

Report on the 4th UK Repair Café Conference 2025

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1 Introduction

The [4th Repair Café UK conference 2025](#) was held at the University for the Creative Arts, Farnham on the 16th June 2025. The conference is chaired by Professor Martin Charter, Director and Chair, Board of Trustees, Farnham Repair Café and The Centre for Sustainable Design®, University for the Creative Arts and funded by the Research England Strategic Priorities Fund.

The purpose of the conference was to discuss practical issues associated with running Repair Cafes, whilst also providing networking opportunities for new and existing Repair Cafes. The conference included attendees from Repair Cafés, researchers, and Repair Café networks, and others wishing to start a Repair Café.

The conference was introduced by Professor Martin Charter, Dr Akin Oluwatudimu, and Councillor George Murray, Mayor of Farnham. Information was also shared on the two PhD's at UCA who are starting research on Repair Cafés.

Repair is an emerging policy issue in Europe. The European Commission passed the Repair Directive in 2024 and reparability will be a horizontal requirement of product-based regulations within the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR). Furthermore, it was highlighted that the Repair Café movement is increasing worldwide, with for example, the number of Repair Cafés in the USA continuing to grow despite the current political climate.

Speakers at the conference included Professor Hua-Mei Chui, Peter Counter, Ruth Lambert, Clare Seek, Alice Williams, and Helen Vines. [Download presentations.](#)

2 Repair Cafés in Taiwan

Professor Hua-Mei Chui (Founder, Southern Taiwan Repair Café Alliance (STRCA) and Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, National Sun Yat-sen University, Taiwan), gave a presentation on Repair Cafés within Taiwan.

The STRCA operate through a combination of university support, repair volunteers, and adult education to deliver repair café activities. The network is supported through the Taiwanese government funding related to community development, sustainability and circular economy. It has completed a variety of projects including working with university students and other young people and volunteers who have repaired farming equipment and machinery. The initiative promotes circular economy alongside increased cohesion within communities.

The Alliance has further been involved in international workshops and co-learning events with local universities, and practical experiments, for example, during a Green Circular Festival. The project has a strong focus on empowering volunteers and visitors and encouraging learning and collaboration between communities and different generations.

To engage more young people in repair, the STRCA runs a repair camp for teenagers during summer and winter vacation times. This supports the creation of an intergenerational repair education space and empowers community repair.

The presentation further highlighted the benefits associated with the repair activities in Taiwan, including physical fixing, repairing memories associated with those items and helping consumers to save money, alongside the creation of resilient and inclusive societies.

3 What is a Repair Café?

A series of roundtable discussions were completed amongst delegates on how to define a Repair Café. To facilitate discussion, the following definition of a Repair Café was provided (Charter and Keiller, 2016), with another document highlighting the characteristics of Repair Cafes such as donations-led, frequency of events, inclusivity, and others.

“Repair Cafés are free ‘community-centred workshops’ for people to bring consumer products in need of repair where they can work together with volunteer fixers, to repair and maintain their broken or faulty products. In addition to repair, many Repair Cafés provide assistance with product modification, particularly to clothing to improve fit and appearance”

A key element that emerged from the discussion was that attendees seemed to think that they had a clear understanding of what a Repair Café was and questioned the purpose, necessity and benefit of an exercise to define a Repair Café.

The proposed definition of a Repair Café was, however, identified as being useful for conducting research, as gaining clarity of the characteristics enables comparability and benchmarking between Repair Cafes and other community repair operations. A definition is also useful to help define which organisations and groups are Repair Cafes and which are not.

The consensus emerging from the discussion was that the current definition is suitable as it highlights that Repair Cafés are community-based events, with an environmental, social and educational purpose, staffed by volunteers. It was further highlighted that Repair Café events are generally donation based and are completed on a voluntary basis. Some attendees highlighted that Repair Cafés are self-funded events and operate solely on donations. However this topic provoked some discussion, as some Repair Cafés also apply for additional funding and grants and/or are financially supported by local councils.

The discussion further highlighted the differences between Repair Cafés, including the frequency of events e.g. some run multiple events a week, whereas the majority run monthly. The frequency of events was seen to differ depending on decisions of the core Repair Café team, volunteer motivation and availability, and perceived and requested community need. For example, a Repair Café in a rural area may choose to run less often, for example once every three months as opposed to the more common once a month, due to the lower population density.

