

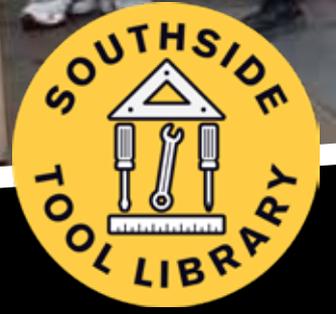


A South Seeds guide

How to set up a tool library



A step-by-step manual that explains all you need to know to successfully establish and run your own community tool library



WHY WE SET UP THE SOUTHSIDE TOOL LIBRARY



The Southside Tool Library was established by environmental charity South Seeds in the summer of 2018 with the aim of providing a convenient way for people to borrow tools rather than buy them.

Fast forward to summer 2020 and the tool library is a key element of the southside sharing economy.

As this guide was being developed (April/May 2020) we were in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. The after effects of this, in terms of how enterprises in the sharing economy will need to adapt, are wide ranging. In the last section of this guide we have outlined what tool libraries can do to protect their staff, volunteers, borrowers and the public.

Until the coronavirus outbreak, the tool library was being used regularly by residents and had new members joining each week. We had made 800 tool loans, with every one boosting the area's self-sufficiency, while reducing the environmental impact of new tools otherwise being manufactured, packaged, transported and purchased.

Our membership has grown to 350

members, all people who have been empowered by easy, low-cost access to tools to make improvements to their homes and lives. We have estimated the tool library has saved our community £20,000, by calculating what they would have had to spend to buy new tools had the library not existed. The [full inventory](#) can be viewed online.

Throughout this guide we feature some of our borrowers and how they have benefited from using the tool library. We also have some more in-depth case studies which can be found on the [South Seeds](#) website.

We've developed this guide as a practical reference for other organisations wanting to establish a tool library and it is based on the huge amount of learning we have accumulated in setting up the Southside Tool Library.



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WHAT WE'VE ACHIEVED JUNE 2018 – MARCH 2020



350 members



£20k in community savings



inventory of 500 tools



800 loans



impact reduction



DIY empowerment

GROW YOUR TOOL INVENTORY

UNLESS YOU have funding to purchase tools for your library, you will need to acquire tools through donation.

All of the tools in the Southside Tool Library – more than 500 at the time of writing – are donations from local people. Putting out a call for donations through community social media sites, door-to-door leaflets and posters in shop windows helped to let people know we needed their unused tools.

After just a few weeks donations were flooding in and we've seen a steady trickle continue since then without having to do much in the way of publicity.

At first, target your call for donations in neighbourhoods where older people live or where people tend to live in houses rather than flats. These people are more likely to have had the time and/or space to acquire tools. Then move on to other neighbourhoods.

If you have no luck using this route you could approach local businesses for donations of tools but they may be more likely to donate once the library is already established, as it means they gain exposure to people needing other equipment and hardware to complement their tool borrowing.

Once your tool library is up and running you will get a better idea of

which tools are most popular with borrowers and those you need more of. At this point we suggest issuing another call for donations, targeting those specific tools.

Store and organise tools

You will need somewhere secure to store tools that are not currently on loan. Options may be some shelves in your office, or a shipping container or similar lockable storage unit.

