

Nesta/DCMS Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund Phase 2 Evaluation Report Summary Sheet

Grantee Name	Library of Things
Programme Name	Library of Things
Fund Name	Connected Communities Innovation Fund
Stage of Development	Early Stage
Evaluation Partner	m2
Date Completed	November 2019
Budget	£12,500

Project Overview

Library of Things (LoT) is a social enterprise that seeks to improve lives and the environment by affordably lending out useful items and helping neighbours share practical skills. LoT sources a range of items from leading manufacturers and loans them to the public at low cost. Up to 70 items are available, ranging from drills and sewing machines, to carpet cleaners, sound systems and waffle makers. Alongside item lending, LoT coordinates skill-sharing events like repair parties and DIY workshops, as well as inviting members to take part in flexible volunteering opportunities.

The funding supported LoT to expand their work to reach more people in the newly opened Crystal Palace site as well as to develop their plans to scale to further sites in the coming years.

Headline Findings

The evaluation found that Library of Things (LoT) increases access to low cost, high quality items. It enables people to develop skills; become more community focused; and more environmentally minded.

Individuals:

- Save money.
- Access more quality items they need.
- Find LoT convenient and offering a relevant range of items.
- Increase their skills through workshops and volunteering.

Communities:

- People engaged with LoT feel they are more linked to their community.
- They like the volunteering aspect and opportunity to meet other local people.

- Some feel LoT has increased the sense of local community.

Environment:

- Borrowers greatly value the potential environmental benefits of LoT.
- Some borrowers are becoming more environmentally conscious and have changed their behaviours as a result of their engagement with LoT.
- Further work needs to be done to collect, collate and analyse data to demonstrate environmental impacts – as quantitative analysis was beyond the scope of this evaluation.

Evaluation Approach & Methodology

LoT and the evaluation team worked together to develop an appropriate process for this evaluation. Key steps to delivering the evaluation partnership were:

- Refining and developing LoT's Theory of Change.
- Developing a measurement framework based on the Theory of Change.
- A workshop focussing on understanding qualitative research and developing a research sample.
- A stakeholder engagement workshop with LoT staff to map key stakeholders and determine who to interview.
- Depth interview training for LoT staff carrying out interviews.
- Support to LoT staff during recruitment and delivery of the depth interviews.
- Making recommendations to LoT about how to collect further data going forward to show impact.

The evaluation activities comprised four strands:

- Qualitative depth interviews with LoT members (n=12).
- Stakeholder interviews with a sample of LoT's partners and wider contacts.
- Analysis of LoT's monitoring data.
- Analysis of survey data that LoT had collected.

Quantitative

Qualitative

Mixed

Impact Evaluation

Process Evaluation

Economic Evaluation

One-off evaluation

Developing internal evaluation capacity

Evaluation Implementation Challenges and Limitations

The evaluation team was appointed as an evaluation and learning partner and evaluation activities were carried out both by the evaluators and LoT staff. As an early-stage project, it was important that LoT focused its attention on delivering its activities and that monitoring and evaluation activity did not become overly burdensome.

This means there are inevitably some limitations in the data:

- The qualitative interviews were carried out by a volunteer PhD student who had not done in-depth interviews of this type before which affected the quality of the data collected. There were also challenges with achieving the desired sample of qualitative

participants in terms of both number and diversity. This means that while the interviews gave a good indication of members' views of the Library of Things, and there were a lot of recurring themes, the evaluation team could not be sure they had captured the full range of views that might exist.

- The initial plan had been for each interview to be written up before it was analysed; however this proved too time consuming for the LoT team and so the interviews were summarised directly from the recordings. This enabled key themes to be drawn out of the data; however, due to the number of interviews and quality of the data, only high-level analysis was possible.
- The quantitative analysis partly drew on surveys sent out by the LoT team to its members. However, the surveys had a relatively low response rate which reduced their validity, and the question wording was variable which made tracking change over time difficult.
- The extensive membership and survey data gathered by LoT did not include demographic information, so it was not possible to create a detailed picture of borrowers.

Key Recommendations and Next Steps

As LoT's offer develops in Crystal Palace and new sites, the evaluation team recommends that evaluation activity includes the following:

- Continued qualitative work in Crystal Palace and new sites to help the team uncover borrowers' views, experiences and unmet needs.
- On-going stakeholder work to ascertain their views on the partnership.
- Targeted survey activity that maximises response rates. It is suggested that this is limited to:
 - A brief kiosk survey at the point of return which consists of no more than three questions. This would not need to be compulsory and should be made easy for the user to skip. In addition, to help increase response, all borrowers who take part could be entered into a prize draw.
 - An annual online survey that is sent out to all borrowers and which covers a range of areas but takes no more than seven minutes to complete. The questions should be carefully worded and ideally include some that have a rating scale. This approach would allow LoT to measure changes in attitudes over time as well as to compare data across sites. This survey should include some basic demographic information at the end.
 - A volunteer survey which explores the views and experiences of volunteers across LoT sites. This should be limited to no more than once a year.
- LoT should also consider how to capture demographic information about its borrowers. The evaluation team recommends this is done at the point that borrowers sign up. To ensure this does not become a barrier to membership, LoT could limit what it asks to three/four non-compulsory questions, including motivation for joining.
- LoT currently collects extensive data about its members and the Things they borrow. To demonstrate impact more effectively, LoT could take this further and develop systems to link the different types of data. To be able to monitor the participation level across all their volunteers and borrowers, LoT ideally will need to systematically collect data (names, postcode) to be able to identify and then cross-reference the involvement of users across borrowing, events and both regular and ad-hoc volunteering. This approach to user/borrower data is a consideration for future software design.
- Measuring the impact of LoT on local communities is challenging but ongoing

qualitative work as well as research with stakeholders in local areas will help to tell this story. While it would be hard to attribute change to a LoT, it will provide a useful overview of the extent to which areas that host a LoT are flourishing.

Library of Things

Independent evaluation & Learning Partner Report

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m2

21 November 2019

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Summary: Impacts

This evaluation has found that Library of Things (LoT) increases access to low cost, high quality items. It enables people to develop skills; become more community focused; and more environmentally minded.

Individuals

- Save money;
- Access more quality items they need;
- Find LoT convenient and offering a relevant range of items;
- Increase their skills through workshops and volunteering.

Community

- People engaged with LoT feel they are more linked to their community;
- They like the volunteering aspect and opportunity to meet other local people;
- Some feel LoT has increased the sense of local community.

Environment

- Borrowers greatly value the potential environmental benefits of LoT;
- Some borrowers are becoming more environmentally conscious and have changed their behaviours as a result of their engagement with LoT;
- Further work needs to be done to collect, collate and analyse data to demonstrate environmental impacts.

Background: The funder & the evaluators

Nesta's role

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Nesta provided LoT with funding through the Connected Communities Innovation Fund (CCIF). This is a partnership between Nesta and the Office for Civil Society at DCMS. Part of the grant was dedicated to evaluation, and LoT and Nesta appointed m2 as learning partner to help them to conduct this.

The Nesta funding ran from May 2018 – September 2019.

m2's role

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m2 was appointed as learning partner to both LoT and *Neighbourhood Watch Network (NWN)*, another CCIF grantee, in order to help build its internal evaluation capacity; support its evaluation data collection; and work alongside LoT to evaluate the organisation's impact.



Background: About Library of Things

Vision and Purpose

Library of Things (LoT) is a social enterprise that seeks to improve lives and the environment by affordably lending out useful items and helping neighbours share practical skills.

LoT sources a range of items from leading manufacturers and loans them to the public at low cost. Up to 70 items are available, ranging from drills and sewing machines, to carpet cleaners, sound systems and waffle makers.

Alongside item lending, LoT coordinates skill-sharing events like repair parties and DIY workshops, as well as inviting members to take part in flexible volunteering opportunities.



History and Development

2014: LoT was started by three friends in West Norwood, South London, as a pop-up item lending library. Open every Saturday for three months, the founders were inundated with demand for borrowing items. The concept caught press attention. People across the UK started getting in touch about starting a LoT in their neighbourhoods too.

2015: A successful crowdfunding campaign raised £15k from 250 people to find LoT a more permanent home nearby – in two customised, home-made shipping containers - located next to a recycling centre and food surplus ‘supermarket’ for low income residents. The space was run by volunteers, open 3 days week with 1,000 local members and a store room of 400+ donated items.



2016-17: After 18 months - and with 10 volunteers working around the clock to open and host the shop, source and repair items, fundraise, manage customer queries, plus operational and technical headaches - the decision was made to re-design the service to be better for borrowers and volunteers alike. And, to make the model replicable so others could start one too, without the same challenges.



Background: Crystal Palace Library of Things

Partners

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2018+: A partnership was created with Upper Norwood Library Hub (UNLH) and Crystal Palace Transition Town, who led a crowdfunding campaign to bring LoT to the area. 300 local people, plus the Mayor of London, Barclays, B&Q and local businesses pledged their support.

Crystal Palace LoT launched in May 2018. UNLH provides space for LoT to run item lending and skills events, in exchange for a share of revenue – and is a critical learning partner for LoT as it tests out a new model. As a vibrant community venue with cafe, book lending, programmes and support services, the hub is open six days a week and used by thousands of local residents.

LoT had a target to have two new sites in the pipeline by the end of the grant period; at the time of writing no new sites had opened, although sites in east and south London are in development.

How it works

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70 items are available to borrow from a self-serve 'kiosk', installed inside the Hub's cafe. LoT members reserve items online and collect and return them from the kiosk, by using an iPad to 'unlock' or 'lock' them to the shelves. Volunteer hosts are available at peak times to support members.

During the period of this report, LoT used prototype technology, utilising a mix of third party software platforms, custom-built apps and handmade locking modules.



The aim was to create a proof-of-concept 'self-serve' kiosk, integrated into the library hub. The rationale was to:

- minimise the cost and operational burden of providing affordable item borrowing;
- grow impact by reaching more people;
- free volunteers from operational roles, and invite them to participate in social and skills training activities;
- develop a specification and attract funding to build an operational version of the kiosk and software, suitable for replication.

