



REPAIR CAFÉ TOOLKIT



Produced by Ludlow Repair Café

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Purpose of Document

This document sets out a basic template to help you set up and run a Repair Café. It is based on practical experience from the Ludlow Repair café. You can find information at their Facebook by clicking on this link [FACEBOOK](#).

What is a Repair Café?

Exactly what its title implies.

A variety of items (and they can be pretty well anything depending on the skills and experiences of the repairers) are repaired, if possible – although not TVs which have built-in obsolescence.

If premises permit, and repairers and owners are comfortable with having refreshments available, then this creates that ‘Café’ element.

Repair cafés have been around since 2007. The Repair Café was initiated by Martine Postma, and since then she has been striving for sustainability at a local level in many ways.

Martine organised the very first Repair Café in Amsterdam, on October 18, 2009. It was a great success.

For more information and the history of Repair Cafés, visit [REPAIR CAFES](#).

Why set up a Repair Café?

As a society today we are too quick to throw away items. Every item which we buy new creates emissions of greenhouse gas emissions, and when they are disposed of, they can create further emissions.

So setting up a repair café creates the following advantages:

- Anything which is repaired extends the life of the item and postpones it ending up in the black bin and thence to landfill or to an incinerator.
- Owners save money.
- It’s about skills: up-skilling and ‘re-skilling’. It encourages owners of “broken” items to attempt a repair themselves.
- Changing mind-sets and reminding owners whose parents and grandparents, perhaps, used to ‘fix things’ that fixing things is still possible. Repairers could share the repair process with an owner, explain the problem and the remedy and the tools needed.
- The HUGE feel-good factor! It does take some work – but the rewards outweigh that and, bottom line, you’re part of a planet-saving initiative!

How to start a Repair Café?

There is useful information here on the Repair Café website - [START-UP](#)

You can also get help from Repair Café Wales by clicking here - [WALES](#)

But there is nothing like first-hand experience, which I learnt:

Team set-up

- I assembled a small team of people from friends, family and acquaintances, who had tools and experience of fixing things and who were enthusiastic about the idea of a Repair Café. It was also useful having an idea of what skills they had and what items they would and would not accept.

PAT Testing

- Portable Appliance Testing (or PAT Testing) is the process of checking electrical appliances for safety through a series of visual inspections and electronic tests. The best way of ensuring that your appliances are safe is to have a PAT test carried out on them. As many items are likely to be electrical, PAT testing, while not a legal requirement, does provide an extra layer of protection for repairers and owners. If there is no qualified PAT tester (with an up-to-date PAT testing machine) try taking a leaf out of [Presteigne's Repair Café](#) and contact a local electrician to see if he will PAT test free of charge as a way of raising his profile and increasing his business.

Alternatively, contact other local Repair Cafés to see if it is possible to borrow a PAT test machine and possibly a PAT tester. Once your Repair Café is established, encourage some of your repair team to undertake PAT test training and use your donations to purchase a PAT test machine.

Registration

- When I'd got my team of volunteers lined up, I registered my Repair Café with the International organisation - [REGISTER](#)

This costs 49 Euros in 2023 and gives lots of helpful advice and allows you to use the Repair Café logos.

Communications

- I set up a Facebook page which means the Ludlow Repair Café can be listed on the international Repair Café website.
- I set up a designated email address, eg: xxrepaircafe@gmail.com by using the Google Mail system.

Risk Management

- I arranged insurance through an insurance broker.
- I conducted a Risk Assessment. When organising a repair cafe or other activity, you have a responsibility to do what you can to make sure people don't get hurt. Doing a risk assessment can help with this. For an example risk assessment for a repair cafe, refer to the CAG Oxfordshire Health and Safety Briefing. Click here [BRIEFING](#). Please note this is only intended as a guide and must be adapted for your purposes.