An additional difference highlighted amongst Repair Cafés at the conference was the scope of items accepted for repair. The scope related to several issues including demand from the community, presence of local repair businesses, repairer skills and discomfort with repairing certain items, such as microwaves. Some representatives highlighted that whilst their Repair Café may not attempt certain repairs, such as watch repairs, they will recommend the visitor attends a different local Repair Café that may be able to help them. Repair Cafés will generally seek not to compete with local businesses, and therefore some will not complete certain repairs, such as fixing smartphones, or clothing modifications and alterations.

The discussion emphasised that Repair Cafés should be open to all and be a non-judgmental space for learning, social interaction, and waste prevention. Whilst most Repair Cafés engage with a wide variety of people, some Repair Cafés have specialist audiences that they cater for. For example, women only Repair Cafés and Repair Cafés aimed at students, can provide comfortable safe spaces for these groups. For example, Repair Café Llanelli have previously run female only sessions, and

Undeb Bangor Repair Café run events catered towards students (Repair Café Llanelli, s.d.; Undeb Bangor, s.d.).

The discussion also highlighted examples of Repair Cafés with particularly unique set-ups. For example, some Repair Cafés utilise outdoor venues using gazebos, as opposed to being based inside a community building. Similarly, others operate without paperwork or data collection in comparison to those that collect information via paper forms or online systems.

4 Networks

4.1 Overview of Repair Café Networks

UCA PhD researcher Peter Counter gave a presentation on Repair Café networks, detailing the geographic locations of those identified within the UK and outlining their main structures, purposes, and relationships with Repair Cafés. It also highlighted that the majority of the networks are in the South, South East and South West of England and there is a lack of information on networks in the North of England.

There are three organisations related to Repair Cafés in the UK which work at a national or international level: Repair Café International Foundation (RCIF), the Community Repair Network (CRN), and the Restart Project. RCIF was the founding organisation for Repair Cafés and provides news and a worldwide listing, and data storage and aggregation through its Repair Monitor tool. CRN aims to provide a listing of all community repair organisations in the UK, most of which are Repair Cafés. Restart provides website hosting and the Fixometer tool that is used by some Repair Cafés and other community electrical repair organisations worldwide, and runs the Open Repair Alliance data aggregation service. Within the UK, there are around 400 Repair Cafés registered on the RCIF website; however, initial research has indicated that the total number of Repair Cafés in the UK is more than 700.

The following networks have been identified within the UK :

- Repair Café Wales
- Cambridgeshire Repair Café Network
- Share and Repair (Scotland)
- Greater Surrey Repair Café Network
- Community Action Groups (CAG) Oxford
- CAG Devon
- CAG Somerset
- Hampshire Repair Café Network
- Cornwall Repair Café Network
- Repair Café West Midlands
- Repair Café Northern Ireland
- Share & Repair Bath
- Vision21
- Berkshire Support Group
- Earth Action North Devon
- Repair Café Wyre Forest

The services provided by networks can vary but generally include supporting Repair Cafés in setting up through providing advice, venues and starter packs, alongside training volunteers and providing skill development, succession planning training, and supporting with data collection and marketing. Furthermore, some networks may support Repair Cafés through providing tools and equipment, fostering relationships and networking between Repair Cafés and communities, advice on and direct financial support, and advocacy and education on repair legislations.

Community Action Groups (CAG) are volunteer-led groups that address local issues and are typically funded by local government e.g. county councils. CAGs work to improve their local area by

organising initiatives related to waste management, transportation, food systems, energy consumption, biodiversity, and social justice. Several Repair Cafés and some Repair Café Networks are run by or supported by CAGs.

During a panel discussion amongst the Repair Café Networks, it was highlighted that networks could encourage new Repair Cafés to operate on different days to the existing Repair Cafés in their area, to avoid doubling up, as many choose to operate on a Saturday morning. Local Repair Cafés operating on different days and times would provide the community with a wider range of options and potentially increase overall attendance at Repair Cafés in the area, whilst furthermore allowing repairers the opportunity to volunteer at multiple events.

