

CAG How-to Guide:

Setting up/running a Repair Café



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Setting up/running a Repair Café

1. About Repair Cafés

Repair Cafés are community events where skilled, competent volunteers who like fixing things are matched with people who bring along broken or damaged household items. Attendees are also invited to learn how to fix their own broken items alongside the repairers, instead of throwing them in the bin.

Repair Cafés were first developed in the Netherlands and there are now over 1,000 around the world. The purpose of the events is to bring about a shift in consumerism and the way we view normal household items as throw-away.

A key part of the events is the focus on building community and bringing people together to support each other in a fun, interesting and sociable way, with plenty of tea and cake!

2. Volunteer roles

It is generally fairly straightforward to recruit competent menders. The key is finding a handful of people who can take on the coordination and administrative tasks. The organisational tasks can be split up in various ways, but usually includes five different main roles.

Administration

In order to ensure that the café runs smoothly there are various behind-the-scenes tasks including printing forms and health and safety guidance, risk assessments, safeguarding, collecting and processing data in order to measure the impact of your events, liaising with the front-of-house welcoming team, and ideally keeping an up-to-date list of attendees to contact in the run up to each event. See the Appendices section for more information to help with these tasks.

Technical knowledge

It is a good idea to have someone technical on your coordinating group who understands the practical requirements of the Repair Café set up and equipment needed. Most menders bring their own tools, and consumables (and they may ask for a refund from the group to cover costs – e.g. batteries and fuses), or as a group you may wish to buy your own.

TOP TIPS

WHAT ARE THE KEY VOLUNTEER ROLES?

- An administrator
 - A technical bod
 - A finance bod
 - A publicity bod
 - A volunteer liaison bod
- plus many baker/teamaker bods!

Finance and fundraising

Most Repair Cafés are self-sustaining due to income from donations which typically cover hall hire, publicity and other material costs. Dealing with incoming and outgoing money is not a very complex job. It may be necessary to fundraise for some start-up costs. Typically these are in the region of £1,000 to £1,500 but can be less. See section on Costs, for more information on funding.

Publicity

Promoting the Repair Café to recruit menders and to attract attendees to bring their broken items (see more detail below) – including social media, press, posters, group emails.

Volunteer liaison

It is important to keep in good contact with your growing and changing group of volunteer menders. This includes welcoming new volunteers and briefing them on the processes involved, updating them with details of upcoming events, dealing with their enquiries, booking them in to know which menders will be at which events, and so on.

Menders and repairers

A Repair Cafés will require lots of menders. You need at least one person who is qualified to do Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) and ideally has PAT testing equipment. See section on Costs. You may be able to borrow this from a neighbouring Repair Café. The equipment cost around £400 new.



Typically most Repair Cafés have between 10 and 20 menders at each event. Electrical repairs are the most in demand, but other repairers include people to mend textiles, furniture, mechanical problems, bikes, computers (software and/or hardware). Some Repair Cafés have specialist menders e.g. watch repairers. If you have a specialist, it is worth advertising that fact which may help get extra attendees for them.

3. Volunteer recruitment

People get involved in Repair Cafés for all sorts of reasons; concern for the environment and our throwaway culture, a desire to meet new people or help other people in the community, a love of fixing things and tinkering, the joy of passing on new skills, and so on.

It is usually fairly straightforward to recruit menders. Finding people who are interested in core project roles that involve organising in between Repair Cafés e.g. volunteer

recruitment, publicity, finance, data collation, etc. is sometimes more challenging. We would strongly recommend holding a public meeting at the start of your project development to introduce the idea to the community and bring together a potential organising team (CAG can support with this).

You could try the following approaches to recruiting volunteers:

- Contact organisations or clubs for older or retired people e.g. Age Concern, University of the 3rd Age (U3A), Men in Sheds.
- Further education colleges/universities with courses in IT, product design, engineering, textiles.
- Local charity shops and reuse facilities.
- 'Meet-up' groups, clubs and societies interested in coding or DIY.
- Friends and family who have practical skills.
- Local community Facebook pages – these are an excellent way of recruiting people.

