MATERIAL FOCUS

How to guide

Repair: Collecting electricals for repair in your area

Contents

Collecting electricals for repair

Repair cafés are becoming more popular across the UK, with many local authorities and community groups setting up spaces and events to encourage people to repair their used electricals instead of throwing them away.

This guide is built on our experience and expertise, along with insights from the repair pilots we've supported through the Electricals Recycling Fund.

Top tips

1. Prioritise safety

- Check for recalls – If an electrical has been recalled, do not use or repair it; follow the manufacturer's instructions. See https://www.gov.uk/product-safety-alerts-reports-recalls.
- If ordering spare parts, use those approved by the equipment manufacturer.

2. Build strong local partnerships

- Collaborate with councils, repair cafés, housing associations, community groups, and tech refurbishers to reach people, build trust, and increase capacity.
- Partner with local influencers (e.g. parish councils, councillors) to boost communications and event attendance.

3. Community engagement is everything

- Use face-to-face outreach to build awareness and trust. Examples are community events, coffee mornings, food markets.
- Pilots with a physical presence saw better awareness and behavioural change.

4. Integrate a recycling option

- Set up recycling points at repair events so that people can easily recycle and repair at the same time.
- Remember, anything with a plug, battery or cable that can't be repaired can be recycled.

5. Reuse processes take time – build in a buffer

- Allow time for data erasure and quality control when refurbishing tech, especially laptops.
- Schedule carefully and plan for contingencies for internal processes such as training volunteers, and when working with partners.

Top tips

6. Measure impact from the start

- Embed data collection (e.g. item counts, weight, CO_2 savings) from the start, to learn what works best.
- Use behavioural surveys to help measure attitude shifts.
- Use data on CO_2 savings to add value to communications.

7. Support your staff and volunteers

- Don't underestimate the amount of support you need for events - especially for set-up, engagement, and lifting items.
- Train volunteers (e.g. in PAT testing, health and safety, data wiping) to build long-term capacity and make them more self-sufficient.

8. Consider the longevity of the service

- Embed services in council or partner operations to give them the best chance of lasting.
- Consider how to make the service financially viable in the long-term – e.g. through sales of repaired goods, offering repair workshops to groups, or inviting people to pay what they feel is reasonable for repairs.

9. Hold regular events

- Consider putting on fortnightly or monthly events, so that people get used to the dates and get into a routine.

Checklist for setting up an electricals repair service

- **Set up partnership meetings** – with community groups, charities, repair cafés, food banks, refurbishers
- **Build relationships** – with councils for site access and local communications
- **Find a partner to handle data erasure and redistribution** – if tech items are to be redistributed
- **Plan logistics** – how to collect, store, transport, repair and redistribute items
- **Set up a system to triage donations** – e.g. working vs not working, reuse vs recycling
- **Plan for electricals which can't be fixed** – e.g. recycling through a local council
- **Source containers or donation boxes** – and use clear instructions and branding
- **Book event dates in the calendar**
- **Recruit volunteers** – repairers, events support, technicians
- **Offer training** – PAT testing, health and safety, data wiping, repair skills
- **Allocate staff or community leads** – e.g. to manage logistics and communications
- **Plan volunteer rotas and shift cover** – e.g. for events and monitoring drop-off points
- **Prepare multi-channel communications** – social media, posters, flyers, press releases, council websites

Cost summary – estimated from previous pilots (p1/2)

Venue hire

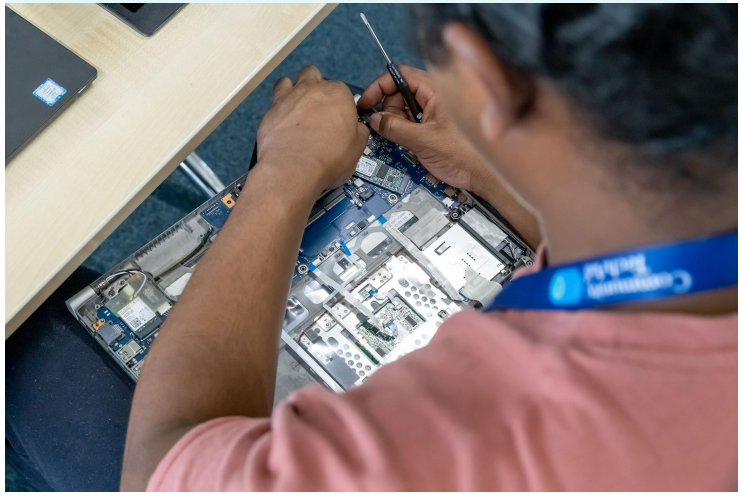
Community centre room hire: £10–£25/hour.

Small workshop (private/commercial): £300–£800+ per month.

Pop-up space in libraries or public buildings: sometimes free or at reduced rates.

Collection containers

Standard large plastic collection containers (e.g. 240L wheelie bins): £50–£200 +VAT each.



PAT testing

Basic PAT tester device: £180–£300.

In-person accredited training: £150–£250 per person for a one-day course.

Cost summary – estimated from previous pilots (p2/2)

Tools and parts

Basic toolkit, multimeter, soldering kit, cable tester: £200–£400 per volunteer.

Parts: £10–£50 per device, on average.

Communications

Previous projects ranged from £1,000 to £10,000.

See pilot spotlights for examples.

Electricals Recycling Fund impact

Since 2020 we have funded 22 repair pilots across the UK.

We have rehomed 32,900 used electricals through redistribution charities and partners such as Community TechAid, Reconome, and Tech Takeback, and by selling at accessible prices through charity shops and social enterprises.