Procedures

- I drafted a simple step-by-step admin procedure which is shown at Appendix 1, which suited my situation, my aims and my volunteers. I shared these with my repair team as they would be delivering the processes I'd designed so their input was vital. The procedures needed to be flexible so they can evolve as my Repair Café evolved.
- I drafted simple forms to register owners and the items they want to be repaired and a watertight disclaimer to protect both the repair team and owners. [See Appendix 3 - *Registration Form* and Appendix 4 *Disclaimer*]

Publicity

- Publicise!!! I used every publicity tool available including:
 - wrote brief articles for local paper(s);
 - contacted my local radio and TV station(s);
 - sent information to parish magazines;
 - paid for regular advertisement in a local magazine distributed to every household in the Ludlow area
 - informed local primary and secondary schools, colleges (universities if relevant to your location)
 - designed and printed posters to display in key locations in Ludlow;
 - asked my team of repairers to display posters in their window;
 - used social media platforms;
 - purchased a large banner to be placed outside the building when a Repair Café was "in session"
 - told as many people as I could!

Who is needed to make a Repair Café happen?

Repairers:

The volunteer repairers are your key asset.

They need to be supported by an admin back-up person/team which fields enquiries and matches customers and items with repairers where possible and which juggles the necessary paperwork.

This can be achieved via a simple spreadsheet – See Appendix 2 – *Call Enquiry Log*

Customers:

Repairers need things to repair so you need to attract customers.

We started small and found most of our customers came from within friends and family and were more elderly. This enabled us to tighten up our initial procedures and, gradually, as word spread, we attracted more and more people across a wider age range. We even had a couple of children with broken toys! So, don't be discouraged if your Repair Café seems slow to get off the ground.

However, you do need to identify a 'customer base'. The best way is via word-of-mouth to start with, but publicity to launch your Repair Café will be essential. Because the customer base is likely to be in the later age-bracket, at least to start with, it's necessary to use as wide a variety of publicity tools as possible (see above).

As the customer base expands, social media is likely to attract a wider age-range, but the 'traditional' advertising methods will retain their importance.

Administration Team:

You will need at least one person to handle the admin side of running a Repair Café: someone available to take enquiries by email and phone, to liaise with repairers and match items with repairers with relevant skills and availability; someone to send out and receive the Registration and Disclaimer forms either electronically or by snail-mail and to put owner and repairer in contact.

There needs to be good admin processes in place and simple financial recording of income and expenditure see an example at Appendix 5 – *Finance Record*.

Once your Repair Café is established and donations are building up, it is best practice to set up a bank account.

This can be with a bank where the/one of the founders of the Repair Café bank or with some building societies.

When can you 'launch' your Repair Café?

As soon as you have your repair team and admin processes in place and a venue, agree a date and times and use that information in your publicity campaign.

Where can a Repair Café take place?

Repair Cafés can be held anywhere where there is sufficient space to set up repair tables and sufficient and convenient access to wall sockets for electric tools where trailing wires/flexes will not pose a hazard – and, ideally, if possible, on one level with no steps to accommodate disabled access.

Also, if possible, and to maintain that 'café' element, somewhere where owners can sit with a cup of coffee and a piece of cake while they wait – and of course somewhere where the repairers can also get a cuppa too!

Involving 'Professionals'

It may be difficult to find volunteers with experience of repairing certain specific items. However, if there is a local service, shop or business which offers such repairs and charges for them, it would be good PR to talk to whoever is providing that service to explain about the Repair Café, why it's being set up and its ethos – and that it will not be a 'competitor'.

Anyone providing repairs in a business context could be invited to attend the Repair Café as a volunteer. If a repair were effected, they could hand over a business card advertising their service/business. If a repair was started but not finished within the time-limit, they could offer to take it back to their shop/business to complete. This should remain as part of the Repair Café and therefore as a free service but with a donation invited which would go to the Repair Café.

If it was impossible for anyone 'professional' to attend the Repair Café you could agree that owners arriving with an item could be referred to their business, but making it clear that any repairs would be charged.

This means raising their business profile at the same time as raising awareness of repairing versus throwing away.

The above arrangement has worked successfully at the Ludlow Repair Café with computer/IT equipment and dressmaking repairs referred to two local businesses.