Having a system of crates, trays and

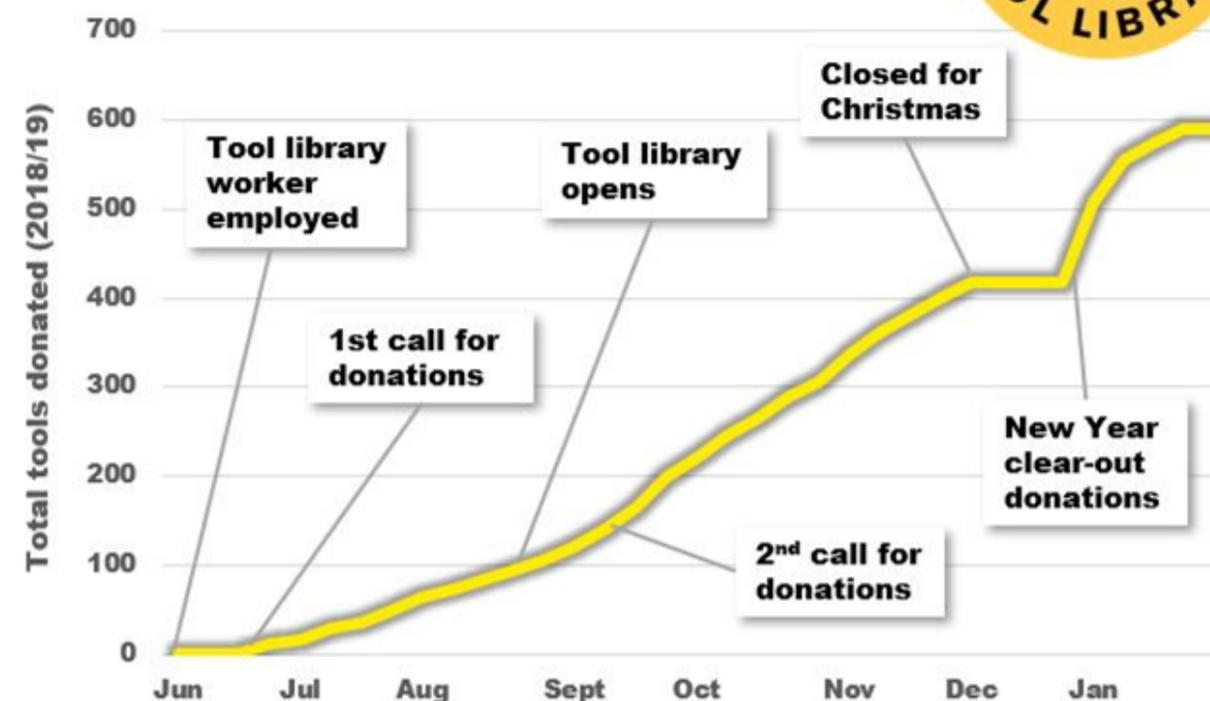


Some of the tools in the Southside Tool Library organised in crates

boxes on labelled shelving will make your life much easier when trying to find a particular tool, as will labelling each tool with a unique ID number. You can label tools using marker pen, stickers, tags or an engraving pen, for example. More advanced tool libraries use a barcode system.

The Southside Tool Library uses a four-digit ID system for tools. For

The journey to tool donation success



A graph we used to report to funders the events that triggered tool donations over the first six months

example all power tool IDs begin with a 3, and those beginning with 35 are saws (eg 3506).

Insurance

You may have difficulty finding an insurer able to provide cover tailored to the specific needs of a tool library. If you are a non-profit organisation, your local or national third sector umbrella body (such as the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations – SCVO – in Scotland) may be able to recommend an insurance broker who is experienced in finding cover for similar organisations. As a minimum



One of Southside Tool Library's circular saws showing its ID number

the insurance should provide public liability, which covers you in case of injury or damage caused while tools are on loan. It should also provide cover in case of theft or

damage from fire or flooding while the tools are on your premises. Theft or non-return of tools by a borrower is classed as an accepted risk of operating a tool loan service by insurers, so it is not possible to get

insurance cover for this. We have only had one instance of tools not being returned in the 18 months since we opened. That's out of around 800 tool loans, so it can be a very rare occurrence.

Rachel



Rachel discovered a hidden damp problem in her new flat before it was too late, with the help of borrowed tools.

Borrowing tools such as a crowbar and reciprocating saw enabled her to lift floor boards and cut into fitted cupboards so that tradespeople could immediately see the problem and fix it.

Without the tool library Rachel would have had to pay someone else to do these preliminary works. Having just bought the flat she would have struggled to afford this ...

“Without access to these tools, which I only needed to use once, I might have gone ahead spending time and money decorating over a space that was unfit for living. They were a huge benefit to me.”

GET THE WORD OUT

BEFORE YOU open your tool library, it is a good idea to start letting potential borrowers know that it is coming to their community soon. You could set up an e-mail list for people interested in joining the tool library so you can keep them updated with an estimated opening date. We also put up a poster in the window of our high street base, ran stalls with some

tools at local events and dropped flyers in to local shops and community hubs.

Building interest in the tool library early on is important, particularly if your funding is time-limited, so that when you are finally ready to open you are more likely to get people borrowing tools straight away.