14 funded repair pilots

Pilot spotlight
Derry and Strabane

Target population	61,005 households
Funding amount	£30,502
Pilot duration	February 2024 – March 2025
Pilot aim	To increase access to electricals repair and reuse across Derry and Strabane, supporting digital inclusion and raising awareness that electricals are reusable, fixable, and shareable.
Outcome	• 124 items repaired through 16 repair cafés • 152 laptops donated: at least 21 redistributed (the rest will be used for training or spares

Pilot spotlight: **Derry and Strabane**

Collection approach

With Repair & Share Foyle, Derry and Strabane Council launched an engagement campaign to attract Repair Cafes volunteers in the rural Strabane area.

Volunteers were able to expand the existing successful Repair Cafe initiative, and focus on encouraging residents to rehome working electrical items.

Additional support was given to community charity shop partners to help them PAT test backlogs.

Seven drop-off points were set up across the district for laptop and small electricals donations.

Communications approach

- Pull-up banner
- 2 x A3 freestanding countertop signs (£40)
- 4 x canvas banners (£140+install)
- Council photographer hire (£120)
- Event filming (£1,500)
- Radio advertising proved extremely successful and more resource than anticipated was put into the medium
    - Radio advertising recruitment drive (£1,500)
    - Repair café radio adverts (£6,000)

Key learnings

Consider the skills needed to help the service be self sufficient – Data wiping in-house took longer to set up, but now means Repair & Share Foyle are more self-sufficient. They trained volunteers to be 'laptop doctors' so that repaired laptops could be rehomed.

Collaborate with existing partners to establish your team – working with an existing partner (Repair & Share Foyle) meant the Council had an established team of experienced volunteers.

Build a community – the pilot was driven by keen volunteers and community spirit and has secured further funding.

Pilot spotlight

Ashford Borough Council

Target population	58,296 households
Funding amount	£9,357
Pilot duration	October 2023 – June 2024
Pilot aim	To enhance local electrical recycling by providing accessible collection and repair events - particularly for rural communities and people unable to use local HWRCs
Outcome	• 60 items repaired • 241 items donated to be rehomed • 3 tonnes of electricals collected for recycling – 66% of the borough's previous annual total

Pilot spotlight: **Ashford Borough Council**

Collection approach

Ashford Borough Council teamed up with local parish councils to run six pop-up amnesty-style events, each paired with a repair café. The events made it easier for residents to recycle their electricals without needing to travel to a household waste recycling centre.

Each pop-up ran for a day at an accessible local site. Bins were placed outside parish halls as drop-off points for unwanted electricals. Inside the halls, pop-up repair cafes offered people the chance to repair and reuse items rather than dispose of them.

Communications approach

- Paid socials (£120)
- Skip signage (£550)
- 2 x banners (£224)
- A2, A3, A5 laminated posters (£210)
- Leaflets / door drops
- Press releases
- Owned social channels
- Website update
- e-Newsletters
- Email signature banner
- Data and insights from this pilot will be used as a benchmark for future communications.

Key learnings

Consider the space available before selecting bin types – Ashford initially planned to use skips for collections, but these proved too large for the rural locations. They switched to 1,100-litre bins and handpicked collections. This not only solved the space issue but also reduced costs and allowed for additional events.

Make sure you have enough staff Successful community events required more hands-on staff than initially anticipated - especially when events were at weekends and involved physical work.

Pilot spotlight
Durham

Target population	253,529 households
Funding amount	£100,000
Pilot duration	January 2024 – March 2025
Pilot aim	To expand small electrical and vape recycling across the county, increase the volume of items reused and recycled through new collection points and repair cafés, and raise public awareness through campaigns and education.
Outcome	• Over 300 items repaired, • 19 repair events attended by 369 people • 40 volunteers trained in repair and PAT testing • 29 tonnes of electricals recycled

Pilot spotlight: **Durham**

Collection approach

Durham supported and promoted four volunteer-led repair cafés plus their own touring repair café. They provided training, PAT testing equipment and promotional materials.

Community engagement was via school competitions, national campaign tie-ins (Repair Week and International E-Waste Day), and HypnoCat themed materials in public venues, bus shelters, and online.

The council also set up 26 new collection points, ensuring every ward had at least one, and installed 77 new vape recycling points in community venues and household waste recycling centres.

Communications approach

- Bus shelter advertising (£15,000). Bus shelter adshels had particularly high impact because they stayed up for a long time and were seen by bus passengers, pedestrians and other road users across the county.
- A4 and A5 leaflets (£200)
- Pull-up banners
- Printed table cloths

Key learnings

Dedicated capacity is crucial – early staffing delays meant the pilot initially struggled with promotion and collections. Once a full-time officer was in place, there was a 94.6% increase in small electricals collected per month, showing the critical value of dedicated capacity.

Consider using targeted campaigns for different audiences – targeted drives (e.g. student-focused materials) sparked engagement. Durham made advice packs for landlords and students, which gained media coverage and helped get recycling messages into homes.

We've created a communications toolkit of HypnoCat assets and bring bank designs, that you can use to use to promote your project.

These include: posters, leaflets, bin wraps, bin hangers, press ads, pull-up banners, lorry / vehicle sides, stickers, social media posts.

All driving people to drop off their electricals...

Clockwise from top left:
Pull-up banner
Bin hangers
Posters & leaflets
Social media posts
Bin wraps
Lorry/vehicle sides

Material Focus support

Check out our website for more information on funding opportunities, toolkits and resources to support your projects.

MATERIAL FOCUS

Material Focus is an independent, not-for-profit organisation on a mission to save valuable, critical and finite materials inside electricals from going to waste. We lead the ‘Recycle your electricals’ campaign.

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