Isolation project secures funds to build more sheds for men

A PROJECT to address the social isolation experienced by older men in Scotland is set to receive a boost of £50,000.

The funding will provide support and resources to new and existing Men’s Sheds across the country. The sheds are a place where men come together and work on individual and community projects, such as building garden planters and restoring furniture. They can use their skills, learn new ones, share stories and experiences, and relax.

Studies have shown that the Sheds improve participants’ health and wellbeing by encouraging positive and active ageing. The funding was announced by Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities and Pensioners’ Rights Alex Neil at the Macmerry Men’s Shed in East Lothian, which celebrated its second birthday in June.

Study finds home care focused on household activities

OLDER PEOPLE are not having their personal care needs addressed by the paid home care system in Ireland, a conference has heard.

Trinity College Dublin research fellow Catriona Murphy said the failure to address these needs in the community was likely to trigger demand for long-term residential care earlier than anticipated. Dr Murphy was speaking at the seventh annual conference of the All Ireland Gerontological Nurses Association (AIGNA) in Dublin. She said the home care received by older people focused on help with household activities rather than personal care and they were much less likely to receive it if they were not living alone.

Presenting findings from the Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing, Dr Murphy said 8% of people aged 65 years and older in Ireland are using formal home care, a figure that rises to more than 30% for those aged 85 years and older. About 80% of home care is provided informally by unpaid family and friends.

‘In view of the increasing number of older people and reduced informal carer supply, this type of formal home care is not sustainable and requires a focused policy response aimed at providing increased levels of personal care and support to family carers,’ Dr Murphy said.

AIGNA president Assumpta Ryan said it was important to address the future shape of home care, day care, acute and long-term care in the north and south of the country.

Professor of gerontological nursing at the University of Sheffield Mike Nolan was critical of media portrayals of older people. ‘We call an older person a geriatric but we would never describe a young person as “a paediatric”,’ he said.

Scanner that detects early signs of tissue damage to be trialled

TWENTY NINE UK trusts are in line to trial a hand-held scanner that spots early signs of tissue damage and could help reduce the incidence of pressure ulcers.

The SEM Scanner can detect damage up to ten days before it is visible to the naked eye. Developed by Bruin Biometrics, it was trialled at Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Foundation Trust and is being tested at ten trusts.

The scanner is placed where damage is most likely to occur, for example, on the heels, buttocks, elbows or shoulders, and its sensors measure changes in moisture. If tissue damage beneath the skin is identified, nurses can put in place preventative strategies, such as more frequent turning or use of protective footwear.

Bruin Biometrics clinical specialist and former tissue viability nurse Kay Smith said: ‘The scanner has given nurses confidence in their ability to assess pressure ulcers independently.’

In brief

The RCN is planning a joint conference with the Royal Pharmaceutical Society at the end of the year and is seeking speakers and best-practice examples of nurses and pharmacists working together to improve care in settings outside hospital. Contact nicola.mills@rcn.org.uk

Standards for the care of older people in Scottish hospitals have been published, with a focus on involving patients and carers in discussions and decisions. Other standards cover the management of frailty, assessment of cognitive function, effective discharge planning and ensuring that older people are cared for in the right place at the right time. NHS boards must now work towards meeting the standards published by Health Improvement Scotland. tinyurl.com/ok3ymt

The National Assembly for Wales has voted to support the introduction of legislation for safe nurse staffing levels in the country. If passed into law, it would see Wales become the first country in the UK with a legal duty on safe nurse staffing levels in acute settings. The bill will be considered in detail by the health and social care committee on July 9.

Kettering General Hospital has become the third acute hospital in the UK to appoint an Admiral nurse. Emma Smith’s role will include assessing patients, training staff to better understand dementia and making hospitals more dementia friendly.

A consensus guide on nutritional management of patients with severe chronic kidney disease is available. It aims to help clinicians identify, assess and manage undernutrition in patients with stage 4 and 5 disease, including those on dialysis. tinyurl.com/oy7caf