

# Making spaces on the high street for clothing repairs

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Making space in high street shops for people to repair clothes could mend the damage caused by fast fashion and transform sewing into a wellbeing activity, experts say.

More resources and opportunities for people to embrace slow [fashion](#) could also save people money, help them learn new skills and create new business opportunities.

A new study suggests a variety of ways in which consumers might be encouraged to change their clothing purchasing behavior, depending on their personality traits. One way to do this might be by marketing making and mending expertise as the "hipster's" equivalent of a spa day."

Fast fashion has emerged in the last few decades as clothes have become cheaper, less durable and are purchased more frequently. This has resulted in severe negative environmental and human costs.

Researchers say top-down solutions—including taxation, market incentives and legislation—have been ineffective. They say [social interaction](#), and showing how repairs can help protect the investment people make in their clothes, should also be used to encourage more sustainable shopping.

The study says social interaction is just as important in shaping views and behaviors as learning new skills.

The experts say people's behavior could also be changed by an app, or other technology, which charts consumers' wardrobe content every six-months. The app could incorporate recording, profiling and photography tools enabling shoppers to make conscious choices regarding what they really need to buy.

The research, published in the *Journal of Cleaner Production*, is by Dr. Jodie West, Professor Clare Saunders and Dr. Joanie Willett from the University of Exeter.

The researchers held 20 one-day workshops between January and

September 2018, in Cornwall (and 20 s West Midlands) to envision and practice an alternative, slower way of doing fashion. Participants gained hands-on experience working with natural yarns, [natural dyes](#), hand-spinning and weaving, making do and mending, ethical clothing and upcycling. The ten people who took part were from varied backgrounds: from avid followers of [fast fashion](#), to persons who made all of their own clothes.

## **The success of the workshops promises significant potential for nationwide roll out across the country**

Making stations could be run by organizations such as WRAP, who could provide making and mending community kits, so groups of enthused people can join together, working with teachers if they wanted. There could also be Government funded making spaces/studios on the high street.

Professor Saunders said: "Top down measures have been relatively ineffective, and rejected by policy-makers. This means we also need bottom-up approaches to reduce the impact of fast fashion.

"Unless quality and longevity form part of fashion identity, it is likely consumers will continue to seek to pay the lowest price to achieve their intended identity statement. As demand for quality clothing increases in line with growing demand for slower fashion, there needs to be wider societal take up of clothing care and maintenance.

"This whole system change in how garments are perceived must include acceptance that clothes—like many other consumer goods—require intermittent servicing. Brands such as Patagonia and Finisterre are now providing servicing and repair kits, with 'investment' type items, like winter coats or boots. This mind-set shift could become popular with

consumers if presented to them as a way to preserve their investment."

Dr. Willett said: "It is crucial expertise in making and mending spreads from small groups working in community halls and art spaces, to a normalized practice on the high street. High street brands should include stations for mending and modifying clothing in their stores, this could become a social thing to do—people could bring friends to making sessions.

"Participants in the workshops said learning about fashion production and conditions had changed the way they viewed clothing. The project gave them the courage and inspiration to tackle repairs and modifications, and has normalized sustainability, rather than feeling isolated for wanting to be more sustainable."

**More information:** Jodie West et al, A bottom up approach to slowing fashion: Tailored solutions for consumers, *Journal of Cleaner Production* (2021). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jclepro.2021.126387](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2021.126387)

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