

Dear Repair Café Team

We are delighted that you have registered with Repair Café International (RCI).

You have received RCI's generic handbook *Organise your own Repair Café* written by Martine Postma, the founder and director of RCI. This contains clear advice ranging from why there is an increasing need for Repair Cafes to planning for your first session and ensuring its long-term future.

### **How this UK-specific supplement works**

Based on more than three years' experience of operating a Repair Café in Malvern, we feel justified in providing additional advice specific to running this type of community project in UK. For each section in the RCI handbook we have added specific UK points, many of which are cultural; we have also included advice and tips on procedures we adopted to keep us successful and improve the Repair Café experience for everyone, volunteers and customers. References are made to the RCI handbook throughout this manual. We hope you find it useful and please do get in touch if you have any questions or feedback.

We wish you enormous luck for the future and are sure you will find running your own Repair Café as inspirational, fun and rewarding as we do.

If you wish to receive copies of any of the forms or documents mentioned in this UK manual, please email us at: [themalvernhillsrepaircafe@gmail.com](mailto:themalvernhillsrepaircafe@gmail.com)

Best wishes

Jan and Chris Dyer

Founders

Malvern Hills Repair Café / Repair Café Herefordshire and Worcestershire

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## 1. Site (RCI handbook page 8)

As well as the recommendations in the RCI handbook, we find these points essential:

- Venue hire charge is an important consideration, so consider a shared space with a café, pub or restaurant or a regular booking may reduce the charge. (Check whether there is an extra cost when using the kitchen.)
- The venue must have its own current Public Liability insurance - do check! There is more about Risk Assessment and Insurance in Section 16, page 10.
- Keep to a ground-floor venue which provides easy access.
- If there isn't a first-aid kit, take your own. If there as a defibrillator, familiarise yourself with it.
- Ensure access to the venue's main fuse box just in case a faulty appliance trips the fuse board.

It's also desirable to have:

- WiFi so repairers can search the internet for spare parts /information.
- Good natural light or else supply desk lamps or ask repairers to bring their own.
- Adequate electrical sockets to reduce the need for extension cables. We recommend using RCDs (residual circuit detectors) to prevent any faulty electrical appliance tripping a fuse in the venue.
- Storage facilities - although few halls have any available.

### **HINTS AND TIPS:**

Take some time to find the right place but don't worry too much if you realise you may have made a mistake and you need to move to another venue. Consistency and reliability are important but so is finding the right venue - so long as you do your publicity, a move should not result in a loss of custom.

When you choose the day to hold your Repair Café, remember that a Saturday attracts volunteers and customers who are still in employment. Some smaller Repair Cafes in UK open on a Sunday afternoon, especially if they are sharing with a local café trying to improve its Sunday trading. Avoid Bank Holiday weekends.

We find that opening from 10 am to 2 pm is long enough for more time-consuming repairs such as furniture clamping/gluing to be completed - but not too long that volunteers are starting to flag!

We have never opened in August as many people are on holiday.

## 2. Catering facilities

At MHRC, the café is an integral and essential part of the Repair Café experience. The ideal is to have a separate kitchen facility and an area where you can set up a few tables and chairs, decorated with tablecloths, flowers or small plants to brighten the space. This is where customers can relax, chat with each other and make new friends. It is also a good fund-raiser.

We serve a selection of coffees, teas, fruit juice and homemade cakes or savoury scones, made by a volunteer at cost. Provide a float of small change. Regular free drinks and cake are offered to all volunteers and a light lunch such as soup/bread, quiche, pizza or pasty is appreciated (although this is optional and dependent on income). Try to support Fairtrade and/or organic products.

## 3. Plan (RCI handbook pages 9/10)

The RCI handbook provides a detailed list of the preparations needed to plan for your first Repair Café. We agree with RCI that following your first one or two sessions, it's important to evaluate all the feedback and recommendations from customers and volunteers so that any procedural improvements can be made. Volunteers must always be informed of any changes.

