

How we set up Salisbury Repair Café (SRC)

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Introduction

Jimmy Walker and Benji Goehl set up SRC in 2019. We have been asked to document how we did this, so that other RCs may share our learning.

Work in progress

This document is not complete. Some parts are a bit rough around the edges. It concludes with editing notes that will appear a bit cryptic.

Copyright

We do not claim copyright for any document we have created and have linked to below, except for this document itself. You are welcome to copy and modify them to suit your purpose.

Repair Café Foundation

Repair Café Foundation is based in the Netherlands and has published a Repair Cafe Manual that is a good starting point for setting up a RC. It comes as a collection of files which includes template posters, flyers and forms.

Salisbury Transition City kindly passed the Manual they had purchased on to us, and we used bits and pieces from it, but essentially did our own thing. However, we would still recommend purchasing it before starting up a new RC because

- not all of our experiences are valid for other RCs, and the Manual may contain valuable information that we have omitted here
- purchasing the Manual entitles you to be listed on the Repair Café Foundation's website
- You will receive a free specialist tool set from iFixit, all you need to pay for is the postage from the Netherlands (approx £7) -

<https://eustore.ifixit.com/en/Tools/Toolkits/Pro-Tech-Toolkit.html>

Start-up conditions

Ideally a RC is started by two or more persons who are equally enthusiastic about the idea, and have similar energy and time to contribute to the project. Having a minimum of two people involved is important for resilience (e.g. in case one goes off sick). Good communication between organisers is important: regular meetings, taking minutes, checking off action points; this avoids duplication of work and dropping of balls.

People involved in the set-up should between them have the following skill set:

- Essential
 - Organised and diligent administration - dropping balls can quickly erode goodwill
 - General IT skills - ability to set up spreadsheets and documents with ease
 - Running a social media campaign - see also separate point below
 - Budgeting and book-keeping - maintaining accurate and transparent records
 - Public speaking - plugging the project at meetings, selling the project to funding committees

- Networking - talking with the right dose of enthusiasm to other people and organisations about the project
- Experience in volunteer management - appreciating the different levels of skill and commitment being offered, and being flexible to accommodate a range of personalities
- Desirable
 - Desktop publishing
 - Basic graphic design
 - Website editing (using a “what you see is what you get” package)
 - Photography and photo editing

Networking and spreading the idea

Very early on we purchased a domain name and set up a website with basic information about the concept of a RC, as well as two features:

- Newsletter sign-up (using MailChimp - see IT below)
- Volunteer sign-up (using Google Forms - see IT below)

We shared the login of one dedicated email account info@salisburyrepaircafe.org (using Google Mail - see IT below), and when sending an email we copied in the other organiser(s) so that they could follow all exchanges.

We also set up social media accounts, making sure that the username was identical for all channels (@SalisburyRepCaf). We posted ...

We printed 500 business cards that we could hand out to anyone we spoke to, so that they had a physical reminder of the project we were proposing, and an easy route to our website and social media channels.

We spoke to other organisations in Salisbury:

- Alabaré, a charity who run a shop and emporium, and have volunteers who repair and electrically test items before they are sold; the charity also hosts a “Men’s Shed”
- Citygate, a local church that runs the social entrepreneur hub Quench, and had thought about setting up a RC themselves

IT set-up

From the moment we were confident of being able to successfully launch the RC, we purchased a subscription to Google Suite (£4.60 per month- see https://gsuite.google.com/intl/en_uk/pricing.html) and the domain name salisburyrepaircafe.org

This gave us access to:

- The entire suite of Google apps, including cloud storage and website editing
- A GDPR compliant environment in which to store the personal data of our volunteers
- One shared dedicated email account (Google tolerates simultaneous logins from different devices at different locations, provided the security settings are adjusted correctly)

The volunteer sign-up was implemented as a form embedded on a web page, the output of which fed into a Google spreadsheet. A notification email of any new form entry was automatically generated, acting as a reminder to send a welcome email to the new volunteer.

