

Leiston Give & Take Day 28 May 2021



This event was organised by East Suffolk Council on behalf of Leiston Together (as part of the emerging Greener Leiston initiative) and the Greenprint Forum. It was supported by Leiston Town Council, East Suffolk Norse, and Access Community Trust. Some of the equipment (clothes rails and coat hangers) were loaned by Ipswich Borough Council.

The event was promoted via a press release issued by ESC on the 21 May and a flyer circulated on Facebook and Twitter by ESC and the Greenprint Forum on their social media channels.

On the day the local primary school promoted the event in the morning via a message to all parents, and the local Co-Op supermarket ran announcements over their PA system during the course of the day. Also on the day, the Leiston Change Manager shared the event on Leiston Chit Chat, the local community page on Facebook. When we asked people how they heard about the event, the Leiston Chit Chat page was mentioned the most.

We had a steady stream of visitors throughout the day, with a total of 40 visitors, and each one of them was positive and wanted to see the event happening again. All items brought to the event were of good quality, and we did not have to refuse any items.

In addition to items donated by staff (ensuring that early attendees had something to browse and weren't faced with an empty venue!) items given by members of the community included:

- Baby clothes
- Books weights
- Brita water filters
- Clocks
- Clothing
- Complete high school uniform including sports kit
- Cowbell
- Crockery
- Cushions
- DVDs
- Harry Potter costume
- Ornaments
- Paraffin greenhouse heater
- Pictures in frames
- Puzzles
- Real nappies
- Reusable Christmas tree
- Set of lawn bowls
- Star Wars mug
- Toys
- Tyre foot pump



Items taken were as follows:

- 6 x imperial spanners (the taker said he would find them useful to maintain his 1950s vehicle)
- Bar stool
- Binoculars
- Board games
- Books
- Brita water filters
- Clothing
- Complete high school uniform including sports kit
- Cowbell
- DVDs
- Mattress protector
- Modelling spanner set
- Picture in frame
- Radiator mounted laundry ailer
- Seat cover
- Star Wars mug
- Steel rule
- Toys
- Tyre foot pump
- Weights

Stand-out donations

Several people came in and said they were struggling with the costs of items and were really pleased that this event provided them with the opportunity to access free items donated by other members of their community. The generosity of one person in particular stood out as her donation really made a huge difference to someone else later that same day. She had donated an entire school uniform and sports kit for the local high school as her child was finishing high school that day. Another parent, whose own child was due to start high school in the autumn and who needed a new school uniform, was able to make use of the donated uniform. An excellent outcome!

One person brought a large quantity of fabric which was all donated to the Leiston Yarnbombing Group, and another one brought their complete set of old baby clothes and real nappies.

Most people gave and took, a few just gave and a few just took. Everyone who attended spoke with us giving us the opportunity to promote the concept of Give and Take Days and several people asked us if the event would be repeated. Three people added comments on the logging out forms as follows:

- "Great idea!"
- "Good idea, thanks!"
- "Lovely idea" (and drew a smiley face)

Access Community Trust were the charity partner for the event and they attended part way through the event and took some items for use in the course of their work supporting people in need.

The items that remained at the end of the day were transported by East Suffolk Norse to the Leiston Town Council offices for storage until the next Give and Take Day scheduled for 21 June 2021 as part of the Suffolk Day celebrations. This next event will be preceded with more publicity and a call to action for local people to step forward to make it a regular community-run thing, on 21st June, Suffolk Day. The plan is to formally get a local group to take this over and run monthly or bi-monthly events, with support from the Town Council to use the community centre.



Key lessons learnt from the day

Publicity

Whilst we were pleased with the level of attendance for what was a pilot event to promote the concept, we did find that many people did not know about the event and only found out about us by happenstance. We weren't able to advertise further in advance than we did due to uncertainties over the easing of Covid 19 restrictions, but we would recommend starting to promote events at least two weeks ahead.

Our visual presence from outside the venue was not very prominent, and this would have benefitted by a larger and more prominent sign, the venue had provided blackboards on an A-frame however we had to make do with A4 posters attached to them as we couldn't find any chalk at the venue – we recommend ensuring that you bring your own chinks, preferably of more than one colour, to decorate an A-frame to position in front of the venue for your event.

When carrying out similar events in other communities in future, we recommend researching and identifying all potential community pages on Facebook on which to post about the event. This could include, as well as general community pages like Leiston Chit Chat, pages used by the community to exchange items (such as local Freecycle pages) or selling pages (if they allow posts to promote events like this). When trying to find such pages, bear in mind that they often only permit people who actually belong to that community to join and post on their page – if you are running an event in a community other than your own, ask the local town or parish council if any of their councillors are members of these groups and would be willing to post on your behalf.

One person who visited our event suggested going on Facebook live with the items on the Chit Chat Page and setting up a mailing list for future events. If you are social media savvy, and have the time, this could be a good way to maintain the profile of your event on your local community Facebook page and give residents an advance idea of what is actually available to browse.



Partner organisations

If you are planning to accept electrical items, it is a good idea to secure commitment from someone who can provide PAT testing well in advance. Bear in mind that whoever you approach to ask about PAT testing, they may need to make a charge.

Whilst we are storing all unclaimed items left at the end of our event until our next one, if you are not going to do the same then we recommend identifying a charity partner who will be happy to accept the items left at the end of your event. You may need to identify more than one charity partner – as one might only accept certain categories of goods – and be clear about what each one will accept.



Key lessons learnt from the day (continued)

Timing of event

If you advertise your event as “Give only” at the start of the day followed by “Give and Take” later on, be prepared to be flexible particularly if the event is quiet early on and it seems reasonable to permit early attendees to take if they want to – especially if they say they won’t be able to return later on. We relaxed this timetable for our event.

We held our event on a Friday. As this would have been a working day for many people, this may have had an impact on the numbers of people who were able to attend. If your volunteers are willing to staff an event at the weekend it may be worth considering this.

Also, whilst Leiston has a community radio station, it only broadcasts on weekends, so we missed out on the chance to promote our event live on air due to the timing.

Remember to check whether there are any other local events scheduled on the same day. You don’t want your event to clash with another (for example a jumble sale down the road at the same time would be a bad idea). Sometimes having another event on the same day can add to the attraction – for example our next Give and Take day will be part of the wider Suffolk Day event in Leiston.

Feedback

Three people used the column headed “notes” on the logging out form to write comments expressing positive feedback. We recommend either renaming the “notes” column, or adding a new column, headed “feedback” if you want to encourage more people to offer their comments.

Donations

Attendees might insist on making a cash donation. Whilst you might not be actively attracting cash donations at your event, be prepared for this eventuality. If your event is on behalf of a charity or local community project, ask your charity partner in advance if they would like to provide a collection box at the event. If your event is at a venue owned by a charity or church, there may already be a charity collection box on site – find out in advance, and find out who the beneficiary of the collection is so that if asked you can inform, this helps to project transparency.

