

STIRLING COUNCIL and THE VALLEY FURNITURE RECYCLING PROJECT

SUMMARY

Stirling Council Housing Services and Community Services worked with the Salvation Army to introduce 'The Valley' Furniture Recycling Project in 2010, for the benefit of residents across the Stirling Council area. The initial aim of the project was to support vulnerable and new tenants and to increase tenancy sustainability, whilst reducing the need to use the civic amenity site.

COLLECTIONS

The Valley accepts donations of furniture including tables, chairs, suites, beds, mattresses and white goods. Other soft furnishings such as curtains, linen, cutlery, crockery, pots and pans, lamps, bric-a-brac and clothing can also be collected for re-use.

HOMELESS

Particular consideration is given to those families being housed through the homeless route who are able to buy furniture at 50% of the ticket price. For a small deposit, clients can put aside furniture and pay it up in instalments. The idea is that by the time their new tenancy begins they will have most of the items they need set aside and the furniture will be delivered free to their new home.

Leaflets are distributed throughout Housing Services and all the partner agencies detailing information on the project and contact details.

ISSUES ADDRESSED

Housing Services and Waste Services recognised that there were three separate issues affecting the Stirling residents:

- those starting off in their new home often have little or no furniture
- outgoing households often cannot find a recipient for their unwanted furniture
- many other residents across the Stirling area wish to dispose of unwanted furniture items.

In an effort to solve these issues and reduce landfill, Housing Services and Waste Services put in place arrangements to:

- encourage residents to deposit their unwanted, re-usable furniture into containers at the local amenity site
- pick up all re-usable furniture from households requiring a special uplift and
- transport it to The Valley for sale.

Furniture is collected from all property types across the Council area regardless of tenure. It is restored and cleaned by offenders carrying out community service and then placed in a showroom setting where it is sold to the public.

For special (or bulky) uplifts, the Contact Centre developed a process whereby items are screened for re-usable items to be collected and taken to The Valley, leaving little or no residue for landfill. This reduces the costs for the service user.

It was estimated at outset that there was potential to divert around 10 tons from landfill each week. Loads collected from the site are weighed accurately while the weights of loads being collected from homes and properties are estimated according to Community Resources Network for Scotland guidelines.

COSTS

Housing Services subsidises the hire of a vehicle for the project whilst the Salvation Army covers fuel and insurance.

The cost of the additional funding provided by Housing for the project is offset by a significant saving in landfill charges throughout the year as a result of material being re-used from void properties rather than dumped. This also reduces the Service's carbon footprint.

EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING

The project is managed by the Salvation Army and is based at Broadley's Industrial Estate in Stirling. The Salvation Army has a Project Manager in place, 1 other paid employee and 6 volunteers. In addition, there are 3 employees funded by the council's Future Funding who are learning valuable work experience.

Furniture is uplifted and restored or repaired where appropriate by offenders carrying out community service orders as directed by the courts. A dedicated Criminal Justice Services Supervisor manages around 8 offenders at The Valley per week. The project provides Criminal Justice Services with extra opportunities to engage with other parts of the community.

At the Scottish Community Payback Awards ceremony in 2012, Stirling Community Payback team won the Best Partnership Project award for their involvement in the Valley Project.

Scotvec qualifications may be offered to offenders as new skills are learned. Since the project had been running, two offenders have been offered employment at The Valley as a result of their placements there. Several Community Service participants have also returned to The Valley as volunteers.

Training in portable appliance testing, first aid, fire awareness and manual handling for offenders and volunteers is carried out. Fab Pad, the national community arts organisation that works with vulnerable people at a critical stage in their lives, also provided training during the first year. They engaged participants as well as new and prospective tenants, in a programme of arts, design and practical skills designed to turn their house into a home.

The project has enabled the Council, in partnership with SACRO (Safe-guarding Communities, Reducing Offending), to seek funding of around £225k over a 3-year period to enhance the integration of exiting offenders from the 3 Forth Valley prisons, back into the community. It is intended that furniture that requires extensive repairs and restoration is taken from The Valley to the prison workshops and returned for sale.

BENEFITS FOR HOUSING SERVICES AND OTHER SERVICES

It was anticipated that the project would:

- Reduce rent arrears at the start of new tenancies as applicants are able to access furniture before they move in and they do not have to rely on a lengthy wait for a Community Care Grant
- Reduce Housing Services costs at landfill as furniture is diverted and re-used
- Reduce amount of waste going to landfill and related reduction in carbon emissions - average 9.7 tons per month diverted, Apr-Sept 2013, SEPA weight
- Minimise void turnaround time loss
- Increase tenancy sustainability – this is now at 100% for homeless tenants
- Decrease repeat homelessness
- Provide valuable new skills and training for vulnerable service users, offenders and volunteers. Offenders will integrate into the community easier
- Help offenders reach the end of their community service order faster whilst paying back into the community – The Valley has a higher success rate than other projects of offenders finishing their community service. Clients say that they feel good about the experience and often thank The Valley for helping them.
- The project has provided the opportunity for various internal and external Services to adopt a joint approach to address key issues in accordance with the single outcome agreement.

CONTACT DETAILS

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