosscare* in Blanchardstown Village and IT skills. The *Rediscovery Centre* <http://www.rediscoverycentre.ie/> a social enterprise dedicated to providing community employment and training via innovative reuse enterprises also delivered furniture restoration training course that 10 men attended. This was possible because of Local Agenda 21 funding from *Fingal County Council* and the *Institute of Technology Blanchardstown* provided a workshop space for the 3 days training along with lunch.

Since a container was also donated by the Dunne Family, the men have begun to craft different wooden products such as Wishing Wells and bird houses from the site that have been sold at Christmas markets held in Blakestown Outreach Office. More recently the men also approached *Blanchardstown Garda Station* and begun to re-condition stolen bicycles that have not been retrieved by previous owners. All monies generated by the above activities are re-invested into the **Men's Shed** in **Mulhuddart** to cover any running costs. At present a brand new premises is being built by the men themselves helped by donations for products and services such as bricks (Dunne Family) and electricity (*Drugs Task Force*) along with €3,000 *Ebay* (see photo) *Yahoo* and €1,000 from *Fingal County Council* to build a toilet on the site. The men also have plans in 2015 to build a new Green House from which to grow vegetables and fruit and put in new bedding plants at Ladyswell Primary School in Mulhuddart.