4.2 Repair Network Presentations

4.2.1 Share and Repair Bath

Ruth Lambert, CEO of Share and Repair Bath provided an overview of the charity and their role as a network. Share and Repair Bath, supports 12 Repair Cafés and has over 200 volunteers, helping Repair Cafés through providing ongoing support and equipment, and the provision of a handbook for new start-ups. Networks such as Share and Repair additionally benefit Repair Cafés by providing shared identity and access to support whilst still allowing the Repair Café to make individual decisions on their operation.

4.2.2 Hampshire Repair Café Network

Clare Seek, CEO of Share Portsmouth and founding member of Hampshire Repair Café Network (HRCN), gave a presentation on the Hampshire County Council (HCC) organised network. HRCN is led by HCC Waste Prevention Team and aims to support existing Repair Cafés to ensure they are financially and operationally sustainable, whilst further encouraging the setup of new Repair Cafés in the county. At present there are 27 Repair Cafés within this network, which are supported through facilitating shared learning, upskilling volunteers and demonstrating successes via promotion of these events.

4.2.3 CAG Oxford

Alice Williams, communications coordinator for Community Action Groups (CAG) Oxford provided information on the network, which currently supports around 30 Repair Cafés in the county. CAG Oxford supports these Repair Cafés through promotion on their website, highlighting when and where each event is taking place, alongside providing peer support through Facebook groups. Furthermore, CAG Oxford provides 1:1 support for Repair Cafés and guidance for setting up new events.

4.2.4 CAG Devon

Helen Vines, project leader for Community Action Groups (CAG) Devon, gave a presentation highlighting the role of the network within Devon. CAG Devon was set up in 2016 and now supports 28 Repair Cafés and 4 Libraries of Things. CAG Devon provides training and small grants to Repair Cafes, alongside supporting networking between Repair Cafés and the community. Furthermore, the network provides templates for documents such as policies, risk assessments, and insurance, alongside promoting the individual events via an events diary and newsletter.

5 Table Discussions

Table discussions took place in the afternoon of the conference. Each table had a facilitator and a specific topic. Attendees were able to choose which table discussion to attend. The discussions were split into two rounds including Repair Types and Repair Café topics. The Repair Types round included discussion on electricals, clothing, glues, tools, mechanicals, and open discussion; and the Repair Café Topics included cross-cutting topics including engaging young people, recruitment, marketing, data, and insurance and legal.

5.1 Session One – Repair Types

5.1.1 Electricals

PAT testing was a common theme within the electricals round table discussion. There were different views amongst Repair Cafés over when PAT testing was appropriate. Some tested prior to volunteers working on the electrical items, others choosing to test after repairs have been completed, and others opted for both. Repair Cafés also had different practices over the naming of the test (some did not call it a PAT test) and the use of stickers.

Another topic of discussion was the safety issue of plugging in and testing electrical items while the item has its case removed, thus exposing live mains voltage. It is not usually practical to diagnose faults without doing this. Repair Cafés may require repairers to use rubber mats when testing equipment and encourage visitors to maintain a safe distance whilst the task is being completed. Isolation transformers are also encouraged by some; however, earthing requirements result in this not always being a practical option.

Volunteers working with electricals at Repair Cafés are usually vetted by organisers prior to working on items. In some cases, repairers may overestimate their skills. In the cases of more complicated repairs, volunteers working on an item are often supervised and/or mentored by more experienced repairers.

Not all devices brought into Repair Cafés are thought to be safe to repair and are considered as end-of-life and rejected at front desk or prior to visits. For example, metal lamp shades without isolation or insulation are deemed unsafe by many Repair Cafés. Similarly, some Repair Cafés have specific exclusion lists of items that they will not repair, such as mobile phones, or microwaves.

5.1.2 Tools

Most RC volunteers bring their own tools e.g. they like to use their own soldering iron or sewing machine or favourite screwdriver. The table focused on identifying different tools and spare parts necessary for Repair Cafés.

The provision of tools and spares by the Repair Cafés largely depends on whether suitable storage facilities are available. Items mentioned as being provided by Repair Cafés included fuses, suitcase wheels, grinders, light sources, screwdrivers, bike stands, endoscopes, soldering irons, glues, batteries, zips, electrical connectors, Iso-Propyl Alcohol solvent, headtorches and electrical flex with plugs for irons.

