**Operating Guidelines for Volunteer Repairers and Helpers**

**Background**

Thank you for becoming a volunteer at Oxshott Repair café. Our café launched on 20 January 2024. In planning to set it up, we visited local repair cafes and have drawn from their experience as well as the guidance provided by the International Repair Cafe (as well as our insurance requirements). We are also members of the Greater Surrey Repair Café Forum, giving us the opportunity to learn from the experience of other local repair cafes. From all of this background we have developed our Operating Guidelines, which, by volunteering with us you agree to abide by. As we grow and develop we will regularly revisit these guidelines and we are always keen to learn and improve so please contact the Helper Team with your ideas/suggestions/learning and observations (repair@oxshottnetzero.org.uk)

**Operating Guidelines**

**Basic principles**

***Not everything is repairable!*** Here is a quote from a repairer from another local repair café: “Some people bring in items that cannot be repaired and are satisfied when we give them ‘permission’ to throw them away/recycle them.” This is still a success since it satisfies the owner, but it also helps us gather evidence and data. At every repair café, data is collected about the items being brought in for repair and what is wrong with them. That information is fed back into the International Repair Cafe and iFixit movements who are receiving similar data from repair cafes up and down the country. They then use this information to lobby manufacturers for the "right to repair" (for example using standard screws or not sealing components in an inaccessible unit. See: https://www.repaircafe.org/en/

***Work collaboratively with other repairers.*** An item may be repairable - however it may not be within the range of your own repair skills. Always be willing to give and receive advice; no one person has all the right answers. A collaborative approach often gets the best results - and can be more fun/rewarding.

***Work collaboratively with the item-owner.*** The idea is to support the item-owner - not to do it all for them. Part of the ethos of the repair café is to pass on knowledge and skills where practical/possible. Owners will also probably have been using the item regularly, so they may have valuable insight as to how it should work.

**Repairers**

• All Repairers must have completed a Volunteer Form before undertaking any repairs at the Cafe, and, by volunteering with us agree to abide by our Operating Guidelines. Potential Repairers are invited to visit the Cafe in advance of committing to volunteering, in order to see how we operate, and may choose to ‘buddy up’ with another Repairer for future sessions.   
• All Repairers and Helpers will be registered for each session at Danes Hill School as a Visitor for safeguarding reasons. They will need to wear a lanyard whilst they are working at the café. The repair café team will need to know in advance if you are intending to attend a particular café as a volunteer so that we can inform the school in advance.

• Repairers are asked to let the Helper Team know of their availability for forthcoming Cafes as soon as they are able. You are under no obligation to attend each Cafe but it’s helpful if the Helpers know how many Repairers to expect - and with what skills - in order to manage sessions more effectively.   
• We will encourage visitors to the repair café to let us know in advance what they are bringing so that there is a chance to research repairing items before the café. There will however also be people walking in with items unannounced. There are lots of online tutorials for how to fix things but a rich resource of advice can be found here

https://www.ifixit.com/ and also on youtube

• Prior to each session, we will circulate details of any potential repairs which we have received.   
• Details of our operating principles are contained within the House Rules and Registration Form (appendix 1), which all item-owners are required to sign when bringing an item to the Cafe.   
• All repairers are reminded that ORC acts as a ‘clinic’ and not a ‘hospital’. With this in mind, repairers are asked to make as quick a diagnosis of a problem as possible and a decision on whether to proceed with the repair. No repair should be undertaken which is likely to take more than an hour.  
• Repairers have the right to refuse any item for repair that:

* is likely to take too long to fix at a normal session
* requires replacement of a part that the customer has not provided
* requires specialist skills and/or equipment and tools that are not available at the session
* is considered to be a potential danger to the repairer
* is in so bad a state of disrepair/damage that a repair is unlikely to be successful and could be a potential hazard to the repairer and the customer
* is too dirty/unpleasant to handle or too badly torn/damaged to make a repair viable

If a repairer is unable or does not wish to attempt a repair for any reason, s/he is not required to justify this decision but should offer as much advice as possible to the item-owner.

**Safety**

• Repair Cafe volunteers are covered by the repair café insurance policy but must take responsibility for their own Health and Safety when taking part in Cafe activities - undertaking a personal assessment of the risks associated with working on a particular item before starting work on it. Again, a collaborative approach can be useful!   
• Always consider your safety and that of others, and if you have any questions or concerns, please discuss with another Repairer or a member of the Helper Team.   
• Our first priority is to remove any hazard in order that there is zero risk - for example: don't route cables across a floor or walkway - re-organise the workspace or route them around the edges or over the top. If as a last resort extension leads/cables have to run along the floor they must be kept out of the flow of foot traffic, and be taped down.   
• Soldering. Please only solder or use a flame outside because of smoke alarms  
• Blades/sharp instruments. Always cut away from yourself, and we recommend using gloves.   
• Drinks. Please be careful when enjoying a hot drink in case spillages cause damage, create a hazard or injure you and/or a Repairee.  
• Personal Protective Equipment. Protective goggles and gloves are available for general use at each Cafe - please use them as appropriate. Please let the Helper Team know if there is anything else that you require, in advance of the Cafe session.   
• Accidents/Near misses. All accidents/near misses must be reported to the Helper Team immediately, and recorded in the ‘Accident/Near Misses’ book on the day.

**Electrical items**

• All Repairers should have received, read and understood the ‘Guidelines for working on Electrical Items’ document (appendix 2) before undertaking any work on electrical items. Please contact the Helper team if you have any questions about this.   
• Helpers will endeavour to ensure that there is at least one ‘Designated Competent Person’ (who will be identified as ‘Electrician on Duty’) at each Cafe, but in the event that none is available the Repairee will be asked to bring the item to a future session. A place is available on the item Registration Form for the testing to be recorded. Note: We would like to increase the number of Repairers that are qualified/competent to conduct electrical safety tests. Please let us know if you are a qualified electrical safety tester (or similar).

**Working with item-owners**

• As far as possible, please try to engage the item-owner in the repair, explaining what you think the problem is, what you are doing etc. However, we realise that some item-owners struggle to maintain their involvement - particularly if they bring young children with them - so there is ‘no pressure’ if this proves to be difficult.

**Tools, Parts and Costs**

• We are currently building up our supply of tools and equipment. We have a basic set of tools and supplies, but you may prefer to bring their own ‘kit’. Please check regularly what we provide as it is regularly updated.

• The Repair Cafe maintains a basic kit of glues, tapes, batteries, sewing materials etc but please let the Helpers know of anything that you think we should keep in stock and we will endeavour to purchase it.   
• Repairers should never incur any personal costs repairing an item.   
• If Repairers believe, from images sent to them prior to the Cafe, that particular parts are needed, they should notify the Helper team to agree a process for purchase. In cases where the part is above £5 the Repairee will be notified (in advance of the purchase) of the likely cost and that they will be required to pay this. Lower value parts can be purchased by the Repairer/helper and funds refunded via the Cafe (with a receipt being required). Helpers will then ask the Repairee for this to be refunded.   
• If required parts are identified at the Cafe itself, the Repairer should provide the item-owner with the details of them and where they can be purchased. The item-owner can either then be told how to undertake the replacement themselves, or invited to return to a future Cafe for the job to be completed.   
• It is a requirement of our insurance policy that we only undertake repair work of a “light, manual” nature.   
• Petrol Operated Items. We will not accept petrol operated items.  
• Welding. We will not accept items that clearly need welding - and no welding may take place on the Cafe premises. We may be able to suggest a local business who can weld   
• Printers. We frequently receive requests for printer repairs - and are mindful that these can be very time-consuming and/or tricky. We will continue to accept these unless repairers tell us that they would prefer not to undertake their repair.   
• Microwaves. We will generally not undertake work on microwave ovens.  
• External patio heaters. We will not undertake work on these, due to their negative impact on the environment. We will explain this if we receive requests for repairs.   
• Antiques. Repairers and Helpers should inform repairees if an item is too difficult or valuable for a repair to be attempted.   
• Signposting. We are trying to keep a list of local businesses/specialist repairers who may be able to help those that we can’t help. Please let us know of any that you are aware of. This also applies to places where people can buy parts/materials locally rather than use global on-line sources! (The list will be available at each Repair Cafe)   
• 3D printing. We may be able to help with 3D printing of ‘tricky’ replacement parts.

**General matters**

• Repairers will be offered free refreshments throughout the session. Please let the Helper Team know of any allergies.   
• Item-owners are invited to make a donation for works carried out, and for refreshments - but no pressure is ever applied for them to do so. A donation tin and card machine is provided on the Helper desk. Donations are used to meet Cafe running costs/materials/tools etc,

Appendix 1: House Rules and item registration form

Appendix 2: Guidelines for working on electrical items, working safely and manual lifting

Appendix 3: Code of Conduct

25 February 2023