As soon as you have borrowers, you can write up case studies about



One of our first stalls held at a community fete, to generate interest in the tool library

their experience to share on social media. Some people will want to hear about how borrowers got on before trying the service themselves. To share our borrowers' stories, and how the tool library has helped them, we produced a series of [case studies](#).

Get branded

People are more likely to remember your tool library and let their friends know about it if you have developed a recognisable brand for it. We contacted some local graphic designers to see samples of

their work and chose one who we felt could create the best logo for the tool library.

The unique identity of your tool library can also be strengthened by using the same font and colour schemes across all of your publicity materials.

Gain publicity

To get a tool library known people need to understand what tools it holds and what those tools can help them do or create. This is often better done with pictures rather than words – people will want to see

the tools. We set up a popular 'tool of the week' post on our social media channels to let people know about the wide range of tools they could borrow



Some of the tool of the week posts we shared on social media

and the things they could do with them.

The designer who created our logo also created some animated gifs about the tool library that we shared on social media. Moving images

are a great way of attracting people's attention.

It is also a good idea to ensure your tool library appears on Google searches and Google maps, as that is one of the main methods people will use to find you. You can do this by visiting '[google business](#)' and setting up a free account for your tool library.

Once your tool library is open, the local paper may be interested in featuring some of your borrowers and sharing how borrowing tools has benefited them. Other methods of publicising your tool library can cost but are usually well worth the money in terms of how effective they are at attracting new members. These include postcards, flyers and posters which can be displayed in local cafes and shops. We put a poster in our window and an A-board outside.



A selection of Southside Tool Library's first publicity materials, including leaflets and an A-board



WELCOME MEMBERS

CONSIDER HOW you want membership of the tool library to work: will membership be renewed annually or be for life? Will you charge a membership fee? Are there some items in your inventory that only certain members will be allowed to borrow?

At the Southside Tool Library, we decided to make memberships renewable annually and by donation rather than a mandatory fee. While we are externally funded (currently by the National Lottery Communities Fund), we don't need to charge for memberships and we don't want to exclude anyone financially from joining the tool library. However, we felt that by attaching some monetary value to the tool library people would be more likely to value it as a service to the community, and the proceeds could be put towards tool maintenance and repair.

How to become a member

We use an online system, [myTurn](#), to manage memberships. It is free to use for small organisations or charities and also integrates management of tool loans.

Try to keep your membership process simple to avoid putting people off joining. The Southside Tool Library has a two-step membership process: two forms of ID are required to join the Southside

Luis



Luis saved cash and improved his mental health by teaching himself how to build furniture from pallets. Buying new furniture was simply unaffordable for Luis when he found his ideal (but unfurnished) flat on the southside.

A sander, drill, saw and screwdrivers from the tool library helped Luis to furnish his home affordably with a sofa, bench and bed built by himself out of pallets, without having to invest in tools that he may not need again.

"Doing things with my own hands and building something I could be proud of also brought benefits for my mental health, especially considering I am studying and it is a mentally demanding and self-esteem-consuming activity."

Tool Library: a photo ID such as a passport or driving licence so we can verify that the borrower is who they say they are; and a separate proof of address, such as a bill or invoice, which matches the address on their myTurn account to prove they live at that address.

Seeing this ID assures us that the information we hold about members is correct in the unlikely event that tools are not returned and we need to take action to recover them.

It is wise to ask borrowers to sign an agreement that declares them able to use the tools competently and safely and to get these documents checked by a legal specialist. These, in addition to PAT testing, help to protect you in the unlikely event of a claim against you if injury or damage occurs while the borrower is using the tools. We based our borrower's agreement and liability

waiver on those of another tool library (Transition Stirling's Tool Library) and adapted it to make it more relevant to the way we work.

Opening times

It is unlikely that you will be able to keep the tool library open seven days a week. You will need to choose several windows of time during the week that will suit you and your borrowers the most and make sure you have shared this information widely across all your channels of communication (posters, social media, Google page etc).

Initially we opened one Saturday per month using a 'pop-up' tool library based at various locations throughout the southside of Glasgow. Borrowers were able to reserve tools for collection at each pop-up and we also brought along



Attendees after one of our workshops with the items they made themselves

a selection of tools that new borrowers could take away on the day. These sessions were great at getting the word out that the tool library existed but we didn't lend out as many tools as we hoped.