Background: Process & approach to the evaluation

Process

LoT and m2 worked together to develop an appropriate process for this evaluation. Key steps to delivering the evaluation partnership were:

1. Refining and developing LoT's Theory of Change.
2. Developing a measurement framework based on the Theory of Change (Appendix II).
3. A joint workshop with fellow grantee NWN, focussing on understanding qualitative research and developing a research sample.
4. A stakeholder engagement workshop with LoT staff to map key stakeholders and determine who to interview (Appendix III).
5. Depth interview training for LoT staff carrying out interviews.
6. Support to LoT staff during recruitment and delivery of the depth interviews.

7. Making recommendations to LoT about how to collect further data going forward to show impact.

The evaluation activities comprised four strands:

1. Qualitative depth interviews with LoT members.
2. Stakeholder interviews with a sample of LoT's partners and wider contacts.
3. Analysis of LoT's monitoring data.
4. Analysis of survey data that LoT has collected.

Approach

The aim was to develop evaluation activities that were as robust as possible, while being proportionate and acknowledging LoT's time and resource constraints.

The evaluation was therefore guided by two principles:

1. A pragmatic commitment to working collaboratively and tailoring the evaluation activity as much as possible to measurement activities already underway or planned by the LoT team.
2. A *realist* approach, meaning that it focused on examining how borrowers and other LoT stakeholders *perceived* and *reported* that LoT affected them - rather than attempting to measure these impacts more objectively. This could be built into future evaluations as LoT develops.



Background: Evaluation activity

Qualitative research: approach

The aim of the qualitative research was to explore members' experiences of the library in detail and understand the impact that members felt that it had - or had not had - on their lives.

The intention was to carry out 15 face-to-face depth interviews with LoT members from a range of backgrounds. Since qualitative research is an intensive process and internal resource was scarce, the LoT team worked with a volunteer PhD student who was interested in speaking to LoT members for her own research.

m2 delivered basic training to the LoT team and the volunteer interviewer on how to carry out depth interviews. The interviews were then conducted largely by the volunteer with recruitment support from the LoT team and ongoing support from m2 on interview conduct and challenges.



The LoT team developed a sampling approach in partnership with m2 (see Appendix I). This aimed to recruit LoT members with a range of characteristics including age, distance from the Crystal Palace site, gender and household income.

Participants were recruited in two ways:

1. The volunteer interviewer attended a LoT event at the Crystal Palace site and spoke to LoT members, asking them if they were willing to take part in an interview.
2. A request for people to take part was sent out both in the LoT's newsletter and across its social media platforms.

All participants were sent an information leaflet detailing how the interviews would work and how their data would be used. They were also asked to complete a consent form before they took part. The interviews were conducted using topic guides that were developed by m2 in partnership with the LoT team. The majority of the interviews were face-to-face with one being conducted over Skype. Interviews were carried out in June and July 2019. They lasted an hour and were audio recorded with participants' permission.

Everyone who took part in received £10 credit at the LoT as a thank you for their time. Anonymised verbatim quotes from these interviews have been used throughout this report. Participants are referred to as 'Depth Interview Participant'.

Background: Evaluation activity

Qualitative research: limitations

As an early-stage project it was important that LoT focused its attention on delivering its activities and that monitoring and evaluation activity did not become over-burdensome. This means there are inevitably some limitations in the data.

The qualitative interviews were carried out by a volunteer student who had not done in-depth interviews of this type before. There were also challenges with achieving the desired sample of qualitative participants. Initially it had been planned that each potential participant would take part in a short screening interview to help identify their characteristics and ensure diversity in the sample.

The volunteer interviewer, however, was less comfortable with this approach and so participants were asked demographic questions at the end of each interview which made it harder to recruit participants with the necessary range of characteristics. Therefore, not all the sampling quotas were filled.

Limited time also made recruiting participants harder and 12 interviews rather than the desired 15 were carried out. This means that while the interviews gave a good indication of members' views of the LoT, and there were a lot of recurring themes, we cannot be sure we have captured the full range of views that might exist.

The initial plan had been for each interview to be written up before it was analysed; however this proved too time consuming for the LoT team and so the interviews were summarised directly from the recordings.

Interviews were charted directly from the recording into a thematic framework where columns represented themes and each participant's data was summarised across the row. This enabled key themes to be drawn out of the data; however, it should be noted that due to the number of interviews and quality of the data, only high-level analysis was possible.

Background: Evaluation activity

Stakeholder interviews & monitoring data: approach & limitations

Stakeholder interviews

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m2 carried out a short stakeholder mapping exercise with the LoT team and from this, a diverse shortlist of stakeholders was selected. The LoT team contacted stakeholders in the first instance to get permission for m2 to make contact and the m2 team then followed up and arranged a time for a telephone interview.

A total of 7 stakeholder interviews were carried out between July and September 2019. The interviews were conducted on the 'phone by members of the m2 team as it was felt that independence from the LoT would be important for these interviews.

m2 developed a topic guide for the interviews which was guided by the measurement framework and agreed by the LoT team. The interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and were audio recorded with participants' permission. Interviews were then charted using a thematic framework to draw out the key themes.

Anonymised quotes are used throughout the report, and participants are referred to as 'Stakeholder interview participant.'

Monitoring data

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LoT holds detailed monitoring data that helps it to keep track of its activity including which Things are borrowed, numbers of members and borrowers, income from each Thing and volunteer activity.

Much of this is drawn from the Kiosk. m2 had access to this data, but LoT analysed it for the evaluation, so it was therefore not fully independently reviewed. The data gathered is detailed and robust; however it is not yet set up to provide a systematic means of understanding an individual user journey or demographic information about borrowers.

Currently software (*MyTurn*) design restrictions mean that it is not possible to move users between membership types as data is erased.

Some volunteer roles, such as the Hosts, are co-led by the host space. This necessitates data sharing, adding to the challenge of managing member and volunteer information.

Background: Evaluation activity

Survey data: approach and limitations

LoT regularly carries out surveys with its members and borrowers. The majority of these are online and sent out through the regular newsletter. m2 was given access to all survey data.

There is a relatively low response rate to the various surveys sent out by LoT which reduces their validity, and the question wording is variable which makes tracking change over time difficult.

In this evaluation we draw upon a survey with 17 recent volunteers (CPLoT volunteers), and the Borrowing Feedback survey, as this had the greatest number of respondents. The survey covers 'satisfaction with the service' and 'motivation for using LoT'.

This feedback survey is sent to all borrowers once they have returned an item. It therefore went to 1,126 individuals, some of whom will have received it multiple times. The response rate is relatively low, with 169 surveys returned.

Response rates are typically low for online surveys, but factors such as being sent the survey more than once and the fact that it is embedded in an email receipt are likely to have reduced response rates still further. The response rate to individual questions varies substantially within the survey.

The extensive membership and survey data gathered by LoT does not include demographic information, so it is not possible to draw a detailed picture of borrowers.



Theory of Change

Item lending

Make costly items available to borrow at affordable prices from community spaces

People are aware of their local LoT & its contents

People access high quality Things at affordable prices

People who would have bought/rented a Thing save money, space & reduce environmental impact

Practical participation opportunities

Create practical skill-sharing, participation & volunteering opportunities through local events & an online platform

More people learn practical skills

People who participate in LoT enjoy fulfilling experiences they would not have otherwise had

More people have the opportunity to create and/or strengthen local relationships

Civic leadership opportunities

Train & support people to start & run Library of Things sites in their neighbourhood

More people volunteer their time & talents

More people adopt more environmentally-conscious behaviours: borrowing, repairing & recycling

Community spaces are more resilient & neighbourhoods more attractive

More people have a shared sense of purpose locally

LoT sites gather critical mass & positively integrate with local community

Personal Transformation

Individuals can affordably access enjoyable, practical experiences that develop self-confidence & increase wellbeing

Active Communities

People feel part of a place; neighbours become friends & the local high street becomes home

Sustainable Economy

Consumption & waste of natural resources are reduced

Findings

This section sets out LoT's progress against the outcomes 1-8 in the measurement framework (see Appendix II), using the data gathered through the evaluation process. It highlights achievements, challenges, and makes recommendations for data collection moving forwards.

m2 recommends developing a further outcome around partnerships, as the evaluation demonstrated their critical importance to LoT.

Outcomes 1 – 8

1. People access high quality Things at affordable prices.
2. More people learn practical skills.
3. More people volunteer their time and talents.
4. People who would have bought Things save money and lessen their environmental impact.
5. More people adopt environmentally friendly behaviours: borrowing, reusing, recycling.
6. People who participate in LoT enjoy fulfilling experiences they would not have otherwise had.
7. More people have a shared sense of purpose locally.
8. More people have the opportunity to create and/or develop local relationships.

There were **three** further outcomes developed for the framework; however these were determined to be outside the scope of this evaluation given the longer term nature of their ambition. These can be revisited as more sites open, and more data gathered.

9. Community spaces are more resilient and neighbourhoods more attractive.
10. People are aware of their local LoT & its contents.
11. LoT sites gather critical mass and positively integrate with their community.

Outcome 1: People access high quality things at affordable prices

Background

LoT seeks to ensure that people can access the Things they need at prices they can afford.