At-Home Repair Service

Sometimes items can take far longer to repair than expected at the outset and which won't 'fit' into the Repair Café event time.

If repairers are willing and owners agree, the repairer could take the item home to complete the repair. This will need to be carefully recorded and logged [see example at Appendix 6 – *Repair at Home Record*].

Depending on the frequency of your Repair Café meetings, and if any of your repairers are willing, it might be possible to offer an 'At-Home' Repair Service.

Once an item has been matched with a repairer, the owner delivers the item to the repairer's home and the repairer liaises directly with the owner, reporting back to the Admin 'team' when the item has been returned, its status and recording any donation received.

If the item is electrical (and there is a PAT testing facility) it goes for PAT testing first before being handed over to the repairer. The repairer returns the item for exit-PAT testing and the PAT tester then returns the item to the owner.

Ludlow Repair Café only meets quarterly and the At-Home service we developed during lock-down is now firmly established, ensuring an on-going repair service with repairers able to work at their own pace rather than being restricted to the opening times at each event.

However, we have found it good practice to set a 28-day window for repairs with the option of an extension if needed.

Because 'At Home' repairs are done under the Repair Café system, repairers cannot charge for their time and labour. However, if parts are required, with the prior agreement of the owners, the cost of these may be reimbursed direct to the repairer or the owner can purchase them.

Regardless of whether a repair is attempted at a Café event or at a repairer's home, providing owners with a brief Repair Report which they take back with them along with the item has proved useful [See Appendix 7 for an Example – *Repair Report Form*].

Safety First

While it is not a 'legal' requirement, PAT testing electrical items is important to protect both owners and repairers. Ludlow Repair Café is fortunate to have two qualified PAT testers and now has its own PAT test machines. PAT testing quickly identifies if an item is actually safe to use and therefore safe for a repairer to attempt to fix.

If an item fails its PAT test, it is declared as a condemned item and the owner is advised the item is not safe to use. Ideally, the plug should be severed but only with permission from the owner. Owners must sign their copy of the Condemned Item sheet and a copy signed by the repairer is kept by the admin team [see Appendix 8 for an example – *Condemned Item Form*].

Repair versus Maintenance

This has been raised a few times at the Ludlow Repair Café with repairers pointing out that lack of maintenance results in breakdowns. Examples were lack of lubricating and/or cleaning tools so they seized up; lack of cleaning generally (toasters and sewing machines specifically) or general 'lack of use' where something just sits on a shelf somewhere or at the back of a cupboard and then when it's needed, it doesn't work.

However, it was acknowledged that lack of maintenance stems from a lack of knowledge and pointing out to owners the benefits of simple maintenance, together with advice as to how to do that, was in fact an essential part of the Repair Café ethos.

And ... the nitty-gritty!

MONEY:

Expenditure – key items

Set-up/admin costs:

1. Registration with the international Repair Café organisation – c.€49; Insurance cover – <https://www.repaircafe.org/en/repair-®-insurance-available-for-uk-repair-groups/>
2. Printing – posters / leaflets / forms;
3. Paper / envelopes / postage – for owners who have no internet/email access;
4. Advertising;
5. Venue hire.

On-going / future costs:

1. On-going costs will include all the above, plus, in time, possibly a PAT test machine – c.£300/£350 (£100/£200 second-hand) and annual re-calibration c.£80;
2. Reimbursement of repair team costs – tools/mileage if they collect/deliver items for housebound owners and there is agreement that they can claim for that – [REIMBURSED EXPENSES](#)
3. Obviously this is outside the ecological Repair Café ethos – but if it means repair vs landfill it's worth considering. Ludlow Repair Café volunteers haven't yet asked to claim mileage.

Income:

Repair Cafés do not charge for repairs but rely on donations. These typically range from £5 to £20 and, as the Repair Café becomes established, donations should cover all the set-up and ongoing event costs. Donations can also be used to purchase communal repair and/or admin resources.

Finally

If there is a local charity/organisation near you with similar principles or ethos, it would be worth contacting them to ask if you could 'piggy-back' your Repair Café onto their existing operations, including using their insurance.