Be prepared to take down details of potential new volunteers at the Repair Café. Very often people sign up to help at future events after visiting a Repair Café and seeing what a fabulous atmosphere there is, and the benefit being provided.

4. Repair Guidance

The important thing about Repair Cafés is that they are a community event, not a service, and repairers are volunteers sharing their skills, not professionals. Therefore, volunteers can't be expected to know how to repair everything! However, there are a number of good resources that can give guidance and advice to support the volunteers' knowledge.

- The CAG Project YouTube Repair Playlist – Bicester Green (from the independent CAG Oxfordshire network) have made five short films on basic repairs including stripping a cable, changing a plug, reconnecting a cable, inspecting an item and changing brushes on a power tool. Watch them here: www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLJq7U7Mx62gm68RpdedPv97hDFE3HKBev
- The Restart Wiki – The Restart Party Project maintains a wiki of basic and widely applicable repair principles: therestartproject.org/wiki/Main_Page
- iFixit – This website has step-by-step guides on how to fix a wide range of electrical and electronic items including specific brands and models: www.ifixit.com/Guide
- wikiHow – This website has a huge range of step-by-step guides on how to do just about anything with drawn pictures: www.wikihow.com
- Twitter: Tweet about the repair you're stuck on using the #SOSrestart to get help from fellow repairers: <https://twitter.com/hashtag/SOSRestart?src=hash>
- PAT Training – If your volunteers need training on how to do PAT testing please contact CAG or search for local providers.
- Web searches – If in doubt, search on the internet as YouTube is full of home-made films on DIY repairs.
- Restart Party Kit – This how-to guide from the Restart Project has loads of idea on how to organise repair events: therestartproject.org/restartparty/

- Restart Project radio show and podcasts – This weekly gadget show airs every Tuesday and follows expert and amateur repairers, designers, activists and makers: therestartproject.org/podcast/
- Restart Hosts Facebook Group – This is a space for those planning Restart Parties or community repair events to share experiences, ideas and support each other: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/RestartHosts>
- Repair Café website – this European-wide organisation has lots of information about Repair Cafés: <https://repairCafé.org/en>
- iFixit website – This is a platform for news, campaigns and information about repairing, the circular economy and rights of electronic workers and users: <https://ifixit.org/>



5. Costs

Running costs of your Repair Café will vary from group to group. Typically, once the Repair Café is established, the income from donations covers venue hire, publicity and other costs, and sometimes results in a growing surplus (particularly if you have second-hand items donated for resale – e.g. sharpened tools).

Below is an example of predicted set-up costs from the Crediton Repair Café. These are probably at the high end of predicted costs. Other Repair Cafés have menders who already have PAT testing equipment and qualifications, which can cut down on costs considerably. Also, some Repair Cafés are given community venues for free.

Typical set up costs

- PAT tester - £354
- PAT tester calibration - £40
- PAT testing qualification for 4 volunteers over 12 months (online course £70+3x£50)- £220
- Publicity banner - £60
- Equipment (e.g. extension leads, protective sheets, etc) - £500 (N.B. this is a high estimate)

Ongoing costs

- Consumables such as fuses, batteries, plugs, gloves, masks, goggles, pens.
- Printing costs such as for flyers, posters, handouts, and forms.
- Venue hire – and a good idea to allow a contingency amount as well.
- Refreshment costs (usually recouped from donations coming in for the refreshments)

Pricing

- Most Repair Cafés are free at the point of use for attendees, however you may like to think about how you can use this activity to fundraise for your group, for example:
- Put out a donations tin for repairs and for refreshments.
- Suggest a donation as a percentage of the average retail price of the item e.g. Bicester Green suggest people give 10% of the retail to fix their item.
- Sell higher-value items (e.g. power or garden tools) that have been donated after repairing them at events, on eBay or Gumtree.
- Asking the attendee for payment or donation to cover the costs of any new materials such as leads, plugs, fuses used to repair their item.

Funding

Most district councils in run a Communities Together Fund which is a good source of funding (CAG can provide example applications to save you time when applying) and can advise on other possible funding sources.