### REMEMBER!

- We cannot over-emphasise the importance of **FULLY BRIEFING** all your volunteers immediately prior to your first session to ensure that each person knows exactly what will happen and what is expected of them.
- MHRC has a Volunteer Policy that defines how we work with our volunteers and what they can expect from us. A copy will be sent on request.

## 4. Publicity (RCI handbook page 10)

On page 10 in the handbook you will find a list of all the additional materials that are included in your RCI starter toolkit.

Never stop regularly promoting your sessions. Keeping the Repair Café in the public consciousness will help to maintain attendance figures and your flyer/poster is your most valuable marketing tool. Social media is crucial too but remember that not

everyone is IT literate and/or connected to the internet and many people, particularly the older generation, prefer to pick up a flyer.

In addition to those listed in the RCI handbook, other suitable locations to display your flyer and/or poster in your community are:

- your local Tourist Information Centre;
- your local Citizens' Advice Bureau and Foodbank;
- community boards in shops, supermarkets, pubs and restaurants;
- village hall notice boards;
- churches and church halls;
- doctors' and dentists' surgeries / hairdressers;

When designing your flyer/poster, it is advisable to:

- be consistent - decide on a format and keep to it so that your flyer becomes instantly recognisable around town;
- include at least the dates of your next two Repair Cafes to reduce the need for frequent printing;
- decide whether you need both A4 posters and A5 flyers and don't over-order as coloured printing is expensive.

#### **HINTS AND TIPS!**

- Always ask for permission to display a flyer or poster. Some places are unwilling to do so unless you're a regular customer
- Put up a poster and leave a supply of flyers in the actual Repair Café venue as well as advertising on their Facebook page or website
- Remove out-of-date flyers/posters - and regularly top-up stocks in places with a high footfall, e.g. the local library

When composing a press release (RCI handbook Page 11) we recommend you:

- always attach a photo - most newspapers are more likely to print a press release or an article if an interesting photo is included. Don't forget to send the names of the person/s in the photo;
- submit articles in bullet points - most reporters seem to prefer this format.

## **5. Visitors (RCI handbook page 10)**

Whether you invite some local key personnel to your first Repair Café is entirely up to you. You may prefer to hold a few sessions before you take this step.

Your local Waste Prevention team at County Council level can be useful to you in terms of networking with other groups involved in waste prevention or management. Consider inviting the following to come along to a session:

County, District and Town Councillors	A reporter on your local paper
County Waste Prevention Officer	Your local Member of Parliament
Community Services Officers	CAB / Food Bank manager/s
Local service organisations, i.e. Rotary, Lions, Round Table	

Our West Worcestershire MP, Harriett Baldwin, visited MHRC in October 2014 and was extremely pleased with the repair of her grandmother's dining chair. Her visit assured us of some excellent publicity in the local paper and she has directed further donations to us since.

## **6. Reception Table (RCI handbook page 12)**

The RCI handbook reinforces the importance of assuring all visitors and customers of a friendly, warm welcome.

It's impossible to know how popular your first few sessions will be but MHRC has always needed two receptionists to ensure the smooth arrival and departure of customers. The first hour is usually the busiest when queues are most likely.

A front-of-house liaison volunteer works closely with the receptionists by directing customers to the café waiting area and helping with the ordering of refreshments. The level of help required often depends on the age and mobility of the customer. MHRC attracts a high percentage of customers aged 60+ and many often need extra assistance and attention.

Our receptionists:

- welcome and register customers, help first-timers to complete the form and explain the Repair Café process;
- liaise with the front-of-house volunteer and encourage customers to use the café while they wait;
- check that departing customers are happy with the service and that their registration form is fully completed and the disclaimer signed;
- encourage departing customers to leave a donation.

Our liaison person:

- checks the registration forms of customers to ensure they are seen in numerical order as the appropriate repairers become available;

- keeps customers informed of progress particularly if there is a queue forming;
- escorts customers to the repairers' tables in the repair zone.