We realised that opening once a month and at a different location each time made borrowing tools inconvenient and confusing for most people. We revised our opening hours to two afternoons a week working out of South Seeds' high street base. We saw a difference immediately in the number of new members joining and borrowing tools. Members told us that opening

the tool library until 6pm allowed them to collect tools after work and the same location every time was easier for people to remember.

DIY workshops

We ran a series of DIY workshops where attendees were given the support they needed to learn how to use the tool library tools to build small items of furniture from upcycled pallets. The workshops were fairly inexpensive for us to run – the materials were mostly free (pallets scavenged from local businesses) and each workshop required a couple of hours of time

Our two-stage membership process



1 New members create a myTurn account. Alternatively, they can visit us and we will create an account for them



2 All new members must show ID and sign a borrower's agreement and liability waiver before borrowing tools

for two members of staff with the help of a volunteer.

These sessions were a great way to encourage more people to join the tool library who had less experience of using tools. Attendees built themselves spice racks, shelves, window boxes and stools and went away feeling more confident about using tools and more likely to borrow from the tool library in future.

Manage risks

Before opening the tool library we carried out a risk assessment. This helped identify measures which would protect our staff or the public from potential harm. For example, our tool storage is in a quiet alley so our policy is that staff should only access it during daylight, ideally with another member of staff to reduce the risks of lone working.

