Repair and Share Guide
Inside this guide

This guide includes the story of six repair and share projects to inspire you, as well as specific guidance on setting up your own organisation and marketing it. We begin with some top tips for success as well as linking to a host of useful resources for you to find out more at the end of the guide.

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The essentials

The first points walk you through the things to consider when you’re setting up your organisation. Everything from the legal structure, to partnerships, to funding. Secondly we focus on how to market your new project in order to get maximum visibility for what you’re doing in the community and get more people involved. And finally, for each example, we share some top tips from those who are already up and running with their own repair and sharing projects...
Setting up your organisation

There are some important things to consider when you’re setting up a repair or share project...

1. Clearly set out your philosophy and values so that everyone getting involved with the project understands your mission and vision. This is particularly important with partners you involve because, often, people have very different views as to why two organisations would work well together. At MAKlab and R:evolve Clothing the mission statements were shown clearly at the front of the shop, as well as on their websites and social media channels, for everyone to see.

2. Consider setting up as a business or charity so that you have an official legal entity and liability does not rest solely on you as an individual. One of the strengths of Bicester Green is that it has eight trustees, each of which is very involved in the wider community. Each trustee is also active with the project so this really shows in terms of the success they have seen. Edinburgh Tool Library went down the route of setting up as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) but you should look carefully at the financial and reporting requirements before going down that route, similarly if you’re considering the option of being a BCorps. It might be that setting up as a social enterprise alongside a charity partner (like Share Frome) would work better for you. Whichever route you choose, make sure you have a business mentality so that you are focused on your aims and objectives and regularly review how you’re doing against those.

3. Think about the right partnerships and collaborations for you. Share Frome is a good example here. They initially started talking with a different partner but this partner had so many trustees, each wanting to know lots of information, that it just slowed the whole process down. In the end, they partnered with a local not-for-profit music venue, which shares a similar philosophy and they were able to move things along more quickly.

4. Organise insurance and make sure that people attending, donating or borrowing from you have clear access to information about it. At the Farnham Repair Cafe and Share Frome, they make sure people have read the terms and have signed either a membership form or a waiver form each time they borrow or repair something. At the Restart Project, they want to maintain an inclusive space and avoid putting any barriers in people’s way so they include disclaimers on all online announcements and place them on each table in venues when hosting workshops. This will ensure you are covered under the insurance should anything go wrong. The cost will depend on the project size and scope, and is something to consider when you decide on your legal structure and partnerships, but you should expect to pay at least a few hundred pounds per year for insurance. As part of the insurance, you will also be required to carry out a health and safety risk assessment. Make sure you have a written assessment process for the lead volunteer to follow for each session and a process for gathering that information after each session has taken place.

5. Make sure you comply with any regulation associated with reuse and repair activities. This toolkit from Hampshire County Council provides some useful information on which regulations you need to be aware of:


6. Building a relationship with your local council(s), in particular the waste team, and with local groups is very important but shouldn’t be your only focus. They can help you find suitable venues – potentially even for free. Even though it isn’t a religious group, the Farnham Repair Cafe, has three hours each month in a church for free. The arrangement works for everyone because it brings more people into the church, who will often buy things from the cafe, as well as repairing their items, and reveals some of the eco-minded congregation too. There are also often some grants at town/parish council level that aren’t so bureaucratic. They may only be small amounts but could well be enough to pay for your insurance each year, allowing you to fundraise for other things.

7. Test out different models to see what works for you and what matches your vision. Many repair and sharing organisations want to encourage anyone who wants to get involved. Costs are kept low so that they aren’t prohibitive. A good way of running a repair cafe is suggesting that people donate something if they manage to repair their item successfully. But be careful if you are suggesting a specific amount as this may put some people off, particularly in more deprived areas. With around half of products being repaired within a two hour session, you could expect to get around £40-80 a session, which at least would cover most of the costs for the volunteers.

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6. Depending on your purpose, you may want to consider a specialist because it’s unlikely that you will be able to do everything. Perhaps with electronics you could choose a few items to focus on – such as washing machines or lamps. Items like TVs can be very difficult because there are so many different models and the electronics are very complex, meaning it could take hours to work out what is wrong with one item. Something more simple like a reading lamp can be repaired and upcycled in a much shorter time so overall, the item is likely to bring in far more revenue over the long term. It does depend on the people involved though, because some of your volunteers are motivated by the variety and serendipity of what they might be faced with next, so for them you don’t want to turn it into an assembly line.

9. As well as small funds from councils there are some other sources of funding that you could consider. Each application can take a significant amount of time to complete, and, if successful, you will need to factor in the time it will take to report back to each funder. On pages 6 and 7 you will find a table of some of the places we would recommend you look. As well as some of the environmental funds you might expect, we’ve also included a number of funds supporting more vulnerable groups, as many of the projects we have seen have as positive an impact on society as they do on the planet.
Funder Notes

School for Social Entrepreneurs - the-sse.org The School for Social Entrepreneurs (SSE) empowers people from all backgrounds to create positive social change. Its courses help individuals start, sustain, and scale social enterprises, charities and community projects. It helps people build confidence and gain practical business skills in technical areas like marketing and finance. For those who have been part of a course there are some potential funding opportunities.

WEEE Project Funding - weeefund.uk This was set up by the Joint Trade Associations Group (JTA) to communicate to Local Authorities in particular, about the availability of potential funding to support WEEE Improvement Projects. On 7 September 2015 The Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS) announced that £775k of funding was available to Local Authorities, to make applications against, for funds towards their local WEEE improvement projects. This is a combination of funds from: The WEEE Compliance Fee Fund administered by Mazars LLP (on behalf of JTAC); and The Distributor Take-Back Scheme (DTS) operated and administered by Valpak WEEE Retail Services.

Other parish, town, district or county council funds With increasing pressure on council budgets, some are seeing reuse as a commercial benefit. They can lease space to charities for reuse on council sites or set up their own project to make money from upcycling. Have a look at your local council website for more details of funding opportunities.