Whatever you do, and however you do it ...

Enjoy!

Being involved in a Repair Café is fun and hugely rewarding 😊

APPENDIX 1 – SIMPLE PROCEDURES FOR MANAGING REPAIRS

1. From Enquiry to Repair – Email

- a. On receipt of email enquiry
 - i. Enter details of Reference no./Date/Name/Item/ in the Repair Log (See Appendix 2)
 - ii. If fault details are not supplied email back to the enquirer and ask for full details of repair required
 1. When details are received enter the details in the repair log
- b. Offer Item to Repairers
 - i. If repair is not accepted advise the enquirer and note in Repair Log.
 - ii. If accepted then send the Registration Form (See Appendix 3 for example) to Enquirer (with pre-allocated Reference Number) and the Disclaimer Form (See Appendix 4 for example).
 - iii. On receipt of completed forms from Enquirer, forward the Registration Form to repairer – either direct by email or if printed, scan the form and send by email.
 - iv. Complete details on repair log
 - v. File signed Registration and Disclaimer Forms electronically or as paper copies

2. From Enquiry to Repair – Telephone

- a. On receipt of telephone enquiry
 - i. Enter details of Reference no./Date/Name/Address/Email/Item/Fault in the Repair Log (See Appendix 2)
- b. Offer Item to Repairers
 - i. If repair is not accepted advise the enquirer and note in Log.
 - ii. If accepted then send the Registration Form (See Appendix 3 for example) to Enquirer (with pre-allocated Reference Number) and the Disclaimer Form (See Appendix 4 for example).
 - iii. On receipt of completed forms from Enquirer, forward the Registration Form to repairer – either direct by email or if printed, scan the form and send by email.
 - iv. Complete details on repair log
 - v. File signed Registration and Disclaimer Forms electronically or as paper copies

3. From Enquiry to Repair – at Repair Café Event

- a. On receipt of enquiry
 - i. Enter details of Reference no./Date/Name/Address/Email/Item/Fault in the Repair Log (See Appendix 2)

- b. Offer Item to Repairers
 - i. If repair is not accepted advise the enquirer and note in Repair Log.
 - ii. If accepted then get Enquirer to complete the Registration Form (See Appendix 3 for example) (with pre-allocated Reference Number) and the Disclaimer Form (See Appendix 4 for example).
 - iii. On completion of completed forms from Enquirer, give the Item and a copy of the Registration Form to repairer
 - iv. Complete details on repair log
 - v. File signed Registration and Disclaimer Forms electronically or as paper copies

Appendix 2 – Example of Enquiry and Repair Log

Note: If you are reading this in Microsoft Word, you can click on the following table, and it will open as an Excel Spreadsheet. If you are reading it as a .PDF file (you may need Acrobat reader to do this) then you could see a paperclip on the Left Hand side, with the name of the file listed. Click on that file name and this will let you open the file as an Excel spreadsheet.

REFERENCE												
DATE	NUMBER	ENQUIRER NAME	SOURCE (EMAIL/PHONE/PERSON)	ADDRESS_1	CITY	POST_CODE	EMAIL	PHONE NO.	ITEM DESCRIPTION	FAULT DESCRIPTION	REPAIRER	COMMENTS
	1											
	2											
	3											
	4											
	5											
	6											
	7											
	8											
	9											
	10											
	11											
	12											
	13											
	14											
	15											
	16											

Note that you can get a good online electronic database from HubSpot, which is set up with a lot of the information and more that you could need to record names and addresses and it allows you to monitor activities – like follow-up. You can email direct from the software.

