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Foreword

Cheshire West and Chester

Against a backdrop of austerity the Council set its waste management team a momentous challenge; to deliver a new collection service that not only achieved stretching efficiency targets, but at the same time met the public's continued demands to maximise recycling.

In partnership with Kier the new 'Recycling First' service has been introduced offering households the opportunity to recycle a wide range of materials at the kerbside, whilst delivering efficiency savings. In 2013/14 the council recycled over 57% of its waste.

Recycling is important to the people of Cheshire West and Chester and Kiers kerbside sort system puts 'Recycling First', whilst truly valuing waste as a resource. One of the key principles of the new contract was to add value with the bulky waste collection service being subcontracted to members of the Cheshire Furniture Reuse Forum. The new bulky waste collection service seeks to maximise reuse and recycling of all items collected through the bulky waste service.

The Cheshire Furniture Reuse Forum and the support of its members have ensured the bulky waste collection for reuse and recycling is a success. In addition, new initiatives supported by the forum include the recycling of all mattresses which otherwise would have gone to landfill for disposal, support of bike reuse schemes, and the HELP scheme for emergency welfare.

The hard work and dedication of the forum members and the forum coordinator have enabled the forum to go from strength to strength, whilst embracing change and always looking at ways for continuous improvement and partnership working. A huge thank you to all involved.

Alison Butler
Strategic Commissioning Directorate
- Cheshire West and Chester Council

Cheshire East

ANSA Environmental Services is a new organisation created and wholly owned by Cheshire East Council. It is keen to continue its support for the Cheshire Furniture Reuse Forum by providing funding for the Forum Coordinator as it values the work undertaken by the Forum throughout Cheshire.

The work undertaken by the Forum is integral to both ANSA and Cheshire East Council's efforts in terms of handling waste in accordance with the Waste Hierarchy outlined within the EU Waste Framework Directive. The Waste Hierarchy sets-out preferences for how waste should be handled with Reuse being one of the preferred methods for handling waste.

With the economy still recovering from recession, the last twelve months have been challenging for Reuse Projects. 2013-14 saw Cheshire East Council utilise a Reuse Project located in Crewe to collect their Reusable Bulky Collections. The new approach will increase the amount of Bulky Collections made by the local Reuse Project and ultimately increase the amount of waste diverted from landfill.

The presence of the Forum has never been more important to the residents of Cheshire East. The Forum is able to increase Social Values within communities across the borough through a sustained approach in-terms of not only supplying often vulnerable people with pre-loved furniture but also providing training and job opportunities. Many of the Furniture Projects work closely with Job Centres in offering development opportunities to people who are struggling most with finding work.

The 2013-14 Annual Report highlights the essential work by the Furniture Projects to help alleviate poverty across Cheshire. The work of the Cheshire Furniture Reuse Coordinator ensures the Forum continues to grow in reusing more furniture and increasing the social benefits of the work the Forum undertakes.

Cllr. John Hammond
Chairman - ANSA Environmental Services Ltd

Co-ordinators Report

Cheshire Furniture Re-use Forum (CFRF) is a support and development organisation for locally based Furniture Re-use Organisations (FRO's) operating in Cheshire and boundaries.

It is focussed on:

- Improving the quality of life and opportunities of people in the community, particularly those in disadvantaged circumstances, through the provision or reusable furniture and other household items.
- Protecting the natural environment through the provision of a high quality re-use and recycling furniture service.
- Supporting and facilitating the development and promotion of Furniture Re-use Projects operating in Cheshire by working with one another, the local authorities and other interested bodies.

2013/14 has been a year of challenges and opportunities for Furniture Reuse Organisations everywhere.

The economic doldrums that gripped the country and beyond meant fewer people were disposing of furniture whilst there has been an increased demand from those on low incomes and in need of basic items.

The public continue to be generous, but competition for donations has increased with national charities collecting and selling larger items and individuals selling items via on-line channels. However there is increasing awareness of furniture reuse and promotion by national and local organisations of reuse possibilities.

These issues are reflected in the results of the Cheshire Furniture Reuse Projects. Projects have worked hard to maintain donations and the number of households helped has been the highest ever. Collections are up and whilst tonnage reused has remained fairly static, the volume recycled has seen a huge increase.

Highlights of the year include Forum Members

- helping more households than ever
- training more staff, volunteers, and placements
- retaining more income in the local economy
- great value fulfilment of the Local Authority emergency furniture packages for people in crisis
- successful operation of Cheshire West and Chester and Cheshire East bulky waste schemes
- opening a new store in Chester



Activities in 2013-14

The primary activity of the Forum during 2013/14 was to rejuvenate the relationships. Members of the Forum benefit from sharing ideas, resources and partnerships with each other, developing coordinated responses to relevant policies and initiatives and working with others promoting the development of Furniture Reuse Projects.