Crowdfunding crowdfunder.co.uk indiegogo.com kickstarter.com spacehive.com Crowdfunding could be a great way of reaching new audiences in the local community. Consider if you need to reach a particular target before money is donated, as this could mean you are left with nothing. Be specific about what each amount will go towards and offer rewards for those donating such as a VIP invite to the opening party. You can see an example from the South London Library of Things on Kickstarter here: kickstarter.com/projects/libraryofthings/library-of-things-bringing-borrowing-shops-to-the

Supermarkets Since October 2014, all retailers in Scotland have been required to charge a minimum of 5p for each new single-use carrier bag. It's worth approaching retailers with a presence in your area to see if there is a way to apply for funds as part of this initiative. You can find out more at: carrierbagchargescotland.org.uk

Marketing your products and services

For many setting up in this space, marketing can end up getting pushed aside slightly. Of course, the running of the project takes priority but a successful marketing strategy is essential in turning your start-up project into a long-term success. This is particularly important if you do not have a prime location on the high-street, as you’ll need to attract people in other ways.

1. Think about where to reach your audience. If, like Bicester Green, you’re upcycling furniture in a warehouse space on the edge of town, it can be difficult to reach the right audience in order to sell items at a premium price. One good way of doing this is trying to take some of the upcycled furniture to more up-market locations – this might be a market in a nearby town, a pop-up shop on a main shopping street or a country fair. Pop-ups can also be a great way of building up a following in different areas through word of mouth. On the other hand, if you’re working with a university, the repair workshops might not be very well attended because students don’t tend to have much stuff, whereas the swapping events might prove very popular. Always keep the audience in mind when planning activity.

2. Events are a great way of reaching new audiences and introducing them to what you’re doing. If you’re selling clothing then make a name for yourself, putting them on Facebook to reach a wider audience. These are held all the back of the boutique and people are encouraged to bring in their own items to be repaired or repaired by on the spot or swap it for something new in the shop. MAKLab also found the repair cafes have been a useful way of recruiting new members.

3. Think about merchandise that people can wear whether that’s badges showing the brand, or a tote bag or t-shirt. Having something that people can take with them when they become a member and use regularly will help to spread the word. You could even brand the upcycled furniture or clothing with a rubber stamp showing your brand. Remember that a good looking brand will add to the appeal of the service too.

There are also grants available from Zero Waste Scotland so do follow us on social media channels, sign up for our newsletter, and visit our website to keep up to date. Funding Central is also a great source of information: fundingcentral.org.uk
Focus some attention on social media as this can be a really good way to reach a similar audience to those you’ve already managed to attract. Once you’ve set up a Facebook Page, you could even set aside a small budget to target people on Facebook in the surrounding postcodes with an invitation to a clothes repair workshop. This is a great way to help people form new habits – once they have repaired one thing and gone through the process they’re more likely to repair again. And if that positive experience is recorded on social media they are even more likely to share that experience with other people too.

Top Tips

Collect data – if you are relying on grants and funding to keep your project going, then having data to show the impact that you’ve already had on the community and on the planet will be really important. Without that information, it will simply be too much of a gamble for many investors. Consider using a tool, such as Resource CIT, which can make this gathering of data much easier for everyone involved.

Let your volunteers be creative – they will have ideas of how to use materials that are going to waste so make sure you have a process to feed that into the project. At Bicester Green, one of the board members is focused on people – spending time talking to the volunteers each week. They then feed this back to make changes in the organisation where appropriate. For example, one volunteer suggested using tyre inner tubes to restring a seat.

Have a process to assess the cost-effectiveness of your activities – this comes back to what your mission is. If your primary goal is to re-engage people in the community through repairs, then selling items at a premium price might not be important. It’s more important to start changing people’s habits and get them to try out self-repair.

Match your volunteers to skills – it’s all about the people. Those who volunteer for you week after week will become your strongest advocates, so listen to what their skills are and help them develop. The more that you can support people in doing something they enjoy and feel good at, the more likely they are to speak positively about their experience. Sharing skills amongst volunteers is also a highly motivating way of attracting and retaining volunteers as they have space and encouragement to learn from each other.

Target your audience through marketing – build the brand personality to attract more of the same sorts of people to your project. If most of your customers are 35-45 year old women who drive a car and like fashion then try targeting that age group, gender and their interests on Facebook or through the materials and content you produce and see how effectively you can draw in more of the same crowd.

Insurance is a basic requirement – this is absolutely crucial before you get going, so think carefully about what insurance you need and what other information and agreements you need to have in place to make sure everyone is covered in the event of an accident.

7. Consider posting some videos on your website and social media channels, or even live-streaming some of your events. People often think that this can harm attendance but, in general, it helps to show people what they can expect and they are then more likely to attend in person. Even just a 30 second video on how to change a fuse could be something useful to give people a taster and highlight a common reason for electrical items being thrown out. If you’re feeling more ambitious, there are some great videos showing you how to upcycle lamps online – so why not try your own!

8. Think about collaborating with your local school or college. You could perhaps work with them on a fashion show or product repair event. Those interested in design, or social media and marketing, might also keen to volunteer with you to gain relevant experience and confidence.
Repairing things doesn’t half feel good

Over the years the price of electronics, furniture and clothes has plummeted, leading to a throw-away culture of use and dispose. What has happened to the culture of curiosity, of pulling things apart to see how they’re made? Repairing electronics, clothing and furniture has once again become all the rage in some communities so we went to see MAKLab in Glasgow, the R:evolve Clothing boutique (as part of LEAP) and Bicester Green in Oxfordshire to find out more about this switch to make do and mend.