We opened a Mailchimp account (free to use up to 2000 contacts, see <https://mailchimp.com/pricing>). This gave us:

- A GDPR compliant environment for storing newsletter contacts, i.e. subscribers can update their own details or remove themselves from the list
- Facility to compose rich emails (with images, buttons etc) using simple drag-and-drop tools
- Best chance to get past spam filters
- Much better solution than having to remember to send all emails as BCC, as Mailchimp does that automatically - no data protection disasters!

The newsletter sign-up was implemented by

We deliberately chose not to use IT for administering repairs. A paper-based solution keeps things simple and resilient to power or internet outages. It is also more inclusive to volunteers who are not confident with IT, and those who are glad to get away from a screen for a change.

Finding a suitable venue

It may be possible to find a free venue if the hosting organisation was thinking about setting up a RC themselves, or if they see that they could benefit from the publicity that the RC will generate.

The venue should have:

- Plenty of chairs and tables to accommodate volunteers and visitors, at the repair stations, in the reception area and in the refreshments area
- A kitchen, or at least tea/coffee making facilities
- Flooring that does not mind getting dirty
- A space to carry out bicycle repairs - that can be quite mucky work
- Car parking: ideally everyone would arrive on foot/ by bike / by public transport; but in reality a lot of volunteers will need to bring in their tools, and will use a car for this; also need to consider disabled parking for visitors; so all-in-all, ample parking nearby is sadly essential
- Secure cycle parking and decent public transport connections, provide good quality information on how to get to the venue other than by car, e.g.

www.salisburyrepaircafe.org/find-us

Insurance

We approached many insurance brokers, asking for a quotation for a combined public liability and product liability policy, but found that most were not familiar with the concept of a RC, and asked lots of questions about what we were going to do so that they could assess the level of risk. This was time consuming and produced a wide range of quotations

In the end we were directed by another RC to Mid Cornwall Insurance Brokers, who seem to insure many other RCs and came up with a sensible price. We asked for Employer Liability insurance on top of the other two, and that came out at an annual premium of £252 including tax. The limitations

on the policy are that we are not allowed to heat work with a naked flame, so this for example rules out jewellery repairs using a blowtorch.

Funding

Approach the Local Authority or other grant-making bodies
Think Sustainability, Waste reduction, Health and Wellbeing

In Wiltshire: Area Board grant system
Ticks these boxes

Start-up costs include:

Insurance

Venue hire

Advertising (leaflet printing, leaflet design if you don't have these skills in-house)

Cloud storage, website and email

Building a pool of volunteers

We hosted an initial meeting for potential volunteers at the venue we had chosen for the RC. The purpose was to introduce our initial thoughts on how a RC would run (who would do what on the day), and to glean everyone's views on:

Types of items to be repaired

Length of time to spend on each item

Tolerance for risk, and implications for Health and Safety, particularly concerning the repair of electrical items

Administration and organisation

This meeting was chaired by Jimmy and myself, guiding the discussions and presenting the preparation work done to date. We broke into specialist groups (fabric, electrical/mechanical, catering, administration) to be able to discuss detail, and then brought everything together in a closing plenary session.

It felt important to glean everyone's views and engage these potential volunteers, but at the same time to keep a close reign on proceedings.

All action points from this meeting were taken forward by Jimmy and Benji.

A second preparatory meeting was held a week before the first RC session, to present the final arrangements for the day, including
Introduction to the Health, Safety & Wellbeing Policy, including Safeguarding Policy, and the Privacy Policy
Administration and paperwork for processing and recording repairs
Trial repair table arrangement
Dry-run with 3 "mystery customers", completing all relevant paperwork and simulating repairs (no actual repairs)

Promotion

Designer, luckily for free

Leaflets/posters, printed and distributed to interested parties (web sign-up)

Made mistake not to design for home printing; maybe best stick with logo provided by RCI?

Social media

Fantastic results via Facebook

Also doing Twitter and Instagram

Having lots of good images helps.

Good success with paying for boosted FB.

An opportunity to get your head around social media. Does not mean you have to do it privately.

Apart from Instagram, all SM accounts can be accessed and administered from a desktop computer.

