

## Beamish Crees

Michelle Kindleysides

[Text: Michelle Kindleysides, Head of Health and Wellbeing, Beamish Museum]

Images [Graphic skyline image across bottom of page. Logo with County Durham Together Partnership logo and Better for everyone strapline]

[Video: Michelle sat against armchair in Beamish's Clover Cottage]

[Michelle: I'm the head of health and wellbeing at Beamish Museum. The men's group that we've got here at Beamish has actually been running for just over ten years and it started back in 2014 when an occupational therapist, who we knew a little bit already, got in touch and said I've got a group of men who are patients within the mental health team. Some of them are living with dementia, some of them it's kind of loneliness, low mood, isolation. She didn't feel like there was anything within the NHS at her service that she could offer them. And she said, is there something that we could try at Beamish based on this men's shed idea and I thought yeah let's give it a go. So, we now have two groups that meet on a Tuesday, so because there's such a huge demand. The biggest number of enquiries we get as a team is from men, men living with dementia, men living with mental health issues as well and often those things go hand in hand. I think what makes our men's group quite attractive to different men out there as well is its at Beamish Museum. So, people know Beamish, they've got an idea in their head of where they are coming to, they know they are going to be busy and we've got an incredible space here. We've got the museum, we've got Clover Cottage, we've got a workshop that the chaps can use. Also, they're a key part of the museum. We actually get asked by other teams across the museum can the men's group make us this, can the men's group do that? It's genuinely meaningful things that the chaps are doing. Sometimes people have the skills already, sometimes they learn from others. For example, we make toys for Santa's workshops, we've made go-carts for the 50's town, we make the bags that are sold in the gift shop and that money comes back to help us buy materials, so it's a genuinely a meaningful occupation for the chaps.

We've been part of the Cree Network for several years now. At first, we just kind of ran it on our own and then somebody through our links with Public Health and Durham Community Action said there's this men's Cree, so we've been of that for quite a while which has been brilliant to meet other people running Crees, share ideas, kind of offer advice to each other. When we can get together in the same room its always incredibly valuable, even doing it online, it's just as valuable to share ideas. There's been times in the past where we've visited other Crees and they've come here which has been great to see what other groups are doing and what we could do here. And the chaps love to meet other people as well, there's this unspoken understanding that they're in a similar boat, it doesn't need to be spoken about particularly, but they understand one another and its lovely. The Cree network is also a good place of support and advice for us, as facilitators, so we know there's always someone on the end of the phone or email if we've got a concern, a query, it's really supportive network to be in and its helped us develop and grow over the last ten years.

So, if we could wish for anything for the Crees, I think I would wish and I think the chaps would wish that we could run more. I think and knowing that that funding is secure, and I guess really, the more funding we get the more we can do. I think we know as a Cree and I'm sure others do that there is such a huge demand out there. We keep our groups quite small, about six or seven chaps at a time,

but we know there are lots more people out there who would love to join and benefit. I think being able to run more of them and just support more people.

[**Images:** County Durham Together Partnership logo]