



NIRN

Northern Ireland Resources Network

Circular Resources Shared Learning

Case Study

Introduction

In July 2025, members Repair and Share Foyle (R&SF) and Tools for Solidarity (TFS) embarked on a dynamic collaboration as part of the Circular Resource Library initiative. This collaboration involved skill sharing with TFS providing sewing machine repair training to R&SF.

Participants expressed the significant benefit of the activity and their interest in further engagement with each other and the wider NIRN members network. The training was mutually beneficial to both members who thoroughly enjoyed getting to know each other better as well as R&SF having the opportunity to upskill and subsequently expand their services whilst TFS benefitted from the donated sewing machines and financial support for workshop facilitation. Overall the collaboration was also able to extend the life of the sewing machines - reuse and repair at the very heart of the initiative.

R&S Foyle / Tools for Solidarity July 2025



Background

R&SF, based in Derry City, was established in May 2022. They started as a repair cafe and have now grown to have their own permanent premises with a Library of Things and a number of other projects in development. As a repair cafe, R&SF are constantly looking to improve their services.

TFS is a non profit organisation based in Belfast and Downpatrick. They support deprived communities globally through the donation of high quality tools, sewing machines and training.

When the opportunity arose, both organisations were keen to avail of the Circular Resources Library as an opportunity to skill share and learn from one another. Members from TFS subsequently travelled to R&SF's premises in Derry to facilitate the workshop in July 2025.

Presentation of Findings

In preparation for the workshop, R&SF issued an open call to the local community, asking for donations of old sewing machines. This initiative aimed to gather a variety of machines that would not only serve as practical learning tools but also be refurbished for future use or donation. During the collaboration:



Analysis

The collaboration via the Community Resource Library brought about positive outcomes for both organisations involved. Both groups emphasised the benefit of Community Resource Library as an avenue to upskill their volunteers without expense and stated they would be keen to further engage with other NIRN members through the programme. R&SF stated that they would welcome another visit to TFS to continue learning about sewing machines given the complexity and the continuing opportunity to learn. Not only did the collaboration help R&SF in increasing their repertoire for their repair cafes, but also gave back to their volunteers by providing the opportunity for individuals to develop their own skills.

In this instance, the CRL's structure in developing mutual benefit among its members helped build a positive relationship between R&SF and TFS. Although TFS and R&SF are distinct organisations with different focuses and goals, both gained significant value from their engagement—not only through the workshop itself, but also through discussions about their structures, operations, and premises. This exchange encouraged reflection on how elements of each other's models could be adapted to improve their own efficiency and effectiveness.

This successful collaboration could easily be replicated for other repair cafes throughout Northern Ireland to help grow opportunities for repair. Equally, other skill sets could be taught to groups in a similar format e.g. PAT Testing and electrical repair. Overall, this specific collaboration illustrates the potential of collaboration in growing the repair sector locally.

Presentation of Findings

The collaboration between R&SF and TFS through the Community Resource Library has been met with remarkable enthusiasm and success. This partnership has proven to be mutually beneficial, developing knowledge and skill sharing, as well as promoting cooperation between the two organisations and financial gain. The connection established here allows both groups to continue working together to build on their skill set as well as developing their individual organisations. The strengthening of the members network is invaluable for all NIRN members as they continue to grow and develop. Bringing reuse and repair to the forefront in Northern Ireland through education, community engagement, and collaboration we are creating a culture that values sustainability and innovation.