



## How to plan and run a Community Clothes Swap (or Swish)

This guide has been created to help you organise and run a clothes swap. In its simplest form a swap is simply a group of people coming together with clothes they no longer wish to keep that are then organised into categories (dresses, trousers, etc) and taken away by someone else. They're a great way to get a whole new wardrobe that's easy on your wallet and great for the planet.

### Venue

Make sure you choose a venue that's easy to access, and quite centrally located. It should have a good sized hall or large room, though some have been held in large foyers that have good footfall. A small kitchen is essential if offering refreshments and somewhere for people to try on clothes can be nice.

### Volunteer roles

You will need a team of volunteers to help you run the event and do the following:

- book the venue and do a risk assessment
- ensure there's good publicity via posters, the local press/newsletters and social media
- go to CCFs office near Cambridge North Station to collect and return the kit
- set up the kit at the venue plus tables, signage and any decoration
- weigh the bags of donations as they come in and record weights. Do the same at the end of the event.
- sort clothes and accessories into categories at the beginning, and keep the railings and tables tidy during the event
- welcome people and explain how the event works, manage donations and signups at the door, do a headcount
- pack up after the event and load any leftover clothes into bags to take to a charity shop (agree this with a charity shop in advance)
- if you're also having a cafe, then you'll need bakers, servers and people to wash-up. Somebody needs to write up and display the allergens in each cake.
- if you have some info and materials to share around environmental issues and carbon footprints, then it's great to have someone on this stall to talk to people

### Promotion

Good promotion is very important. Make sure you start promoting it at least six weeks beforehand, to allow people to get it into their calendars. Create a really eye-catching poster (sample poster [here](#)) with all the key information written clearly: date, time (when to drop off

for sorting and when it starts and ends), location, cost or free, what to bring (men's/women's/children's and only clothes or accessories and footwear too?), whether there will be refreshments etc.

Put posters up in public spaces like libraries, corridors, schools, halls, local shops. You can email info to organisations, community groups and friends and ask them to display posters for you and forward it on. Social media is an easy and very effective way of publicising an event: schedule regular posts (once a week, for instance), tag in lots of organisations and ask your friends to share the event as well.

Tying in with key dates can be effective - Sustainable Fashion Week is usually in Sept, World Earth Day in April or maybe there are locally significant dates that you can tie in with?

## **Equipment needed**

- the Community Clothes Swap Kit that includes hangers, rails, signage, fold out mirrors and luggage scales. Here are the [Instructions for putting up the rails](#).
- posters to put up outside the venue.
- stationery such as pens, clipboards, blu-tac, tape, drawing pins.
- spare plastic bags, recycling collection bags and bin liners to take remaining clothes to your designated charity shop.
- extra labels for clothing categories.
- a makeshift changing room like a small gazebo (but only if there's no room or space you can use at the venue).
- chairs and tables for the cafe, and tables for sorting clothes and laying out trousers, shirts, knits, etc.
- refreshments: tea, coffee, sugar, milk, cakes, display stands and large knives, napkins, cups, plates, jugs, spoons, float, price signs and things for washing up.
- you might also like to decorate the venue with bunting, tablecloths and little vases/jam jars with flowers. Having some music playing helps create a nice atmosphere.
- an information table with some displays/leaflets and further information about reducing your footprint, connecting with local groups and initiatives working in sustainability. CCF will have some materials and may be able to come and calculate carbon footprints at events.

## **At the event (timing & setup)**

- Allow *at least* an hour before the advertised time to set up the venue. Have 1-2 tables by the front entrance (for signup sheets, information, donation bowl, etc) with a volunteer to welcome people as they arrive. Allow at least two tables for people to leave their donations on - volunteers can take the clothes from here, weigh the bags using the luggage scale and then sort them into the appropriate categories: dresses, jackets, blouses, skirts, work well hanging on railings; trousers, knits, shirts, accessories and kid's clothes work well folded on tables
- You'll have advertised a drop-off time and then a time when the swapping begins. Leave at least 30 mins between drop-off and the start of swapping for volunteers to sort clothes into categories. Swappers can leave the venue and come back for the start, or preferably sit and drink tea/eat cakes and/or browse your leaflets and info if you have some.
- When clothes are sorted and just before the actual swapping begins, it's nice for one of the organisers to welcome everyone and provide a brief introduction on how things will work. We tend to let people donate and take as much or little as they like. Explain how

it works, why you're doing it, and whether it's a fundraiser (draw their attention to the donation bowl). Declare the swish open ( a lot of the activity happens early on and then people tend to circle the room a few times for bits they didn't notice first time round!)

- An hour is generally enough time for the swap, but be prepared for some people to stick around a little longer.
- Leave at least an hour at the end to pack up the venue. Make sure you leave it as you found it. Pack the remaining clothes into large bags, weigh them and deliver them to your charity shop before they close!

## **Money matters**

A swish can be organised for free amongst friends...but swishes do make excellent fundraisers. Though CCF doesn't do this, you can charge a small entry fee, or encourage a small contribution per item. We generally ask people to donate as they leave - having someone shaking a bucket at the exit really works. If you have a card reader that's helpful as many people don't carry cash.

Your biggest earnings will likely be made at your cafe if you can arrange one. Having basic refreshments such as tea, coffee and good quality/homemade cakes is quite important to fill the time between drop and start. Set up some tables and chairs, write labels with the name and ingredients of each cake, write and display prices on a sheet of paper/whiteboard. Do provide gluten free/vegan options and it's probably best to avoid nuts. Remember to have some float and leave the kitchen as you found it or you'll not be a welcome repeat user!

CCF always welcomes donations towards their work, please contribute if you can.

## **Booking, collecting and returning the kit**

To book the kit please first check the [Community Clothes Swap Kit Calendar](#) and choose a free date. Then email [nicole@cambridgecarbonfootprint.org](mailto:nicole@cambridgecarbonfootprint.org) with a few lines about you/your org and the event that you are planning. Nicole will get back to you and send you a [Community Clothes Swap Kit Loan Agreement Form](#) to look over in advance.

The kit is held at CCF's offices and the best times for collection or drop off are Tues - Thurs 10am - 4:30pm, though these times and dates are flexible. The kit is quite bulky and heavy. Our address is:

Cambridge Carbon Footprint  
The Bike Depot  
140 Cowley Road  
Cambridge  
CB4 0DL

01223 301842

Please note that Cowley Rd splits into two. If you are coming down Cowley Rd from Milton Rd please turn left at the cement silos and then take the first right.

## **Letting us know how it went!**

We'd be super grateful if you could fill in this short [Clothes Swap Feedback Form](#) to let us know how your event went.