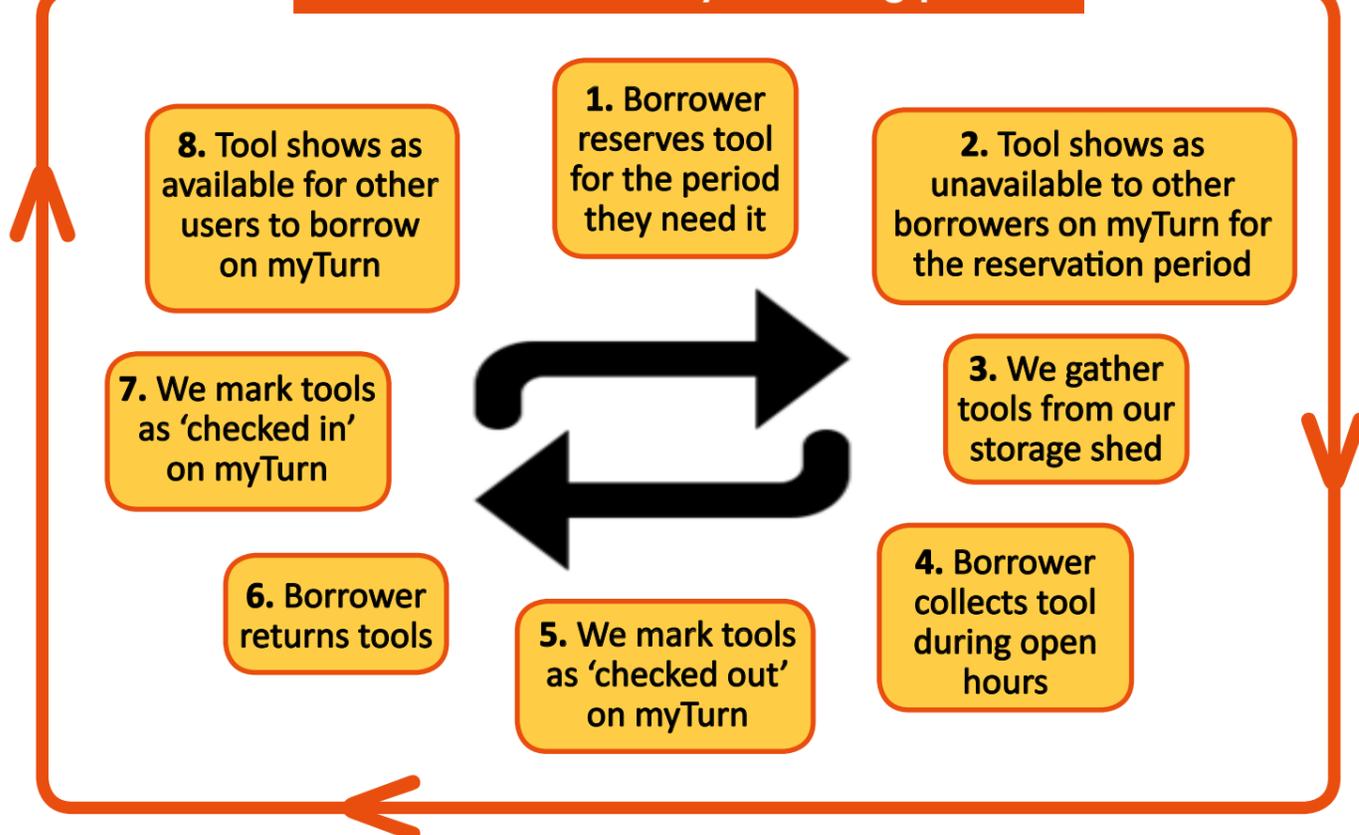
MANAGE YOUR TOOL LOANS

YOU WILL need a loan management system that lets you and your tool library members know what tools are still available to borrow while also helping you to gauge the success of your tool

library. It is possible to track tool loans using spreadsheets but this will get cumbersome as your tool library grows.

MyTurn provides the facility to electronically 'check out' and

Southside Tool Library's lending process



'check in' tools, see when tools are due back, chase any tools that are overdue and track tool maintenance. It also allows borrowers to search for the tools they need in an online inventory and to reserve them in advance.

The reservations function allows the Southside Tool Library to offer next-day tool loans despite our tool storage shed being in a different location to the collection point at South Seeds' high street base.

Fees for borrowing

Consider whether you will charge a fee for tool borrowing or hold a deposit when lending out certain tools. You may also want to charge a late fee if tools are returned after their due date.

The Southside Tool Library doesn't charge any fees for borrowing, including for overdue tools, in line with our aim to be financially inclusive. However, although the vast majority of the tool library's inventory is tools in the conventional sense, we also have three e-bikes and a bike trailer. South Seeds already owned the bike trailer for transporting gardening equipment but we also had the opportunity to acquire three e-bikes through an Energy Saving Scotland grant. We added the e-bikes and trailer to the

inventory as transportation 'tools', giving those who are wondering whether an e-bike might be right for them the chance to try one out for up to three weeks. The e-bikes and some other items within our large stock of regular tools have a high replacement cost, so we hold a deposit in the form of a passport or driving licence for anyone borrowing such high-value items.

Safety

Make sure all power tools pass a PAT (portable appliance test) for electrical safety before lending them out. It is likely that your insurer will require that this is carried out. A local electrician will be able to carry out PAT testing for you. Make sure you keep records of what tools have received a PAT and when.

It is a good idea for your borrower's agreement to strongly advise the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) when using tools and, for more hazardous tools such as circular saws, to provide PPE with



One of our tool library members is delighted to be able to borrow the bike trailer to transport a heavy load across Glasgow

each loan. We have a stock of PPE such as gloves and goggles which can be lent out and dust masks which can be provided free-of-charge alongside tools.

By signing the borrower's agreement, borrowers confirm that they are a competent tool user already but in practice, many people using the tool library are starting to build up both experience and confidence of using tools.

By supporting people to tackle small DIY jobs in their homes while being mindful of safety, many will go on to bigger jobs and discover their own sources of safety advice from instructional videos on YouTube, DIY TV shows or books and manuals.

Overdue and non-returned tools

Although non-return of tools by a borrower is very rare, it is helpful to have a process in place for trying to recover non-returned tools so you are prepared if it does happen.

Our policy has been to contact the borrower using a hierarchy of methods: first by email, then phone and finally by letter. By the time a letter is sent, the tools will have been overdue by at least six weeks. The letter explains that if the tools are not returned or if the borrower hasn't contacted us to explain how they will return the tools by a certain date, their tool library membership will be suspended.

For very high-value items (our e-bikes, for example), we take a

deposit in the form of a passport or driving licence as a deterrent to theft. But if theft did happen, we would report it to the police. Be sure to take photos of the items and record any identification or serial numbers to increase the chance of recovering the stolen item. You may also be able to get items security marked by the police.



Tool maintenance

Once tools are returned you'll need to check them over to make sure they are safe for the next borrower to use. Have a written tool inspection procedure and an inspection log which confirms who inspected the tools and when. Your insurer is likely to require these steps to be followed to ensure you are covered in case of a claim of injury or damage caused by use of the tools.

Useful guidance on when and how to carry out tool inspections can be found on the [Health and Safety Executive website](#).