An interesting tip emerged from the discussion: a mobile phone can be utilised as a fuse tester. This can be done by placing a fuse upright on a locked mobile phone screen and placing a finger on the other end of the fuse. For functioning fuses, the phone screen should light up, whereas in cases where the fuse is not working, the screen should remain black.

The discussion also highlighted the benefits of Repair Cafés that utilise pre-booking systems which allow repairers to know in advance what products are coming in for repair and therefore which tools repairers should bring to the Repair Cafe.

5.1.3 Clothing

The table that discussed clothing repair first touched on the gender imbalance of repairers e.g. most clothing repairers tend to be women. This discussion may have benefitted from male input to further investigate why clothing repair consists of mostly women; however, this table discussion topic was selected by only female attendees. The discussion highlighted that this area of repair is female perhaps due to traditional education systems teaching sewing to only women, whilst men received classes such as woodworking.

Despite the gender imbalance within textile repairers, Repair Café attendees utilising clothing repair expertise were identified as mixed gender. However, there seems to be no gender imbalance in those bringing clothing items in for repair, or regarding the willingness for attendees to get involved and physically support with the repair. Many participants in the discussion were clothing repairers and they highlighted that it is significantly easier to engage visitors and encourage them to support in completing the physical clothing repairs when completing hand sewing related repairs, as opposed to when using a sewing machine.

Participants in the discussion expressed that flexibility is necessary when considering whether to complete alterations and modifications of clothing. Many Repair Cafés do not accept alterations and modifications to clothing for reasons such as not considering them as repairs and a desire not to compete with local businesses. However, in some cases, repairers may choose to complete modifications and alterations. An example was provided of a Repair Café that operates alongside a food bank and chooses to complete these tasks as it provides an otherwise potentially inaccessible service. This highlights the community specific nature of some repair cafes.

Fast fashion was identified as impacting clothing repair rates as it was thought people don't have the motivation to repair these items or bring them to a Repair Café due to placing less value on them as a result of the low cost, reduced quality of materials, and low cost of replacement. Remykit fashion show, as part of Wandsworth Arts Fringe, and Storywear, a Taiwanese brand, were given as examples of creative clothing repair, demonstrating repurposing garments (Storywear, 2025; Remykit, 2025).

Education related to clothing repair was highlighted as being inaccessible for both young people (due to the lack of sewing education in schools) and for adults (due to the cost of evening classes). To encourage more young people to engage in clothing repair, it was suggested to focus on the creativity associated with upcycling and 'visible mending', as opposed to only the sustainability aspects. Some Repair Cafés offer workshops to teach people clothing repair skills, by encouraging people to bring in sewing machines, or teaching visible mending. An example from the Hudson Valley Repair Cafés network in the USA, showed that 13% of the 67 Repair Cafés within the area offered sewing machine classes, and 17% offered a visible mending class to encourage further learning (Repair Cafe International Foundation, 2025).

5.1.4 Glues

The roundtable discussion on glues identified different types of glues that are recommended for use on different surfaces and items. 'Setting time' was also identified as being important when choosing a glue as this can impact the speed of the repair and ability for it to be completed within the time constraints of the event.

As a general glue, Araldite Ultra was recommended for strength but has an extended drying time. Araldite Rapid is a faster drying option and can be moulded but is less strong. Araldite Crystal was recommended for glass, or alternatively a UV resin glue.

For ceramic repairs, Araldite Ultra was recommended with the piece held together with bands and tape, trimming the glue along the seams once cool. To speed up the process the item can be placed in an oven at 85 degrees C, although this may not be an accessible option for many Repair Cafés.

PVA glue or polyurethane was recommended for wood. It was further recommended that when using polyurethane, items are clamped as the glue expands.

For rubber and plastic, Evo Stik was recommended, with Copydex being suggested for materials. Loctite Threadlock was recommended for use where screws or nuts must remain stable and Milliput epoxy putty for filling gaps.

It is also suggested that before glueing, items should be cleaned using products such as isopropyl alcohol. Acetone can also be used but is unsuitable for plastics. Following this, surfaces should be made rough to promote adhesion.