During the latter half of 2012/13 the projects had met less, shared less and were not benefiting each other as much as they could. By restarting the community, projects are supporting each other and profiting from new avenues of activity.

Working with Social Landlords and Housing Associations

CFRF members perform a number of social benefits, providing valuable furniture to assist people set up their homes, work (paid and voluntary) and training to a wide range of people including those classed as vulnerable.

Working with Housing Associations closely combines the environmental and social aims of the Forum. When a tenant leaves a rented property they often leave it full of furniture that needs to be cleared before the next tenant, often without furniture, moves in. The cleared furniture usually goes to landfill, at some cost to the Housing Association.

A number of Forum members have developed close relations with housing associations to divert the usable furniture for re-use, providing the projects with much needed stock and the Housing Association saves money.

It doesn't stop there however. The projects provide emergency furniture to new tenants of the Housing Association, thus improving the chances of that tenant retaining the tenancy for the long term, and saving more money for the Housing Association. In this case, the tenant, the Housing Association and the Furniture Reuse Organisation all win. There are also strong community training opportunities for Forum members, providing additional services for their local housing associations.

New partnerships with Housing Associations have been, and are, being developed, increasing the support to those in need, whilst also increasing the supply of items that would otherwise have been sent to landfill. These are relationships which have the potential to grow further, the more both parties realise the mutual benefit to be gained.

Emergency Welfare Schemes

Local welfare schemes provide support to the most vulnerable facing immediate short term needs as a consequence of a disaster or to prevent serious risk to an individual or family.

By using Local Furniture Organisations to help meet furniture needs the local authorities use organisations that are already familiar with the local community, who are comfortable working in what can be evolving and chaotic circumstances, can often provide additional support and as a result of their operations can provide essential items for less cost than buying new.

Cheshire West and Cheshire Council set up their new contract for Emergency Welfare Scheme (HELP). This was won by Changing Lives in Cheshire who work with members for the Forum to fulfil referrals as appropriate.

Cheshire East Council use Christian Concern to help fulfil their Emergency AssitanCE scheme.

Bulky Waste Service Development

Furniture reuse organisations are best placed to maximise the reuse of household and other items – it's what they do. Forum members are used to going into households to collect items – providing a high level of service to the household whilst minimising damage to items caused by dragging or the elements.

Recognising this, both Cheshire West and Chester and Cheshire East are successfully using Forum members to help fulfil their bulky waste service.

Expanding items collected - WEEE, Bikes, Beds, Paint.....

Projects have individually and jointly accessed Waste Electronic and Electrical Equipment (WEEE). Projects are collecting items from Household Waste Recycling Centres, are cross-supplying reusable and in-need-of-repair white goods. Christian Concern and Reviive have developed their new approved authorised treatment facilities (AATF), increasing the amount of white goods that can be received, repaired and reused.

Christian Concern's bike project goes from strength to strength – providing hundreds of bikes to the local community in the last year, most of which go to those on minimum wage jobs who, due to the unsocial hours and low wages have limited transport options. A bike from Christian Concern is often less than a weekly travel ticket.

The Forum has restarted the relationship with the Cheshire Constabulary. Accessing over 100 bikes for reuse across member projects. The Forum also helped Chester Giants set up their new bike reuse scheme. Providing case studies, site visits and advice. 'On your Bike' is now a live project allowing long term unemployed to learn cycle maintenance and at the end of their training, be given a bike. Members are providing bikes collected via Bulky Waste then reselling the finished repaired, refurbished and safety checked item.

The Forum has developed a relationship with a local bed company who collect used mattresses, beds and settees when delivering a new item. Previously these used items would have gone to landfill. Now, any that are reusable are diverted to a furniture reuse project.

Changing Lives in Cheshire have become part of the Community Repaint Scheme, initially focussing on full tins, they have turned their attention to part tins. They have conducted a pilot to get a better understanding of volumes from HWC.

Promoting the Forum

A lot of work has gone into raising the profile of Forum Member's work in the last year. There are three specific strands to this development:

Online Improvements

Members have increasingly found that they can deepen existing relationships and reach new audiences via online channels.

The website has been updated to make the user journey as simple as possible. Finding a local project to donate to or buy from, identifying ways of working together, understanding the possibilities and benefits of reuse have all led to an increase in content viewed and contact via the website.

A CFRF twitter account has been set up and will start to build up followers, allowing for the cross promotion of individual project initiatives and sales.