MakLab

MakLab is an innovative Scottish charity focused on providing resources for people from all backgrounds, of all ages and all abilities to use physical making as a tool for social empowerment, regeneration, economic growth and social capital. As soon as you walk in the door of the MAKLab studio in Glasgow you can feel the brand all around you – even the door handles are adorned with the brand motif. It is a huge, open space with machines in every corner, the philosophy printed on the wall and a planar and a maker library of books from the British Council on how to make it things come apart for added creativity.

Founded in 2012, MAKLab now has spaces across Glasgow, Dumfries, Dundee and Wick, with Paisley, Stirling and Edinburgh in the pipeline. Richard Clifford is one of the founders and he tells us about setting up MAKLab as a response to poor education. “Our core ethos is to empower people through making. All of the team are designers – and as designers also create a lot of waste, we need to take responsibility for this.”

“Everything we’ve done was borne out of frustration. I was teaching architecture and students couldn’t put stuff together. It is starting to change with eco-building initiatives – people are starting to understand more but we’ve got ourselves into a big mess with design so we need to rethink.”

“If you’re looking to make a difference then I would say look at what frustrates you in the world and seek out a way to change it. That’s what we’re doing with MAKLab and being authentic about where you come from and why you’re trying to change something has taken us a long way – people really respond to that authenticity.”

Learning through doing

In the basement, there is an event space, complete with DJ decks to give it a real start-up feel, but they also have a transportable fleet of flight cases which means that events can pop-up anywhere.
The project is now self-sustaining through membership fees, commercial work, events and workshops. But if they want to keep expanding into new locations or new things, then they do need more funding. That’s where building a strong relationship with key funders is really important.

Attracting a crowd
The shop-front location really helps to attract different people into the space. MAKLab seems to attract every type of person – some will have some money to throw at a project and might want to try out the latest in 3D printing and laser cutting technology. Students might want to find inspiration to progress a career in the design sustainability space, whilst parents might be focused on repairing things for the house, but they don’t have the skills and knowledge without a little help.

The combination of traditional sewing and woodworkers skills with the new technology like metal powder coating is what really sets MAKLab apart and positions them as much more than a repair shop. But it’s also the wealth of experience they have across the team from dedicated people who are focused on social empowerment and equality. Richard emphasises that “getting the right team and advocate around you is really important so think about who can really help you achieve your aims and what you could achieve together.”

MAKLab has also started fitting out different premises for different focus areas so in Glasgow it has a main studio, including laser cutting, 3D printing, wood work and metal powder coating. But it also has a manufacturing premises located in two railway arches where they recondition furniture and have some space for storage. In this space, they can do things from repair for a house to supporting with the decommissioning of a Glasgow hospital where they will be rebuilding lockers and chairs to use in their own event space for 60-70 people. The repair side of things is often aesthetic so recoating a bike to give it a makeover will often be all that’s needed.

Social impact
MAKLab was set up as a social project – it’s about getting people to realise their impact through personal experience and helping to build skills and ultimately get people into work. One of the ambitious projects on the cards is teaching young people to build their own houses. It should cost £50,000 to build a two-bed eco-house and because Scotland has relaxed the rules around self-build, this could revolutionise how people think about making or repairing things. They will bring in broken items or ideas and, for as little as £78 for the year, can access all of the facilities as well as training and advice to make everything from materials, to construction, to packaging. It’s a real eye-opener in dealing with the waste that you create too.

The whole point of the space is supporting people, through volunteers and information, in making or repairing things. They will bring in broken items or ideas and, for as little as £78 for the year, can access all of the facilities as well as training and advice to make everything from materials, to construction, to packaging. It’s a real eye-opener in dealing with the waste that you create too.

Everything that you make and everything that you throw away is a product of our consumer culture. We're all involved in it one way or another. If you think about it, you only have to get off the housing ladder. The whole of the UK has relaxed the rules around self-build, this could revolutionise how people think about making or repairing things. They will bring in broken items or ideas and, for as little as £78 for the year, can access all of the facilities as well as training and advice to make everything from materials, to construction, to packaging. It’s a real eye-opener in dealing with the waste that you create too.

The tear-down workshops are also really popular where people can pull things apart, so people might want to find inspiration to progress a career in the design sustainability space, whilst parents might be focused on repairing things for the house, but they don’t have the skills and knowledge without a little help.

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Top tip from Richard: Try running a monthly repair cafe. MAKLab makes sure that this is a regular thing in every location so people start to get into the habit of attending. The sessions are also structured to make sure that people attending get value out of it too—they’re fun and engaging and you can be sure to walk away with something that is functioning or at least to have learnt some valuable skills. MAKLab is also experimenting with video links to the repair sessions so people can watch along and fix things live.

R:evolve Clothing

R:evolve Clothing is one of those places that has much more to it than first meets the eye. From the outside, with an old butcher’s bike pointing you to the front door, the shop looks like a high-end boutique, which wouldn’t be out of place on George Street in Edinburgh. Inside, the clothes are displayed using reclaimed wood and vintage furniture, put together by volunteers who were keen to put their DIY skills to good use. Old Singer sewing machines are used as decorations and the window display changes regularly to catch people’s eye.

But the story behind LEAP’s R:evolve Clothing project is far more down to earth. LEAP is an older people’s charity in South Lanarkshire, working since 1992 with anyone over the age of 50. These older people were saying that they didn’t see any outlet for them in the community and in many cases were feeling lonely and isolated. They also felt that there were skills they had learnt throughout their lifetime, like sewing and DIY, that younger generations are often just not being taught at home or in schools. Many of them remember having one pair of shoes and one good outfit to wear out. It’s now a completely different way of life and the desire to just consume more and more is something older people are concerned about.

Wendy Russell is the Project Manager at R:evolve Clothing, and she joined LEAP to set up the clothing project after completing a leadership course through the social enterprise academy. At the outset, she surveyed the local people on their attitudes to clothing and addressed all of the barriers they stated to set up R:evolve Clothing. It is the newest project from LEAP and it is something that is hugely successful in bringing together people from across different generations. It is also very focused on cutting CO2 emissions and reducing waste by focusing on repairing and skills sharing to mend clothes and textiles.
Wendy reports on each month to show the momentum of the project. Where they have travelled from and how much they usually spend on clothes in an average without discriminating. We also need people with good quality clothes so there is a real need for people of all incomes and social status to be a part of this.

R:evolve asks a lot of questions when people register – things like household income, where they have travelled from and how much they usually spend on clothes in an average wage.

The basic model is that people get points for the clothes they bring in – one point for one shop or a charity at a lower rate. I would say this is something where the building a close relationship with the Council will really help as they can help you explore other avenues and even use that power to free up space. We have ended up slightly raising funds to make the existing stores self-sustaining.

One of the biggest challenges was, and still is, space. “The two shops are bursting at the seams,” Wendy tells us. “But if we’re offered some good quality clothing from a retailer then we have to find a way to bring the stock in so we can keep expanding as well as raising funds to make the existing stores self-sustaining.”

The Council has also been really supportive in finding premises because we found that many owners of empty premises on the high-street just really don’t want them to stay empty as they don’t see them as a charity at a lower rate. I would say this is something where building a close relationship with the Council will really help as they can help you explore other avenues and even use that power to free up space. We have ended up slightly raising funds to make the existing stores self-sustaining.

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We're very lucky to have funding opportunities through the Scottish Government and will keep a very open eye for opportunities to expand. But we would want to make sure that, once a shop is up and running, the rent and running costs are low so they can sustain themselves,” says Wendy.

In terms of staff, they have one full time project manager as well as two part-time post holders so if you are really short-staffed in an area, they were really looking for support from employment to local women so it’s something that has real meaning here.

The regular Make & Mend workshops also help to emphasise the environmental impact of clothes and teach something as simple as sewing on a button in a upcycling a dress.

In the UK, we throw away around 350,000 tonnes of clothes every year and when we consider that it take seven gallons of water to produce one cotton t-shirt, isn’t it about time we thought differently about our clothes? People can drop in and either bring things in or get something from the shop. One of our volunteers will then take them through the shops and show them how to upcycle their piece of clothing,” says Wendy.

The workshops are an area were we are looking to expand, so we may charge for more detailed sessions, or even take this offer out to businesses in the area that are looking for an innovative team building activity.

One of the most popular events held so far was ‘Bling it on’ where a high street store gave the project its stock of formal dresses. The team publicised the special day and had notices of people wanting to come in and they raised over £3,500 in one day. Often this sort of overstock is just shredded in the textile industry as building a relationship to make use of this is a great way to raise extra money and awareness.

Build on the success

After the runaway success of the swap-shops and Make & Mend workshops, R:evolve Clothing is looking to secure funding to focus on a few more developments. One of the services they offer is formal wear lending. This means that if someone has a job interview or another formal event to attend, they can drop in and get an outfit and use the swap to produce the perfect look. They are also working with schools to put on ‘trashion’ shows and deliver awareness educating them on the effect clothes have on the environment.

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Top tip from Wendy: The damage is done when the clothes are on your back so we must try and prolong the life of the clothes by getting the community on board and finding innovative ways to share our already abundant resources.

Bicester Green

Embedding reuse and repair into a growth town

Bicester is one of the fastest growing towns in Europe with 13,000 new homes expected to be built as part of its garden city status. Simon Kenton, the project manager for Community Action Groups in Oxfordshire and Gavin Hull, Commercial Waste Reduction Officer at Oxford County Council, took the idea of Bicester Green to the Eco Bicester team at Cherwell District Council and secured £40,000 to start the project. This meant they could set up a place where reuse and repair could be more accessible to the general public. Three years later, they employ one person to manage the workshop, volunteers and marketing of the project with the aim of encouraging more reuse and repair in the town.

Social value as important as environmental and economic value

The volunteers don’t always have the skills they need as it’s all about upskilling. In fact the Bicester Green motto is ‘skills, sustainability and second-hand stuff’ and its aim is to reduce waste, to reduce hardship, and to reduce isolation. Azul is on the Board of Trustees and looks after volunteer wellbeing and HR, coming in once a week to see the team and find out any needs to the board. She’s a Bicester resident and works with disadvantaged people as part of Oxford City Council’s community team. She has been involved from the beginning, having spotted a gap in terms of a place where people could reuse and repair things in Bicester.

There are nine people on the board of trustees and they nominate people when there is a lack of resource or skill amongst them. For example, they’ve recently had someone take on the treasury role with accounting skills as this was a gap. Each board member commits 10 hours a month plus the board meeting.

Azul is really passionate about the impact the project is having on people. She says, “at first it was about diverting waste but, more and more, it’s about the people and the skills-sharing. We really feel like the project is reducing the waste of people as well as resources. There is the potential for them to be so much more.”
Many of the electrical items are put aside at the local Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) – and usually just need a clean, a wire or fuse fixing, then PAT testing.

Clive is a volunteer who looks after bike repairs. He started at Bicester Green in July 2014 and does a couple of half days a week. Clive was an engineer all of his working life and now he looks after the bikes with a couple of others, sharing skills between themselves.

A big problem is getting a higher price for second-hand bikes, because you can get them so cheaply now. They don't seem to have the demand or the demographic coming in to buy the higher-end bikes at a higher price. Safety is really important so the minimum they will do is check the bikes are roadworthy. But they have to balance the safety and cleanliness with spending too much time working on them so it just isn't worth the time if they won't get much extra money for them.

Alex came to Bicester Green from the local job club, which helps people to find training or work. He's been volunteering for 18 months, focusing on furniture repair, and is gaining plenty of skills and confidence. He says, "It is very satisfying when you fix something or give it a new coat of paint and then see it being bought.

There's one volunteer who loves to take the staples out of furniture ready for reupholstering. Whatever it is, we can help them to build confidence and a social network through their work.

"People are starting to recognise that they can upcycle with us," says Emma who runs the project. "We have some really popular shabby-chic workshops and ladies DIY classes that are going really well. One of the trustees is focussing on communications so Bicester Green is using the marketing tools on Facebook to target people for workshops. This generally fills up the class pretty quickly.

Volunteers are also always looking at ways to minimise waste across the teams. For example, some of the used tyre inner tubes have been used to create a new mesh for a chair and they send some of the old tyres to a company that makes them into children's play areas. "The more creative uses we can find, the more we can divert from landfill," says Emma.

The pros and cons of property

Lewis works for the district council on the sustainability team. He's been a director at Brookes University) and tap into the other newsletters in the area that might be happy to share information regularly.

"Bicester isn't like Oxford but affluence is coming to Bicester," Lewis says. "There's a new station with trains direct to London and with all the new properties being built we have to question how long we'll be able to afford to stay at this site."

Bicester Green is using the marketing tools on Facebook to target people for workshops.

"We are very lucky that we have a great relationship with the HWRC, which really helps in terms of getting materials in," says Lewis. "Oxfordshire is a very affluent county so the donations are often really good quality.

Sharing a space with the charity warehouse Sobell House is also a real benefit because many people stumble across Bicester Green from there. They go to Sobell but end up buying from Bicester Green instead. Sobell doesn't do any upcycling so work for both parties. They secured that space because Sobell needed a training element to secure planning permission.

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Having a real mix of influential people on the board really does help. For example, one of the board is the general manager of the main supermarket in the town centre. It owns quite a few of the shop units in the town so offered one to Bicester Green for a six-week pop-up shop in the run-up to Christmas.

Bicester Green is focusing a lot of its time on funding applications because even though Bicester Green generates around 40% of revenue from sales, it is still reliant on grant funding to keep going. This was ok at the start-up stage but many funds don't seem to want to support running costs.

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Bicester Green is using the marketing tools on Facebook to target people for workshops.
Top tip from Emma: Everything takes time so stake and marketing often slip but getting the word out is a really important part of what you’re doing. Try and get a volunteer in to dedicate some time to this, perhaps even approaching people at a local college or university (e.g. Oxford Brookes University) and tap into the other newsletters in the area that might be happy to share information regularly.

Discover almost anything in a Library of Things

Most people are familiar with libraries full of books, even if only in the depths of their childhood memories. And, in that context, the notion of borrowing something and giving it back is completely normal. But, why, when we use some things so infrequently, do we feel the need to ‘own’ everything? A library of things can open up a world of possibilities without people having to store, pay for and maintain a myriad of tools and equipment. We found out more about the sharing phenomena from BELS toy library in Newcastle, Shire Fringe’s general Library of Things and the quirky Edinburgh Tool Library.
Eight people + six weeks + £7,000 = Share Frome

What’s interesting about Share Frome is that it was set up incredibly quickly with minimal resource so it really shows that, with the right people and determination, anyone can give it a go.

It helps that Frome is a wonderfully creative and progressive town with a really strong sense of community and its own independent newspaper to boot. Anna Francis started working at the town council as its Sustainability Officer around two years ago. It’s an independent town council and she is the only Sustainability Officer at town council level across the country, in fact very few city or county councils have anyone performing that role. In Frome, there is a real sense of responsibility for the town and the council chooses to do far more than just the typical street scene and parks. It was Anna’s interest in reuse and her involvement with Sustainable Frome which was the trigger to get the project started.

The idea for SHARE was born in early 2015, as a partnership between Frome Town Council, social enterprise Edventure, Sustainable Frome and The Cheese and Grain, the local charitable music and events venue. A group of eight young people were part of specialist training in community entrepreneurship, run by Edventure and they set up the shop with funding from the town council and all of the items were donated or lent by people in the town. The local community also contributed in the form of advice, expertise, time, money, opinions and enthusiasm!

Donate time, money and skills

Over 350 people have joined Share Frome with membership options starting as a yearly donation of £1-£10 where you donate between £1 and £4 for a week to borrow items as and when you need them; right up to ‘SHARE Extraordinaire’ for a £10 monthly donation, which means that you have unlimited borrowing, as well as a membership pack, free tea and coffee in the shop and free entry to any of the events.

All members have to provide ID and they sign an agreement to say that they are lending the item at their own risk. This is really important for insurance purposes so think about what agreements you need people to sign when they are volunteering or donating to make sure you and they are both covered. Building in an ongoing donation option is crucial to the longevity of the project and the more people who get involved through borrowing things or donating items or their time, the more they build a habit and affinity with the project.

Another way the team has tried to build this affinity is by asking everyone who donates an item to have their picture taken and to write a short explanation of its history or why they are lending it out. These picture cards are positioned around the shop and it often acts as a conversation starter in town, as people know the people they are borrowing things from!

As well as donating money and things, people are also encouraged to donate time. Keith is one of the regular volunteers. He’s a full time artist but spends his days a week at Share Frome to escape. Doug is a dab hand with DIY so will help with any shelves that need putting up.

They also have a team of retired women who come to give back to the community and it really does become a big part of the volunteers’ lives. Anna often hears things like ‘Share Shop changed my life – I get to meet so many different people and feel like I’m contributing to the town.’

It shows that the project isn’t just about reducing waste, it’s also about giving people a sense of pride and purpose. Anna talks about Share Frome being an antidote to austerity – something that is incredibly important in the current economic times.

Engage the community

At the moment they don’t collect much information about their members but with two new shop managers in place the team is now working on getting people to confirm what categories they are interested in so they can keep people updated on the things that are of interest to them, whether that be children’s toys, tools, or gardening or cooking equipment.

Share Frome also has an online database running on myturn software. This means that people can look at the stock online and then contact the shop by phone, email, or on social media to reserve it and organise to come and pick it up.

The co-ordinators are continually working to update the system with new items and add tags and descriptions to help people find the right items for what they need.

Another way they are finding they can reach the community is through skills sharing. Where there is a real skills gap they try run workshops and skills sessions to help people learn how to use the equipment and there’s a board on the wall of the shop where people can ask for help or offer their services. For example, someone is asking for help to learn how to use their sewing machine properly.
Events form an important part of the business model, with everything from DIY sessions for women, to a sharing festival where the DIY doctor was on hand to help and advise people. It can be difficult to get volunteers with the right skills so they will be focusing on finding people with experience to help with workshops on sewing and electrical repair to keep expanding this area.

Another regular event they run is a jumble session. Because the shop is constantly being offered items to include in the inventory, when they find that items aren’t popular and are taking up valuable space, then they would go into a jumble session where people are able to take these items for a small donation. This is the sort of thing that they did at the Independent market that runs on the first Sunday of each month and can also help to bring in more revenue for the shop.

**Location, Location, Location**

The most important thing is acquiring a shop in a good location. Avire is the organisation that helped Share Frome find its shop and it is a department that focuses on the charitable rental sector so is worth looking at. There are also other companies like The Ethical Property Company that could help.

In this case the shop is owned by Lloyd Bank but there was no demand for the property at full market rate so they were happy to have it occupied by a good cause at a lower price. Landlords don’t have to pay business rates on their shop if it is occupied by a charity but they are on an empty property so many are open to taking minimal or even no rent for a good cause because they have someone maintaining the space and paying the bills at least. For Share Frome it is on a two year contract with a one month notice period but Avire says that around 80% of charities they place are still in the property at the end of the two years.

**Project setup**

The initial funding ran from May 2015 to January 2016 and they now have some more funding from the WEEE diversion fund. To support this, they are running repair cafes to support the shop and reduce WEEE to landfill.

People going along to the repair cafes are asked to pay what they can because they don’t expect anyone to not be able to get because of cost. As a social enterprise, they are also very careful with the way they spend everything on their marketing materials — always talking about donations rather than fees or a service. They also recognise other types of contributions, such as time or food and drink, as these are equally valuable for the project.

More recently, they’ve also secured some Housing Association funding to engage with people and to go into the community centres on the local Aster Housing Association sites.

**Other important partners** are the local charity shops, which in this case helped with volunteer recruitment and gave advice around shop management. As part of the recent funding, Share Frome has contributed to diverting two tonnes of WEEE before the end of the year.

They’re exploring partnerships with charity shops on this as well as many of them don’t accept electrical items. Share Frome managers are qualified PAT testers and so could help local charity shops to divert their electrical waste from landfill.

**Impact measurement** will include all of the borrowed electrical items and those items which are fixed, because effectively it’s avoiding the need to buy them. It’s always a success if you’re able to see in a year that you’ve reduced WEEE and repurposed so many of those items. So they’re looking at direct and indirect effects. They are using standard average weights of items provided by the Somerset Waste Partnership to measure this.

Share Frome has also put together a toolkit to help you get started and this includes things like forms and legal documents that you could use to get started. They also offer guided tours and consultancy.

You can find it online at: edventurefrome.org/consultancy/set-up-share-a-library-of-things-in-your-community/

**Table: Item Cost per month**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Cost per month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>764</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and drink</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* A basic breakdown of the costs

Anna suggests, “ask to get a water meter installed if there isn’t one already — we were charged £800 for water for the first six months as it was assumed to be an average business (but only has two Sink and a toilet!).

**Partnership working**

An important part of the process is the good connections in the town and she recommends “if you’re not a charity person then you should look to link with one to set up. This is what Share Frome did and it meant we could rent the shop for peppercorn rent as only charities get business rate exemptions.”

“Some charity partners might need too much certainty and have you jumping through many hoops to get their full team in support. So it can often be more effective to work with a smaller, more nimble partner. We approached Cheese & Grain, which is a music venue in the town but is also a charity. The team man-work together to promote Share Frome as well as promoting the music venue in the shop. Another option is to set up as a charity yourself but this would take a little more time.”
Top tip from Anna: Share Farm was set up as part of the Edventure apprentice scheme but don’t be put off if you don’t have a similar programme in your area. You only need a small budget to get started and could set up as a co-operative or in someone’s garage as long as it was well promoted and people knew where to find you. Her biggest piece of advice is to copy what others are doing that is working well. There is no need to reinvent the wheel just adjust it for your local area.

BELS and Toy Library

Easing the cost of parenting

The Baby Equipment Loan Service and Toy Library (BELS & TL) in Howdon, North Tyneside on the outskirts of Newcastle has been operating since 1985. The project loans, at a minimal cost, essential baby and safety equipment to local families on low-income or benefits. In 2003, it established a Toy Library for children from newborn to 15 years old.

The project grew from the Rosehill Young Women’s Project when a Project Worker recognised there was a need in the local area. In the beginning most of the equipment was second hand and had been donated to the project. The items were then cleaned and safety checked to get them ready for reusers. Over time, funding was raised from a variety of sources that enabled BELS to purchase some new equipment. Items such as pushchairs, seats, high-chairs and baby monitors are provided on a six or 12 month loan, with the option to extend if needed. When items are returned, sometimes little life is left in them. If the team believe there is any inherent value retained, the items will be sold at a table-top-sale, or repaired (e.g. new wheels) and made available for a new customer.

More recently, the BELS has been extended to short-term hire. For example, grandparents can hire for a weekend or a week when their grandchildren come to visit. This is a great way for the organisation to raise some extra income and is a service available to anyone, not just those on low incomes.

As you’d expect, over the years there have been some changes in the types of items that can be loaned. Fire guards and stair gates used to be available to loan - but due to the nature of their being used to protect children and now subject to stringent safety regulations, these items are no longer loaned. Instead BELS now provides parents and carers in need with subsidised stair gates or fire guards to purchase, but not loan. BELS and the toy library have been in three different premises, moving to its current location in 2011. When selecting premises, space, proximity to the previous premises and to core membership, as well as cost were taken into account. Whilst the rent is not as cheap as some nearby shop fronts, the benefit of the current location is that all utilities and maintenance costs are included and it is extremely helpful to know in advance what the running outgoings will be.