### **REMEMBER!**

You need customers to buy refreshments to boost your income! So don't rush them through to the repairer too quickly!

In addition to the list in the RCI handbook list (page 13), on the reception table we always have:

- Pens - lots: they often go walkabout!
- Donations box - we use a labelled shoe box which is both discreet and a good size.
- Spare paper for any extra notes or comments.
- Clipboards - useful when a customer wants to take the form away to complete in the waiting/café area.

We also have a supply of stationery items such as scissors, felt tip pens, sellotape, coloured card, scrap paper, blu-tack and pencils.

With reference to the RCI handbook page 13, we have never introduced a numbering system using coloured tickets as there has been no requirement to designate different repair stations. Most of our repairers are generalists and multi-skilled. Nor have we provided a guest book but this is something you may wish to consider for your historical records. We provide space on our registration form customers to leave comments and we keep every form as the data is useful when applying for grants.

## **7. The Registration Form (RCI handbook page 12)**

We modified RCI's registration form to our own MHRC needs and can send it to you if you so wish. Your receptionists should reassure customers that the information requested on the registration form is confidential and never passed to another person or organisation. Explain that it is only ever used to:

- maintain your records and statistics which are needed for grant-funding applications;
- monitor the types of repair and the changes in demand over time;
- enable management to remind them about future Repair Café dates/events.

Most customers are very happy with this arrangement and appreciate being added to our mailing list. Providing an email address is by no means mandatory - some customers choose not to disclose personal details and this is fine.

The 'item for repair' section needs to be as detailed as possible as this helps the repairer with the initial diagnosis. Although our house rules (printed on the reverse of the form) state that only one item can be seen at a time, many customers bring in two or more. We have rarely enforced this rule but customers are asked to prioritise their repairs and complete a different form for each item.

Always encourage customers to leave a comment on the registration form unless you have opted to start a guest book.

## **8. Basic Repair Stations (RCI handbook pages 14 - 19)**

The RCI handbook lists the main repair activities - electrical, sewing, furniture, toys and bicycles - that are considered to be most in demand at Repair Cafés but of course the demand does vary from one to another. Repairs to small electronic handheld devices and gadgets are on the increase. The handbook also provides a comprehensive list of the basic tools and consumables needed. It will take some time to acquire a wide range of tools so initially ask your volunteers to bring their own. They may continue to prefer to do this so use your income to purchase the more unusual and expensive tools such as a PAT tester or furniture clamps. Regularly check your stock of consumables - items such as glues are well-used and often need replacing.

## **9. Electrical appliances (RCI handbook page 14)**

In addition to the printed list of materials we suggest providing:

- A PAT tester - to test all electrical appliances before they leave the premises;
- RCD circuit breakers - to use in sockets and disconnect a current thus reducing the risk of an electric shock when testing a faulty appliance.

**REMEMBER:** always check if an appliance is still under warranty as any repair will negate it. Such items must always be returned to the retailer in the first instance.

### **HINTS AND TIPS!**

- Egg box bases are useful for storing any screws, pins etc. removed when an appliance is dismantled. Put a couple on each repairer's table.
- Provide a waste bin and damp cloths to clean any spills promptly.
- Keep a CD and DVD for testing in repaired equipment and A4 paper for testing in a repaired printer.

## **10. Clothing (RCI handbook page 15)**

MHRC customers are always expected to supply replacement zips and buttons. If you have a local business providing garment alterations and repairs, you need to take care on the types of repairs you accept.

## **11. Tool and Knife Sharpening**

We recommend you consider offering this extra service as it's disappeared from most communities and guarantees another income stream. Our wet and dry grinder was donated to us and our repairer is busy at every session.

MHRC volunteers can bring in their own possessions for repair and are not expected to make a donation. However, we do ask that customers' repairs take priority over those of the volunteers.