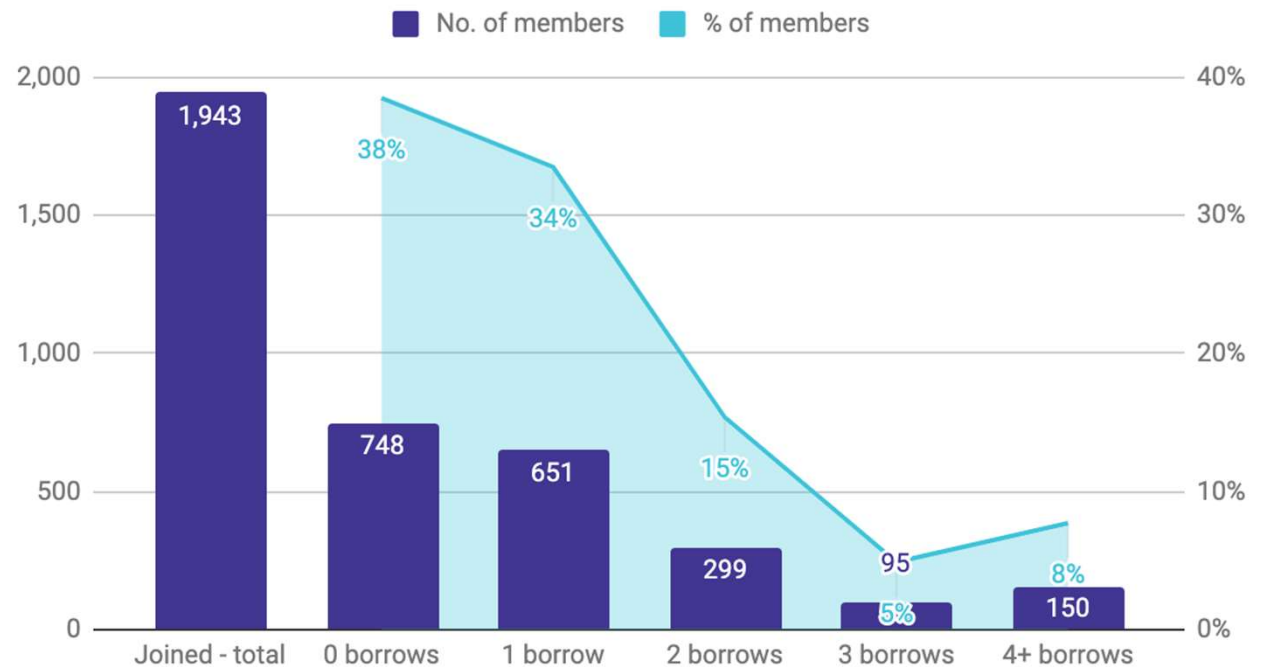
There are four key dimensions of this, and we look at each in turn:

- Quality;
- Price;
- Relevance of Things;
- Convenience.

For LoT to be sustainable at each local site, there needs to be a minimum of **1,000** active users, each borrowing on average **two** times a year. In the period covered by the evaluation (**May 2018 – September 2019**):

- LoT Crystal Palace had **1,943 members**;
- **1,195 (62%)** of members borrowed at least once, and on average **2** items each;
- **2,418** loans were made;
- **70** different items were available;
- **106 (av.)** new members joined each month.

Borrowing activity of LoT members



Outcome 1: People access high quality things at affordable prices

Quality

LoT aims to provide high quality Things from top suppliers.

The top five suppliers over the time period were:

1. Karcher (5 Things, 714 loans, 30% of total loans)
2. Bosch (11 Things, 659 loans, 27% of total loans)
3. Spear & Jackson (5 Things, 75 loans, 3% of total loans)
4. Stanley (7 Things, 65 loans, 3 % of total loans)
5. The North Face (5 Things, 20 loans, 1% of total loans)

170 repairs were carried out to make sure Things work effectively, and 22 items were replaced. This suggests that LoT is focusing on ensuring items borrowed continue to be high quality and working well.



The quality of items was praised by the LoT members interviewed, and the brands on offer were seen as good. It was felt that the Things stocked by the LoT were often better quality than they would have been able to access if they had bought them.

The fact that items are also checked on a regular basis was seen as positive.

Someone who had found an issue with a Thing was pleased with how easy it was to report the problem as well as the LoT team's response to the issue.

Some stakeholders said that the LoT team's focus on quality (of items to borrow, of staff recruitment) and rigour meant that they felt confident about both delivery and member experience being satisfying and of high quality.

'Everything seems to be good quality, built to last.' (Depth interview participant E)

'They are quality-led.' (Stakeholder interview participant G)

'The great thing about what you can borrow here ..is high quality tools like Bosch [...] you know you are looking at great tools that you couldn't afford if it wasn't on a professional level and considering the amount of times they are being borrowed here it makes sense to invest in something good.' (Depth interview participant H)

Outcome 1: People access high quality things at affordable prices

Price

LoT aims to ensure that borrowing is as affordable as possible.

The daily borrowing price is calculated at 5-10% of the cost of buying an item, meaning a borrower would have to use it 10-20 times before spending the same money on buying the equivalent.

73% of people borrow an item for one day or less. There are weekly prices available for Things (such as the GoPro or tents) which tend to be borrowed for longer – these give borrowers seven days for the price of four.

As of September 2019 there were 189 concessionary members – 10% of the total. This level of membership is aimed at people who are on low wages or who are unwaged, and offers a 25% discount on daily and weekly prices.

LoT offers 3 types of membership:

- Pay As You Go (PAYG)/Concession (£1 joining fee);
- Simple (£15 for three months, offering a 25% discount);
- Supporter (suggested donation £25 for three months, offering a 50% discount).

PAYG is by far the most popular, with 1,710 members, as opposed to 13 Simple members and 9 Supporter members.

There was an average of 2.3 borrows per member for concessionary members and 2.0 for PAYG members, suggesting that LoT is providing a valuable service for those on low incomes.

Some depth interview participants felt that the costs were very reasonable. However, other depth interview participants felt not all the costs were justified.

The name library is synonymous with borrowing for free and so they had expected the charges to be lower than they are on many items. Screwdrivers and secateurs were cited as examples that members felt were overpriced given that they are very cheap to buy. It was felt that if someone was not focused on the sustainability element or could not afford the prices, they would just purchase them instead. In contrast, larger, less frequently used items are seen to offer better value.

'It was an absolute bargain. In places like HSS hire, that hire out big power tools, you would be looking at £40-60 to borrow something like that and this is a fraction of that. That {also} plays into the community thing I like, that it's going to make something better as opposed to buying into a company.' (Depth interview participant M)



Outcome 1: People access high quality things at affordable prices

Relevance of Things

LoT aims to provide relevant Things to the local community.

LoT establishes what Things to stock based on three key criteria:

- 1. Desirability/local demand:** based on requests and votes from local people, trials (e.g. The North Face stock) and data from previous pilot sites.
- 2. Maintenance need:** can borrowers easily return the item in good condition/do the team have the skills to service the item weekly.
- 3. Storage requirement:** with 8m² on offer, space is at a premium, so large items that are not regularly borrowed are not feasible.

The top 15 Things earn 75% of the item rental revenue. *'It's about getting real things to real people.'* (Stakeholder interview participant A)



The depth interviewee participants saw the wide range of items that LoT stocks seen as a real benefit - liking the diversity on offer. The fact that LoT stocks Things that people might only use occasionally such as a gazebo or sewing machine was seen as useful and convenient. We also heard a view that it would be useful to have a greater quantity of certain more popular items.

Top 5 Things by loans:

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------|
| 1. Carpet cleaner | (238 loans) |
| 2. Pressure washer | (208 loans) |
| 3. Drill (cordless) | (162 loans) |
| 4. Steam cleaner | (125 loans) |
| 5. Hand sander | (109 loans) |

The most popular (and most profitable) items are those that are used infrequently, are large and/or costly to buy. In contrast, the tape measure was loaned once, and brought in £1 of revenue. *'People are still only borrowing a small percentage of what's on offer.'* (Stakeholder interview participant G)

'For me, what they have to lend is still quite small so [a question] is whether that could grow. For example, we just got back from camping and there were two tents on there, but both had been unavailable for the time I wanted. So if there was more available it might be more of a "Go to place" for that kind of stuff.' (Depth interview participant M)

Not all stakeholders are convinced, however, that the items on offer are all appropriate or needed and feel that there could be a greater focus upon getting more of the most popular items. One stakeholder felt there was a push to be overly uniform as sites were developed, and more care needs to be taken to ensure that what is on offer responds to specific community need.

Outcome 1: People access high quality things at affordable prices

Convenience

LoT aims to make it as convenient as possible for borrowers to borrow and use Things.

Locality

LoT has reliable data on location for 91% of its users. This shows that the majority (69%) live 0-1 miles away from the Library, suggesting that a substantial proportion of borrowers do not find travelling a slight distance an inconvenience or that it outweighs the need to travel to LoT's location. Some were driven to join by the need to borrow something specific straight away. In one case, a participant even delayed doing some DIY jobs until the LoT opened as they felt it was a much cheaper and more convenient option than others that were available.

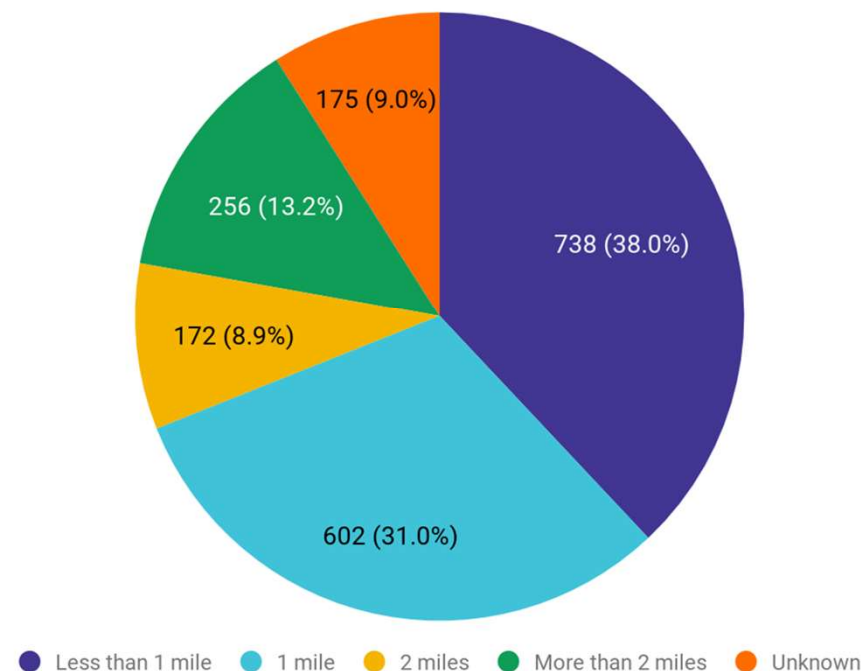
Opening hours

LoT's opening hours are set by the Library host space, Upper Norwood Library Hub (UNLH). Some LoT members found the opening hours (Tues-Sun, 10am-6pm) constrictive, making it hard to attend the library or return items. This was particularly the case for people who work outside the local area.