If you keep things simple (for instance not customizing the database by adding too many extra fields etc.), then you can use this database for free. See [HUBSPOT](#)

Appendix 3 – Sample Registration Form

REPAIR CAFÉ LOGO

PAT-IN PAT-OUT PAT-FAIL

REGISTRATION FORM Item Ref No: Repairer:

OWNER'S DETAILS

Name:

Address:

..... Post Code:

Email Address:

Contact Number:

Where did you hear about the xx Repair Café

ITEM DETAILS:

Please give details of the item (name/make/manufacture and model number if known) and describe what's wrong with it as fully as you can

Appendix 4 – Sample Disclaimer Form

Repair Café logo / Name /Address

DISCLAIMER FORM

1. All repairs carried out by the XX Repair Café are performed at the owner's own risk
2. A triage service will discuss the fault with the owner and, if possible, allocate a repairer. XX Repair Café reserves the right to refuse to accept any item which is considered dangerous and/or damaged or obviously beyond repair.
3. All electrical items will be safety tested on receipt and after a repair has been attempted. If any item is found to be unsafe and dangerous, owners will be informed that the item is condemned. In such a situation, the plug should be severed to prevent further use but permission will be sought from the owner before that action is undertaken.
4. If permission is not given for that action, the owner of a condemned item will be asked to sign a specific disclaimer acknowledging they have been informed that the item (full details provided) is unsafe and dangerous to use.
5. Items needing two people to lift/carry will only be accepted by prior arrangement.
6. The repairer ensures to take care of the owner's property while it is in his/her possession and will endeavour to complete the necessary repair. Should a part be required to complete a repair, the repairer will discuss with the owner whether they wish to proceed and viable options. If the owner wishes to proceed, either the owner orders the part and arranges for it to be delivered to the repairer, or the repairer places the order and the owner reimburses the repairer when the repaired item is collected.
7. Neither the xxxxx Café nor the repairers in personal capacities or otherwise are liable for any loss or injury whatsoever which may result from any repair carried out or for any advice or instructions given and used at a later date.
8. Repairers offer no guarantee for any repairs carried out and are not liable if any repaired item does not work properly at home or breaks down again in the future.

9. Where possible, owners are responsible for the collection of the item after the repair is completed. Items which cannot be repaired must also be collected from the repairer and disposed of responsibly.

10. There is no charge for this service. Donations are welcome, and can be given on receipt of the item after repair or made via bank transfer (details provided on request).

11. The Registration and Disclaimer Forms must be completed and signed by the owner and returned before any repair can be undertaken

I accept the terms and conditions listed above.

Signature

PRINT NAME

Date

Please return this form by email to: xxxx or by post to: xxxx

Appendix 5 – Finance Records

REPAIR CAFÉ FINANCE RECORD

EXPENDITURE:

£

Registration Fee Repair Café International

Insurance

Paper/ink

Printing

Advertising

Stamps / Postage

PPE – Gloves / [Masks]

Volunteer reimbursement, eg: batteries, glue, etc. etc.

ITEM	ORDERED BY	COST	REIMBURSED Y/N	DATE

INCOME:

Donations received:

DONATION	RECEIVED VIA REPAIRER [®] OWNER (O)	DATE	AMOUNT	ITEM REPAIRED (if known)

Appendix 7 – REPAIR REPORT FORM

Item Ref No:

PAT-IN **FAIL** PAT-OUT PAT-**FAIL**

OWNER Name:

Repairer:

ITEM:

Brand Name

Make

Manufacturer

FAULT:

REPAIRED YES / NO

COMMENTS

REPAIR REPORT FORM

Item Ref No:

PAT-IN **FAIL** PAT-OUT PAT-**FAIL**

Repairer:

ITEM:

Brand Name

Make

Manufacturer

FAULT:

REPAIRED YES / NO

COMMENTS

Appendix 8 – Condemned Repair Item

XX REPAIR CAFÉ - CONDEMNED ITEM FORM

Item No:

Repairer:

Item Description:

Manufacturer:

Model:

Serial Number:

PAT Test Result: **FAIL**

This item has failed a PAT Safety Test and is considered unsafe for use

Repairer's signature:

Date:

I have been informed that the above item is considered electrically unsafe and should not be used in its present form. If I choose to try and get it repaired, I will ensure it is re-tested for electrical safety prior to use.

I agree/do not agree that in the interests of safety, the plug is removed.

Owner's signature:

Date: