

Bath & North East Somerset Council Guidelines for running a clothes swap

We have run two successful clothes swaps in Bath and would like to support groups to run their own. A clothes swap is an event where people swap clothes, shoes and accessories that they no longer want, like, need or fit for 'new to them' items. Clothes swaps can be just for women's, men's or children's clothing or a mix of these.

This guidance is designed to give you guidelines, ideas and materials for putting on your own event based on similar events. This guidance accompanies our clothes swap loan kit which includes most of the equipment that you'll need for the event and which you can borrow from Bath and North East Somerset Council for free. All we ask is that you monitor the amount of items that are swapped at your event so we can measure the total amount of goods that get passed on for re-use.

With the rise of fast fashion we've got more clothes in our wardrobe than ever before, with the average UK household owning around £4,000 worth of clothes, although around 30% of these haven't been worn for at least a year. Add to that the estimated 350,000 tonnes of used clothing goes to landfill in the UK every year and that's a lot of clothes that could actually have been worn again (WRAP, 2012)

Clothes Swap events can take the form of a night in with friends, a lunch-time swap at the office or a larger, public event raising money for charity. If you're looking to run a large, public clothes swapping event then the following advice is for you.

The team

This isn't an event that you would want to tackle on your own – you'll need a small team – the more hands the better. Friends and relatives are a good starting point or you could approach a local voluntary group, such as a local environmental group, that might be thinking along the same lines as you. If you're running your event to raise money or increase donations of items for a local charity then perhaps the charity has a pool of volunteers that you could tap into. Additionally, you could advertise for volunteers locally. Get in touch with Bath and North East Somerset Council using the contact details at the end of this guide as we will be able to support your event along the way. You will need lots of helpers to check clothes, display them, keep them tidy and help clear up at the end of your event.

Event planning

Ideally, you will need to start preparing at least eight weeks before you want your event to take place. This will enable everyone who wants to be involved to make the date, as well as giving you enough time to book the venue and to publicise the event. It's worth checking that there isn't another local event due to run at the same time so that you don't end up competing for visitors.

Finding a venue

Any local, large hall that is regularly used for this kind of event will be suitable and will, no doubt, have the right facilities such as toilets and disabled access. School halls are worth investigating. Suitable car parking is useful but will be one of the factors involved in choosing the right venue.

It may be possible to find a venue to use for free in the local area – perhaps via the library or another local organisation. Evening clothes swaps can work well in the function room of a pub where the pub will get the business from those visiting the clothes swap – they may even let you have the room for free. Make sure the venue is accessible to all.

Often a venue will have their own terms and conditions to adhere to such as the need to have your own public liability insurance, a limit on the capacity of the venue and specific arrangements for recycling / waste disposal. You may wish to run a pay bar where you can also raise funds for your organisation or pay a company to run a bar to make it more of a social occasion.

Charges / costs

Clothes swaps normally charge around £5 for entry. All or part of this could be donated to charity or to help raise funds for your group depending on what your event costs are. Often clothes swaps are run primarily as fund-raising events and then the ticket price might be a minimum donation amount. You could offer a drink or a raffle ticket in with the entry fee if you think that would appeal.

Event times

Clothes swaps can be run in the evening during the week or during the day-time on a Saturday or Sunday. The times below show the timetable we used of our evening clothes swap.

- **3.30-6.30pm – Drop-off – Items are checked in by the clothes swap team to check that they meet the clothes swapping criteria and then swapped for clothes swapping tokens.**
- **6:30-7:00pm – Continue sorting / displaying clothes** – Half an hour break between dropping off and the start of the clothes swap ensures that everything can be hung up / put out on display in time.
- **7.30pm – The Clothes swap opens!** Time to swap tokens for lots of lovely 'new' things!
- **9.00pm – The Clothes swap ends!**

Running the Event

There are many different ways that a clothes swap can work.

Basically, to swap, guests will need to bring at least one unwanted item in good, clean, gently worn condition i.e. not in need of repair, shrunk, stained, ripped, torn, missing buttons, sequins or beading, bobbly, discoloured or with broken zips.

You can have an upper limit for the number of items that people bring if you think that is necessary – perhaps up to 15 or 20 items.

Ask people to bring:

It's really up to you what items you want to include but the following are what are normally accepted at these kinds of event. We have dealt only with adult clothes at our swaps but you could consider including or run solely children's clothes swap in appropriate venues e.g. schools.

Clothes and if you want to be more specific:

Tops / Blouses / Shirts
Trousers / Jeans / Shorts (depending on season)
Skirts / Dresses
Jumpers / Cardigans
Jackets / Coats
Evening Wear
Accessories such as:
Handbags
Scarves / Shawls
Belts
Hats
Jewellery

Shoes / Boots

Ask people not to bring:

Swimwear
Underwear including tights/socks/leggings
Nightwear
Gym-wear
Pierced jewellery

As people arrive, your clothes swapping team will need to look over what they have brought to check that it meets the criteria prior to exchanging their items for clothes swapping tokens. Items can be rated according to their label/quality but this takes quite a lot of time and you may decide that isn't necessary and that the most important thing is that items are in good, clean condition and ready to be worn again – not tired and past it!