## **12. LOCAL REPAIR BUSINESSES: IMPORTANT NOTE!**

We reiterate the advice in RCI's handbook, in that it's important not to compete with local professional repair specialists such as bicycle repair shops, furniture restorers or garment alteration services.

## **13. Finding Volunteers /Specialists (RCI handbook page 20)**

The RCI handbook covers this topic in some depth but we would add that we have continuously sought new volunteers as people will come and go over time and a surplus of volunteers takes the pressure off everyone turning up each month. Currently, MHRC has 20 specialist repairers, a sewing team of four and eight front-of-house/catering volunteers. We usually have a core team of ten repairers at each session.

In addition to the usual press releases and articles, we suggest the following places to advertise when looking for volunteers:

- Your venue: leaflets, website, newsletter
- Church and other local magazines/newsletters
- Local library
- Family, friends and acquaintances
- Websites and meeting spaces of local practical, social or environmental groups such as the Green Party, Friends of the Earth, Men in Sheds, Transition Town
- Local volunteering centre/agency
- Social media - Facebook, Twitter - and local radio



- U3A - contact leaders of any relevant practical groups and the newsletter editor; many of MHRC's customers come from the U3A generation.

***DON'T FORGET:***

- include contact details in all publicity, an email address and Facebook address. Inclusion of a telephone number is at your discretion.
- many newsletters and magazines have deadlines for copy so ensure you submit an article in plenty of time - keep them brief as they are usually over-subscribed with material and often run by volunteers who won't have time to edit your article!

We have always found it extremely beneficial to arrange to meet potential volunteers, ideally in the proposed venue so the procedures can be explained. Anyone who is hesitant about becoming involved will probably be won over by your enthusiasm and friendliness!

We ask each new volunteer to complete a **Volunteer Enrolment Form** which asks a few basic questions such as the reasons for wanting to join the team, the skills they can offer and details of any health problems that may be relevant. We don't ask for volunteers to disclose any criminal records and we don't undertake DBS checks. However, we do ask every volunteer to complete an **Emergency Contact Form** with the details of a relative or friend whom we can contact in the case of an emergency.

If you would like samples of these forms, please email us.

#### **14. Looking after your volunteers (RCI handbook page 20)**

The RCI handbook emphasises the importance of looking after and valuing all your volunteer repairers. At MHRC we maintain this by:

During the sessions:

- Getting to know each volunteer and their skills and what they are happiest doing
- Offering regular comfort breaks and free refreshments throughout the session
- Putting a new repairer alongside a regular so they get used to the system
- Ensuring that customers remain with the repairer as this demonstrates appreciation and respect for the service
- Ensuring the smooth flow of customers so that no repairer is under pressure
- Intervening when a repairer is tied up with one customer for too long

- Asking for regular feedback and promptly fulfilling requests for tools and/or consumables.

Outside of the sessions:

- Always sending a 'thank you' email soon after each session and giving feedback on the customer numbers, donations taken etc.
- Keeping in touch regularly and informing them of any plans or changes
- Ensuring no volunteer is out-of-pocket by reimbursing expenses promptly
- Regularly getting volunteers' photos and stories in the local paper
- Providing the occasional treat; we give volunteers a small gift at Christmas and have a celebratory home-cooked meal at our December session.

We ensure that customers are happy by:

- Fully explaining the procedures and keeping them informed, particularly when there is a queue
- Allowing regular customers to leave a repair and collect it later - but use your discretion and check with the repairer first.

### **15. How to get hold of the things you need (RCI handbook page 21)**

MHRC's repairers have always preferred to use their own familiar tools but we supply a wide range of consumables. We encourage our repairers to always ask for any items that are missing from our toolbox. In the early months, we relied heavily on their advice to build up a wide range of expendables.

Other ways of acquiring tools and equipment are:

- advertising on Freegle, Facebook, Twitter and Streetlife;
- appealing for donations in local paper/s and magazines;
- going to garage sales, car boot sales, jumble sales;
- asking friends, neighbours and members of local practical groups.

