

Who we help...and who helps us

Cheshire Furniture Reuse Forum (CFRF) is made up of local projects and organizations that collect quality reusable furniture, household appliances and other items and donate or sell it at low cost to people in need. They employ staff, create work placements and train volunteers. The Forum is supported by Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester Local Authorities and works in partnership with many different organisations.

In 2013-14 the projects helped over 10,000 families, employed nearly 60 people, were helped by over 250 volunteers, generated and retained £1m locally and saved xxx tonnes from landfill.

But it is the specific differences to individuals and families that projects can make which drives many of the people involved in furniture reuse projects – it's more than furniture.

Furniture for Families

Danny

Danny was sleeping rough on the streets of Manchester. He had lost his business and the problems he had with alcohol has increased. He found himself in the hands of the police; fortunately for him they were sympathetic to his circumstances and helped him through other agencies to get back home to his remaining family in Ellesmere Port.



Aided by his brother he found accommodation but had no means of furnishing it. He was put in touch with a local church who referred him to the St Vincent De Paul Society. A member of the society visited him to assess his needs and within 3 days a furniture package was delivered, Danny was grateful for the help he received from all the different agencies, he could now attempt to get his life back on track.

Now on the way back he wants to give something back and has offered his services as a volunteer with the SVP furniture project.

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 re-possessed. 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 Department 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.

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'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.

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.

The time spent at Women's Aid helped Francine get back on her feet and feel safe. She was still receiving treatment at Christie's and waiting for a new home. She 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 she came to Christian Concern she was a bit nervous, but the receptionist gave her space to calm herself and feel reassured. Similarly 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."

Francine has since come to the weekly Friday sale where she enjoys the atmosphere. She says "I like the people there, they are friendly and patient. The prices are reasonable and when I come in, they've got what I want." She also joined one of our community computer courses and is interested in volunteering/volunteers at the Christian Concern Coppenhall shop. Francine mentioned that she had always been a Christian and found that she simply had to trust that "God will show you the way forward."

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Trainees and Apprentices

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.

			
<p>Kieran started with Reviive on an 8-week JC+ Work related programme - aimed at refining and updating his existing workplace related skills.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>This young man is Jordan, one of Reviive Job Centre Plus Volunteers. Jordan joined on a 8-week placement working with the staff team whilst learning new skills along the way.</p> <p>The work and team-related multi-tasking skills gained will (we hope) helped Jordan secure full-time employment once his placement ended.</p>	<p>Ashley started working with Reviive on 8 week work placement through Job centre Plus. He worked in all of their departments.</p> <p>Reviive subsequently had a job opening for a Warehouse Apprentice and Ashley suited the role perfectly.</p>	<p>Since joining Changing Lives in Cheshire as a volunteer Tony has gained new experiences, improved his social skills, achieved an NVQ level one certificate in computer literacy and drastically improved his confidence and self-esteem. Having gone from working one day per week at the Warehouse, Tony, who suffers with learning difficulties, now works three days per week.</p>
	<p>Mica's 12 months apprenticeship with Reviive saw her gain an NVQ level 2 in Business Admin. The best news is that they were able to give her a full time permanent position.</p> <p>Mica's apprenticeship involved her working the front desk handling calls, dealing with customers, booking collections and deliveries. She went on to develop Reviive's online department, including Amazon, Ebay and their social networking, become their finance administrator and now runs their Shrewsbury Store.</p> <p>Apprenticeships can and do work, and Mica is living proof!</p>		

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Volunteers

Rebecca with SVP

Rebecca grew up in children's homes and foster care, she married at 18 but life was hard, she had five children and a husband who showed little affection. But her children loved her and that was all she needed. After her husband left her for a younger woman life got even harder, but she coped. Then she met Greg and he took her and the children on and for the first time in her life she was very happy. For thirty five years her life was complete the children grew and left home to happy families of their own. Then tragedy struck, Greg and her youngest son were killed in a car accident her life fell apart nothing and no one could heal the wounds she was desperate. Eventually she received counselling, during this time she saw a request for volunteers with the SVP furniture project, her counselling advisers suggested she did something with her time instead of sitting alone at home.

She soon found sympathetic people working as volunteers and she was able to show a great understanding with the customers who couldn't afford to buy new furniture because they needed to make ends meet. She still feels the pain of her loss, but because she is volunteering in an area that she has a lot of empathy with those she meets she now has a positive slant to her life.

Spotlight on Mike – Blacon Furniture Project Retail Assistant

"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."