It is not necessary to have one's life taken over by SM, and it is entirely possible to deal with SM maintaining what I would call a professional boundary.

Images

Important to have a good selection of powerful RC images. The internet is awash with them, and we have simply ignored any copyright issues, and assumed that all RCs operate in the spirit of sharing resources

Images can easily be stored on and shared from Google Pictures which comes with the Google Suite package.

NB our Privacy Policy specifically refers to the issue of taking pictures of volunteers at SRC

Essential Policies

Health and Safety

We were lucky to have a retired fire officer amongst our volunteers, who had the relevant experience to provide us with all the necessary documents. We have an overarching Health Safety and Wellbeing Policy, Risk Assessments for all our areas of activity, and a Safeguarding document.

The collection can be found here:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1pfzuSOsQtawndJZAgVO4zurkTylJ1b4?usp=sharing>

Privacy

We have a Privacy Policy that spells out how we will handle visitor and volunteer data. A cornerstone of implementing this policy is that all data is kept in one place: on Google Drive of a paid-for G Suite account to which only 2 people have access. We avoid printing out personal data so that no paper copies exist, and we avoid collecting data that is not absolutely necessary, for example: we don't keep a permanent record of the names of our visitors (see also Repair Form) below.

Our Privacy Policy is here:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1psq2oGbp4z6naDEmWheLCfTnrd5fxFWCq-22QJZJNmA/edit?usp=sharing>

A laminated copy is available at every Café session for visitors to inspect.

Volunteer Sign-up

We ask all volunteers to enter their details via a Google Form, which automatically populates the spreadsheet that is our Volunteer Roll. Everyone on that Roll is covered by our insurance policy.

The sign-up form is here:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe1BBUvhaSw5NHVvecXZAoD3flek2JAjAwkeLuXld4R4OX-SA/viewform>

As soon as we receive a new sign-up, Google generates an automated email and notifies us. We can then send a welcome email to the new volunteer, giving them all the information about our organisation and the next Café session.

Communication between volunteers

This is a bit of a difficult issue because of data protection. On the sign-up form some of our volunteers have opted out of sharing their details with anyone but the organisers. This needs to be respected. But it would be nice if all volunteers could correspond. We are investigating a technical solution (e.g. www.vivil.no)

To co-ordinate who will do what on the day of a Repair Café we use [DoodlePoll](#).

Processes and paperwork

Processes

We have a [process flowchart](#) that illustrates the journey of a visitor and the item they have brought along. This is currently under review, because we find that it does not cater for all eventualities, but it is a good starting point.

Documents

[Reception Desk Guide](#) - helps volunteers at the reception desk to set up their work station; useful for the induction of new volunteers

Name badges - we print them out on a label printer before the session, using a mail-merge function with the Volunteer Roll spreadsheet as the source of data

[House Rules](#) - we print out several laminated copies so that they are readily available at the reception desk to show to visitors when they sign the Repair Form; we also have a number of them hanging up on walls around the venue

Forms

[Volunteer Register](#) - as soon as we open up the venue, one volunteer gets assigned to collect everyone's signature, before handing them a name badge

[Repair Forms](#) - we staple raffle tickets to the top right corner, with the first perforation aligned to the right edge: the first ticket gets stapled on, the duplicate gets torn off and handed to the visitor

[Visitor Feedback Forms](#) - these are separate forms that we ask visitors to complete at the check-out stage, when we also ask for a donation

Signs

We put up a number so signs: on reception tables, on repair tables, on walls. You can find our collection in this folder:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1fIlFVrTOVPx6jERObD1K3z2DGpAi7QVr?usp=sharing>

Editing Notes

VVV Bank account, reception and check-out etc processes

Appendix: grant app, sm postings

Include Jimmy's points

Volunteer wellbeing

Supervisory role

It is necessary for at least one organiser to have no specific role during the RC session, and is always free

Sort out any problems, delegate

Anticipate problems, delegate

Make sure volunteers and visitors are happy: listen, act promptly & fairly

Ideas for the future

Skills workshop

Tool library

Using excess funds to help other RC start-ups