MEASURE AND REPORT YOUR TOOL LIBRARY'S IMPACT

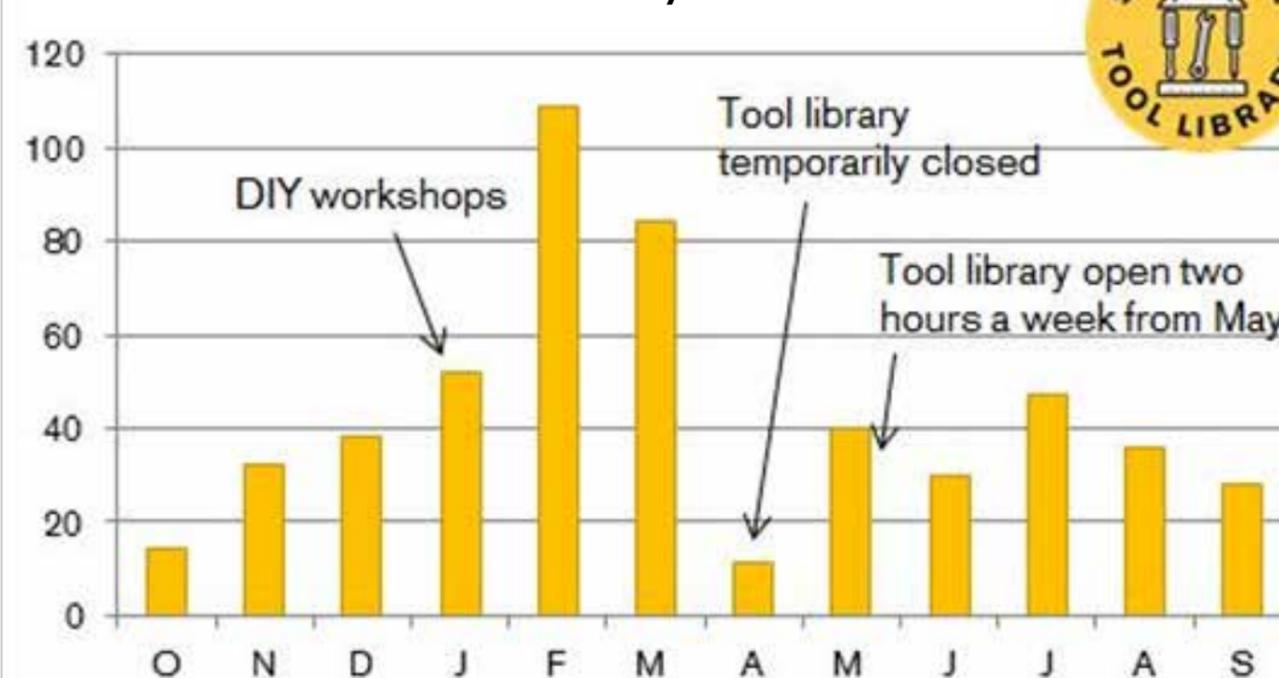
YOU WILL find some people will not consider borrowing until they have some information about how other borrowers experience your service. Reporting the impact of your tool library is vital to giving it the best chance of securing future borrowers and funding to keep it going.

Different funders have different objectives and these influence what information they want to see. They may want to know who has benefited from using your tool library and in what ways: have borrowers made their homes more energy efficient? Have they tidied their garden? Have they been socially

isolated and through the tool library been able to build connections with others in their community? Funders may also be interested in how many tools have been borrowed and how this translates to carbon savings and supports the sharing economy.

There are many ways to effectively communicate your impact. For example, you could present this information using case studies, where you interview members and share their tool borrowing stories. Or you could use clear, simple graphs or infographics (which combine images and data) to illustrate targets and achievements on social media.

Number of loans by month



Graph shared by the Southside Tool Library on social media

TOOL TALES

Jim and Peter

Jim donated this router after he bought it for one job – “It seemed a waste for it to be sitting in my shed and it’s unlikely I’ll need it again.”

Thanks to Jim, Peter was able to borrow the router to help make a kayak!



Katie and Calum

Katie donated this jigsaw after moving to a smaller flat with less storage – “I just don’t have room for things that I rarely use, and I can always borrow it back!”

Thanks to Katie, Calum was able to borrow the jigsaw to install a fancy new worktop in his kitchen.



