

Furniture Re-use Network Social Impact Report 2017



Re-use

Any operation by which products or components that are not waste are used again for the same purpose for which they were conceived.

INTRODUCTION

A network of socially driven organisations with comparable aims and objectives can have a hugely positive impact on society and local communities across the country. Key to having such an impact is pointing yourself in the right direction with a common determination to help those in most need and some hard graft combined with as much support as you can get from others with the same drive. This is the Furniture Re-use Network (FRN); a network working together, working with key partners across sectors, all striving to make a difference to people's lives, to people's welfare and to our planet.

The challenge in measuring impact for membership bodies lies in the diversity of their members remit. Our members, although autonomous and with their own missions - be it tackling poverty, homelessness, employment or social exclusion - are a safety net for people who find themselves in crisis or on the margins of society. They adhere to our membership eligibility criteria of using reuse for the benefit of people on low-income through the provision of affordable furniture, volunteering and employment opportunities. Therein, we at the FRN, have been working for many years to not only support the membership with services that our members all want or need, but also to represent them in a manner that does justice to their work and demonstrate their social impact. Whereas foodbanks are in the news today as a gauge of the state of poverty in the UK, furniture reuse has been around since the 1980s working to alleviate a similar problem.

As year-on-year successive governments cut and strip budgets and then each new government blames the last; the reuse sector will just get on with the job with diminishing state support for their activities and the people who use their services. Reuse for poverty alleviation has been the norm for many years as people rely on second-hand furniture to make a house a home. We are still seeing and expect to see further increases in people coming through our members' doors for support as the effects of the benefit freeze hits and the roll out of universal credit takes hold.

Fairness and opportunity for all is a central aim for the reuse sector and has been for many decades. While tax cuts are offered to the most wealthy, the poorest are being hit hardest, therefore our mission continues as austerity measures cut deep into the welfare and opportunities of those most in need. The job of the reuse sector will get tougher and so the challenge we set ourselves is to have the biggest positive social impact possible.

The FRN's Social Impact Report 2017 sets out to illustrate the difference that working with the FRN membership can have on people's lives across the UK. Although the demand for second-hand furniture is growing every year, the output and impact of our sector is being constrained by the opportunities to secure more good quality donations to supply to the increasing number of low-income households in the UK. As the general public tighten their belts and hold on to their products for longer, our members are reporting how difficult it is to source product donations and it is for this reason that we, at FRN, have been channelling our efforts to work more closely with the retail and manufacturing sectors to drive household furniture and electrical equipment to our members.

It is with pride that we can see how our sector has sustainability at its heart. We work with members to ensure they have a sustainable supply of goods to support people in poverty and in need of employment; to have a sustainable environment for sustainable charities to continue to offer this help. Most of all it is to give those that find themselves socially excluded a house they can call their home and a future they can call their own.

**Craig Anderson, CEO,
Furniture Re-use Network**



HOW WE SUPPORT OUR MEMBERS

Showing the true impact of reuse on society

Since 1989, the Furniture Re-use Network (FRN) has made it its mission to ensure that *'No-one should be without a bed to sleep on, a cooker to cook on, or a sofa to sit on, wherever they live in the UK'*. The 1.5 million people supported by the sector are in crisis and on the margins of society. FRN members offer supportive, friendly and respectful environments in which to volunteer, work and donate. They reduce social isolation and enable increased influence and participation in the community as well as ensuring that furniture or white goods which would otherwise have been disposed of, are put to good use.

National representation for local action

Collectively our voices are stronger. The Furniture Re-use Network has successfully informed government departments on waste; welfare; work; business & innovation; justice; community & local government; and tax issues so that our members can provide their core services, unhindered by the policy changes that could impact upon their organisations. We interpret and lead our members through complex technical regulation, commissioning and service provision, eradicating illegal operations and supporting their growth.

A nation-wide network for reuse

As the national body we support and develop reuse charities and social enterprises throughout the UK to access furniture such as sofas and beds, and white goods to be provided at low-cost or free of charge. Our members range from very small community groups run entirely by volunteers to Approved Re-use Centres who employ a team of staff. The FRN engages with all of them, creating the environment and mechanisms to get them working together to share ideas and best practice, diversify and grow services, and help new organisations to establish.

Genesis Trust, Furniture Project

31a West Avenue, Oldfield Park, Bath, BA2 3QB

"Working with the FRN has helped us here at The Genesis Furniture Project thanks to initiatives on waste disposal charges, up-cycling, and sourcing products for our shop. The forums at national and regional level also provide a great opportunity to meet like-minded souls striving for similar outcomes, improvements and generally being able to offer a better all round experience to our customers."

Anthony Ward, Project Manager



FURNITURE RE-USE NETWORK SECTOR IMPACT 2017

The Furniture Re-use Network (FRN) is the national body which supports, assists and develops charitable re-use organisations across the UK.

We are the lead, the voice, the technical and business support and the product broker for re-use charities. At its core, the FRN, with the mandate from its members, works hard to marry its social and environmental missions. The FRN strives to ensure that good quality, unwanted furniture and electrical equipment can be accessed and reused by those on low incomes.

The Furniture Re-use Network's social impacts emphasise the importance of re-use on our society, economy and environment. These figures, taken from our members' annual statistics, show the impacts of the 250 strong re-use organisations in the UK, from the Isle of Wight to Caithness.

www.frn.org.uk

SOCIAL IMPACT



1.5 million households helped through the provision of free or low cost household items.
£436 million saved by low income households on essential goods thanks to reused items

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT



3.45 million furniture and electrical items reused in the UK
117,450 tonnes of waste and recycling diverted
125,600 tonnes of CO₂ saved

SOCIAL-ECONOMIC IMPACT



5,000 employed part-time and full-time in the last year
49,560 people supported through volunteering, training and work placements

THE DIFFERENCE OUR COMMERCIAL PARTNERS MAKE

Whether it is by working with our members to collect customer furniture or electrical appliances through FRN managed takeback schemes, donating customers returns or supplying end-of-line stock; our commercial partners make an incredible difference to the re-use sector, giving low-income households the chance to own something that might otherwise be out of their reach.

In 2016/17, FRN commercial partnerships managed by the national team, supplied **84,000 furniture and electrical appliances** to the voluntary reuse sector.

This, in turn:

- ✓ Helped **67,200 households** in the UK
- ✓ Saved low-incomes households over **£9.9 million**
- ✓ Prevented **3,240 tonnes** of products being wasted
- ✓ Saved **2,860 tonnes** of CO₂

For more information about our commercial partnerships, please visit:
www.frn.org.uk/commercial-partners

John Lewis



SOUTH LEEDS ALTERNATIVE TRADING ENTERPRISE & JOHN LEWIS: A CASE STUDY

Nicholas is a driver's mate at South Leeds Alternative Trading Enterprise (SLATE) which means he works on the van collecting furniture that is donated to the charity. Before working at SLATE, Nicholas had spent many years trying to find work but having a learning disability made it difficult for him. He started volunteering for the charity who then offered him a job. Nicholas said: "I love working at SLATE. It makes me happy. I enjoy being busy and helping people".



SLATE was set-up to run environmentally friendly projects for the benefit of the local community and offer work opportunities to people with learning disabilities. Part of Nicholas' rounds includes delivering furniture to SLATE's customers. Thanks to the Furniture Re-use Network's national sofa reuse takeback scheme with John Lewis; FRN Approved Reuse Centres' (ARCs) such as SLATE, also benefit from high quality furniture returns donated by John Lewis. These returns, or debit stock, provide a valued contribution to support charities like SLATE by providing employment opportunities and generating income.

Furniture Re-use Network

Dave Firth, SLATE Operations Manager said: "The opportunities that the FRN and John Lewis provide us is not all about income generation. The stock we receive gives us the opportunity to offer high quality products for low prices, and alleviating poverty in the local community. It also gives our volunteers the opportunity to experience different work cultures and environments. All the volunteers ask if they can go to Logic Park to see the big warehouse as it is "amazing". Many aspire to work on the vans that do the John Lewis run.

"The FRN and John Lewis's commitment to us is something that is truly amazing. We are very thankful for all the support you both give us and we can definitely see a long lasting friendship for many years to come."

For more information about SLATE, please visit www.slateleeds.org.uk



Social Impact Report 2017

MEET THE TEAM



CRAIG ANDERSON
Chief Executive Officer



LESLEY PRESCOTT
Head of Operations



SANDRA WYATT
FRNE Administrator



JOHN KEEGAN
Assessor



CLAIRE CHARRAS
Business Support Manager



LAUREN JENKINS
Office Administrator



HARVEY GRIFFITHS
Assessor



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CONTACT US

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