LoT members feel it offers a convenient means of gaining access to items they need.



Members: distance from home to Library (by road)



Based on postcode data entered by new members when they join LoT. 9% data missing is due to inconsistent data entry into myTurn software, making systematic analysis across all postcode data not possible.

Outcome 1: People access high quality things at affordable prices

Convenience (2)

There was a sense of relief expressed at the way LoT removed the challenges associated with buying, such as the various choices that needed to be made during a purchase, and the need to store the Thing at home.

‘The battery was fully charged, it was clean, there were instructions on how to use it, it was easy to pick up and get going with so I was quite impressed with that.’ (Depth interview participant M)

Positive reactions to technology

Some depth interviewees were surprised at how seamless the process of becoming a member and checking out an item was. They liked the fact that the Things were available to view online beforehand, meaning that they knew exactly what they were going to borrow.

The iPad kiosk system was seen as easy and accessible by some - though not all - and the presence of volunteers to help with borrowing items was also valued.

There was a sense from some depth interviewees that the concept was great, but that it needed to be further developed.

Improvements to technology

Members: Participants were unclear as to whether they could extend their borrowing online if they needed to.

Although some members were delighted with the ease of joining; reserving Things online; and checking them out through the iPad, others were not as enamoured.

One older participant felt that the reliance on technology worked well for younger borrowers but not necessarily for everyone.

Volunteers: This was echoed by a volunteer who felt that the process was very dependent on the individual borrower, how comfortable they were with IT, and how willing they were to spend time reading the instructions.

There were also examples of where the technology had failed and borrowers had been unable to release their Thing or had unlocked it but had not been able to lock Things back up again in the time allowed. They then just had to hope it was locked up by a staff member later.

Volunteers reported that the technology could be challenging too, with some saying that things went wrong on every shift.

Stakeholders: Stakeholders like the innovative focus on technology, but feel that the challenges in developing it have affected borrowers and the speed of take-up.



Outcome 1: Summary & recommendations for future data collection

The available data suggests that LoT is enabling borrowers to access high quality, relevant, Things affordably and conveniently.

There are some questions about the extent to which smaller, less expensive Things are seen to represent value for money and relevance in the same way that larger, less frequently used items do.

In order to demonstrate impact and progress against this outcome more effectively, LoT should capture data on:

- Demographic information about borrowers in order to understand who borrows what, and to establish if particular groups should be targeted for marketing. This should ideally include age, gender, ethnicity, distance lived from LoT site and household income (at sign up). For example, currently gender is known for only 22% of borrowers;
- How people transport items home (annual survey);
- Whether they consider the prices to be affordable (annual survey);
- What would make them likely to use LoT more frequently (annual survey).

LoT currently collects extensive data about its members and the Things they borrow. To demonstrate impact more effectively, LoT could take this further and develop systems to link the different types of data.

To be able to monitor the participation level across all their volunteers and borrowers, LoT ideally will need to systematically collect data (names, postcode) to be able to identify and then cross-reference the involvement of users across borrowing, events and both regular and ad-hoc volunteering. This approach to user/borrower data is a consideration for future software design.



Outcome 2: More people learn practical skills (1)

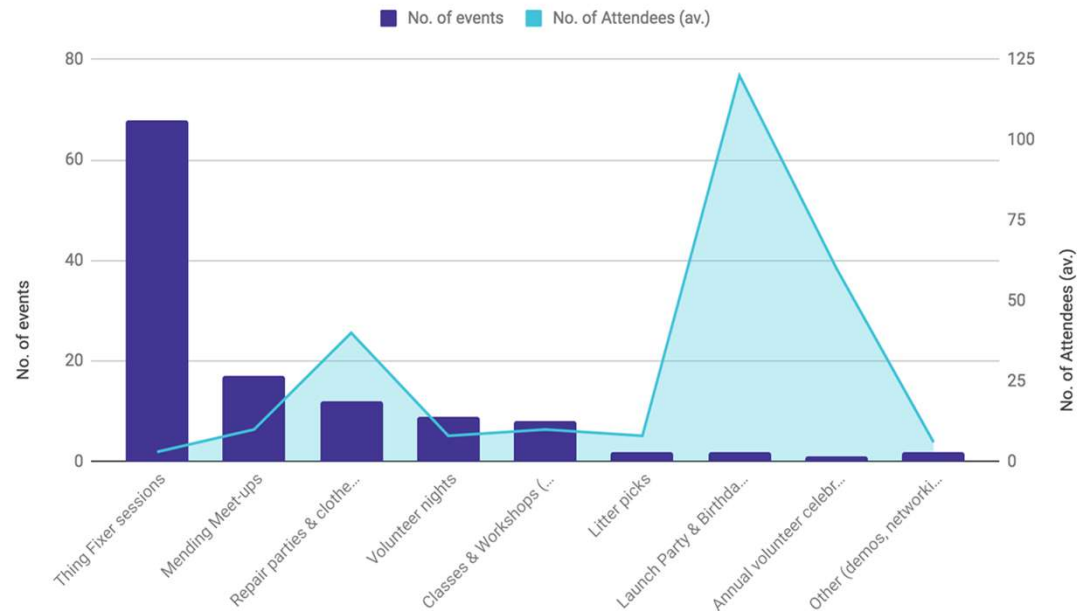
LoT aims to offer the potential for local people to gain skills through borrowing items, attending events, and volunteer training.

Events

There were 139 events over the evaluation period. Of those, the majority were designed to enable people to develop practical skills and learn how to use, reuse or repair items. This included 11 repair parties, 17 mending meetings and 68 Thing Fixer sessions. 1,271 people attended events.

Feedback about the events and workshops was positive. One depth interview participant attended a mending workshop and was delighted that not only had she managed to mend an item of clothing that she had been meaning to for years, but that *'they didn't ask for a donation or anything.'* (Participant D)

LoT events & skills training



Outcome 2: More people learn practical skills (2)

Desire for more events

The depth interviews also revealed an appetite for more support with practical skills. Some interviewees also discussed the need for LoT to do more to support borrowers by offering DIY courses alongside lending out tools.

While there was acknowledgment that this was already happening to some extent, it was felt more could be done since the expertise that was needed to support members was not always present.

It was suggested by depth interview participants that LoT could consider offering events in a more flexible way, for example by having a stall at other local events or just focusing on one key skill like fixing a plug.

Borrowing

The experience of borrowing in itself can enable people to develop new skills as they grapple with unfamiliar items. One LoT member spoke about how they had enhanced their skills and gained the confidence to research, cut and assemble their own bed frame using tools borrowed from the Library.

Volunteering

The available data suggests that some LoT volunteers are gaining skills and confidence as a result. 8 people out of the 17 volunteers who answered the CPLoT volunteer survey said they either agreed or strongly agreed that they have *'learnt new skills'* (CPLoT volunteer survey).

10 out of 17 volunteers in the volunteer survey also said they either agreed or strongly agreed that they have 'gained confidence' as a result of volunteering with LoT.

Anecdotally, some volunteers (particularly Thing Fixers) have found work as a result of their experience at LoT. Three volunteers have also been hired in a paid capacity by LoT.



Outcome 2: Summary & recommendations for future data collection

The available data suggests that LoT is enabling some of its borrowers and volunteers to develop practical skills.

This is welcomed by borrowers, who feel that more could be done to develop and highlight this service.

The depth interview participants who were volunteers as well as members described how they enjoyed the sense of community they got from volunteering, and the opportunity to talk about the library and its work to others.

In order to demonstrate impact and progress against this outcome more effectively, **m2** recommends LoT should capture data on:

- How many unique attendees there are at events (*linking member data to event sign up*);
- Which demographics of borrowers are mostly likely to attend events (*linking member data to event sign up*);
- The extent to which borrowers attending events have used their new skills subsequently (*annual survey*). This question should remain the same year on year so that comparisons can be easily made;
- The extent to which volunteers feel that they have gained new skills through their engagement with LoT (*volunteer survey*);
- The extent to which borrowers have developed skills through the process of using Things (*annual survey*);
- Qualitative work with members to get their views about the events.



Outcome 3: More people volunteer their time and talents (1)

LoT aims to enable people to volunteer and engage with LoT in a variety of ways. At each local site, LoT targets 1 in 10 members to participate beyond borrowing items.