Many of MHRC's sewing materials were also donated including an old electric sewing machine which worked perfectly after a major clean and overhaul.

### **16. Risk Assessment and Public Liability Insurance (RCI handbook page 22)**

The RCI handbook offers much practical advice on health and safety issues. Health and Safety legislation in the UK is a minefield and the majority of insurance companies we contacted could not understand the concept of a Repair Café and therefore could not offer us appropriate insurance. It is imperative that the disclaimer on the reverse

of the registration form is understood, agreed and signed by all customers but this would probably be inadmissible in a court case.

In 2015, a team of American exchange university students were seconded to MHRC and undertook a consultative Risk Assessment Analysis whereby all the repairers, catering staff and some customers were invited to give their personal assessment of the risks involved in a Repair Café. The returned forms were then aggregated to provide us with a ranked/prioritised picture of the assessed risks and used to produce an ongoing Risk Assessment. Samples of all these documents will be sent to you on request.

We advise you to complete your own risk assessment before deciding whether or not you need or want to take out Public Liability Insurance (PLI) cover. MHRC operated without it for two years as our risk assessment indicated that the risks were minimal. The venue's public liability insurance covered many of our activities. When we again attempted to take out our own insurance, we considered the following PLI possibilities:

- **Transition Towns' Event Insurance** - if your local Transition Town takes out annual Events Insurance cover, it is possible for them to extend that to cover your Repair Café event as 'repair' is a Transition style activity. Annual Event Insurance for Transition Town groups can be bought for about £250 and covers eight events per year normally
- **Ansvar Insurance** ([www.ansvar.co.uk](http://www.ansvar.co.uk)) offer a Charity and Community Connect policy for around £380 a year\*
- **Tennyson Insurance Brokers** ([www.tennysoninsurance.co.uk](http://www.tennysoninsurance.co.uk)) offer cover with Zurich Insurance for around £350 a year\*
- **JST Insurance Services** ([www.jstinsuranceservices.co.uk](http://www.jstinsuranceservices.co.uk)) offer cover with AXA Insurance for upwards of £360 per year\*

\* All prices are at 2015 rates and we were warned that they would rise in 2016 due to some new Insurance Tax introduced by the Government.

The three insurances above vary in the number of Repair Café events/hours per year that the cover is valid for and for what types of Repair Café activities the policy would cover. For the purposes of our Big Lottery funded project (RC H&W) we chose the JST Insurance Services/AXA Insurance cover as it was for up to 20 Repair Café events per year and covered all the higher risk activities from our risk assessment. This meant that in addition to MHRC events, we could extend the cover to any new Repair Cafés we supported in the two counties under the RC H&W project.

We recommend that you try to achieve the same economies of scale by affiliating with other Repair Cafés to purchase collective cover.

## 17. The Disclaimer / House Rules (RCI handbook page 23)

We adapted RCI's disclaimer to reflect UK's cultural and social differences. All customers must read and sign the disclaimer before they are referred to a repairer as they need to understand that all repairs are undertaken at their own risk.

We suggest that you reserve the right to refuse an item brought in for repair for any of the following reasons:

- **too damaged:** the receptionists cannot always check an item when it's registered so the repairer needs to assess its condition. Repairers should know that they have the right to reject to handle items on safety grounds.
- **unpleasant and dirty clothing:** the sewing team are not expected to handle garments or other textiles that are obviously unwashed, smelly and torn beyond reasonable repair.

**Microwaves:** MHRC has never been comfortable dealing with microwaves, however simple the problem may appear to be. We introduced a policy not to touch any microwave for obvious safety reasons but a couple of our repairers are happy to deal with these appliances. They understand that they do so at their own risk!