Alec and Eilidh

Alec donated his axe – “I realised that I’m past the point of going out looking for wood to chop up. Someone else will get better use out of it.”

Thanks to Alec, Eilidh was able to borrow the axe to break up her Christmas tree.



Colin and Emma

Colin donated this air compressor after his father-in-law died – “He loved to tinker with cars; it would be great if his tools could help others get things done.”

Thanks to Colin, Emma was able to borrow the compressor to spray paint her garden fence.



CONNECT WITH OTHER TOOL LIBRARIES

ESTABLISHING AN organisation in the sharing economy requires new thinking and the solving of challenges that are unique to this type of service.

Existing tool libraries will have already developed solutions so connecting with them can help you to avoid spending lots of time duplicating mistakes or coming up

with ideas that have already been thought of when setting up your own tool library. Before setting up the Southside Tool Library we visited two other tool libraries in Scotland to learn from their experiences. We also joined the Facebook group ‘Tool Libraries & Libraries of Things: A Global Movement’ to connect with other tool libraries around the world.

Lilly



Lilly created treasure from trash and could experiment with different tools without the cost. Lilly borrowed a heat gun, scraper and sander to strip paint from an old dresser that she found on the street.

“Borrowing was great for me since I could try out what method worked best without having to spend lots of money, as I’m still trying to figure out which power tools are sensible to own when you rent a one-bedroom flat.”

Having access to the tool library meant that Lilly could test out her creative skills and create a bespoke piece of furniture from an item about to be discarded.

GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR PLANS

WE HOPE that this guide has provided you with useful tips and answered some of the questions that you will have about how to establish your own successful

tool library. If you would like to know more about the Southside Tool Library, please feel free to get in touch with us at tools@southseeds.org

ADAPT YOUR TOOL LIBRARY TO COVID-19

AT THE time of writing the Southside Tool Library is closed during the Covid-19 pandemic. We are considering how we will re-open safely, and the following guidance forms our current thinking on the procedures we will use to manage tool returns and collections in a way which minimises the risk of spreading the virus once we re-open. It is based on our own risk assessment and guidance written by Revolve and the Charity Retail Association which has been made available to us as a member of CRNS (Community Resources Network Scotland).

We recommend contacting these organisations to get a copy of their guidance, or the guidance issued by relevant bodies in your own country if not Scotland. The Health and Safety Executive has also produced an online guide called '[Working safely during the coronavirus outbreak](#)'. You should also update your own risk assessment to help you manage the unique risks which apply to your situation.

Social distancing

Having a box for returned tools, those awaiting collection by borrowers and for tool donations, rather than having to pass tools

