



Community Repair Café & Swap Shop

Reduce waste, save money and bring people together

A Repair Café & Swap Shop is a simple but powerful way to stop old clothes, furniture and other items from going to landfill whilst bringing the community together.

Local volunteers help repair broken household items, clothing, bicycles and small appliances, while a swap area gives pre-loved items a second life.

As well as cutting carbon emissions and reducing landfill waste, these events help build community connections and can combat loneliness by creating a welcoming social space.

Step 1: Form an organising group

Start by gathering a few enthusiastic people to help organise the event. You will need to have an event coordinator, a health and safety lead and, if you are going to have a café, someone to manage the catering and refreshments.

Step 2: Recruit volunteers

It's usually best to start small and if the event is successful let it expand naturally. Don't worry about trying to cover lots of different repair skills, play to your strengths.

Consider inviting:

- Sewer or mender
- Retired tradespeople
- DIY or general repair volunteers



Top Tip: You could also recruit electricians for repairing appliances; however, this requires an extra layer of health and safety planning, insurance and possibly PAT testing. So we don't recommend doing this for your first event.

Step 3: Find a Suitable Venue

Choose an accessible indoor venue with:

- Tables and chairs
- Electricity supply
- Accessible toilets
- Parking or cycle storage
- Kitchen facilities if possible

Good venues include community halls, churches, village halls and community centres.

Aim to create a welcoming, social atmosphere where people can sit, chat and learn while repairs take place.

Popular Repair Categories

- Clothing and textiles
- Bikes and scooters
- Small electrical items
- Toys
- Household goods
- Furniture repairs
- Jewellery

Swap Shop Ideas

- Books
- Children's toys
- Clothes
- Jigsaws
- Gardening tools
- Kitchen equipment
- Craft supplies

Step 4: Create some simple rules

It's important to be clear in your promotion of the event and on the day what is and isn't suitable for repairing or swapping.

For items that are being swapped they should be clean and in good condition. You might also want to decide some rules about what is fair to swap.

For the repair café be clear about what is possible in your promotion of the event and what sort of skills the volunteers have.

Don't allow anything unsafe and ensure that items are collected at the end. If the event is going to be busy it might be best to book repair slots to help avoid frustration.



Step 5: Arrange tools and equipment

Ask volunteers what equipment they need and create a shared toolkit.

- Sewing machines and kits
- Screwdrivers, pliers, allen keys, hammers and other basic tools
- Extension leads
- Safety equipment including goggles and gloves
- Work lamps

Many volunteers may have their own equipment, but you can also reach out to community groups and even local businesses to see if they will loan you equipment.

Top Tip: You can ask for donations to help cover any costs of consumables that the volunteers provide (Such as thread, glue, nails, sandpaper etc) so that the volunteers are not left out of pocket.

Step 6: Consider safety and insurance

Carry out a simple risk assessment before the event. You want to think about electrical safety, trip hazards, tool use, fire exits and first aid arrangements.

It is also worth checking whether your venue's insurance covers the event or whether additional community event insurance is needed.

Top Tip: Make it clear that repairs are carried out on a best-effort basis and cannot be guaranteed.

Step 7: Start promoting

Start promoting your event at least four weeks in advance. You can promote through Community Facebook groups, parish newsletters, local newspapers and community noticeboards.

