



## Tools for Solidarity, Belfast and Change Clothes, Dublin January 2026



**Tools For Solidarity**  
est: 1984



### Presentation of Findings

Participants were taught the fundamentals of how sewing machines operate, equipping them with the knowledge needed to effectively troubleshoot and resolve any issues that may arise. In addition, the training covered essential practices for cleaning and maintaining equipment, ensuring the longevity and reliability of the sewing machines.

The training successfully demystified the workings of sewing machines, empowering individuals from various backgrounds including volunteers, and Change Clothes staff to engage confidently in repair work. This inclusive approach gave allowed for a sense of capability among all attendees, encouraging them to tackle equipment repairs without hesitation.

As a result of the training, the group acquired valuable skills in sewing machine maintenance and repair. These new competencies will help them keep their machines operational and allow them to address repairs independently whenever necessary.



### Circular Resources Shared Learning

## All Island Case Study

### Introduction

This case study details a collaborative project between Tools for Solidarity Belfast and Change Clothes Dublin, marking the first all-island Circular Resources Library Shared Learning initiative. The partnership focused on sewing machine refurbishment and repair training, aiming to enhance skills and promote circular resource management by extending the lifecycle of equipment.

The Circular Resources Library Shared Learning project represents a pioneering effort across the island, bringing together expertise from Belfast and Dublin. The primary aim of this initiative is to facilitate shared learning in sewing machine refurbishment and repair.

As part of the project, participants received focused training in the refurbishment and repair of sewing machines. This training supports both skill development and the broader goals of circular resource management by extending the lifespan of equipment.

### Empowering Community Repair through Knowledge Sharing and Partnership

#### Background

##### About Tools for Solidarity

Tools For Solidarity is a not-for-profit organisation in Belfast. Our work is fully run by international, local and supported volunteers. And the main focus of our charity is to support artisans in the poorest parts of the world and mostly in the countries of Africa. This act of solidarity enables them to become more self-reliant and have some hope for the future.

##### About Change Clothes

Change Clothes are on a mission to prevent textile waste at its source, tackling the problem locally before it becomes a global issue. Along the way, they create opportunities for the long term unemployed and spark meaningful change. Their goal is to make textile reuse community-focused, fun, affordable, and social. Change Clothes offer creative reuse solutions for textiles at every stage of their lifecycle.

##### Nature of the Collaboration

The collaboration between Tools for Solidarity Belfast and Change Clothes Dublin was grounded in a shared commitment to circular resource management and skill development. By pooling their expertise and resources, the partners sought to create a platform for hands-on learning, fostering community engagement and practical knowledge exchange in sewing machine refurbishment and repair. The partnership exemplified a cross-border, community-driven approach to sustainability.

### Benefits and Impacts

- **Enhanced Sustainability:** The training contributes to Change Clothes becoming more sustainable by ensuring that equipment, such as sewing machines, is maintained and repaired rather than replaced, reducing waste and promoting environmental responsibility.
- **Cost and Time Efficiency:** By empowering the team with skills to systematically identify and resolve common issues with sewing machines, the organisation will save both time and money on repairs, minimising downtime and external repair costs.
- **Increased Staff Capability:** The group's improved knowledge and confidence in repairing sewing machines gives greater independence and resourcefulness within the team, leading to a more resilient and capable workforce.
- **Operational Reliability:** With three sewing machines repaired during the training, Change Clothes can ensure smoother operations and consistent productivity, reducing disruptions caused by faulty equipment.



### Conclusion

The sewing machine training initiative has not only bolstered Change Clothes' sustainability efforts but also fostered empowerment and opportunity among the team and participants. By equipping members with the skills to maintain and repair essential equipment, the organisation stands to benefit from improved efficiency and reliability. Embracing repair as a core practice supports the principles of the circular economy, extending the life of machinery and reducing waste. This approach helps Change Clothes minimise environmental impact, conserve resources, and promote responsible consumption. Furthermore, the personal growth sparked in trainees, such as the young Ukrainian participant, highlights the wider social impact such workshops can have. Overall, the project demonstrates how practical skills development and a commitment to repair can drive positive changes within the organisation and the broader community, contributing meaningfully to a more sustainable future.