5.1.5 Mechanical

The discussion noted that the main task associated with mechanical repairs was simply taking apart items and rebuilding them, with shears and knives for sharpening being a common item that are repaired. Paper shredders are often received and usually unrepairable due to the inner mechanics.

This discussion further showed a significant dislike of tamper proof screws and hidden fixings as this increases the difficulty of the repair.

5.1.6 Open

The open discussion table allowed attendees to focus on any Repair Café topics they thought relevant. The discussion first focused on furniture and upholstery repair. Whilst some Repair Cafés offer these services, they involve a variety of different skills and tools and repairs cannot often be completed on the same day. Items are often taken back to the repairer's own workshop to complete the job.

The topic of take-home repairs was discussed, as some Repair Cafés offer this as normal practice whilst others do not allow this, or only on specific occasions. Insurance was identified as a reason for some Repair Cafés not allowing items to be taken home by repairers. In addition, some Repair Cafés have different rules on item collection. Some Repair Cafés do not allow visitors to collect items from the repairer's homes, whereas some permit this. Similarly, some may permit volunteers to attend a visitor's home to complete repairs or return items, in pairs.

Some Repair Cafés have identified an issue of some visitors 'exploiting' the goodwill of Repair Cafés by purchasing broken items and then having them repaired for free and reselling online. There was a difference of opinion on the morality of this, as whilst some see it as an exploitation of a voluntary service, others expressed that this is still preventing items from entering the waste stream.

Some don't charge for 'consumables', or leave to fixers' discretion. Others rigorously charge for all expenses. Woking have an excellent clock repairer who was a victim of his own success and started to be overwhelmed with clocks to take home. Now they ONLY do clocks as a take home repair, and there is a fixed charge of £50.

Another discussion was about items that some repair Cafés will not attempt to repair. Excluded items included:

- Knives – some are concerned about Police stopping people carrying knives; some thought that it is illegal to carry a knife on public transport
- Microwaves – some insurance policies prohibit microwaves (and air fryers): as there some issues with unusual door interlock mechanisms and danger of burns if the device is able to continue to run with door open
- Electric blankets – Surrey Fire Service and some other Local Authorities insist that defective electric blankets are sent to community recycling or landfill.

5.2 Session Two – Repair Café Topics

5.2.1 Engaging young people

The discussion around engaging young people focused on the methods being used or previously witnessed. For example, some Repair Cafés encourage Duke of Edinburgh participants to complete their volunteering sections at Repair Cafés. Similarly, many sixth forms and colleges require students to complete enrichment hours. Furthermore, some local scout groups work with Repair Cafés to encourage the engagement of more young people in repair activity.

Many Repair Cafés encourage adult attendees and volunteers to bring their children and grandchildren as a method of engagement with Repair Cafes. Furthermore, some universities and student unions have supported in setting up Repair Cafés on campus and promote the tangible benefits of volunteering at Repair Cafés, to gaining relevant repair and social skills and organisational experience that might be added to CVs, such as Undeb Bangor Repair Café (Undeb Bangor, s.d.).

An alternative option that emerged from the discussion was for Repair Cafés to encourage families to teach their children about the problem of waste to further highlight the importance of repair. For example, by visiting recycling centres or viewing suitable media demonstrating the amount of waste being produced, such as the Stacey Dooley documentary, *Fashions Dirty Secrets*, this can encourage young people to be more interested in waste prevention and getting involved with Repair Cafés (Stacey Dooley Investigates Fashion's Dirty Secrets, 2018).

Furthermore, some schools and Repair Cafés conduct repair-focused child friendly activities to encourage engagement, such as using scrap materials to make small items, and toy repairs.

Another issue that arose within the discussion is potential safeguarding issues related to the presence of young people present at Repair Cafes. Repair Cafés that actively encourage the engagement of young people approach this issue differently, with some inviting school groups and having teachers/leaders present as a method for compliance, whilst others ensure all under 18s are accompanied by a family member.

5.2.2 Insurance and Legal

The discussion on insurance and legal aspects included conversations relating to insurance companies and coverage, DBS checks, first aid requirements and Repair Café structures.