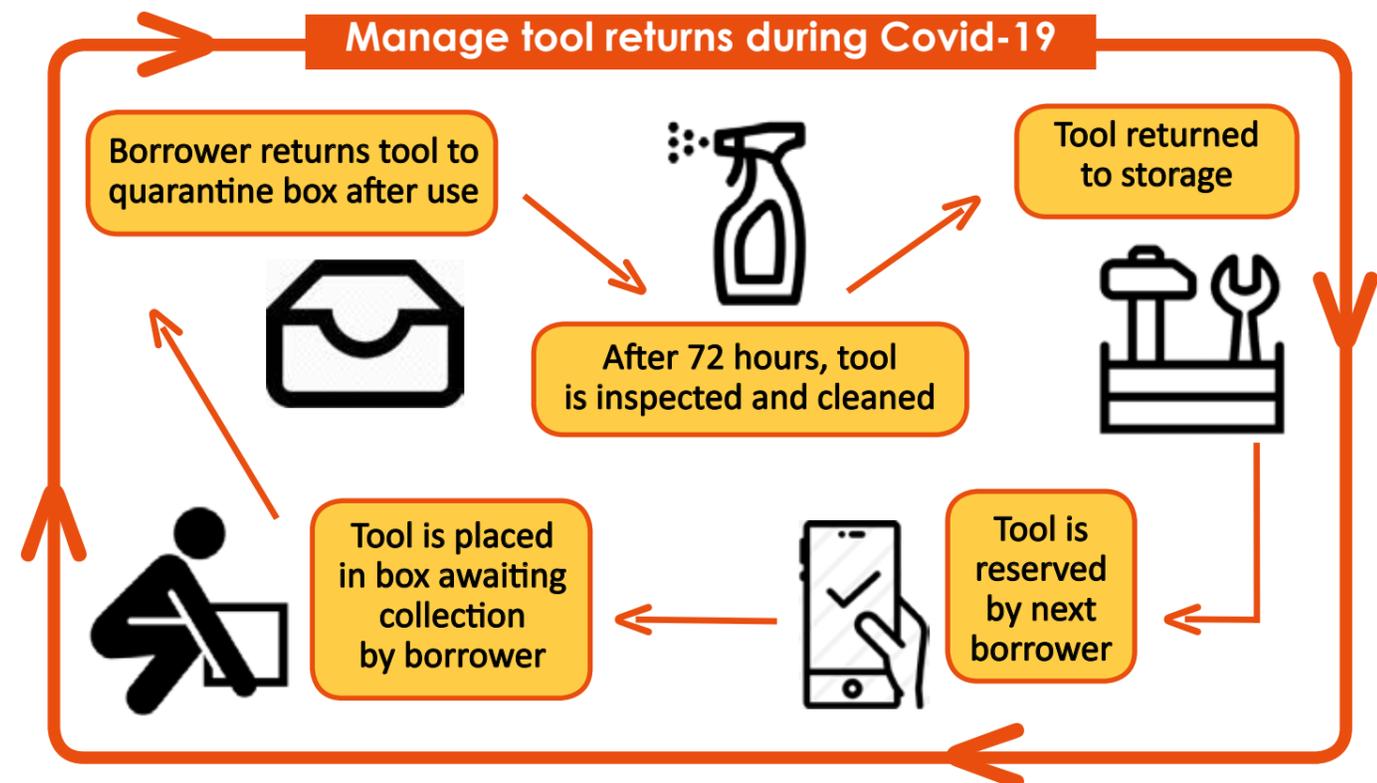
directly between people, will help to maintain social distancing. You may need to add a sticker or tag to tools which are awaiting collection so that each borrower knows which tools are theirs and they don't take someone else's tools by mistake.

Try to set up a non-contact membership registration system

Using myTurn can help with this. MyTurn provides the option of having new members digitally sign a member's agreement and liability waiver rather than signing it in person. They will still be required to show appropriate ID the first time they borrow but this could be done from a distance by getting them to place it on a surface for you to check while they stand back.

There will be times when borrowers will want to ask questions and in doing so may unwittingly risk breaking social distancing guidelines. It may help to develop signage to put up in your window or on an A-board to remind people about social distancing and other procedures you have in place to protect them and your staff such as limits on the number of people allowed inside your tool library at any one time.

If regular face-to-face contact is unavoidable at your tool library, you may want to consider putting up clear perspex screens at counters where this contact takes place and/or floor markings to indicate where borrowers should wait.



Tool cleaning and handling

Ensure that returned and donated tools are quarantined for 72 hours before being handled by you, your colleagues or volunteers. This time span is based on research of how long the virus can survive on surfaces. We envisage providing a returns container so that borrowers can return tools directly into the container without us needing to handle them. We'll put a dated sticker on each returned tool so we know when it's safe to handle them.

Set aside dedicated time for tool-handling sessions, such as cleaning or transporting them to or from storage, when you won't be required to switch to other tasks. This will minimise the risk of you transferring any virus present to other surfaces.

Once 72 hours have passed since tools were returned by a borrower, the tools should be cleaned

thoroughly using disinfectant wipes or a washable cloth sprayed with disinfectant. Wash your hands before and after any tool-handling session and you may also want to wear an apron and gloves, particularly when cleaning tools.

Once you have finished tool handling, whether cleaning or transporting, dispose of any single-use protective items you have used such as gloves or aprons. Put reusable items in a bag until they can be washed in soapy water or a washing machine and dried before next use.

Other cleaning

Regularly clean all surfaces in your tool library using disinfectant wipes or cloth wipes sprayed with disinfectant. You may find it helpful to develop a checklist of all surfaces and areas which need to be part of this cleaning regime.



The Southside Tool Library is a project by South Seeds, delivered with the support of The National Lottery Community Fund Scotland. For more information, please visit www.southseeds.org/tools



This guide is produced by South Seeds, an environmental and community action organisation based at 514 Victoria Road, Glasgow G42 8BG. South Seeds is a Scottish charity (No. SCO42244)