Local promotion

Articles have been published in many community newsletters, with local organisations, associations and regional updates and local groups have provided opportunities for networking and presenting.

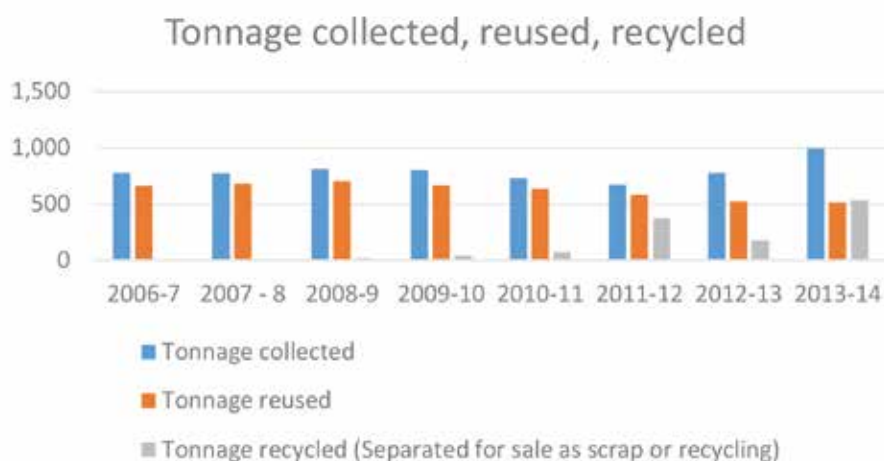
Diverting Waste from Landfill

Furniture Collected and Reused

A very small drop in re-used tonnage this year, (primarily due to one project losing its' warehousing premises) is already showing signs of reversing, as that project adapts to its' new space and another project moving into the area. Furniture broken down for recycling is increasing steadily year on year.

The net result is that Furniture Reuse Forum Members are diverting more waste from landfill.

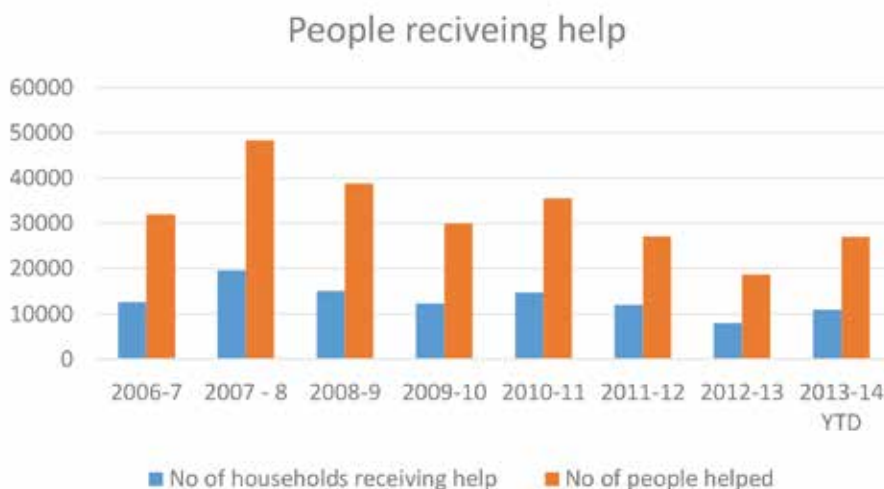
Figure 1: Furniture Collected, Re-used and Recycled by the Cheshire Furniture Reuse Forum 2006-14



Social Impact

Waste diverted from landfill sites is of course only half the story. The primary aim of all Furniture Reuse Organisations is the alleviation of local poverty through the provision of low cost furniture. One other important consequence of the economic downturn is that the number of low income families requiring help has increased and as Figure 2 below shows, despite the fall in donated furniture, re-use organisations in Cheshire have still been able to rise to the challenge.

Figure 2: Number of households helped with low-cost furniture and household items 2006-14





Francine's Story

Francine was referred to Christian Concern through Crewe Women's Aid. She had taken refuge there with her youngest son and only a bin-bag full of clothes after having suffered several blows in life including cancer, the break-up of her marriage and domestic violence.

Francine was referred for furniture from Christian Concern and received beds, a three piece suite, sheets and cutlery.

She admitted, "Without their help, I wouldn't be able to afford anything," adding that, "I've always been independent and didn't know there are people who help like this."

When the team on the van delivered the furniture, she felt a bit overwhelmed wondering how she was going to put the wooden bed together. However, the delivery guys were really friendly and assembled the bed for her, taking time to make sure she was comfortable, even though they had to get to the next delivery.