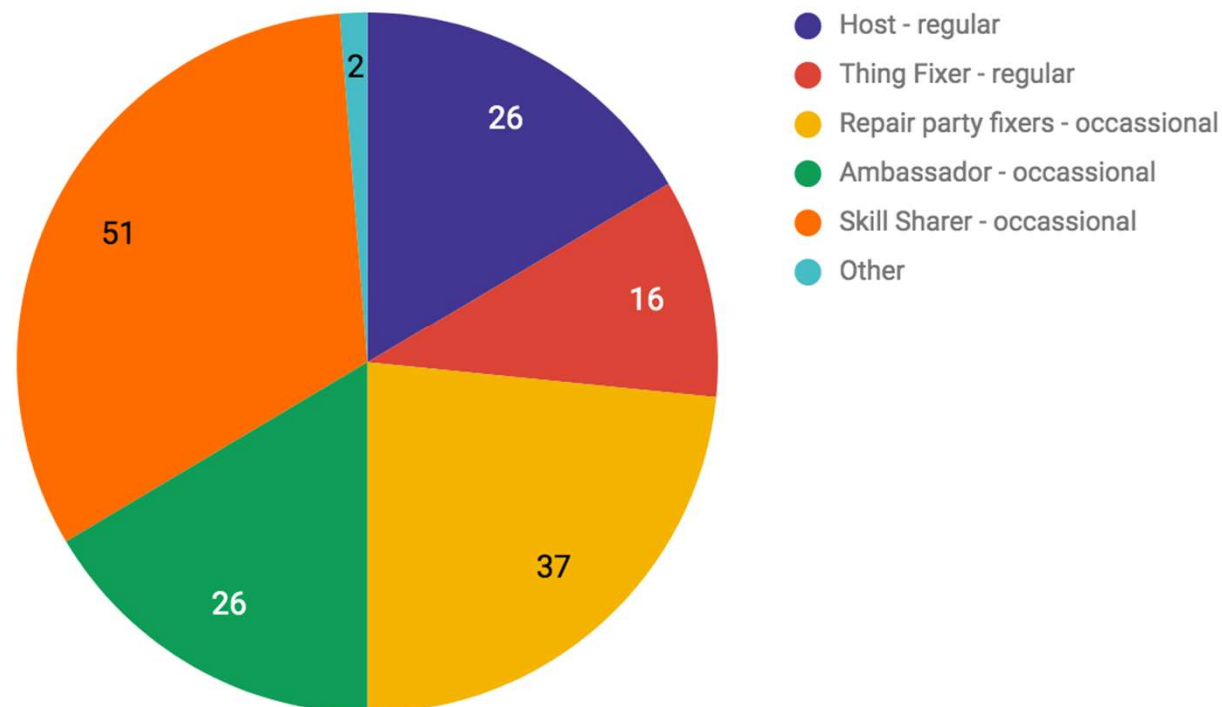
158 volunteers had participated in LoT over the evaluation period. Of these, 68 were aged 50+.

Roughly 1 in 4 volunteers were in roles that require sustained engagement, such as Thing Fixers and Hosts (known as 'Regular' volunteers). These roles are the highest level of participation on offer for LoT members.

3 in 4 volunteers got involved in 'Occasional' roles. These are ad hoc, generally events-based activities, such as hosting a Mending Meet-Up or being an Ambassador to promote LoT at local events.

All volunteers receive rewards for their time – from refreshments during their shift and branded t-shirts to 50% discounts on borrowing items.

158 Volunteers by Role



Outcome 3: More people volunteer their time & talents (2)

Regular volunteers

The most complete volunteer data LoT holds relates to the 42 Hosts and Thing Fixers, as they apply and interview for their roles, and data about them is systematically gathered in the Volunteer Address book.

Employment status

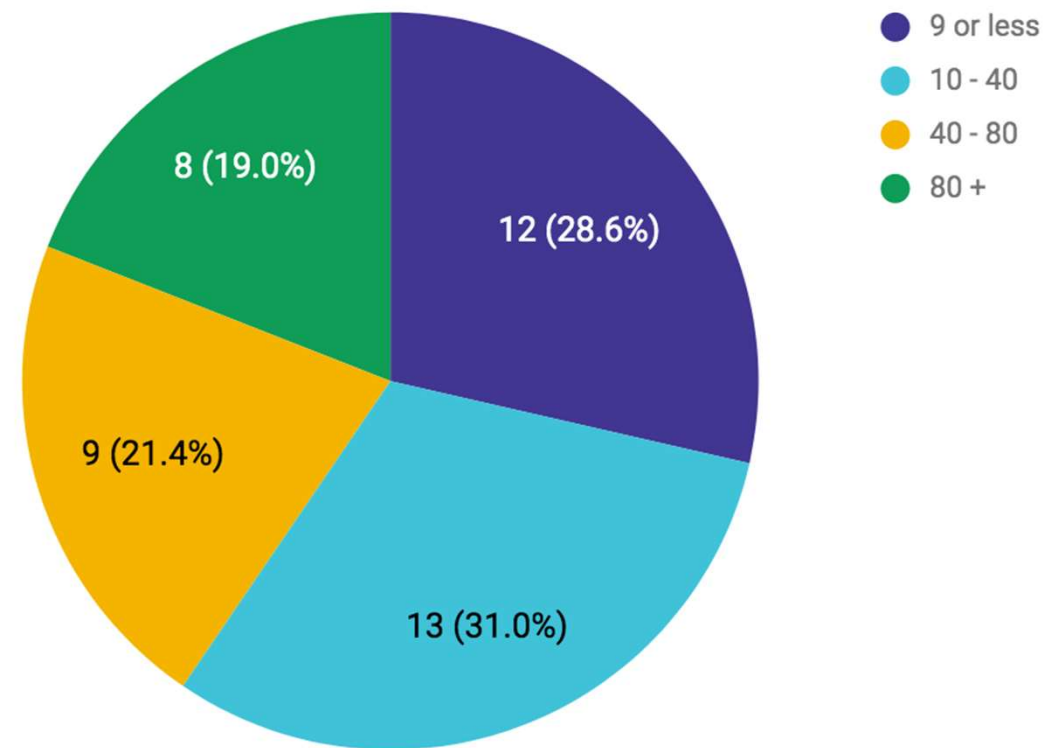
At the point of applying for their role, 50% of regular volunteers were either unemployed (41%) or retired (9%).

Time input

A total of 1,981 volunteer hours were contributed by regular volunteers. Overall, 29% of people volunteered for nine hours or less, and 21% volunteered for over 40 hours. 19% volunteered for over 80 hours, including two individuals who each contributed 180+ hours.

This data suggests that LoT is successfully enabling people with different levels of availability and commitment to volunteer.

No. of Hours contributed by 42 Regular Volunteers



Outcome 3: More people volunteer their time & talents (3)

Regular volunteers (cont.)

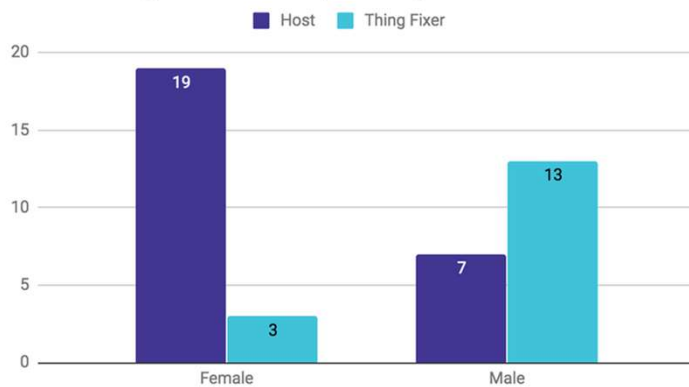
Locality

81% of regular volunteers live 0-2 miles away from the Library, suggesting that the local connection is likely to be important to them.

Gender

There is a near even gender split in terms of numbers, but a strong gender bias in terms of the roles that are chosen (see graph).

Host & Thing Fixer – role-specific gender bias



Age & ethnicity

A third of regular volunteers are aged 50+, with 57% aged 30-50. This suggests that LoT is working effectively to reach a range of volunteers. Data on ethnicity was not available.

Retention

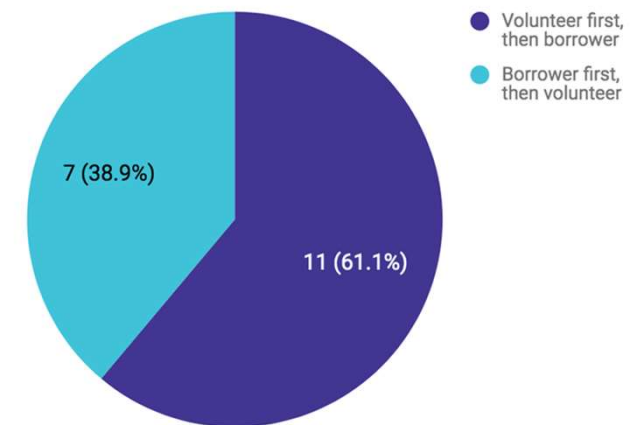
Hosts and Thing Fixers review and re-commit to their volunteer role every three months (or choose to leave/have a break), to keep it as flexible as possible. At the last quarterly review, 52% of volunteers chose to stay on. 48% chose to leave.

Motivation

The majority of regular volunteers have not yet borrowed. Those who have (18) tend to borrow more than the average member (an average of 3 times each) and typically *after* they have started volunteering.

This suggests the most attractive incentive for most volunteers is *not* the discounted borrowing (up to 50% off) that is made available for borrowers – but some other driver(s).

Borrowing journey of Regular Volunteers



Over half (24 out of 42) of regular volunteers said their main motivation is being *'excited by the idea and mission of Library of Things.'*

Outcome 3: More people volunteer their time & talents (4)

Challenges for volunteers

The volunteer survey also throws up some frustrations experienced by volunteers. These focus upon the difficulties in using the technology '*technical issues when the locks won't open*' and feeling under-utilised '*it can feel quite lonely, if people don't come in it's quite quiet.*' Some of the depth interview participants were also volunteers, and they echoed these concerns.

On the flip side, when the library was quieter, volunteers could find their 4-hour shifts quite dull.

Improvements to the volunteering programme were therefore suggested by interviewees, focusing on the challenges of the technology and the pressure to provide good customer service in the face of charging for items.

One volunteer reported that their experience had not been as much fun as they had expected because there had been problems with the kiosk system on every single shift they had done. This observation was supported by another volunteer who said that '*something always goes wrong*' and that they had to use their initiative to ensure that things went smoothly for the borrower.



Outcome 3: Summary & recommendations for future data collection

The available data demonstrates that volunteers largely enjoy and appreciate their roles with LoT, and that LoT has exceeded its target number of volunteers.

More could be done to support volunteers around technology use, and to address the challenge of working with volunteers in a paid for context.

In order to demonstrate impact and progress against this outcome more effectively, [m2](#) recommends LoT should capture further data on:

- The user journey – how people move between being borrowers and volunteers (*sign up data*);
- What prompts people to become volunteers (*volunteer survey*);
- Demographic make up of volunteers (*user data*);
- The extent to which volunteers feel their time and talents are effectively used (*volunteer survey*);
- Ongoing qualitative work with volunteers to explore their experiences in more depth;
- Employment status at the end of their volunteering period (*volunteering survey*).



Outcome 4: People who would have bought a Thing save money & lessen environmental impact

LoT aims to enable people to save money and to make a positive environmental impact through borrowing Things rather than buying them.

