

## Cheshire Furniture Reuse Forum - Void Case Studies

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Cheshire Furniture Reuse Forum (CFRF) is made up of local not-for-profit projects that collect quality reusable furniture and household appliances through Cheshire 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 the projects work in partnership with many different types of organisations.

Members of the Cheshire Furniture Reuse Forum have been involved with Housing Associations and void clearance for a number of years. Examples differ but as these case studies show, the individual Furniture Projects work with the Housing Association to find an approach that works for and benefits both parties.

### Reviive and Wrekin Housing Trust

The Wrekin Housing Trust was established in 1999 following a transfer of homes from Telford & Wrekin Council. It is now one of the largest independent housing providers in the Midlands with over 11,000 homes across the Telford and Newport area. They have approximately 800 voids per year.

Reviive is a Community Interest Company focused on the sale of pre-loved high quality low cost furniture and household items whilst providing new training, volunteering and work placement opportunities in the local community focusing on both the young and long-term unemployed.

Reviive has four outlets based in Shrewsbury, Oswestry, Telford and Chester and looks to partner with charities and Housing Associations in those areas.

Reviive started void clearance on behalf of the Wrekin Trust in June 2013. Both Reviive and Wrekin feel that the system is pretty straight forward and works for them:

- As soon as the Wrekin Housing Trust have the keys, the property is inspected by a Trust Inspector.
- They identify what items can be re-used (and sold through a Reviive Shop), and also an estimation of time it will take to clear the property. This information is e mailed across to Reviive.
- Staff at Reviive book in the collection of items and arrange the disposal of rubbish in the void. There are currently have 4 full time Driver/Labourers working on these voids.
- During the first four months of the contract, Reviive carried out 100 void clearances and re-used about 20% of items that previously would have been sent to landfill.
- 99% of these voids were completed within a maximum timescale of 5 days, with the vast majority being done within 72 hours of notification.



This clearly helps the void process massively by clearing the property quickly to enable any repairs to be carried out either in week one of the notice period or week 2 at the latest. The void turnaround time is currently **8.5 working days!**

Reviive are also re-cycling an awful lot of the waste that previously we would have been tipped, and this is further reducing tipping costs and, in some instances, providing an income.

## Christian Concern Crewe and Wulvern Housing

Created in 2003, Wulvern's original homes and shops were transferred from Crewe and Nantwich Borough Council. Wulvern's vision is provide brilliant social housing and now manages over 5,300 homes.

Christian Concern began in the 1980's when three local couples started collecting furniture to give it to those they knew were in need of it. Now diverting up to 200 tonnes of furniture from landfill a year, Christian Concern gives items away four days a week on referrals and offers to public sale on a Friday.

Wulvern believe that every day that a property is empty means that a prospective customer may be without a home or living in unsuitable accommodation for longer than is necessary. It also means that rent cannot be charged and this money is permanently lost to Wulvern.



Wulvern use Christian Concern to manage their 'tortes'. When a tenant leaves a property with goods in situ, Wulvern contact Christian Concern to take those items and store for a set period. If the tenant has not claimed the items within the set date, Christian Concern contact Wulvern. In the majority of cases Wulvern will then authorize Christian Concern to use or sell those items as part of it's charitable work.

## Wesley Community Furniture and Mosscares Housing

Mosscares Housing is a housing association committed to communities and neighborhoods. With 4500 properties through greater Manchester area they aim to deliver a high quality, high value housing service that is sensitive to individuals. The void standard is comprehensive and has been developed with tenants, with arrangements for quick turnarounds.

Wesley Community Furniture key aim is to provide household goods to people in need. Established in 1993, the Wesley collects donations from people throughout Manchester and North Cheshire, repairs and renovates where necessary then provides for a small fee or on an agency referral basis to members in the local community and those in need.



Since October 2013 Mosscares Housing and Wesley Community Furniture have been running a trial partnership void reuse project. This idea has been well-received and is now progressing to a full Service Level Agreement.

Mosscares Housing contact Wesley Community Furniture to advise that there is an empty property containing potentially reusable items. Wesley Community Furniture make a quick inspection to identify reusability of furniture and white good items and collect anything reusable within 48 hours of notification.

All items recovered, reused, sold etc, are recorded on Wesley Community Furniture's stock database. They issue 'vouchers' for 50% of the value of items sold, for use by Housing Officers/Financial Inclusion staff with their most in-need tenants (they can also access the referrals process as normal).

Mosscares Housing have supplied an empty shop unit rent free for additional storage/workspace and promote the service via tenant newsletters etc.

Both organisations benefit - Mosscares Housing from having the shop unit being used and reduction in disposal tonnages, Wesley Community Furniture gain from increasing their outreach to those in need whilst boosting their income.