Francine mentioned that having the furniture had taken the pressure off her, especially finding it at an affordable price. And now there are no more clothes in bin bags in her house. She said: "It's a new start in life."



'H' and Wesley Community Furniture

H came to us last year as someone in really dire circumstances. He and his family had had to flee Kenya, and arrived in the UK with next to nothing, and were denied state assistance. We were able to sort them out with a furniture pack and subsequently, other items.

Having been given the right to stay and work in the UK, but with poor English and no benefits, H became a volunteer here. A great lad, he gained experience on the vans (the driver's mate) and in the shop. His English (and map reading!) improved swiftly and he was able to kit out his family's new home.

After five months he got a job as a baggage handler at Manchester Airport with a shining reference from us. He still pops in from time to time to say hello.

We help numerous other clients who may come to us from women's refuges, hospitals, social services, CAB's, RSL's and many from other voluntary organisations.



John and Jill

John & Jill were a fairly ordinary family. John had his own IT business and Jill worked part-time. The children were at school full-time. They had a mortgage and bought many of their household goods on credit.

Within a year their lives changed completely. John became very ill and lost or had to give up most of his contracts. Unable to meet mortgage and credit payments they lost everything. The house and most of its contents were repossessed. The family became homeless and were housed in a local authority homeless unit. Eventually they were offered a council house but could not afford the necessary furniture to move in. Credit was not an option and Jill's income meant they did not qualify for full benefits.

St Vincent de Paul works in close partnership with the Local Authority Housing Departments and so were able to help and support John and Jill with many of their furniture requirements. At a follow up visit some months later John's health had begun to improve and Jill was able to increase her hours of work.



Training people for work

Furniture Reuse also involves addressing a range of other social issues through support and provision of training and social inclusion activities.

Trainees at Changing Lives in Cheshire

Nathaniel - one of CLIC-Changing Lives volunteers won a silver Learner of the Year award. Alan Cox won Tutor of the Year and CLiC won Provider of the Year 2014 at the Cheshire West & Chester Community Learning Awards.



Mike, Volunteer at Blacon Furniture Project

"I heard about Blacon Furniture Project through the Community Builder at Blacon Community Trust", Mike explains, "I first started out on the vans then moved into the shop so I could complete an NVQ in Customer Services."

Without volunteers, like Mike, the Blacon Furniture Project would not be able to run.

"I come in the shop in the day and can do anything from taking collection and delivery notes to selling items donated to the shop and updating the Social Media sites, like Facebook and Twitter. There are opportunities for everyone to help out."

"I've been here for three years and really enjoy the sense of teamwork. We have a good crowd; everyone enjoys doing something for the community and making a difference."





Skills development at Christian Concern

The bike workshop is a skills development hub for young and old alike, and has recently been expanded. It is fully equipped and you will often see retired Bentley engineers teaching young adults traditional mechanical skills. More importantly these young people gain positive attitudes towards work by working alongside experienced engineers.

Rob Wykes explains how important it is to help young people make the connection between what they do in the workshop, and the income it can generate. 'In our workshop these young people see their effort reaping a reward and they become energised.'



Apprentices at Reviive

We directly help young people and the long term unemployed or people who are fed up of not getting the work experience required to get a job. We give them the opportunity to come into a supportive work environment and learn and grow in confidence so they can enter the job market in a stronger position.

Kieran started with Reviive on an 8-week JC+ Work related programme - aimed at refining and updating his existing workplace related skills.

At the end of 2013 he successfully switched onto their Warehouse Apprenticeship Programme in association with Telford College of Arts and Technology and will be working with Reviive for the next 12-months.

Ashley worked with Reviive on 8 week work placements through Job centre Plus. He worked in all of departments with the staff team whilst learning new skills along the way.

Reviive subsequently had a job opening for a Warehouse Apprentice and Ashley suited the role perfectly.



Mica's 12 months apprenticeship with Reviive finished in August where she gained her NVQ level 2 in Business Admin. The best news is that they were able to give her a Full time permanent position.

Mica's apprenticeship involved her working the front desk handling calls, dealing with customers, booking collections and deliveries. Now she is going to develop Reviive's online department, including Amazon, Ebay and their social networking.

A great opportunity and we are sure she will do well....apprenticeships can and do work, and Mica is living proof!

Turnover

Employment

Volunteer numbers have fallen slightly in the last year, but staff numbers have increased.