6. Practicalities

A well-chosen and well set-up venue will help make sure the event runs smoothly. Choose somewhere that attendees can flow through easily and volunteers can work comfortably and efficiently within the space. The café element is a crucial part of the event so the space to be used for refreshments should be big enough and adequately equipped.



TOP TIPS

HOW MUCH TO CHARGE?

As a guideline, the Repair Café at Bicester Green in Oxfordshire

- ask attendees for a donation of 10% of the average retail price for fixing their item
- check online to look for average retail prices
- sell on a fixed, donated item at 30% of the average retail price

Venue set-up

- Welcome area/table
- Repair workstations – it makes sense to have separate areas for different types of items. This can include electricals (nearly always the most popular item), sewing repairs, furniture, bikes, tool sharpening, miscellaneous (a lot of jobs also fall into this category).
- PAT testing area/table – probably next to the electrical menders
- Resale area/swap shop – where fixed items or sharpened tools that owners don't want can be sold on for a donation
- Refreshments/waiting area – this should be a comfortable and welcoming area with refreshments for attendees.

Resources needed

- Tables and chairs
- Instruction signage
- Labels for areas/tables
- Registration/record keeping sheets
- Extension cables
- Scales
- Masking tape (for taping down trip-hazard cables)
- Tools and spare parts – see the Restart Party Tool Guide: <https://therestartproject.org/wiki/Tools>
- Spare consumables, e.g. buttons, fuses, thread, dowels, glues, batteries
- Tea, coffee, drinks, snacks and lots of cake!

At the event

- Volunteers at the welcome desk will greet and register attendees. They may ask questions about the item to determine what type of repair is needed and who to direct the item to. Attendees are asked to complete a form, which includes "House Rules" (see Appendix 4)
- You may want to set up a waiting/queue system such as giving out numbered tickets or keeping a list on a whiteboard for example. Some Repair Cafés lay items out along a bench in order of when they arrive with owners' name next to each one, so that when a mender is free, they can pick the next item in line and call out their name. If it is an item they don't have the know-how or skills to fix, then they take the next item that they can.
- Attendees can chat and take advantage of the refreshments while they wait.

TOP TIPS

WHAT MAKES A GOOD VENUE?

- Open and accessible to the community
- Located where there is passing footfall
- Good lighting/visibility
- Plenty of power sockets
- Has access to WIFI or good mobile internet
- Big enough space for several work areas
- Suitable refreshment/waiting area

- Once the item and attendee are matched with a repairer, they will be able to watch their item being fixed or even help where appropriate, picking up tips to give them new skills.
- Once an item has been fixed it if it is an electrical item it must be PAT tested to check it is safe to be taken away or swapped.
- Items that can't be fixed or have failed PAT testing should be returned to the owner to take away and recycle. Those items need to be labelled to say it failed its safety test and the owner should be told if it is not safe to be plugged in again.
- It is important to set a cut-off period for new registrations (e.g. during the last hour) so you don't get left with items you don't have enough time to fix at the end. You might also want to put a limit on the number of broken items each person can have fixed in one session.

7. Publicity

All the detailed and careful set up will have gone to waste if you don't get people through the doors with their items that need fixing, so well-planned publicity is a must. Strong social media engagement is essential these days so make sure some of your volunteers have skills in this area.

Consider which of the following publicity and advertising methods are most appropriate to your event:

- Check the CAG guide and handy checklist on how to promote your event in the How to Guides on the CAG website.
- Make use of free software like Canva to easily create eye-catching publicity images for all social media.
- Make a poster – CAG have poster templates that they can share with you.
- Create a Facebook page, and a Facebook event for each Repair Café event. CAG will also share your events on their website and Facebook page.
- Make some short video clips on a smart phone to recruit volunteers and post it on as many social channels as you can.
- Photos of repaired items and happy owners make great images for Instagram. Remember to get people's permission first.
- Promote your events by sharing some of the success stories from your previous Repair Cafés (or other local ones if it is your first event).
- Send a press release to local media – see the template in Appendix 4.