The project is overseen by a volunteer management committee and staffed by two part-time project support workers. The treasurer oversees staff supervision and other trustees contribute whatever possible, through raising funds, supporting funding bids or managing the toy library when staff members are on annual leave.
Volunteers are warmly welcomed and have roles such as meeting new customers and attending staff meetings, choosing toys to buy, administration work, publicising the service and fundraising. The team are currently fundraising for a one-year part-time BELS project support worker to give this part of the project the attention it needs.

The Toy Library
In 2002 the toy library began as a volunteer led six month trial. A small amount of toys were purchased, but the popularity of the service and success in obtaining grant funding meant that project support workers could be employed. The toy library now has an impressive array of toys which means children can benefit from their parents being able to regularly change the toys they play with – enjoying the changes in stimulation this provides. The toy library is open on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays, including until 6.30pm on Tuesdays and Wednesdays which allows families to pop in after school.

Stock is purchased ad hoc when specific funding is obtained or there are sufficient funds to allow new toys to be purchased. The toy library has benefited from corporate free gifts, including a large amount of Lego from the Lego store, and toys from Tesco, John Lewis and Fenwicks department store. However these are one-off gifts and it could be worth investigating the possibility of regular donations or sponsorship from these corporations.

Regular interaction with a wide range of different organisations and professionals to promote the project within the community is invaluable for maintaining the project’s profile. With two part-time workers, this is often a challenge, but its importance should not be underestimated.

is managing a temporary pop-up shop in order to sell donations to raise funds and awareness of the library.

It is worth considering how the premises impacts on the ability to raise more income for the project. The BELS and toy library is located within a community centre which is closed on weekends. This restricts the activities the project can participate in. For example, the centre regularly has requests for parties to be held within the meeting room on Saturdays which cannot be accommodated. If such a party was allowed on weekends, the toy library could supply toys, for a small fee.

The premises may also impact on the size of the project. BELS & TL would like to grow but the shelves and cupboards are full within the Top Library and therefore there is a limit to how much the project could expand within its current premises.

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Top tip from Deb: Make the best of the people around you. The services that complement you, the people that have used your service in the past, they will be your strongest advocates so get them involved in spreading the news about your project.

Case study

The Edinburgh Tool Library

“I went to Toronto to visit friends in October 2013 and spent a day at the Toronto Tool Library. I could already see the environmental benefits but the social benefits really struck me on that visit. Lots of people have their own struggles in the Leith community so I just thought, if I can do something that will help them improve something in their own home or to get started in a job that might change their life, then I will. That’s why I set up The Edinburgh Tool Library.”
The practicalities of getting started

Chris got his inspiration from the repair and share scene in Toronto where a friend introduced him to the people at the Toronto Tool Library (http://torontoollibrary.com/). There is also a Toronto Repair Cafe (http://repaircafe.ca/) and Kitchen Library (http://thekitchenlibrary.ca/) making it a really vibrant place for repair and share.

“One of the big hurdles was setting up as a charity (charitably incorporated organisation) but this is also the space to pick things up and drop them off. “For the first year of the project, it’s a cheap option,” says Chris Hellawell, the founder of the first tool library in the UK. “But importantly it’s also something we preach – we’re telling people that we’re about maximising the effectiveness of objects. We hire the police box for four hours on a Saturday morning, but you might have someone selling jam there on a Friday or sharing campaign information on a Sunday. None of these organisations needed to make sure that I was protected personally, so I waited until we were officially constituted before accepting any donations.” The Edinburgh Tool Library is set up as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO). Chris spent some time with OSCR, the Scottish Charity Regulator, to lay out what a tool library is all about. Essentially he explained it as a library, but for tools - a place where people can go to learn, grow, escape and be a part of a community, not just access things.

Getting technical

Without a permanent space, it is really important to have a good website and, linked to that, the tools in place to manage your inventory and bookings. Chris uses myTurn software, which is free for charities and trusts. It means that people can reserve items online and see the whole range of tools that they have to lend. “Having this system makes the management of the tools so much easier. They’re also making a lot of changes so that it is more UK-friendly, which is great.”

Next steps

“While we prove that the model of an online library works, but because I always have the guys in Toronto in my mind I keep coming back to the idea that this should have wider social value,” explains Chris. “I want our library to help people who have had a tough ride or have done something a bit stupid and need a second chance.” The next move is to get a larger space for the library to maximise the use of the tools they have. They want to give members the space to use the tools there, enabling them to learn new skills from each other and from the volunteers.

Chris is already doing a lot of outreach work but this could also be brought in to the workshops. One recent project was with Dads Rock, where they did a session for young fathers who didn’t have much contact with their children. “I’m needed by my organisation, but I’m also needed by my community,” he explains. “I’m a trades person, and a local craftsman, to make balance bikes, which they could then give to the kids for Christmas. It is also a really good activity for fathers who don’t have much contact with their kids, and also for other fathers who don’t have much contact with their children. Chris worked with them, and the fathers who didn’t have much contact with their children.

An employment project is next. Chris wants to pair a young person who’s struggling to get a job with a volunteer mentor – someone who’s retired but wants to share their skills and life knowledge. Perhaps an ex-trades person - they often go from working in a very isolating and lonely environment to suddenly finding themselves at home, and are at risk of social isolation and loneliness.

Getting the right pro tool

Out of the headstarts

The Edinburgh Tool Library has calculated that in just one year it has saved two tonnes of carbon just associated with cordless drills – and they only make up 1% of the inventory. It is this sort of data that could be hugely compelling for future funders so do keep an eye out for tools like myTurn and ResourceCIT that could help you capture this.