We have just used a one item for one token system to make it simple. You'll need to be very specific in your publicity about the kinds of items you are willing to accept and the condition you expect them to be in.

Don't be afraid to refuse things that don't meet the criteria and have a charity bag or recycling box ready for these. As items are being checked the team can also explain 'How to Clothes swap'.

If you choose to use a rating system then think along the lines of:

Gold – designer items and expensive High Street brands such as Whistles, All Saints

Silver – better quality High Street brands such as Reiss, Marks & Spencer, Zara

Bronze – supermarket brands, Primark, New Look etc

If you are rating items you will also have to work out a system for labelling the item. Tagging can take time so perhaps a small coloured dot on the label is the best approach.

If you are sticking to the simpler plan of swapping one for one then give people one token for each good item that they have brought.

As clothes are checked in they will then need to be put out on display – first of all categorised by garment and then, if time, by size.

Lots and lots of **clothes rails** are hugely important for a clothes swap. We have six available to borrow as part of our clothes swap event kit. Likewise, **coat hangers** – the event kit has 200 of these available. Tables are also important for handbags, accessories and folded clothing items such as tops. You will need a number of tables for checking people / items in and out. Low tables or shoe racks are great for keeping shoes neat and tidy.

You may find that you have a fair amount of items that have been amassed prior to the event that will also need putting out before the event opens.

If you're using the rating system, then tokens can be swapped for an item of the same or lesser colour but if someone wants to swap for something 'better' then they will need to double up on tokens as follows:

2 x Bronze = Silver / 2 x Silver = Gold

Or 4 x Bronze = Gold

Towards the end of the evening, when everyone has completed all of their swaps, you might like to make items available for sale. Have a fixed price for these items of £3-£5 per item with this money going to charity or to fund your next event.

If someone cannot find enough items that they like to take home with them again i.e. they have brought more than they can find to take away, ensure them that all of the remaining clothes are going to a good cause and let them know which charity you are supporting.

So, ideally you would have a team along these lines, at the minimum:

3 checking items in

3 putting items out on display

3 checking items out

For trying items on, unless you have a useful side room to your venue then it will be necessary to rig up a makeshift changing area. The Clothes swap event kit includes **freestanding mirrors**.

It is a good idea to have a secure area of the hall for volunteer's belongings and ensure any volunteers are fully thanked for their contribution and make sure to keep them fed and watered throughout the event!

Added extras

Clothes swapping was originally conceived as an event with a party atmosphere so consider setting the mood with music, drinks & nibbles, bunting and other decorations etc. You may also want to invite local clothes upcyclers and garment repairers to have a stand to promote their work at your event. To make your event even bigger and better, why not invite a local seamstress along to give advice on how to do alterations.

Events like these are also an opportunity to raise awareness of the environmental and social problems associated with the fashion industry. Ideally, your event will inspire people beyond the day to waste less, buy less and re-use and recycle more. Every time a piece of clothing is thrown away, all of the energy, water and natural resources that went into producing it go to waste. Every item that is taken away from the clothes swap may mean that one less thing is bought new and that one less item is disposed which is brilliant for conserving resources. [Love Your Clothes](#) is a national campaign that provides all sorts of tips on how to look after your clothes to make them last longer and could be promoted at the event. Contact us to see if we can run a roadshow at your event to encourage and give advice to everyone not to throw away clothes but to re-use or recycle them.

Event publicity

Local publicity is key to getting as many people as possible along to your event. The more people that attend, the more clothes are donated and therefore the more choice available. But you may also need to have a maximum number of attendees for the space and the volunteers to handle. Giving people plenty of advance notice gives them enough time to sort through their wardrobes to be able to make the most of your event. Produce posters that will attract people to your event.

Make sure you add the venue, date, time, contact for more information and some of the **'How to Clothes swap'** info in your publicity so that people understand what to expect. Use as much local publicity you can, such as:

- Put up posters around the local area, in as many locations as possible. Ask every shop/café on your main street to put a poster in their window, ask householders on different streets to do this as well and make sure it makes it on to your town / village noticeboards and in the local library.
- Leave flyers (A5 or A6 versions of the poster) in shops and public places such as the library for people to take. Start distributing your posters and flyers about three weeks before the event.
- Send a press release to the local newspapers/radio approximately three weeks before the event (depending on their submission / printing schedule). They may be willing to do an article on your upcoming event which will serve as an advertisement but they may also want to come along on the day itself to take photos and do a follow-up article. Send an image along with your press release or a jpeg copy of your poster.
- Your local paper may also have a listings / What's On section that you can get your event included in.
- Depending on the success of your pre-event press release, you may need to consider paying for an advert (based on your poster) in a local publication.
- You can also send your press release to local newsletters such as parish and village magazines and websites. However, these may be monthly publications so check their deadlines well in advance. Again, send an image with your release.
- Additionally, local schools may be happy to print your poster in their newsletter or display it on a community noticeboard.
- Bath and North East Somerset Council can list your event on their event calendar and also publicise it on their Facebook page www.facebook.com/recycleforbathnes
- Submit your event on www.clotheswaping.com and www.loveyourclothes.org.uk/events/
- Consider using www.eventbrite.co.uk to sell tickets for your event and promote it, although for an event that is costing £5, Eventbrite will receive £0.95 of this.
- Make good use of social media; if you have use of a Twitter account then tweet local organisations, including press, for them to retweet. Create the event as a public one on Facebook and then share it across relevant Facebook pages / groups such as What's On in Bath and the local Buy/Sell/Swap groups that now exist on Facebook.
- Promote the event via your local Freecycle / Freecycle group.
- List details of your event on local websites such as your town or parish council's event listings.
- Email the poster to your friends and family and via relevant local email networks. Word of mouth is the best form of advertising so tell everyone you know / meet about your event!

- Involve any event partners in promoting the event such as your venue or the charity you are fund-raising for.
- A banner is useful to put up in the weeks running up to the event and outside of the venue on the day. An 'A' board is also available in this kit for displaying large versions of your event poster on the day.

Monitoring your clothes swap

One of the ways to determine the success of your event is to monitor the number of items that are actually swapped and record the weight of how much is swapped and how much left over.

You need to make sure you have arranged for anything left over at the end of the event to be stored somewhere for another event or donated to a local charity that may be willing to collect at the end of the event but you will need to arrange this before your event. Or arrange a pick up from a clothes recycling company who may pay you for your items.

- Count the items accepted for swapping and weigh
- Count the number of items swapped You can work this out by counting up the number of tokens that you take back in
- Count the items left over and weigh so you can use the number of items swapped and the weight of these to publicise your success in the media. Please also let us have this information so we can monitor the success of our event loan kit
- Perhaps provide a short feedback survey for attendees to complete

Your success may encourage others to hold their own event. Work out what you would do differently/better, if anything and then book a date for your next event!

It might be a good idea to do your own **post-event press release** in case the press don't make it along. Make sure to take photos/video of the event in full swing to include with this release. A newspaper article after the event also gives you the opportunity to advertise the date of your next event.

Bath & North East Somerset Council's clothes swap loan equipment kit

Let us know that you are arranging an event and we can loan you our clothes swap equipment (Bath & North East Somerset area only) for free. If you wish to borrow our equipment we would require you to have our Love Your Clothes roadshow at your event if appropriate. We can help with publicity via our social media platforms and Council website. We can also offer free advice on running a clothes swap event.

EQUIPMENT

- Clothes rails x 6
- Clothes hangers 200+
- Mirrors x3
- Blackboard x1
- A boards x1
- Textile repair cards i.e. How to sew on a button, How to take up a hem
- Textile leaflets
- Digital scales x2

Insurance & Risk Assessment

It is recommended that groups of volunteers undertaking this kind of event have suitable public liability insurance. Often, venues will also insist on this kind of insurance being in place but it may be possible that the venue has their own public liability insurance that your event could come under.

A risk assessment is recommended for this event and may also be required by your insurance policy. We have included a **template risk assessment** with this kit which should be completed prior to the day and monitored on the day in the case of new and unexpected hazards. Please be aware that the template risk assessment is only an example and you will need to identify any further hazards and control measures that are directly relevant to your venue and event. Volunteers will need to be briefed on the risk assessment before the start of the event and will need to remain aware of hazards as they arise throughout the morning; taking necessary action to remediate – such as dealing with breakages.

N.B. We have run 2 successful public clothes swaps in Bath and these guidelines have been adapted from Recycle Devon.



www.recycledevon.org

**For further advice, guidance and help with running your event as well to provide any feedback on this toolkit, please contact
wastecampaigns@bathnes.gov.uk
Council Connect 01225 39 40 41**

**Like us on facebook for news and tips
to reduce your waste and recycle
and re-use more:
facebook.com/recycleforbathnes**

Risk Assessment

Location of event:	Date of risk assessment:
Name(s) of risk assessor(s)	

Tasks undertaken	Hazards	Who might be harmed?	How can the risk be controlled?	What further action is needed to control the risk?	Action when?
Setting up and taking down equipment	Slip, trip or fall Manual handling injury Falling equipment	Volunteers and members of the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training in manual handling • Only use equipment capable of moving and setting up • Ensure equipment is fit for purpose and instructions are available 	<p>Organiser has carried out a pre-event site visit to ensure that the area is suitable to hold event with disabled access.</p> <p>Organiser to give pre-event briefing session with all volunteers to include instructions on manual handling</p>	