For further information contact Katy Mackenzie on 01392 881034 or Lucy Mottram on 01392 881190
Or see our Facebook Page @sustainablebradninch



- Advertise your Repair Café through www.repaircafe.org/en/visit/
- Share the fun of repair with other repairers at www.therestartproject.org/parties/
- Advertise in local charity shops. If you think you will have capacity, you could ask them to donate any broken items they receive to your event.
- Make a banner to hang outside the venue in the week before the event to attract passers-by. Make sure it is reusable, so use wording like 'Repair Café here this Saturday' rather than using specific dates.

8. Health & Safety

This section will tell you what you need to know about - and the things you must do - to keep volunteers and members of the public safe.

Insurance

Public and product liability insurance is currently provided for free by CAG to those community groups in CAG membership, if signing up before March 2024. After that, CAG groups can apply for a small grant to help cover the costs of insurance. If your CAG group wishes to use the CAG insurance or find out about grants, you must inform the CAG project staff. You must also submit a copy of your up-to-date risk assessment to the CAG team for approval at least a week before the event. If you decide not to use the CAG insurance, your own group will be responsible for seeking and maintaining alternative insurance to cover your activities.

The policy wording for the second-hand goods product liability states that “before the products leave your custody or control” the insured MUST:

- “Have any electrical appliance (other than a battery-operated appliance) inspected and tested by a suitably qualified person”. In terms of what counts as suitably qualified, the insurer states that: “We expect the insured to appoint a competent person to carry out repairs, but we do not apply conditions within this area”.
- “Ensure that each item of furniture or furnishings supplied free of charge is fit for purpose”.
- “Ensure that any other products are compliant with any current safety legislation or regulations”.
- “Retain all required records under such legislation or regulations for the required period provided this period is not less than 3 years”.

Risk assessments

It is essential to have an up-to-date risk assessment for your event. For a risk assessment template, contact the CAG team.

Health & Safety Guidelines

As well as the risk assessment, you may want to have a set of clear guidelines for volunteers to be aware of to keep safe. Ideally you should print out the guidelines and have

volunteers sign them to show they've read and understood them. Some basic guidelines can be found in Appendix 1.

More guidance can be found in the Health & Safety Executive's Safety in electrical testing resource: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/eis36.pdf>

9. Regulations

It is good practice to display or hand out a set of house rules to make attendees aware of how it all works and to manage their expectations. A sample of these can be found in Appendix 2. It is also a good idea to create a disclaimer explaining your liability and adherence to regulations, which can be displayed on the welcome desk. You may want to ask attendees to read and sign.

A template disclaimer can be found below:

Disclaimer:

This Repair Café is a community repair space not a repair service and our repairers are competent volunteers not professionals. Therefore:

- Attendees offering items to be repaired do so at their own risk and should back up any data beforehand.
- Repairers are entitled to refuse to repair certain objects due to safety.
- Repairers give no guarantee to be able to fix the item and are not responsible if repaired objects turn out not to work properly at home.
- The repairers and organisers of the Repair Café are not liable for any loss that may result from advice and instructions concerning repairs or resulting from work performed in the Repair Café.

Competition

It is important to be aware that there might be some criticism of Repair Cafés on the ground of them taking business away from local professional repairers. However, Repair Cafés have been shown to have quite different audiences, often those who would have thrown an item away rather than use a professional repairer due to the expense. The culture change that repair Cafés are trying to bring about, may also encourage more people to get items fixed rather than throwing them away, increasing business for these professionals.

Data protection

To ensure you are not breaching any data protection policies, ensure that you ask the attendee to restore any personal electronic or electrical equipment to its factory settings to wipe any personal data. If there is no access to the device to restore the factory settings, the data-bearing component should be destroyed to prevent unauthorised access to confidential data.

CE

CE Marking

The CE mark is a mandatory conformity mark for most electrical items sold within Europe, indicating that the item meets the relevant EU safety standards. Old or poor quality electrical and electronic items may not have CE markings or may have fake ones. Although there are no direct regulations about repairing, testing or reuse of second-hand items without the CE mark, the lack of a mark may help identify old, poor quality and dangerous items. You may choose not to accept items without these markings.

Returns

If you are selling items, as best practice, you could offer a returns policy of a given number of weeks and full refund. You would need to provide receipts including the make and model so that you can track it.

