

Co-collection of mattresses and furniture from households for re-use

Charity, 'toogoodtowaste' co-collects mattresses with other bulky waste for resale through its charity shops. By working in conjunction with Rhondda Cynon Taf Council they maximise the amount of material diverted for re-use and bring social benefits to the local community.



Collection of mattresses for re-use: Rhondda Cynon Taf, Wales

This is an example of the collection of post-consumer mattresses from households. The collection is undertaken by toogoodtowaste using their own vehicle fleet. The mattresses are subsequently sold on for re-use through their charity shop or sent for recycling by Amgen Cymru (the council's waste contractor).

Key facts

- Organisation: 'toogoodtowaste'
- Type of business: Charity
- Location: Ynyshir, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Wales
- Type of non-textile: Post-consumer mattresses and duvets from domestic sources
- Type of collection: Collection from households
- Tonnes collected per year (2011): 317 tonnes in total, of which 9 tonnes of mattresses
- Re-use rate (2011): 80%
- Number of employees: 11 full time, 3 part time and around 150 volunteers.

Introduction and background

'toogoodtowaste' is a registered charity and social enterprise operating throughout the County Borough of Rhondda Cynon Taf in South Wales. It offers free collections of re-usable furniture as well as carrying out house clearances. Items are then sold on to the local community through its charity shops in Aberdare and Ynyshir or provided to low income households as a furniture start up package. In 2011 'toogoodtowaste' collected 28,000 items, of which 26,500 were sold or given away free for re-use.

'toogoodtowaste' was started in a local authority factory unit in 1995, in the north of the Rhondda Fach valley. In 2007 toogoodtowaste and Rhondda Cynon Taf Council made a successful joint partnership application under the Strategic Recycling Scheme fund, which allowed them to expand their premises by rebuilding and moving into their current warehouse in Ynyshir. They also agreed a five-year rent-free period with Rhondda Cynon Taf Council. In 2012, at the end of the five years, 'toogoodtowaste' was successful in its Community Asset Transfer grant application to the BIG Lottery Fund and the Welsh Government, receiving funding of £800,000 to buy the building and extend it, with space for a training room, as well as funding to create four new jobs.

Description of the operation

'toogoodtowaste' and Rhondda Cynon Taf council both offer a free collection service for bulky waste within the Rhondda Cynon Taf area. Residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf who require a bulky waste collection can either contact the 'toogoodtowaste' call centre or contact the council call centre. Items which are assessed as re-usable are collected by 'toogoodtowaste', while items which are not re-usable are collected by the council. As well as logging collection requests and determining if items are re-usable or not through asking questions of callers, staff at the 'toogoodtowaste' call centre also help coordinate collection logistics.

'toogoodtowaste' uses a fleet of four Luton vans, with each van undertaking about 8 deliveries and 8 collections each day. The collections used to be zoned, but the fleet now collects from each area every day due to the increased volume of donations and deliveries. Most collections take place within a day or so after the request is logged. Items are taken to the warehouse in Ynyshir, where they are inspected, quality controlled, sorted, cleaned and priced before being put on the shop floor for sale in their charity shops. Any rare or valuable items that are

identified are picked out and sold either at auction or on EBay to maximise income for the charity, to assist in their charitable aims and objectives.

'toogoodtowaste' also carries out house clearances for a fee. It is usually able to clear an average house with a team of 13 staff and volunteers within an hour. As all items within the house are cleared (non-reusable items are collected by the council), many more items such as clothing, crockery and bric-a-brac are also collected. Around 300 duvets are collected in this way each year, though only around 10% are suitable for re-use. Some are sold in the shop while others are donated to homeless charities and animal shelters or passed to the local rag trader.

Items which are collected but not suitable for re-use are sent on to Amgen Cymru for recycling. Items collected by the council's bulky waste collections are also sent to Amgen Cymru. Furniture is broken down and recycled as wood, while mattresses are deconstructed for recycling. Mattresses are also sourced from council bulky waste collections and HWRCs. After deconstructing mattresses manually for a few years, Amgen Cymru commissioned a mechanical mattress deconstruction machine to speed up the process.

Mattresses are fed towards the machine using a large belt. As seen in figure 2 below, staff members slit mattresses along the top edge, then feed them into the machine where rollers grip the textile and peel the cover and padding off the steel frame. The textile materials drop down while the steel frame continues along the belt into a shredder. The textiles and foams are hand sorted into different types, baled and sold on for recycling or Energy from Waste (EfW), while the springs are sold as scrap metal. While 75% of the mattress components, the steel and the padding, are recycled, no end market has yet been identified for the mattress covers.

Performance/outcomes

- Number of collections/deliveries: Approximately 60 per day
- Non-clothing textiles collected: 500 mattresses per annum, around 9 tonnes. Also collect around 300 duvets each year through house clearances, but only around 10% are re-usable.
- Re-use rate: 80%

Figure 1 Mattress being prepared for mechanical deconstruction at Amgen Cymru.



Innovation/good practice

The agreement in place between 'toogoodtowaste' and Rhondda Cynon Taf council ensures that items are disposed of in accordance with the waste hierarchy. Unless specifically requested by the resident, items suitable for re-use are diverted to 'toogoodtowaste' for resale. As well as diverting resources from landfill, this scheme has significant social benefits as it provides low cost furnishings to local residents in need and creates volunteering and work based learning opportunities for members of the local community with 42% of volunteers leaving for paid employment. Any non-reusable items are sent to Amgen Cymru which recycles as many of the materials as possible. The cooperation between the three organisations ensures that items are diverted to the best possible end use.

'toogoodtowaste' manages all its collected items responsibly, working with other local charities and organisations to ensure they divert as much as possible to re-use and recycling. Clothing collected during house clearances are passed on to leading cancer charity Tenovus, spectacles and tools are donated for re-use in developing countries, bicycles are donated to a local school bicycle refurbishment project as well as other local charities, whilst invalid aids are returned to Vision Products (who work with local council and social services) and duvets are donated to homeless shelters or to animal rescue centres.

Description of costs and revenues

This box provides a summary of the main annual costs and revenues (detail given where provided).

Costs:

- Collection vehicles: Four 3.5 tonne Luton vans, one with a tail lift (operating within approximate 25 mile radius of site) estimated cost of each vehicle £25,000.
- Buildings: One warehouse (900m²), divided between the shop (750m²) and the sorting area (180m², with additional 90m² on mezzanine floor).
- Dedicated staff: 14 employees: 11 FTE (General manager, Finance manager, Finance assistant, Logistics co-ordinator, Volunteer co-ordinator, Electrician, two Van supervisors, House clearance co-ordinator and two Customer services supervisors), 3 PTE (CEO, Marketing and Trainer) and around 150 part time volunteers, each working between 1 and 3 days per week.
- Collection cost: Around £15 per collection (estimated £240,000)

Revenues:

- Self-generated income from sale of items
- Grants income
- Big Lottery & Welsh Government awarded a Community Asset Transfer grant of £800,000 to buy the building and extend it, as well as funding to create four new jobs.

Figure 2 Mattresses displayed for sale in the toogoodtowaste warehouse



Conclusions/key learning points

'toogoodtowaste's' operation allows it to fulfil its mission of helping those in need through the provision of affordable furniture and providing volunteering and work based learning, whilst regenerating the community and reducing the amount of waste going to landfill. By working closely with Rhondda Cynon Taf council's waste management and social services team, they have established a system which allows them to co-collect furniture and other items and divert them from landfill into re-use whilst providing over 150 people with volunteering and placement opportunities. Their cooperation with local firm Amgen Cymru and other local charities allows them to re-use or recycle any items which cannot be re-used. Overall 'toogoodtowaste's' operation brings important social benefits to the area as well as helping reduce the amount of waste going to landfill.

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