



Northern Ireland Resources Network

Circular Resources Shared Learning

Case Study

Introduction

This case study explores the shared learning project between Tools for Solidarity (TfS) and Life Change Changes Lives (LCCL), two non-profit organisations dedicated to empowering communities through practical support and skills development. The project focused on the repair and reuse of industrial sewing machines, with TfS not only restoring donated equipment for LCCL but also providing hands-on training to LCCL members. This initiative sought to enhance skills, foster self-sufficiency, and promote sustainable resource use within the community. The outcomes included increased skills among participants, significant equipment reuse, and strengthened organisational ties.



Tools for Solidarity and Life Change Changes Lives

November 2025



Tools For Solidarity
est: 1984



life change
changes lives

Background

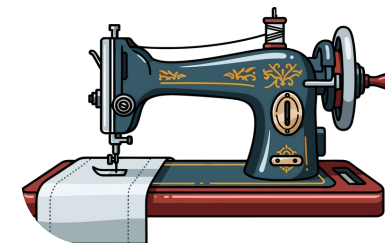
Tools for Solidarity (TfS) is a Belfast-based charity committed to supporting livelihoods in disadvantaged communities, both locally and internationally, by collecting, refurbishing, and distributing tools and equipment. Their expertise lies in mechanical repairs and skills training, fostering a culture of reuse and sustainability.

Life Change Changes Lives (LCCL) is a community organisation focused on providing support, training, and opportunities for individuals facing barriers to employment, particularly those affected by mental health challenges or long-term unemployment. LCCL's mission is to offer meaningful activities that build confidence, skills, and community integration.

The collaboration arose from LCCL's need for their industrial sewing machines to be fixed to expand their textile and upcycling programmes. TfS responded to a request from NIRN through their Circular Resources Library initiative by offering to repair the donated machines and deliver tailored training sessions for LCCL members. The project involved skilled staff from TfS, LCCL staff, volunteers, and participants eager to acquire new skills and contribute to their community.

Presentation of Findings

The collaboration between TfS and LCCL marked a significant achievement in community empowerment and sustainability. With the donation of three industrial sewing machines, TfS embarked on a mission to restore these vital tools, which required extensive repairs. Their efforts over the half-day visit not only brought the machines back to life but also enhanced the skills of eight LCCL staff, volunteers, and members through hands-on workshops. Participants reported increased confidence in machine operation, maintenance, and troubleshooting, emphasising the practical value of these sessions. This initiative also contributed to environmental sustainability by diverting approximately 150kg of machinery from landfill. Participants expressed gratitude and newfound capability, highlighting the transformative impact of the project on their involvement in community textile projects. The partnership demonstrated the powerful outcomes achievable when organisations collaborate towards shared goals.



Benefits and Impacts

The collaboration delivered tangible benefits for both organisations and the wider community. LCCL members gained practical skills that enhanced their skills and self-esteem, while TfS advanced its mission of promoting repair and reuse. The project also strengthened the relationship between the two organisations, paving the way for future joint initiatives.

Unexpected Outcomes

An unexpected outcome was the increased interest among LCCL members in mechanical skills beyond sewing, prompting discussions about further training in equipment maintenance. Additionally, the project fostered a sense of community and mutual support.

Lessons Learned

- Clear communication and shared goals are essential for successful collaboration.
- Hands-on, practical training is highly effective for building participant confidence and competence.
- Repair and reuse initiatives can have far reaching impacts, from environmental benefits to personal empowerment.



Conclusion

The partnership between Tools for Solidarity and Life Change Changes Lives demonstrates the power of collaborative, skills-based initiatives in driving positive community outcomes. By repairing and reusing industrial sewing machines and providing accessible training, the project delivered measurable benefits in sustainability, skills development, and community engagement.