



# CONVERSATION STARTER

'CONNECTING MEN' SUMMARY

The Rural Wisdom 'Conversation Starter' sessions are a series of short webinars that aim to generate discussion around the issues that matter to older people in rural communities. They bring together a range of people to share ideas and offer different perspectives on the challenges and solutions.

## WHAT'S INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- TOPIC BACKGROUND
- GUEST SPEAKERS
- DISCUSSION POINTS
- RESOURCES



Image Credit - men2men

## TOPIC BACKGROUND

At Rural Wisdom we are lucky to meet wonderful groups across Scotland and Wales who all contribute to making rural communities good places to live. We love hearing about 'whole-community' activity but we also know the impact of having a 'space to call your own' to support mental health and wellbeing. This session brings together two organisations who are supporting older men to connect, build friendships and share peer support. They have each built upon well-known, valued approaches drawing on local strengths and resources.

We met 'men2men' last year at our Rural Wisdom National Gathering when the founders were in the process of setting up. They were bringing together their shared experiences of what works well for men and using this as the basis of their new organisation. We loved their passion and outlook and made them promise to come back and give us an update.

Following on from 'men2men' it seemed like a perfect opportunity to follow-up with South Lanarkshire Council. Their innovative project transformed a library bus into a mobile shed, creating more connections and support for men across South Lanarkshire. We think this is a great example of adapting services and repurposing resources to reflect what works for rural communities.



# DISCUSSION POINTS AND RESOURCES

FIND OUT MORE AT [WWW.RURALWISDOM.ORG](http://WWW.RURALWISDOM.ORG)



Image Credit - men2men

## SPEAKERS

**Luke Conlon, Fred Luckman and Pete Colling, men2men** - designed for, and led by, men living in areas around Camarthenshire, Pembrokeshire and Ceredigionshire. We heard about how they support men to set up small activity groups around shared interests like woodland craft, woodturning, photography and walking. These groups help create safe spaces where men feel they have the permission to explore their feelings and share with others. The speakers shared some of the challenges, successes and the huge impact it's making to men, their families and communities.

**Paul Creechan, South Lanarkshire Seniors Together** - The 3-year project funded by The National Lottery Community Fund, adapted an existing library bus into a mobile shed. We heard about how the project adapted their plans to better reflect what they were hearing from rural communities and how it is helping to break down barriers between local community and different council departments.



Image Credit - Seniors Together

A recording of the guest speaker's presentations can be found on the [Rural Wisdom website](http://RuralWisdom.org). [ADD VIMEO LINK](#)

## DISCUSSION POINTS

- There is still a lot of **stigma** around men's mental health and wellbeing and it can be challenging to get conversations going. In the right circumstances it's possible to build enough trust and safety for men to open up but it takes time.
- men2men and the men's shed movement use **purposeful shared activity** to create the spaces where men feel comfortable - woodworking, music, walking etc.
- Many groups are still **meeting online** - this can be daunting and cause anxiety. What are the solutions? If possible meet in person/talk over the phone first to establish a relationship, link someone up with a buddy, support with how-to guides. Keep in mind that digital won't work for everyone.
- Resources are tight but **re-purposing existing resources** might open up new opportunities eg: Mobile buses/sheds. Banchory Men's Shed have adapted laptops so people can access zoom in one easy step. A great example of repurposing, problem solving and increasing accessibility.
- **Mobile spaces for rural communities** - banks and post-offices use buses and vans. What other community activities or services could make use of the 'mobile' model in rural areas?

## ORGANISATIONS & RESOURCES

Useful links shared by our speakers and participants.

[men2men website](#)

[South Lanarkshire Seniors Together](#)

[Seniors Together Mobile Shed](#)

[Scottish Mens Shed Association](#)

[Age UK Scottish Mens Shed](#)

[Moray Wellbeing Hub](#)

[Banchory Men's Shed](#)

[Ability Net IT Support](#)

[Outside the Box - Digital Buddies](#)

[Ageing Better - Engaging with Older Men](#)

[Engaging Men - A Good Practice Guide \(2012\)](#)