



A survey about borrowing

19 Aug 2023

The survey

SHARE Oxford's aim is to reduce unnecessary consumption and waste, and help build a more sustainable city for the future. We're always looking for ways to have more impact, and in September 2022 we asked our followers some questions hoping to discover ways we can do more:

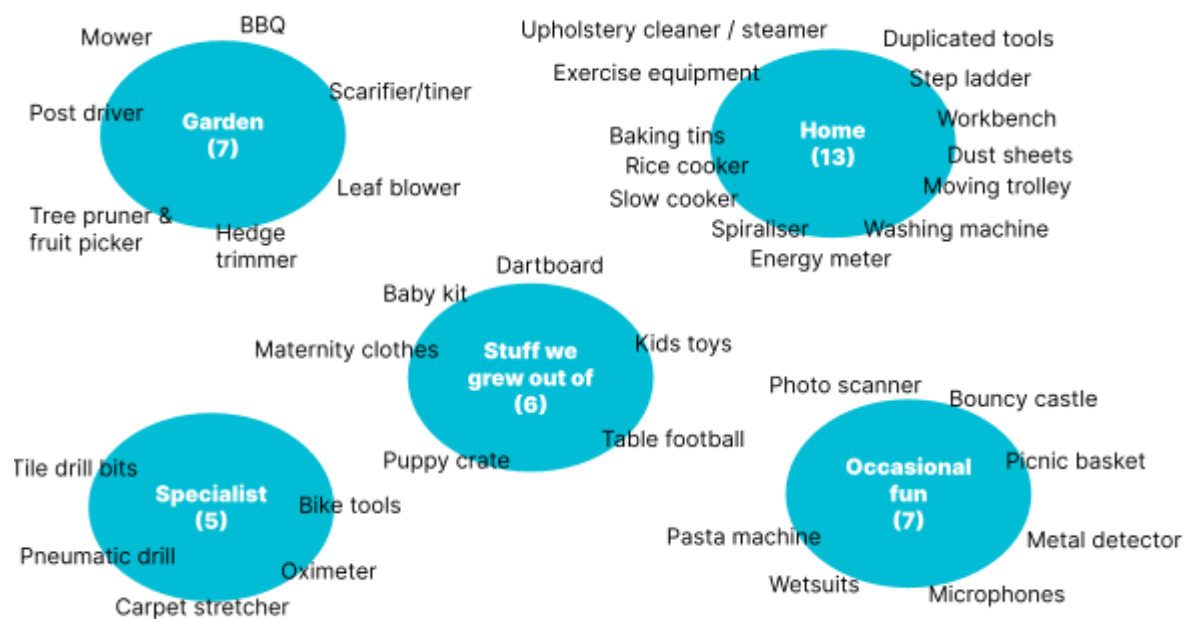
- What Things have you bought recently or have cluttering your home, that you wish you could have borrowed instead?
- Do you currently use any hire services or libraries, including our Library of Things? What are you hiring/borrowing?
- Do you share Things in your street? What sorts of Things are you sharing? Do you use any online platforms? (eg WhatsApp)
- What do you no longer need to use, but you're struggling to find a good home for, or have sent to the tip in good working order?
- Do you have any other suggestions or queries for us?

We're very grateful for the 40 thoughtful responses we received. You've helped shape our planning, and we hope this short summary is useful for others working to develop sharing in your community.

Results

Stuff you wished you'd borrowed not bought

We asked what people had cluttering their homes which they'd have rather borrowed or shared. As well as lots of "Library of Things classics" like tools, cleaning gear or garden kit, we saw some areas we don't help with yet:

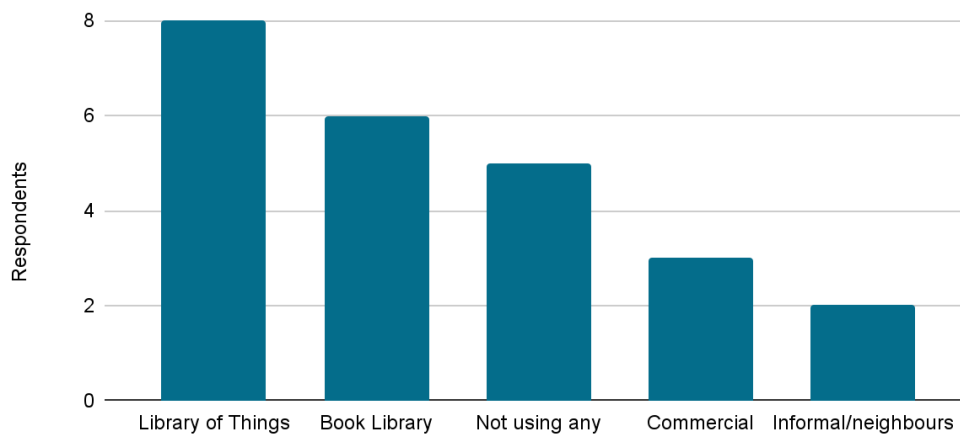


→ *ideas to work on:*

- **Parties** - there's more we can do in what is already a key range for us, eg offering high-quality PA systems.
- **Kitchen** - our Library kitchen equipment is rarely hired but people often mentioned this as unwanted kit. Could there be a project with people "sharing their kitchen kit with the community" whilst continuing to use it, in a slightly different model to our Library?
- **Maternity and baby** - there are various initiatives underway in the city such as the maternity clothes library and cloth nappy library. Perhaps we could help promote these and help them scale with excess from our network.
- **Kids toys** - perhaps a candidate for swap-shops or a scheme for people to pass on bulkier kit such as table football tables. We could explore which toys are best suited to short-term hire and which are best to be kept them passed on when no longer needed.
- **Hobbies** - where things don't fit into the current Library of Things, could we work with community interest groups to help sharing in particular areas eg art workshops, music groups, sports.
- **Passing things on** - where things aren't suitable for sharing, how can we help people pass on things they no longer want? How can we help make online platforms like freecycle or gumtree easier?