Regarding Repair Café structures, an unincorporated association was identified as the most effective way to run a Repair Café, however this was not a universal opinion as this may vary amongst different Repair Cafés set-ups and with funding methods.

From a legal perspective, insurance within Repair Cafés is not mandatory, however most choose to obtain cover. The general opinion within the discussion highlighted that public liability and product liability were necessary for a Repair Café, with employer's liability for those that have paid staff (which is unusual). Additionally, it was noted that some insurers may have age limits within their policies (e.g. over eighteens) or require proof of volunteer competency, or PAT testing certifications. Therefore, it was recommended that new Repair Cafés should prepare questions relating to these matters prior to approaching insurance companies. It was noted that on average Repair Café insurance policies cost approximately £240 per year.

The discussion highlighted that DBS checks are only necessary when the Repair Café intends on having continued interaction with vulnerable people and/or those under eighteen. In open plan venues it was highlighted that DBS checks may be unnecessary for many as no volunteers would be alone with young people or vulnerable individuals. Some Repair Cafés highlighted that they have policies related to repairers visiting a product owner's home should do so in pairs to safeguard both the owner and repairer. Furthermore, DBS checks should only be conducted where required, as it can go against legal regulations to conduct them unnecessarily.

First aid training is not a mandatory requirement for Repair Cafés, however the discussion demonstrated that many thought it is a beneficial and sensible option to be able to quickly address any potential issues. A first aid box should be on standby in all venues, and accident logs are established. It is good practice for Repair Cafés to ensure the presence of a first aid kit and to make volunteers aware of its location.

5.2.3 Data

The discussion on data focused on a variety of topics including how much data is necessary to collect, methods of data collection and the importance of feedback.

The discussion highlighted that when collecting data, it is important to consider the GDPR implications and privacy of the visitors. Therefore, it is important to ensure all data being collected by Repair Cafés is necessary and where possible anonymised. Data such as addresses, postcodes and age can be important for understanding the demographics of Repair Cafés and to identify potential geographical gaps for new Repair Cafés. However, this is personal and potentially identifiable information and could hold GDPR implications if mishandled, therefore using postcodes and age banding (18-24, 25-32, etc) can be an effective method for appropriately collecting this data.

The discussion also highlighted the importance of asking visitors for immediate feedback, as this can encourage them to consider and evaluate their experience prior to leaving the Repair Café and can promote an increase in donations. For example, Woking Repair Café reported that when removing their exit feedback process, donations fell by half. On return of the exit survey, donation levels made a full recovery.

The individual nature of Repair Cafés results in a variety of methods of data collection, including using paper forms and electronic forms/digital systems, with some identifying that no data was collected. Some Repair Cafés reported that they have retained paper forms as the repairers did not wish to use the digital methods. This has been addressed by some Repair Cafés, by implementing a coordinator who is responsible for the data collection, taking information from the visitor and repairer but not requiring them to have direct involvement with the digital systems.

Some Repair Cafés felt that the use of tonnes of CO₂ savings and similar statistics when publicising a Repair Café's achievement was not easy for most people to relate to. The suggestion was to use more

easily understood comparisons such as the CO₂ equivalent in “number of flights” or “number of toasters” to provide more accessible metrics.

5.2.4 Marketing

The discussion on marketing highlighted a series of ideas on potential methods for encouraging the attendance of visitors. For example, this included organising themed Repair Cafés, such as bring-your-bike months, or Christmas focused events aiming to repairing lights and decorations.

Furthermore, discussions highlighted the need to attract more visitors from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and from different age ranges. Suggestions for engaging these demographics included hosting Repair Cafés within libraries, food banks, and clothes swaps, and working with other groups such as Scouts to promote repair to younger audiences and their parents. Additionally, aligning Repair Cafés to other initiatives can also encourage attendance. For example, co-hosting a Repair Café alongside clothing swaps, stalls, or workshops such as bird box building.

A series of ideas over communicating Repair Cafés was discussed. This included advertising what items can be repaired at the event, where and when the event takes place, and a brief overview of how the Repair Café works, such as encouraging visitors to stay with their item and learn. Furthermore, communication should highlight that Repair Café is open to everyone and part of the community. Within communications, calls to action were highlighted as an effective method for public outreach, by using individual-focused language. For example, “*You* can make a difference” or “Bring *your* toaster to our Repair Café”.