If, for any reason, the disclaimer isn't signed on arrival, the receptionists **MUST** ensure that it is signed before the customer leaves the premises. As mentioned previously, although not regarded as a legal document, it does clearly state that the customer agreed to the repair taking place. Send us an email if you would like a copy of our disclaimer/house rules.

## 18. Evaluation and Monitoring / Keeping Records (RCI handbook page 24/25)

The RCI handbook states the importance of consulting regularly with your steering group, conducting ongoing evaluation, maintaining records and keeping statistics. Other record-keeping that you may find useful to start and maintain:

- details of all volunteers - names, current addresses, phone numbers and email addresses;
- a volunteers' Skills Audit;
- a volunteer attendance register for each Repair Café session;
- a spreadsheet recording monthly registration figures, the age profile of customers, the main categories of repair and the success rate.

#### HINTS AND TIPS:

- Keep a scrapbook of all your articles and press cuttings for reference and to avoid repetition in future press releases. Store online articles in a folder
- Always ask permission when you take photos, particularly of children, and point out that they may be used in your publicity. If you prefer, download a photograph consent form from the internet

We hold an Annual General Meeting following our December session when all volunteers and their partners are invited to stay for lunch. An Annual Report and Financial Statement are presented and the opportunity is given for questions and comments. We have found that our volunteers prefer this option to meeting socially in the evening on a non-Repair Café day.

### 19. Financial Support (RCI handbook page 26) Fund-raising and Sponsorship in the UK

If/when you want to apply for some funding to develop your Repair Café and/or establish a small network in your area as we have done with Repair Café Herefordshire and Worcestershire (RC H&W), then you will need to implement the following:

1. A **Constitution** document (banks will ask to see this) supported by minutes of a meeting in which a Chair, Treasurer and Secretary were elected. Email us for a sample copy of our Constitution. Feel free to adapt it.
2. A **bank account**; we opened our account as a Clubs/Societies/Charities account (online banking available) with NatWest which we have found to be entirely satisfactory.

Several of the potential sponsors listed in the RCI handbook also apply in UK, i.e. community organisations such as Rotary and Lions Clubs and the local DIY store and/or supermarket. To help with the start-up costs of purchasing tools and expendables, you can also approach:

- Your local Town/District Council - Small Grant Fund
- Your County Councillors' annual Divisional Fund
- Local supermarket community support schemes; MHRC received an award from Waitrose 'Community Matters' which was used to purchase tools

Most funders want to pay for specific items such as tools, equipment and printing rather than day-to-day running costs or venue hire. Always check the small print in an application form to make sure you fit the criteria.

A key ingredient for the success of the MHRC's first and subsequent sessions was the printing support received from the local District Council, Malvern Hills (MHDC). For the first two years, their Document Services department printed all MHRC's publicity and in-house forms for free. This service ceased as a result of local authority funding cuts so we now pay commercial printers for all our printing needs. However, do approach your local councils or another sponsor to ask whether they are willing to offer free or subsidised printing until such time as you have enough in the bank to pay commercial rates for it.

There are an increasing number of national schemes offering small grants such as:

Persimmon Homes at: <https://www.persimmonhomes.com/charity>

Greggs at: <http://www.greggsfoundation.org.uk>

A new and innovative crowd-funding idea is becoming popular across Britain. Inspired by Detroit SOUP (<http://detroit soup.com/>), it is a community fund-raising dinner with a difference. Check for one in your area - or start your own to raise funds. Repair Café Worcester won the first Worcester SOUP event (<http://worcestersoup.co.uk/>) in March 2016.

To develop the RC H&W project, we achieved the most funding from *Awards for All England*:

<https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/global-content/programmes/england/awards-for-all-england>

There are separate Awards for All for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Applying to *Awards for All* involves completing a comprehensive, largely self-explanatory and interactive pdf application form. You can apply for up to £10,000 and we found them to be very approachable and ready to assist with ensuring that we received the grant from them.

We have produced a list of suggested statements and text to include in a grant application. This will be emailed to you on request.