



UK Repair Café Conference

Notes from Roundtable Discussions: Key Issues and Product Repair

9th June 2023

UCA Farnham

Key Issues

Community Engagement

- Charity groups: cross pollination with other group through sharing on Facebook
- Engage with urban projects and environment alliances
- Farmers market: piggyback on audiences e.g. market stalls
- Climate action networks e.g. some also focus on zero waste
- Roving repair cafes e.g. rotating in different places in larger towns/cities
- Church fetes and libraries
- Men sheds, community fridges, furniture reuse and food banks
- Ethnic groups

Data Management

- Repair data is really important
- Most cafes use paper to record repair data
- Two types of data e.g. product owner (e.g. GDPR) and repair activity data
- Data retention e.g. how long do you hold data on repairers and product owner
- Data input is primarily manual e.g. pen and paper
- Some starting to use digital data capture e.g. Lover/Aldershot/Haslemere
- Some use advance booking but this may not suit all repairers/repair cafes
- Use of Google Sheets on google, one drive, I-cloud to load data online
- Some use Eventbrite for customer bookings

Engagement of Youth

- Family members: mother/father accompanying a young person as a volunteer is a 'win win'
- Safeguarding policy: create a policy including, for example, how to handle confidential issues, ensuring that a young people below 18 is never ever working alone with an adult and how manage DBS requirements/checks
- Insurance: if decide to engage young people discuss beforehand with insurers
- Apprenticeship: consider running an apprenticeship for young people learning from/working alongside a more experienced fixer

- Schools and colleges: connect with school community engagement officers rather than a hard-pressed teacher or go to Parent Training Associations (PTA)
- Local youth groups: approach organisers of Duke of Edinburgh/scouts/youth clubs as they may have recycling/repair badges that can be completed
- Workshops: organise specific fixing workshops for video game controllers/toys/bikes/skateboards/sports gear
- Bikes: contact bike hubs or teach young people how to service bikes.
- Creative projects: engage young people to create posters, make short videos and promote the repair café via social media.
- Upcycling: create bird boxes/bug hotels using waste or recycled wood as projects; upcycle pre-loved clothes into more fashionable items

Insurance

- Standardised policy: it's really difficult for new groups to know what questions to ask insurers, what level of cover they need, and what types of cover they need (eg product, public, employers liability)
- Economies of scale: if there was a standardised policy (across the UK), prices could be potentially drive down through economies of scale
- Insurance companies: limited understanding of what repair café are and do which means new groups have to go through the same conversations again and again
- Premiums: vary generally between £50-£300+
- Venues insurance: what happens if use multiple venues?
- Competence: some insurers insist that volunteers are qualified, others allow self-selection over what is deemed to be 'competent'
- PAT testing: requirements and qualifications vary
- Duty of care: repair cafés have a duty of care to volunteers
- Variation: the types of products that cover varies eg some won't allow bikes, white goods, microwaves, safety equipment, etc
- Local authorities: might help with insurance policies in the short-term?
- Homework: some policies cover taking repairs home to work on and some don't
- Age: differences in the age of volunteers vary - some insurers state 16 years old as the minimum age and others state 18 years old (note: there are safeguarding issues related to those who up to 18 years old)
- Product liability: some insurers deem product liability to be necessary to cover the potential risk of an item causing damage to a person/property once it has left the repair cafe venue; whilst others deem it not necessary as repair cafes have not manufactured or sold items

Marketing

- Local newspapers
- Stalls at local events e.g. local farmers markets
- Word of mouth
- University student unions and student environmental groups
- Local environmental groups
- Social media (Facebook and Instagram) – different demographics
- Church newsletters
- WhatsApp groups

- Notice boards at post offices, local charities, stores, etc
- Engagement with local councils (at community recycling and landfill sites), posters on local notice boards.
- Community networks and websites
- Need marketing skills e.g. social media.

Recruitment of Repairers

- Social media announcements: relevant forums, Facebook, Next door, ask people to share
- Open meeting of interested people
- Use volunteering centre/services
- Fliers/newsletters door-to-door
- Advertise in newspapers/community newsletters
- Local events where people meet, stalls, etc
- Possibly pay for training e.g. PAT testing
- Partner with other projects with appropriate skills
- Word-of-mouth with existing repairers
- Talk to neighbouring repair cafes (avoid clashes)
- Posters in local businesses
- Company/local employer volunteer days
- Visit other groups, networks e.g. Hack(er)spaces, Women Institute (WI), churches, etc
- Develop mailing list (via Mailchimp) asking for volunteers
- Lots of skilled people in repair cafes network
- Discuss with people who walk-in with skills/experience

Product Issues

Furniture

- Many repair cafes don't offer furniture repair
- Size of furniture is a key issue
- Time to repair is an issue
- Furniture is more suited to repair at home
- Most common items: small furniture, chairs, stools, coffee tables
- Upholstery: lots of requests, where do you draw the line between repair and upcycling?
- Establish affiliations with local community, furniture projects
- Educational aspect of repair cafes very relevant to furniture

Bicycles

- "Repair rate is normally 100%"
- Competing with Bike shops
- Patchy experience: needs marketing.
- Puncture education: when things go wrong with a bike, people are not at the repair café!
- Bike health check list for repairers
- Some repair cafes have schemes to repair and pass on bikes to others

Electrical

- Lithium batteries: recycle safely at battery point
- Spot welding (needed for Li-Ion battery repairs) - specialist skill / equipment
- PAT on arrival/departure – advisory only, no label
- Battery tester & safety
- Useful equipment:
 - Air line or bike track pump to blow battery contacts/keyboards
 - Variac: useful for old radio/audio/motors
 - Isolating transformers: useful, but heavy & may give false security: use with caution!

IT/Smart Devices

- Large value and high price
- Difficult to repair and take apart
- Takes a long time
- Need specialist tools
- Access to spare parts
- Training: iFixit; YouTube; skill share
- Cleaning IT
- Make old laptops usable
- Data issues: take off data - ensure there is a backup.
- Older VCRs (deteriorating components)
- Some repair cafés take no smart devices
- Smart coffee machines starting to be seen in some repair cafes

3D Printing

- Cafes using 3D printing: some have borrowed, some bought and some thinking about it
- Some challenges of transferring from object to files to 3D printing
- 3D printer needs 3D scanner!
- Library of repaired parts: possibly establish amongst repair cafes
- 'Goodwill' with some 3D printing companies
- Partnership with companies/universities
- 3D CAD skills needed
- Steep learning curve when you start
- Issues storing 'expensive equipment' (for those without storage)

Mechanical

- Sometimes don't know at outset if electrical or mechanical fault
- Access to device common issue
- Does mechanical need a desk?
- Battery contact springs: available from eBay (AA/AAA)
- UV setting superglue
- Milliput (epoxy putty)
- Battery contacts for 'Power Jig' for cordless battery vacuums
- Sharpening services: shears, scissors, knives, etc
- Repairing ornaments/ceramics

- Some common problems
 - Dirty belt phase e.g. VCR's
 - Broken wires
 - Corroded battery contact springs released
 - Blocked vacuum cleaner
 - Toaster clogged with breadcrumbs