The discussion further brought up that good practice might include highlighting that all repairers are volunteers and should be treated with respect.

Finally, the group discussion acknowledged that to identify if the marketing of Repair Cafés is effective, it is necessary to measure the impact. Methods for identifying the impact included monitoring interaction with social media, such as likes and shares, or alternatively receiving feedback from attendees, and enquiring where they heard about the event. Furthermore, through receiving feedback on marketing, this may further allow the Repair Café to identify which methods attract certain demographics, and their effectiveness.

5.2.5 Recruitment

The discussion focused on potential ways to recruit volunteers and potential issues and solutions. The participants identified that their associated Repair Cafés did not struggle with recruitment and would only encounter issues when searching for a specialist.

In smaller communities, recruitment can be conducted via word of mouth as people often ask others they know, family members or those attending the Repair Café. Other options suggested for recruitment include using social media platforms and banners to advertise to the local community.

Potential issues in recruiting volunteers highlighted by the discussion included potential repairers feeling a lack of confidence in their abilities and therefore feeling hesitant to volunteer. To address these issues, the following solutions were suggested including having open conversations with potential volunteers, encouraging people to visit the Repair Café before volunteering, providing case studies and stories, and assigning mentors to new repairers.

6 Conclusion

In conclusion, the 4th UK Repair Café conference hosted presentations and discussions related to Repair Cafés in Taiwan, networks, the definition of a Repair Café and on product repair issues and cross-cutting Repair Café issues. The discussions provided attendees with the opportunity to learn about new initiatives, both locally and internationally, and to ask questions in a knowledgeable and supportive environment.

The discussion on the Repair Café definition highlighted that there is no single model of a Repair Café and are dependent on the local community need, volunteer availability and motivation, decisions of the core Repair Café team and what is suitable for that area. For example, Repair Cafés may differ regarding event frequency, scope of repair offerings, and financial structure. A key question that emerged from this discussion was the importance (or not) of having a specific definition of Repair Cafes. Whilst a definition is beneficial for creating Repair Café specific objective and comparative research criterion and events, outside of these scenarios, having a tightly worded definition didn't present a practical benefit to Repair Café attendees. Some Repair Cafés may have had fixed ideas on the definition of a Repair Café prior to attending the conference, which may have changed during the event following the presentations and hearing about how other Repair Cafés operate.

The presentation on the Southern Taiwan Repair Café Alliance and their methods for engaging the community and young people highlighted potential ways in which the UK Repair Cafes could encourage more community integration. For example, by working with different local organisations such as schools, and universities. Conversations around networks within the UK similarly demonstrated the benefits of having organised support and a shared identity at a county level and the different ways this support can manifest. Furthermore, it was identified that the majority of the identifiable networks exist in the South of the UK, with fewer present in the Midlands and none in the North.

The roundtable discussions offered opportunities for attendees to network with others, whilst contributing to specific topics. There is a large amount of experience within Repair Cafés, which is often not widely shared outside of individual Repair Cafés. The conference provided an opportunity for others to hear the experience and knowledge of others. These discussions provided practical advice, interesting personal experiences and examples, and potential questions for future discussion and research. For example, the discussions highlighted useful tools and glues for Repair Cafés to stock, such as using Evo Stik for rubbers and plastics, and keeping a stock of button batteries. Furthermore, the roundtable discussions brought forward ideas on marketing and engaging young people, such as hosting themed Repair Cafés and reaching out to schools and scouts groups.

7 Repair Café PhD Research

The University for the Creative Arts has two funded PhD research projects focused on Repair Cafés:

7.1 Beth Quinton

Researching clothing repair occurring within Repair Cafés in the North and Midlands of England, and the potential methods for engaging young people with clothing repair.

The research will include focus groups with clothing repairers, educational organisers, and additional research to create, provide, and evaluate a clothing repair toolkit for young people.

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7.2 Peter Counter

Research covers the collection and use of repair data from Repair Cafés, the organisation and management of Repair Cafés, and the ecosystem of networks and organisations who support them.

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8 References

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