10. Monitoring & evaluation

Measuring your impact is a really important part of making sure your Repair Café is effective at reducing waste. For example, you could:

- Make sure you weigh items as they come in or use a list to find the average weights of items such as The Furniture Reuse Networks list: www.frn.org.uk/documents/FRN%202009%20Final%20average%20weights%20list.pdf
- Create a chart with columns to record: a) Item; b) Problem; c) Fixed? (Y/N); d) Repairer's name; and e) Comments. This can also serve as a waiting list at the event and a nice visual reminder to celebrate achievements at the end of the event!
- Use our handy spreadsheet to keep a track of your items. Please contact CAG for a copy so that you can record all your activities (not just at Repair Cafés) and then enter it into ResourceCIT software to be able to produce reports and calculate local authority and consumer cost savings and carbon emissions prevented from electrical repairs.
- Comments book in the café/waiting area.
- Use photos and video to capture a flavour of the event and the type of repairs made.
- Share your successes online and in local papers.



Appendix 1: Example - Health and safety briefing for volunteers

Guidance for volunteers - minimising risks Ashburton Repair Café

The Repair Café in Ashburton is insured by its membership of the Community Action Groups (CAG) network. If we needed to make an insurance claim we would need to demonstrate that we have taken all foreseeable measures to reduce any risks at the event. CAG have helped to develop a risk assessment for the event which will be updated and amended if necessary for future events. There is no need to give all volunteers a full copy of this but it is available on request. All volunteers should sign this copy to show that they have read and understood it. The key points are summarised below. Please familiarise yourself with them. Happy reading!

General points

- First aid kit will be carried to attend to any injuries. Medical advice will be sought if necessary.
- Check for obstructions of open floor space and walkways and clear any trip hazards.
- Take care to minimise the distance between sockets and electrical equipment.
- Ensure that any cables are properly enclosed and secured (e.g. taped to the floor).
- Spillages or wet floors should be blocked off and cleaned up immediately.
- Try and reduce the need for manual handling of large/heavy/awkward items. If necessary, use a trolley, ask someone stronger or move as a team. Some guidance on safe manual handling can be found here: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/manual.htm>.
- Avoid sandals/open-toed shoes if moving equipment.
- Children are very welcome at the event - they need to be accompanied by an adult.
- Volunteers should ensure that they or other members of the public are never left alone with an unaccompanied child or vulnerable adult.

Food handling

- People tasked with food preparation must be aware of basic food safety principles (such as washing their hands, checking products for freshness, washing products, tying back hair, etc.).
- Food and ingredients should be clearly marked so everyone is aware of potential allergens.
- Care is taken when making or serving hot drinks.

Electrical Repairs

- All high voltage electrical items, under EU law, must be tested by someone who is Portable Appliance Test (PAT) trained. Visual checks that the items are in a proper state of repair will also be done, e.g. checking for loose wires/cracked casing. Battery powered items do not need to be PAT tested.
- PAT testing should only be performed by properly trained people who hold a certificate in PAT testing.
- PAT testing equipment should be regularly maintained and checked before use for any damage.

General Repairs

- Inspect items for damage that could result in injury or harm when they are first brought in and remove them if damage cannot be fixed, e.g. item with rough or sharp edges or faulty brakes on bicycle. Members of the public to be warned verbally or by a clear sign that they need to also inspect items before taking them off the premises.
- Protective equipment such as gloves should be worn where necessary.
- Ensure that all tools and equipment are kept on a table rather than on floors, so they are out of walkways or doors when not in use.

Bike Repairs

- Tools should only be used by, or under the supervision of, a trained mechanic or responsible adult.
- Those responsible for the tools should ensure that the conditions of the tools are checked for damage before use.
- Protective equipment should be worn where necessary such as gloves, aprons or goggles. Participants advised to tie back hair or other pieces of clothing that might become trapped in equipment.
- Unless a qualified mechanic is present only basic repair activities are permitted – e.g. brake pad changing, gear indexing, puncture repair.

Appendix 2: Example - House rules


House rules Ashburton Repair Café

Sorry, but there do have to be some!