LoT's intended environmental impact is: **direct** (outcome 4) - (quantifiable, but not within the scope of this evaluation to review this):

- reduction in carbon emissions;
- reduction in landfill (with financial savings to councils);

indirect (outcome 5):

- behaviour change;
- reduction in use of natural resources.

In total 1,195 borrowers borrowed 68 Things 2,418 times. The average daily price to borrow was 7% of the purchase price.

Repeat borrows

30 people borrowed the same Thing more than four times, across 32 different items. Even when borrowing the same item multiple times, in comparison to buying this saved them £3,855 (NB actual figure likely to be higher, as this is based on the trade discount price obtained by LoT rather than RRP). One person borrowed the tile cutter 9 times, which works out as more expensive, however, than buying the Thing.

Motivations

Both the depth interviews and the Borrowing survey demonstrate that saving money and environmental considerations are both important motivators for joining LoT.

Some of the depth interview participants specifically mentioned joining LoT because it encourages sustainability and they liked the idea of borrowing Things rather than buying them.

53% (38 people) of people say their main motivation for using LoT is that it is cheaper to borrow from LoT. (Borrowing feedback survey, question did not ask what the comparison was)

58% (42 people) say their motivation for borrowing was to help the environment. (Borrowing feedback survey)

'It is not just to get things repaired, it is to help people to understand that they can repair things themselves, that they can be part of sustainability movement, keeping their own stuff going for longer, saving money, all those good things; you don't have to give that responsibility to someone else and walk away.' (Depth interview participant K)

'I am really sustainability focused, [...] so for me taking part in such a project is saying no to mass consumerism and capitalism in some way.'

(Depth interview participant C) 



Outcome 4: People who would have bought a Thing save money & lessen environmental impact (2)

Example: The Drill

The drill is one of the most popular items borrowed by LoT members.

Drill	
No. items available to borrow	4
Purchase price	£160
Borrowing price at LoT	£7 per day
Total no. of loans	221
Total no. of borrowers (unique)	165
Av. length of loan	1 day
Item weight	2.5 kg
Av. lifecycle carbon footprint (CO ₂ -eq) (Source: WRAP Electronic Products Summary Report, 2010)	27 kg



Usage: Each drill was borrowed on average 55 times.

Financial savings: Each loan was on average 96% cheaper compared to buying the same item.

Environmental impact: If each borrower had purchased a drill instead, the combined carbon footprint would have been 5.3 tonnes. Instead, LoT purchased 4 drills, with a combined carbon footprint of 0.1 tonnes.

(It is not yet possible to infer the actual net financial or environmental saving realised without knowing whether each borrower would have purchased a drill - see recommendations).



Outcome 4: Summary & recommendations for future data collection

The available data shows that borrowers are motivated both by saving money and by reducing their environmental impact.

There is some evidence that borrowers are saving money. To make clear assessments about environmental impacts, however, further data needs to be collected, collated and analysed - both from within LoT and from secondary sources, for example the Advance London Circular Economy network.

'It's not always easy to know what difference it makes.' (Stakeholder participant A)

In order to demonstrate impact and progress against outcome 4 more effectively, **m2** recommends LoT should:

- Validate assumptions the proportion of borrowers that would otherwise purchased an item (*defined multiple choice question, Kiosk survey*);
- Understand more about motivation(s) for joining (*sign up data*);
- Ask members whether LoT could do more to encourage borrowers to reduce their carbon footprint generally (*annual survey*).

To establish direct environmental impact savings, **m2** recommends LoT needs to capture data on:

- weight-for landfill calculation;
- carbon emissions (*if published*);
- whether items are electrical (*as e-waste has additional environmental concerns*);
- natural resource composition (*if available*).

m2 recommends that future evaluations break down environmental outcomes as follows:

1. Influence on behaviours (*current outcome 5*).
2. Environmental benefits of borrowing rather than buying (*currently sitting within outcome 4*).
3. Saving money should then be included (*in outcome 1*).



Outcome 5: More people adopt environmentally conscious behaviours: borrowing, repairing and recycling

LoT aims for borrowers to increase their environmentally conscious behaviours as a result of their interaction with LoT.

Some LoT members clearly felt that the LoT had changed either their views or behaviour in some way. Depth interview participants spoke about how, since they had joined, they had started to think more about the everyday lifecycle of the things they use and about - not just recycling - but trying to reuse too, and questioning whether they really needed to buy things.

Stakeholders perceive the potential environmental and community benefits to be a critical aspect of LoT's appeal and approach.

However, there is a sense that these need to be better quantified and described in order to articulate LoT's potential more clearly.

'How many millions of these small appliances, which are really bulky and take so many resources are going to landfill every year? It is a horrible thought!' (Depth interview participant E)

'One big part of the fight for climate change is...behaviour change and I think that LoT contributes to that for different reasons. It should be common sense not owning everything that you could use but also borrowing and having a sharing system - that's why I would love to have more LoTs in London so more people could use it.' (Depth interview participant C)



Outcome 5: Summary & recommendations for future data collection

The available data shows that borrowers are in some cases thinking in more environmentally conscious terms, and changing their behaviours as a result.

The environmental and sustainability aspect and potential of LoT is greatly valued by both borrowers and stakeholders.

In order to demonstrate impact and progress against this outcome more effectively, m2 recommends LoT should capture and cross-reference data on:

- Self-reported behaviour change as a result of engaging with LoT (*annual survey, volunteer survey and ongoing qualitative research*);
- What level of engagement is most likely to prompt a shift in behaviour (*annual survey*);
- Which behaviours are most likely to change (*annual survey*) and why (*ongoing qualitative research*);
- Which borrowers are most likely to change their behaviours (*annual survey*);
- The number of members who borrow and then come to events or vice versa.

For many borrowers, the motivation to join LoT in the first place is linked to their views on the environment. They are potentially less likely to adopt environmentally conscious behaviours, if they already do this.

So being able to analyse the annual survey data against motivations will be important, as will being able to establish the extent to which more environmental behaviours are aligned to those attending events.



Outcome 6: People who participate in LoT enjoy fulfilling experiences they would not otherwise have had

LoT aims for borrowers to enjoy different and fulfilling experiences as a result of their interaction with LoT.

Overall, members enjoy the interaction and concept – 71% (119 individuals) said that they ‘loved’ borrowing their latest Thing and 83% (60 individuals) said they ‘love the Library of Things concept. (*Borrowing feedback survey*).

The LoT team’s attitude and approach was applauded. The fact that LoT is seeking its members’ views and opinions - and that the team is open to feedback - was also viewed positively.

Depth interview participants who had attended events were very positive about their experiences. There was also mention of smaller details like the fact that the various Things are given names; this was seen as being humorous and clearly resonated with at least some of the members.

Anecdotally, staff and volunteers mentioned stories borrowers had told them about how they had used Things; continuing to capture these stories systematically will be important.



Outcome 6: Summary & recommendations for future data collection

The available data demonstrates that borrowers largely find engaging with LoT an interesting, fulfilling, experience.

In order to demonstrate impact and progress against this outcome more effectively, m2 recommends LoT should capture data on:

- What borrowers enjoy and value most about their involvement with LoT (*annual survey*);
- What borrowers who have attended events think about them (*annual survey*);
- How would borrowers rate their experience (*5 point scale, Kiosk survey*).

It is difficult to collect robust data setting out what people would have experienced otherwise, as they will not always know. m2 recommends refining the outcome to: *'people who participate in LoT enjoy fulfilling experiences'*.

This kind of questioning is suited to a qualitative approach and, as further LoT sites develop, the teams should continue to capture qualitative data about the experiences they have had.

Much of the evidence around this will be anecdotal and informal – we suggest setting up an *anecdote library* (this could be a shared word or excel file) for staff and volunteers to log stories from borrowers as they hear them. This would complement the existing social media log.



Outcome 7: More people have a shared sense of purpose locally

LoT aims to enable local people to develop a greater sense of shared purpose as a result of their interaction with LoT.

Depth interview participants described a number of ways in which they felt LoT enhanced community spirit:

- Events not only taught skills but also encouraged community interaction and sustainability;
- Some of those people who volunteered spoke about how this helped them to become more immersed in the local community and have a better sense of what was going on in the area;
- Some interviewees described how they felt LoT had given a sense of hope to the area, enriched the local life, and that the community was more vibrant as a result.

‘LoT has definitely had an impact on community in Crystal Palace. It has enhanced the spirit of the area.’ (Participant F)

72% (52 people) say their motivation for participation is that they like supporting local projects. (*Borrowing feedback survey*)

LoT’s encouragement of an active community was lauded, not just because it encourages interaction and people getting together, but because its location helps to support a local library that may otherwise be under threat.

‘It shows we are a vibrant little community.’ (Participant D)

There was a feeling that Crystal Palace as an area already had a community spirit and so was primed to host a Library of Things which in turn enhanced the existing sense of community. For example, one participant spoke about how the community had already come together to try and save the library and that the creation of LoT took that sense of community even further.

It was suggested that, although the Library has a presence on social media, it has very little physical presence outside of the hub and that more could potentially be done to increase this and signpost people to its location.



Outcome 7: Summary & recommendations for future data collection

The available data shows that borrowers appreciate the way that LoT is contributing to the local community.

In order to demonstrate impact and progress against this outcome more effectively, [m2](#) recommends LoT should capture data on:

- What people feel LoT contributes to the local area (*annual survey and further qualitative work*);
- The extent to which borrowers experience a shared sense of purpose locally, and how much this can be attributed to LoT (*annual survey*).



Outcome 8: More people have the opportunity to create and/or strengthen local relationships

LoT aims to enable local people to strengthen their relationships through interaction at events, with staff and with volunteers.

LoT members taking part in the depth interviews described feeling connected both with staff and volunteers. Staff were described by as friendly, chatty and relaxed and participants liked the fact there was no sense of division between staff and LoT members.

One depth interview participant commented on how, now they were retired and at home all day, they welcomed having a chat with someone at the library when they visited; another commented on how nice it was that the project was intergenerational.

