

## GRAVESHAM REPAIR CAFE



**R**epairing old items might not seem innovative in a world focused on the next new thing. However, the emergence of Repair Cafés, first developed by Dutch journalist Martine Postma in Amsterdam in 2009 to promote local sustainability, shows how traditional habits and methods can re-emerge and spread, offering fresh solutions to modern challenges.

The Gravesham Repair Café is a volunteer-led initiative dedicated to reducing waste and fostering community connections. By offering a space where residents can learn to repair broken items, the café encourages sustainable living and helps keep valuable goods out of landfill.

### GRAVESHAM REPAIR CAFE



Gravesham's Repair Café is part of a global movement aimed at reducing waste and building community spirit. With over 5,500 Repair Cafés worldwide, the initiative started in Holland and has grown steadily, with the Gravesend branch now celebrating more than a year of operation. Volunteer-led, the café helps the local community repair items that might otherwise end up in landfill.

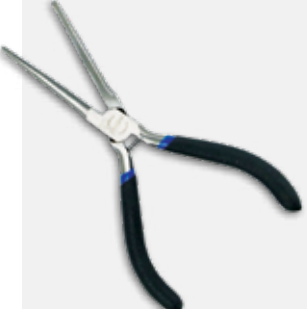
Philip Davies, one of the organisers, sums up the mission: "We want to stop things from going to landfill. The idea is to encourage people to bring in broken items and learn how to fix them." The café is more than just a repair service; it's about changing how we think about waste and con-

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sumerism. Volunteer David Barnes, a former civil engineer, adds, "In areas where money is tight, it's important to help people save what they can. It's not just about fixing things, it's about supporting the community."

### KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE



The café's success comes from its blend of practical repair help and knowledge exchange. Roger Stevens, a volunteer with a background in petrochemistry, explains, "It's satisfying to bring something back from the dead. Many people don't realise how capable they are of mending things themselves, and we guide them through the process." The café is growing rapidly, with plans to


expand into neighbouring areas like Meopham, a few miles away, driven largely by word of mouth. A location in neighbouring Vigo began operating as this newspaper went to press.

At the heart of the Repair Café is its focus on learning. Volunteers offer guidance on a range of repairs, from electrical items to household appliances, often using resources like YouTube to explain the process. Clive, one of the repair specialists, recently worked on a pair of headphones, noting that modern devices are often more complex to fix, but with the right approach, it is doable. "It's about changing how people think about their possessions and making repairs part of everyday life," he explains.

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### SOCIAL SPACE



Beyond the practical help, the Repair Café offers a warm and social atmosphere. Visitors are welcomed with a free cup of tea and cake, creating a friendly space to chat while repairs are underway. Repairs are carried out free of charge though donations are welcome to keep the Repair Café going and to cover hall rental. The event happens once a month and is open to everyone, encouraging new people to join the movement and learn a few repair tricks themselves.



As it continues to expand, the Gravesham Repair Café is more than just a place to fix things, it's a community hub for learning, sharing, and contributing to a more sustainable future. To fix things often requires an imaginative approach, which underscores all innovation. The café serves as a reminder that small behavioural changes can make a big difference for the environment and local communities. ■

[www.graveshamrepaircafe.blogspot.com](http://www.graveshamrepaircafe.blogspot.com)



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