1. The work carried out in the Repair Cafe is performed free of charge by volunteers.
2. New materials used to affect a repair may be chargeable and must be paid for before the object is returned to you.
3. A voluntary donation for the skills of the repairer is greatly appreciated.
4. Neither the organisers of the Repair Cafe nor the repair volunteers are liable for any loss that may result from advice or instructions concerning repairs, for the loss of items handed over for repair, for consequential loss, or for any other kind of loss resulting from work performed in the Repair Café.
5. Visitors offering broken items for repair do so at their own risk.
6. Experts making repairs offer no guarantee for the repairs carried out with their help and are not liable if objects that are repaired in the Repair Cafe turn out not to work properly at home.
7. Repair experts are entitled to refuse to repair objects.
8. Only one broken item will be repaired in one instance: anyone who brings more than one item will need to start at the back of the queue again, so as to ensure that as many people get help as possible.
9. The safety of items repaired offsite is no longer the responsibility of the Repair Café.
10. By signing this form, you are confirming that you consent to the Ashburton Repair Café holding and processing your personal data for the purpose of keeping you informed of news, events and activities related to the Repair Café.

Signed _____ Date _____

Appendix 3: Example – Signing in form



Repair Café – registration form

Date: _____ **Name:** _____

Phone: _____ **Email:** _____

Please tick here that you have read, understood and accept the House Rules & Disclaimer overleaf.

Please tick here if you're happy for us to take photographs/video at the Repair Café to be used for Repair Café/CAG Devon publicity only.

Item brought in for repair:

Electrical Items:	Household items:
<input type="checkbox"/> Laptop	<input type="checkbox"/> Chair
<input type="checkbox"/> Vacuum Cleaner	<input type="checkbox"/> Jewellery
<input type="checkbox"/> Radio	<input type="checkbox"/> Watch
<input type="checkbox"/> Electric sewing machine	<input type="checkbox"/> Clock
<input type="checkbox"/> Lamps/light fittings	<input type="checkbox"/> Other Household (costing >£50 to replace)
<input type="checkbox"/> Other electrical (costing >£50 to replace)	<input type="checkbox"/> Other Household (costing <£50 to replace)
<input type="checkbox"/> Other electrical (costing <£50 to replace)	

Other items:

clothes/textiles bike tools/knives sharpened

What is the problem with the item?

Repair Item

number allocated:

Outcome:

Repair completed Repair not possible Parts required Taken away for repair

Signature of mender: _____

Name of Mender: _____

NB: Electrical Safety. If any 240v circuits are disturbed by our actions, a PAT test is required.

PAT TEST result: PASS/FAIL Tester: _____ **Labelled:** Y/N

updated 04/22

Appendix 4: Example – Press release template

Press Release

[Date here]

For immediate release

“Fix it, swap it, don’t throw it away!” – *[your CAG name]* announce Repair Café(s)

[Your CAG name] is running an innovative new event called a Repair Café in *[your location]* to tackle the growing issue of electronic waste and change the way we view normal household items like toasters and radios.

A Repair Cafe *[and/or swap shop]* will be happening on *[date]* at *[venue]*. It will match people bringing along broken electricals and electronics *[and other things as applicable]*.with skilled people who like fixing things.

[your CAG name] have been assembling a team of enthusiastic volunteers who have expertise in fixing electrical items *[and other things as applicable]*. The focus of the event is on skill-sharing and building community as, rather than throwing items in the bin, attendees will be invited to learn how to fix their item alongside the volunteer repairers.

There will also be *[list any other activities or repairing facilities here]*. Attendees will enjoy a relaxed social atmosphere with tea, coffee and cakes *[or other]* provided.

[Volunteer name] from *[your CAG name]* explains how this came about “*[insert your quote here about why your group is doing the repair cafe]*”.

[Name of representative, local councillor or other VIP] from *[insert partner organisation, local authority etc.]* said: “*[insert quote about local significance or why they support it]*”.

For enquires please contact: *[insert contact details]*

Notes to editor:

[Insert description of your CAG]

For more information please see: *[Insert website and any social media links]*

ENDS