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Community Building and Waste Prevention in Collaborative Consumption Practices Related to Children: The Lessons from the Toy & Gift Swap Shops in Greater London.

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Due to the current climate emergency, the study and design of more sustainable ways of living is deemed necessary. The United Nations recently called for people to share and borrow more, and to foster human relations by doing so. Collaborative ways of consuming products have the potential to reduce household waste and strengthen community ties, which make them a promising response to current unsustainable consumption habits. This paper looks at the Toy & Gift Swap Shop example, a series of events that ran in community centres in Greater London, where families could swap unwanted items for children, such as toys, books or clothes. The aim of the study is to explore the potential for swapping events as a more sustainable way of consuming children-related products, so as to understand people's motivation and their interests. The data was collected through a combination of self-completion surveys and participant observation. According to people's responses, most participants showed an interest in reducing waste but based on observation and ad-hoc interviews, saving money to consume more was an unconscious motivation. The paper finishes with suggestions about how to promote more participation and reuse to meaningfully prevent waste. First of all, the interventions designed need to encourage a radical change in consumer culture. Second, there is a need to extend the availability and range of services. This will increase opportunities to exchange items and encourage broader user participation. In conclusion, further research needs to be conducted to understand how much these practices may in fact effectively contribute to sustainability.