The sense of human connection and community that comes from interaction was seen as a potential benefit of having a LoT in the area.

Some participants even spoke about timing their visits to the Library to coincide with when they knew a volunteer would be there.

LoT members described thinking that LoT was a great idea and wanting to show both the team and the local community some support.

Some participants were specifically drawn to the community element of the venture, while others liked the idea of the repair parties and the fact they also encouraged social engagement.



Outcome 8: Summary & recommendations for future data collection

The available data suggests that borrowers appreciate the opportunities LoT affords them to meet other local people, through events, volunteering and borrowing.

In order to demonstrate impact and progress against this outcome more effectively, m2 recommends LoT should capture data on:

- The extent to which borrowers think they have the opportunity to create or strengthen local relationships and whether LoT provides this (*annual survey*);
- The number of new people that borrowers think they have met through LoT (*annual survey*);
- What, if anything, has happened as a result of these new relationships (*qualitative work*).



Proposed new outcome: LoT develops & maintains effective partnerships to further its vision

LoT's partnerships with statutory bodies, the local voluntary sector and corporate organisations are critical to its success.

To enable many more people to start and benefit from a LoT in their neighbourhood, some key relationships have been established during this programme including with:

- Councils and community groups in south and east London, who have committed funds, host spaces & time to launch **two** new LoTs in early 2020;
- Suppliers like Bosch and The North Face, providing high quality items and testing a neighbourhood lending model;

- Other UK lending libraries, **12** of which gathered for the first time at Crystal Palace LoT for 'ShareFest' in October 2019. The event was sponsored by B&Q.

m2 recommends developing an outcome to demonstrate impact around this.



LoT develops & maintains effective partnerships to further its vision: achievements

The LoT team are seen by stakeholders to be excellent at building and developing partnerships with a wide range of different organisations, from libraries to manufacturers. Their personal approach was appreciated by stakeholders, some of whom described how they had been pushed (positively) to think differently about their own approaches, e.g. business planning.

The stakeholders interviewed for the evaluation consistently expressed praise and appreciation for the LoT Directors, who are seen to be energetic, visionary and strategic. There was genuine admiration for the way in which they have set up and developed LoT, and stakeholders enjoy engaging with them.

This personal connection was an important aspect of why partners wanted to work with LoT. The Directors are seen to be open to challenge and to shifting how they work in response to contextual changes; both of which are welcomed.

‘I think it’s a great company doing great things.’ (Stakeholder interview participant C)

‘They’re a dream team to work with - it’s so exciting to work with three young female entrepreneurs.’ (Stakeholder interview participant B)

‘The tenacity and focus is unrelenting.’ (Stakeholder interview participant E)

Some stakeholders said that the LoT team’s focus on quality and rigour meant they felt confident about both delivery and member experience being satisfying and high quality. The history behind LoT, of trying things differently, of persevering, ‘spoke’ to stakeholders and added credibility to their work.

‘They’re great to have as a partner, their push and drive makes a difference.’ (Stakeholder F)

Stakeholders expressed excitement about LoT– its potential for environmental and community impact; its replicability; and its approach of marrying technology and volunteering. It is seen as an opportunity to positively disrupt town centres and to drive footfall in a different way - one which helps meet the needs of future ways of living.



LoT develops & maintains effective partnerships to further its vision: challenges

Some stakeholders discussed the fact that LoT is managing a challenging balance between community and corporate; between volunteerism and professionalism:

*‘They’re in an invidious spot.’
(Stakeholder interview participant F)*

Most felt that the balance was not always right, with the experience being *‘less like walking into the Apple store and more like walking into your Dad’s shed.’* (Stakeholder interview participant D)

For some, the answer is to become more corporate and slick, whilst for others the focus should shift more to the community aspect.

A number of stakeholders felt there was a lack of clarity about the financial model and expressed confusion about the apparent contradiction between being both volunteer-led and profit-led.

‘Any community business that relies on volunteers will see both benefits and disadvantages from that.’ (Stakeholder B)

For some, these challenges were exacerbated by a sense that the way in which LoT’s purpose, approach and ‘offer’ is communicated to different audiences has not always been consistent.

‘They need to be more consistent with what they’re asking – there are different understandings of what LoT is depending on what event you go to or presentation you hear.’ (Stakeholder interview participant G)

‘The community element can feel lost, then it is all about the business plan.’
(Stakeholder interview participant A)

‘Sometimes their branding is almost too good, a bit too corporate, and there could be more diversity [reflected] in there.’ (Stakeholder interview participant G)



LoT develops & maintains effective partnerships to further its vision: challenges (2)

Some stakeholders expressed surprise that LoT had not moved ahead further and faster by now. They appreciate the team's attention to detail and focus on getting things right, but feel there should have been more demonstrable progress in terms of new sites by now. One stakeholder said that they felt that setbacks were not always effectively communicated.

'I don't know, I just thought more would have happened by now.'
(Stakeholder interview participant E)

We heard from some stakeholders that LoT were not always sufficiently aware of the constraints those operating in different sectors face, particularly local statutory providers.

In particular, there is a perceived lack of recognition of the time involved in supporting and managing volunteers.

There is a sense that the LoT team are of a particular demographic, and not necessarily sufficiently aware of what might be needed by very different groups, such as 3rd age or BAME groups.

'They're not coming from a charitable perspective.' (Stakeholder interview participant F)

Looking ahead, continuing to capture stakeholder and partner views will be critical; m2 recommends an annual stakeholder engagement and interview exercise.



Reflections

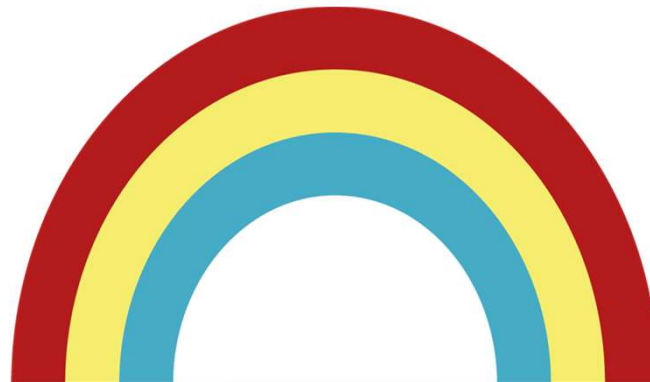
Library of Things has captured considerable data that shows positive change and demonstrates that LoT is making a difference to the people who borrow items and attend events.

There is currently less evidence for the impact at community and environmental levels, as these take longer to be measure and appropriate environmental measurement tools have not yet been developed.

As referenced, as new sites open, there will be further opportunity to assess community and environmental impacts.

Library of Things is valued by partners and stakeholders for the vision and dynamism exhibited by the Directors.

LoT's approach, however, is perceived to fall between corporate and community; this can feel inconsistently communicated externally to volunteers and stakeholders alike. This is exacerbated by the lack of clarity about where LoT fits into the wider circular economy movement.



Recommendations

Partners

Much of LoT's credibility with external stakeholders derives from the Directors' approach and ability to forge effective relationships and partnerships. As LoT develops it will be important to ensure that this is maintained, even as the number of sites and partnerships grow.

Wider movement

Clarifying where LoT fits into the wider movement, and establishing what is distinct (including any IP) compared to other similar approaches will help to set out and establish LoT's niche.

Offer coherence

Establishing where LoT places itself between community and corporate - and targeting its messaging to different audiences while at the same time ensuring it is consistent - will be important in maintaining a sense of integrity, and enabling a wide range of partnerships.

Technology

The innovative technology developed by LoT is valued by members and stakeholders alike. It is important that this continues to be as user-friendly as possible, and co-exists with a human face wherever possible to ensure the offer is accessible to all, including older people and to those for whom English is not the first language.



Recommendations: future evaluation activity & addressing data limitations

As LoT's offer develops in Crystal Palace and new sites, m2 recommends that evaluation activity includes the following:

- **Continued qualitative work** in Crystal Palace and new sites to help the team uncover borrowers' views, experiences and unmet needs;
- **On-going stakeholder work** to ascertain their views on the partnership;
- **Targeted survey activity** that maximises response rates. It is suggested that this is limited to:
 1. **A brief kiosk survey** at the point of return which replaces the borrower feedback survey and consists of no more than *three* questions.

This would not need to be compulsory and should be made easy for the user to skip. In addition, to help increase response all borrowers who take part could be entered into a prize draw.

2. **An annual online survey** that is sent out to all borrowers and which covers a range of areas but takes no more than *seven* minutes to complete. The questions should be carefully worded and ideally include some that have a rating scale. This approach would allow LoT to measure changes in attitudes over time as well as to compare data across sites.

To maximise response, LoT could consider doing some pre-survey publicity and offering entry into a prize draw for completed surveys. This survey should include some basic demographic information at the end.

3. **A volunteer survey** which explores the views and experiences of volunteers across LoT sites. This should be limited to no more than once a year.

LoT should also consider how to capture demographic information about its borrowers. m2 recommends this is done at the point that borrowers sign up.

To ensure this does not become a barrier to membership, LoT could limit what it asks to *three/four* non-compulsory questions, including motivation for joining. The reasons for capturing this information will need to be made clear to new borrowers.



Recommendations: future evaluation activity & addressing data limitations (2)

As mentioned, m2 also suggest developing a simple **anecdote library** to capture informal stories told by borrowers to staff and volunteers to complement the existing social media log.

Measuring the impact of LoT on local communities is challenging but ongoing qualitative work as well as research with stakeholders in local areas will help to tell this story.

LoT could also consider mapping the make up of the local communities where they set up sites and look at how these change once a LoT is established.

While it would be hard to attribute change to a LoT, it will provide a useful overview of the extent to which areas that host a LoT are flourishing.