Hire / borrow services you currently use

We asked where people currently hire or borrow equipment from:

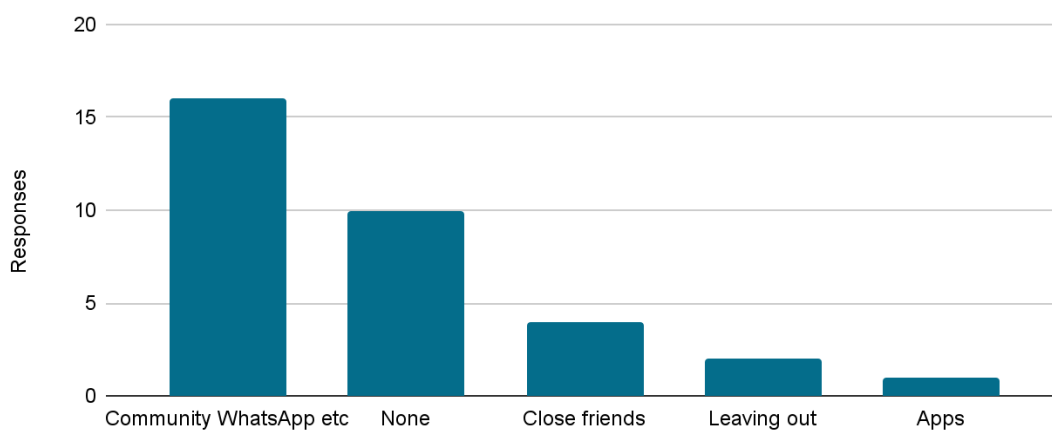


Unsurprisingly, many of the respondents use our Library of Things. We found it interesting how many said they weren't yet using any sharing services. On commercial services, people mentioned hiring tools, sound systems and cars.

→ *ideas to work on*: we can do more to promote other ways of sharing (free, community or commercial).

Informal community sharing

We asked what sort of sharing people do informally in their community:



It was interesting to see people have very different experiences in different communities - many people described active community sharing via whatsapp, leaving things out on the street etc. Others mentioned that they've struggled to get any sharing going in their areas.

WhatsApp street groups are common, and people mentioned Olio, freecycle, neighbourhood watch, facebook and google email groups as alternatives.

→ *ideas to work on*: we could set up a project to support champions wanting to bring informal sharing to areas it's not yet working, with top tips for tools to use, how to engage your neighbours etc.

Stuff you're struggling to find a home for

This question was about things you no longer need but have struggled to shift:



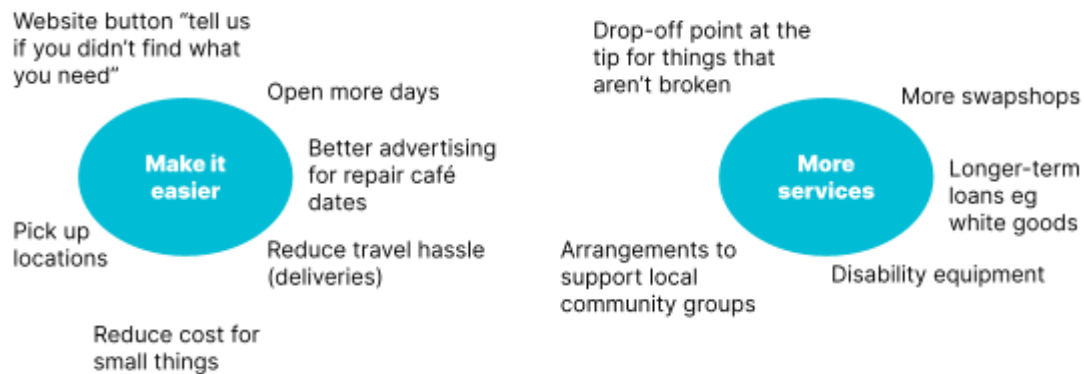
Nearly half of the respondents mentioned that they take care to move things on via charity shops or passing on to others rather than tipping, so don't have a problem in this area. Where people are struggling, the themes were:

- Insufficient time - eg to move on kids stuff or unwanted electricals
- Bulky stuff - either hard to shift or "a shame to bin something fixable"

→ *ideas to work on*: what services could we offer that make it easy to move things on, saving time and handling bulky stuff?

Other suggestions for the SHARE team

We're grateful for these really practical suggestions!



→ *ideas to work on:*

- Improve our user experience so it's super convenient to hire not buy
- Consider projects to launch new services if we can "be the right answer" for the services suggested above.

In summary

Thank you to everyone who took the time to share your experiences and thoughts. This really has helped us in our thinking and plans. For 2023-24 we're prioritising two areas:

- Help the Library of Things grow to become sustainable by offering the most useful possible range, backed by great service and effective promotion.
- Plan and seek funding for future projects where we can help increase sharing and reduce waste in the city and share lessons with the wider community.

We expect you'll see many of the great ideas people have given us in these answers appear in our plans in the coming months!