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 continues to represent its membership based on these guiding principles and strives to ensure that good quality, unwanted furniture and electrical equipment can be accessed and reused by those on low incomes.

In the last year alone, members of the FRN have been put under greater pressure than ever to help people in need experiencing a 100% increase in demand for essential household goods.

A major challenge encountered by reuse charities to fulfil their charitable aims is meeting the need for quality reused household items. The FRN's role in brokering take-back schemes plays a vital part in helping meet the demand for affordable items in the UK. The FRN take-back scheme is an FRN partnership between commercial retailers and the FRN re-use members. Associates such as DHL Envirosolutions & DixonsCarphone, John Lewis and IKEA give FRN members access to their customers’ quality reusable items that are collected when their new product is delivered.

Previously, the swapping of the customer’s old product for their new would mean that all items were being disposed of by the retailer. Waste and waste costs for the commercial retailer was sky high and therefore certain operational activities were not being met effectively. The answer was simple. We had members who desperately needed quality reusable product to meet the demands of the increasing numbers living in poverty, and the commercial retailers were collecting that product as part of their service.

The impact these FRN commercial take-back schemes have is three-fold. A social impact, whereby items collected by charities allow low income households to either buy these items at low cost or receive them free.

A socio-economic impact, allowing the charities to provide employment and training for people who have been marginalised from society.

Lastly, an environmental impact diverting a large percentage of items from landfill and recycling.

The FRN take-back schemes have proven to be one of the greatest successes the charity re-use sector has had working with the private sector. It has worked so well because not only have the commercial partners understood the social context and value involved in re-use, they’ve seen the opportunity for a service-based partnership that meets their business needs and comes with the bonus of adding value to their local communities and customers.

Re-use of products, be they waste or not, is the key starting point for the Circular Economy agenda, and making sure poverty alleviation for the previously excluded customer is recognised as a driver for change.

**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.

**circular economy**

An alternative to a traditional linear economy (make, use, dispose) in which we keep resources in use for as long as possible, extract the maximum value from them whilst in use, then recover and regenerate products and materials at the end of each service life.
VALUE DERIVED FROM RE-USE IN THE UK
Alleviating Material Poverty and Tackling Climate Change

Re-use organisations are tackling environmental waste and social costs, however there is a need to increase recognition of the true value of re-use services.

**SOCIAL IMPACT**

- **1 million** households helped through the provision of free or low cost household items
- **£382 million** saved by low income UK households on essential goods thanks to reused items

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

- **3 million** furniture and electrical items reused in the UK
- **103,000** tonnes of waste diverted
- **110,000** tonnes of CO² saved

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT**

- **4,793** employed every year
- **49,209** people supported through volunteering, training and work placements

How reuse benefits corporate social responsibility

Different businesses have different reasons for operating take-back schemes; it may be legal, financial or ethical or, a mixture of all three. Much of the impetus for a business wanting to support local social concerns is down to their own corporate social responsibility (CSR) targets. What we find is that, for a CSR-based partnership with the third sector to work, it must mirror or match the business activities. Re-use offers costs savings and value to the customer; and key to this working is retailers wanting to see real social benefit, not just in the eyes of their customers but for their staff too.

Staff are increasingly motivated by their employers’ social concerns. The tangible impact corporate social responsibility can have on their local community provides job satisfaction to staff members. In particular, the opportunities for staff to interact with their local reuse charities in the work place enhances their sense of involvement, thus encouraging a more positive work ethic.
WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH...

- 16 FRN members involved
- 2,818 sofas provided by IKEA last year, saved households in the UK over £845,400
- 3,433 beds supplied last year, saved households in the UK over £343,300
- 157 pallets of flat-pack furniture collected last year

- 12 FRN members dealing with electrical equipment and WEEE in partnership with DixonsCarphone and DHL Envirosolutions
- Over 12,000 low income households helped in the UK last year thanks to re-used and repaired items, saving these households over £2 million
- 10% of all DixonsCarphone’s UK take-back appliances were collected for reuse

- 21 FRN members working on the scheme
- 254 tonnes of furniture collected in 2014 was either reused or recycled
- This resulted in over 125 tonnes of CO2 savings
WORK WITH THE
FURNITURE RE-USE NETWORK

Support your Local Communities.
Reduce Waste and Save Money.
Protect your Environment.

The FRN can add value to your organisation, help you reach certain operational responsibilities and make savings to your operational costs. The FRN’s work covers a wide remit of social and environmental activities that cross the boundaries of policy, society and commercial markets. The FRN supports policy makers, local and national government, social housing, local authorities, commercial partners and more. It has been calculated that every £1 spent on reuse provides £7 worth of social value and impact.

Last year, FRN commercial partnerships managed by the national team:

- Supplied **78,000 items** through national contracts
- Helped over **62,000 households** in the UK
- Saved low income families over **£12 million** in the UK
- Prevented **3,000 tonnes** of products being wasted
- Saved **3,800 tonnes** of CO²

If you would like to find out how you can benefit from working with the FRN please contact:

Craig Anderson, Chief Executive Officer  craiga@frn.org.uk
Helen Middleton, Market Development Manager  helenm@frn.org.uk
Lesley Wilcox, Operations Manager  lesleyw@frn.org.uk

info@frn.org.uk  www.frn.org.uk  0117 954 3578

Furniture Re-use Network  @FRNUK

We feel proud to be part of such a great scheme, which offers invaluable opportunities within our communities and supports John Lewis’s ambition to divert waste from landfill.

Stephen Cawley, Head of Sustainability and Responsible Sourcing at John Lewis