Next steps & new developments for LoT

Product development

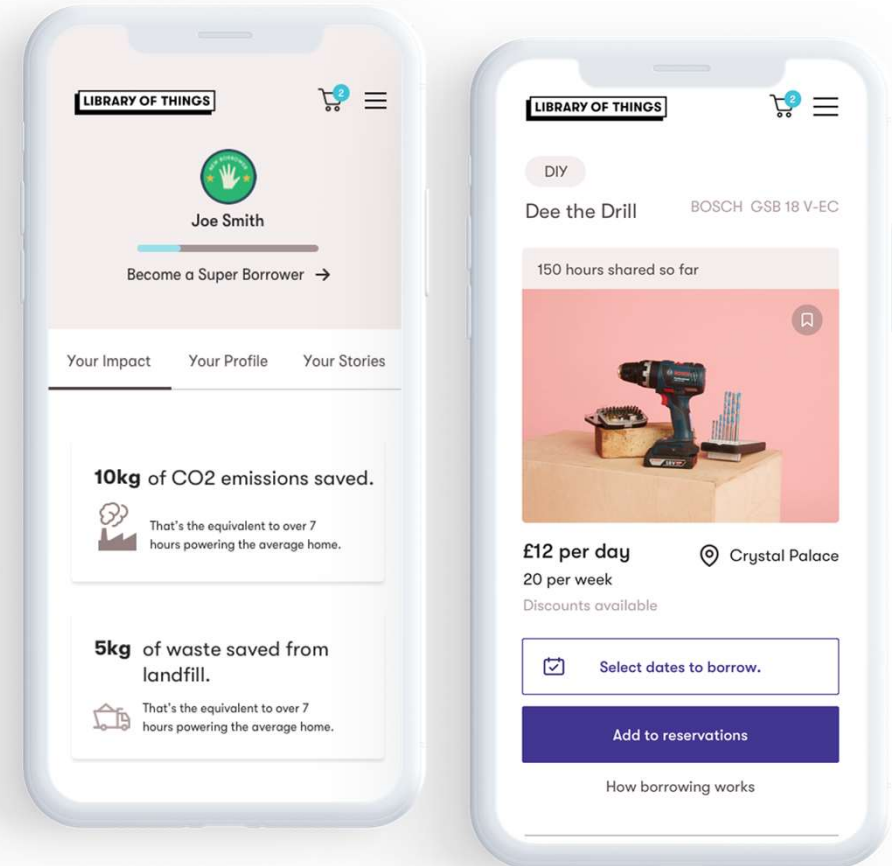
During the period covered by this evaluation and the CCIF, LoT has tested a mix of prototype technology for its self-serve borrowing kiosk. This has enabled the team to design an operational version (shown below), which has been built for installation at Crystal Palace LoT in November 2019.



Kiosk: A secure, modular locker system fabricated in local makerspaces and customisable to different host sites. iPads replaced with a large, user-friendly screen & simple app.



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Software: Custom-built web app enabling simpler, more participatory user experience & back-end for improved data & impact reporting.



Next steps & new developments for LoT (2)

Capacity building

During the period covered by this evaluation and the CCIF, LoT has grown its team from 7 to 12 people and established offices in London and Bristol.

In 2019 this growth has been enabled by a significant fundraising effort to secure investment from mission-aligned impact investors. The funds are 70% secured at the time of writing. The investment has been used to develop LoT's own software and kiosk product, making it suitable for replication across multiple sites, and will resource the team to deliver six more LoTs across London in 2020-21.

Whilst launching new sites has been later than planned, the Directors were reluctant to move ahead without ensuring funds were in place and necessary improvements made to LoT's prototype product for it work well, in Crystal Palace and beyond.



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Appendix I: qualitative data collection quota

Characteristic	Quota (min.)	Achieved
Age		
18-30	2	2
31-50	2	4
51+	2	6
Gender		
Male	5	4
Female	5	8
Where they live		
postcode / distance to LoT site		
within 0-2 mile radius	4	9
2+ miles	2	3
Household income		
Socio-economic situation		
£0-20k	3	2
£21-40k	3	2
£41k+	3	8
Ethnicity		
White	4	9
BAME	4	3
Level of participation		
none	1	1
borrowed only	3	3
borrowed & participated	2	5
participated, not borrowed	2	3



Appendix II: Measurement Framework (1)

Outcomes to measure	Indicators or proxies of the outcomes	Sources of data/measurement tool	Frequency and approach for using measurement tool – and who by	Possible challenges/limitations
1. People access high quality things at affordable prices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Numbers of borrowers accessing Things cross-tabulated by various characteristics (e.g. user type) ➤ Views of borrowers on whether Things are high quality and affordable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ LoT monitoring data from kiosks, ideally covering who borrowed what, for how long and when ➤ Survey with borrowers which includes questions about affordability & quality of Things ➤ Qualitative interviews with sample of borrowers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ongoing data collection by LoT central team across all sites ➤ Qual interviews by LoT staff and volunteers to take place on a rolling basis with a diverse range of borrowers ➤ Regular survey with LoT membership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Monitoring data may be incomplete ➤ Qual interviews would yield useful data but be time consuming for staff or volunteers ➤ Response rates to survey are likely to be low and to reduce over time, meaning that the data is indicative rather than representative
2. More people learn practical skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Borrowers report having practical skills they didn't before ➤ Number of borrowers participating in skills/community events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Survey with members ➤ Qualitative interviews with sample of members/borrowers ➤ LoT Record of borrower participation in skills event 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Regular survey, asking same questions to measure increase in members who feel that have practical skills over time by LoT location as well as increase in confidence to learn new skills ➤ Qual interviews by LoT staff and volunteers to take place on a rolling basis with a diverse range of members and borrowers ➤ LoT record of borrower participation in events will help track who is taking part. NB attendance is not a proxy for acquiring skills so it will not tell us more than that 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Response rates to survey are likely to be low and to reduce over time, meaning that the data is indicative rather than representative ➤ Qual interviews would yield useful data but be time consuming for staff or volunteers

Appendix II: Measurement Framework (2)

<p>3. More people volunteer their time and talents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Increase in the number of volunteers at LoT sites ➤ Details of the type of volunteering that people are doing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ LoT volunteer monitoring data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ongoing monitoring that can capture volunteer recruitment and retention details, as well as number of hours and how time is being used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Getting consistent data across sites may be challenging but could be aided by uniform software and dashboard
<p>4. People who would have bought a Thing save money & reduce environmental impact</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ There is a group of borrowers who chose to borrow rather than buy and who have borrowed the Thing fewer times than it would have cost to purchase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Survey with members which includes questions about why those who borrowed did ➤ Qualitative interviews with a sample of borrowers ➤ Ask at check out: 'if you hadn't borrowed, would you have bought it / rented it / got from elsewhere?' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Regular survey with members ➤ Qual interviews by LoT staff and volunteers to take place on a rolling basis with a diverse range of borrowers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Response rates to survey are likely to be low and to reduce over time meaning that the data is indicative rather than representative ➤ Qual interviews would yield useful data but be time consuming for staff or volunteers



Appendix II: Measurement Framework (3)

<p>5. More people adopt environmentally conscious behaviours: borrowing, repairing and recycling</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Quantitative formula for calculating landfill diversion, CO2 emissions & raw materials saved - for each product/product category? ➤ Check-out survey, 'if borrower hadn't borrowed from LoT.' ➤ Members' and borrowers' own perceptions about how their behaviour has changed ➤ Analysis of people's motivations for joining LoT to help understand the extent to which LoT has influenced their behaviour vs. pre-existing behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Survey with members and borrowers which includes questions about the extent of their sustainable behaviours and how they have changed as well as questions about their motivations for joining LoT to understand the extent to which they were environmental ➤ Qualitative interviews with a sample of members and borrowers 	<p>As above</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ This needs more scientific evidence & robustness to determine the quantification of environmental savings 	<p>As above</p>
<p>6. People who participate in LoT enjoy fulfilling experiences they would not otherwise have had</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Some Borrowers feel that they have new and fulfilling experiences ➤ Volunteers and staff across sites report instance of lives being enhanced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Qualitative interviews with a sample of borrowers ➤ Anecdotal reports from staff and volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Qual interviews by LoT staff and volunteers to take place on a rolling basis with a diverse range of borrowers. ➤ Anecdotal data collection from staff and volunteers collated by head office regularly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Qual interviews would yield useful data but be time consuming for staff or volunteers



Appendix II: Measurement Framework (4)

<p>7. More people have a shared sense of purpose locally</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ People report feeling more connected to their community and having a shared sense of purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Qualitative interviews with a sample of borrowers <p>NB Ideally there would be a measure taken at local population level, through a community survey of some sort. It is not suggested that that is done now but worth considering in the future</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Qual interviews by LoT staff and volunteers 	<p>As above</p>
<p>8. More people have the opportunity to create and/or strengthen local relationships</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ People involved in LoT report new opportunities to create or strengthen relationships ➤ Local stakeholders report new dynamics in local relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Qualitative interviews with a sample of borrowers ➤ Depth interviews with a purposive sample of local stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Qual interviews by LoT staff and volunteers ➤ Small stakeholder mapping exercise to determine who might have different understanding/views of LoT ➤ Interviews with small sample of stakeholders/partners to be carried out by m2 towards end of project. 	



Appendix II: Measurement Framework (5)

<p>9. Community spaces are more resilient and neighbourhoods more attractive</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Views of local residents about area ➤ Views of local stakeholders about area 	<p>Ideally there would be data collection with local residents but this should be a longer term aim and is not possible during the life of this project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Depth interviews with a purposive sample of local stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Interviews with small sample of stakeholders/partners to be carried out by m2 towards end of project. 	
<p>People are aware of their local LoT & its contents</p>	<p>This would require measurement with the local population as a whole. m2 suggest that this is something to park and consider exploring at a later date.</p>			
<p>LoT sites gather critical mass and positively integrate with their community</p>	<p>This is not possible to measure at this stage but should be considered as LoT sites increase.</p>			



Appendix III: Stakeholders interviewed

- Alex Beale, Landsec
- Joe Duggan, Transition Town
- Eddie Hamilton, Seymourpowell
- Emily Jewell, Upper Norwood Library Trust
- Sam Kirk, Hackney Council
- Julian Lings, The North Face
- Khyati Modgil, Nesta
- Emma McKenna, Advance London