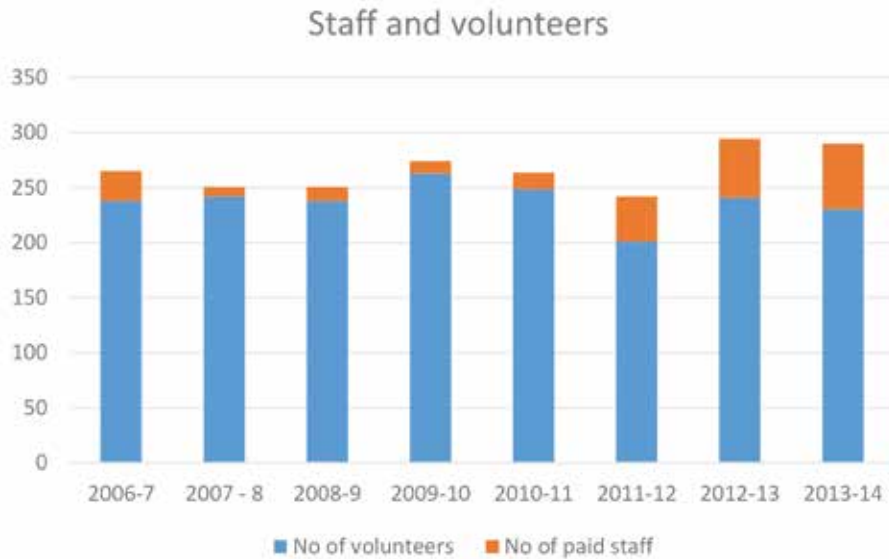


Figure 3: No. of staff and volunteers employed in furniture reuse in Cheshire 2006-14

Income

After a drop in 2011-12, income generated from furniture reuse operations in Cheshire has increased. Retaining nearly £1.2million in the local economy.

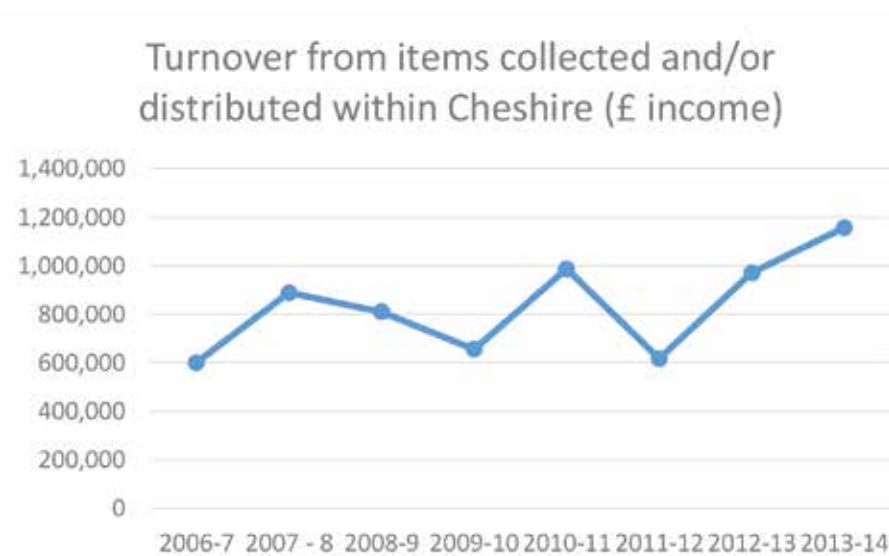


Figure 4: Income generated from furniture reuse operations in Cheshire 2006-2014

Future Developments

The priority areas for 2014-15 are:

- Ensuring sustainability of the Forum
- Increasing breadth and depth of coverage
- Moving towards zero waste
- Awareness raising
- Increasing turnover
- Capacity building
- Coordination and reporting

Ensuring the sustainability of the Forum and expanding the range of activities and services

We will set up the Forum as a registered structure and have next year's funding in place before the end of the Financial Year.

Identify project that will can provide a service to all Forum members and an income for the Forum – long term aim to become self-financing and contribute to zero waste.

Greater Geographical coverage

There are still areas of the county where collections from CFRF members are minimal and projects for clients to access reuse items are severely limited. This is particularly that case in North East Cheshire and the Forum will be addressing this issue in the coming year.

Zero Waste

Establish current CFRF member non-recyclable levels and opportunities to progress to zero waste.

Awareness raising

A major concentration in coming months will be on increasing the public awareness of the Forum, its members and of the environmental drive to waste prevention and re-use generally.

Ensure promotion in at least one publication from each local authority that reaches all that authorities households.

Increasing Turnover

Through awareness raising, increased partnerships and types of items accepted we will increase the volume and tonnage of items otherwise destined for landfill.

Capacity Building

The Forum will increase member access to funding, sharing expertise and training.

Coordination and reporting

The Forum will continue to support regular network meetings, sharing best practise and services and to gather and report consolidated reuse and recycling figures to the local authorities.