Closing the loop

“Another element that we’re looking at expanding on is the data it helps us to collect. We’re already collecting certain baseline data when someone joins, things like how many hours they’ve spent there, and their income bracket. But there’s interest around building relationships. Chris has secured a few small pots of funding along the way and they have some money coming in from membership fees, but it’s their local relationships that really matter. Farming relationships – with people who are living in the Leith area, with local neighbourhood partners and community groups, and with councillors and MSPs that can see the real value in what the library is delivering - is key to securing a long-term for the project.

Bringing the tool library model to the UK

The idea of a tool library can be very flexible. For The Edinburgh Tool Library, it means everyone knows the venue, and they can afford a permanent space but we all benefit from having a highly visible location that everyone knows.”

The idea of a tool library is used as an example of a successful business and there are many benefits to start-ups. The programme teaches the students about building relationships. Chris has secured a few small pots of funding along the way and they have some money coming in from membership fees, but it’s their local relationships that really matter. Farming relationships – with people who are living in the Leith area, with local neighbourhood partners and community groups, and with councillors and MSPs that can see the real value in what the library is delivering - is key to securing a long-term for the project.

Weekend workshops

Chris thinks that a weekend workshop is something that everyone should try.
Top tip from Chris: Get your timeline sorted and then multiply it by three – things always take longer than you think they will! As the lead on the project you will also need to put in a substantial amount of time so be prepared to give it your all.

Useful resources

More inspiration...

There are some fantastic resources out there to help you get started on your repair and reuse journey. In particular, we would recommend taking a look at the following information from our contributors in more detail.

Professor Martin Charter
Martin started working on sustainability issues in the late 80s and attended The Rio Earth Summit in 1992. He has been running The Centre for Sustainable Design for over twenty years and hosted the first workshops on WEEE in 1996. Martin is a recipient of a World Green Design Contribution Award for his personal contribution to the development of sustainable design worldwide. He also runs an annual conference on sustainable innovation – where he is starting to see more interest in social aspects as well as economic and environmental benefits of innovation. Martin is a former Visiting Professor in Sustainable Product Design and now Professor of Innovation and Sustainability at University for the Creative Arts. Martin he a member of BSI Circular Economy steering board and was past chairman of ISO 14064 (eco-design management systems) and previous UK expert to both ISO and BSI groups on ISO TR 14062 (eco-design). Martin is the (co)author and (co)editor of various publications, notable Eco-Innovate (a guide for SMEs on eco-innovation) which has had over 50,000 downloads. Martin also launched the Farnham Repair Cafe and conducted work with Hampshire County Council on reuse projects across the county with WRAP funding. As part of his work in Hampshire, Martin has helped to put together a repair and share toolkit, which includes lots of information on common things to repair: it also lists some key regulations and permits that you should be aware of when setting up a repair centre. You can download the full toolkit from point 8 of the ‘Love your home for less’ page: hants.gov.uk/smartliving/inthehome

Janet Gunter
Janet is the Co-founder of the Restart Project: a London-based social enterprise that encourages and empowers people to use their electronic equipment longer, by sharing repair and maintenance skills. Janet leads on communications strategy and implementation as well as community building in this small, award-winning social enterprise. Spearheading strategy to scale social and environmental impact as well as leading on monitoring and evaluation. The project achieved major media attention including from BBC, AFP, Bloomberg, and The Telegraph. You can find out more about the Restart Project, including a guide on how to host your own restart party at: therestartproject.org

Lucy Chamberlin
Lucy is Head of Programme for the RSA’s Great Recovery project. She has a background in research, marketing and environmental technology and previously worked as a Business Analyst at the Ellen MacArthur Foundation. Whilst at the RSA, she led workshops and gave presentations to a wide range of audiences, expanded the Great Recovery’s network of participants and collaborators and led on two Design Residencies involving waste management entities, local authorities, reuse networks, manufacturers and professional designers culminating in a new report and film to be broadcast on national TV.

The RSA has recently published a report on reclaiming power in the sharing economy: https://www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/reports/fair-share-reclaiming-power-in-the-sharing-economy
Other useful sources and tools

OSCR – Scottish Charity Regulator
If you’re considering setting up as a charity there is a wealth of information on the OSCR website to help you decide the structure that is best for you.

MyTurn
A tool to help you organise, optimise resources by making it easy to rent, track and share goods and services. This is used by Share Frame and Edinburgh Tool Library as well as many repair and share centres around the world.

Eventbrite
An online tool to manage ticket sales or registrations for your events. It is free for free events with a small charge on paid tickets, with a reduced rate for non-profits.

Meetup
A good place to recruit tech volunteers and to get people to come along to regular sessions and get involved with your project as a volunteer.

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About Zero Waste Scotland

We’re on a mission to create a circular economy.

Zero Waste Scotland exists to create a society where resources are valued and nothing is wasted. Our goal is to help Scotland realise the economic, environmental and social benefits of making best use of the world’s limited natural resources.

That means reducing energy generation, reducing waste and reducing water use. It means recycling, reusing, repairing and remanufacturing as much as we can.

It means developing a circular economy where we rethink linear business models of production, consumption and disposal so that we keep materials in use for as long as possible and then turn them into new, high-quality goods.

We are funded to support delivery of the Scottish Government’s circular economy strategy and the EU’s 2020 growth strategy.

Find out more at zerowastescotland.org.uk

Join us on social media to keep up to date with more inspiring projects:

@ZeroWasteScot        zerowastescotland        zero-waste-scotland

Thanks

With thanks to all of the contributors to this guide. In particular to MAKLab, R:evolve Clothing, Booster Green, SHARE: A Library of Things, BELS & Tips Library and Edinburgh Tool Library for sharing your story, your inspiration and the lessons you’ve learned along the way.

We would also like to thank our peers in the industry: Janet Gunter, Martin Charter, Lucy Chamberlin, and Simon Kenton. They have provided valuable insight and information to help others succeed in repair and share.

This guide was created for Zero Waste Scotland by Resource Futures, a non-profit distributing sustainability business, focused on minimising the impact of consumption and instigating positive change.