



FINGAL CLOTHES SWAP GUIDE

**How to Run a Community Swap that's
Social, Sustainable and Simple**



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WHAT'S A SWAP EVENT?

- A swap is a free community exchange where people bring good-quality items they no longer need and take away things they'll use. No money changes hands. The idea is simple: share what you have, take what you need.
- Swap events can focus on:
 - Clothes (adult or children's)
 - Toys
 - Books
 - Household items
 - Seasonal items (e.g. Halloween costumes or Christmas decorations)
 - School uniforms
- They can be one-off events or regular community fixtures.

Top Tips

- Use language that's welcoming, not preachy. Call it a "clothes party," "bring-and-take," or "free market."
- Start small: your first swap can be just a table at another event!
- Offer a "bring a friend" incentive — the more, the merrier.



WHY ARE THEY SO GREAT?

Swap events are:

- Environmental: Reduce waste and extend the life of products.
- Social: Build local connections, especially across generations and cultures.
- Affordable: Provide access to needed items without cost.
- Educational: Encourage conversations around sustainable living and climate action.
- They're also a fun, hands-on way to engage people in the circular economy and the Council's broader climate goals.

Top Tips

- Use stats: "If every Irish person swapped just one item this year, we'd save over 500 tonnes of textile waste."
- Make it a regular feature – monthly swaps build community momentum.

WHAT CAN YOU SWAP?

Set clear swap rules (condition, types of clothing, volume of clothing people can donate etc.) based on the event type. For example:

For Clothing Swaps:

-  Clean, wearable clothing
-  Accessories (bags, belts, scarves)
-  Underwear or damaged items

Top Tips

- "Would I give this to a friend?" is a great litmus test for quality.
- Print your item rules on posters, social media, and signs at the door.
- Have volunteers check and return any unsuitable items to attendees

PLANNING YOUR SWAP

Here's a checklist to guide your planning:

Step 1: Choose Your Venue

Look for accessible spaces like community centres, schools, libraries, or parish halls. Ensure the space has:

- Tables and hanging space
- Toilets and handwashing facilities
- Accessible entry and exit points

Step 2: Set a Date and Time

Weekends work well. Aim for a 2–3 hour event window.

Step 3: Build a Team

You'll need people to help with:

- Publicity
- Setup and cleanup
- Item sorting and welcome desk
- Refreshments (optional!)

Step 4: Decide on Swap Logistics

- You could use:
 - Token system: 1 item in = 1 token = 1 item out
- Open table: Take what you need, no tracking
- Be clear in your promotions so people know what to expect.

Top Tips

- Visit your venue in advance to check layout and flow.
- Host a pre-event volunteer evening — it builds excitement and ownership.
- Have a Plan B for storage if lots of items are donated before the day.

PROMOTING YOUR SWAP

Get the word out with:

- Posters in shops, cafes, libraries and schools
- Community WhatsApp groups
- Facebook and Instagram posts
- Local newsletters and radio
- Support from Fingal PPN and County Council

Include the “what, when, where” — and any key rules.

Top Tips

- Use “before and after” photos to show the impact of swapping.
- Tag local influencers or community leaders in your posts.
- Post a 7-day countdown with reminders: people often forget!
- Share photos of items that will be available at the swap



EVENT CHECKLIST

Before Opening:

- Sort and display items by category
- Put up clear signage
- Set up a welcome desk with friendly volunteers

During the Event:

- Encourage browsing and conversation
- Take photos (with consent) for promotion
- Offer tea/coffee if possible

After the Event:

- Collect feedback
- Pack away leftover items (see below)

Top Tips

- Create zones: e.g. “women’s wear,” “kids’ corner” etc.
- Use music to set the tone — upbeat, instrumental, or local playlists.
- Offer a “chill zone” with seats and tea — it keeps people lingering.

After the Swap

What to do with leftovers?

- Donate to charity shops
- Offer on local freecycle or community Facebook pages
- Upcycle with local artists or groups
- Save items for a future swap

Review and Reflect

- What went well?
- What could improve next time?

Thank your volunteers!

Top Tips

- Give volunteers first pick of leftovers as a thank you.
- Record impact: how many people came? How many items were swapped or donated?
- Share wins online to build momentum for next time.

RESOURCES

The following supports are available:

- Environmental Awareness
 - For information on other environmental initiatives, funding and workshops
 - [Environmental Awareness | Fingal County Council](#)
 - Email: Environment.Education@fingal.ie
- Fingal Public Participation Network (PPN)
 - Helps community groups connect and collaborate
 - For news about grants
 - fingalppn.ie
- Fingal County Council Community Department
 - Offers advice, connections and venue support.
 - Email: community@fingal.ie
 - Tel: (01) 890 5080

Contact **hello@changeclothes.org** for any of the following PDF templates:

- Sample Sign-In Sheet
- Poster Template
- Clothing Swap Rules Sign
- Photography Permission Form



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