

the Furniture Scheme





The Furniture Scheme

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- Reuse and recycling of furniture and other waste streams
- Retail
- Development of Social Enterprise – both within and externally to SSFS
- Community Engagement and support



Jean Jarvis MBE

Chief Executive

Our mission...

Our mission is to enhance the quality of life of disadvantaged people in Shropshire, by providing access to low cost furniture and improving employment related skills through training.



What we believe in:

- Relieving poverty
- Enabling inclusion
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Relieving Poverty...

We strongly believe in financial inclusion and finding responsible ways of alleviating the crippling effects of deprivation. The ability to furnish your home is something many people take for granted but there are those who simply cannot afford the basic essentials. Our core objective is to enable those people to access all they need to make a house a home.

Despite the common perception that Shropshire is both affluent and prosperous, there exists a layer of poverty. Since 1994 **the Furniture Scheme** has been providing low cost furniture and household equipment to those in need.

Enabling inclusion...

There are a multitude of social and economic barriers that face the disadvantaged. **The Furniture Scheme** is passionate about removing these obstacles and reducing social exclusion. As well as providing access to low cost furniture we are able to enhance the long term prospects of the people we assist. We not only improve individual's employability, we also encourage a sense of self worth, confidence and self motivation.



Protecting the Environment...

Reuse is high on everyone's agenda as the world tries to reduce its carbon footprint and responsibly manage its natural resources. Across Shropshire the Furniture Schemes divert approximately 500 tonnes of furniture and household appliances from landfill every year – the equivalent of nearly 30,000 flat screen televisions. Our work raises awareness of the 3 Rs – reduce, reuse and recycle and promotes the benefits of sustainable lifestyles.





Developing potential in people...

The Furniture scheme's ethos is one of equality, enablement and involvement; particular focus is placed on providing training and volunteering options to a range of people, including the unemployed.

Based on its years of experience, the furniture scheme has developed an extensive portfolio of training and work placement opportunities to address the needs of local people. This mutually beneficial approach provides the scheme with a skilled work force of volunteers and trainees, without whom their range of services could not be provided.

Empowering communities...

The Scheme was established in order to address the local demand from an increasing number of households unable to afford essential household equipment.

It soon became apparent that this need was a symptom of a much wider problem.

As a long established and trusted service provider the scheme is able to work in the heart of the community enabling and empowering local people to take control of their own destiny



Supporting social enterprise...

Social enterprises are businesses which exist to address social or environmental need.

Rather than maximising profit for shareholders or owners, profits are reinvested into the community or back into the business. It's this which makes social enterprise the most exciting and inspiring business movement in the world. *[Social Enterprise London]*

As a diverse and innovative flagship social enterprise the Furniture Scheme's sharing ethos has led to it providing a range of support and services to new and existing social enterprises throughout the UK.





James Cooper

General Manager



What we do...

We offer a breadth of activities and experiences to a wide range of beneficiaries, each of which has their own needs and challenges.



Our activities fall into
five broad areas:

- Training and Work experience
- Reuse and recycling of furniture and other waste streams
- Retail
- Development of Social Enterprise – both within and externally to SSFS
- Community Engagement and support



Volunteering and work experience





Supporting people is at the heart of what we do. Many people choose to volunteer at the Furniture Scheme. Each has their individual reason for doing so. For many it is about giving back their time to the community whilst for others it is about gaining valuable work experience or meeting others. Anyone working through difficult issues whether that be health, family challenges, regaining confidence or getting ready to move into work will find a supportive environment here with us. We achieve this by focussing on:

- valuing what people do
- continued professional development of the staff team
- a robust volunteer support team
- individual skills assessment to ensure appropriate volunteering opportunity
- employment support for the volunteer workforce
- encouraging mental well being

Although it can sometimes be difficult to be supportive and run a successful social enterprise we think we have found the right balance. Wherever YOU are in terms of confidence or work experience WE believe you can develop both your personal and work skills to meet your needs whilst still making a valuable and important contribution to what we do.

After all we find value in everything especially people!



**We see value
in everything
especially people**





We are able to offer formal accredited training, work placements and support, and more informal volunteering opportunities for our client group. All the units we offer are from the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) Progression Award allowing trainees and volunteers to build up credits that are 'portable'.

By way of example, training opportunities include accredited qualifications in Personal Learning Programme, Work Experience, Customer Service, Health and Safety Awareness, Emergency First Aid at Work and certificates in Manual Handling; Mental Health First Aid; IT skills; CIEH Risk Assessment; Practical Use of Fire Equipment. Where appropriate we will facilitate access to external training such as Waste Management; Literacy and Numeracy; Leadership and Management.

These training opportunities take place across all our sites and within all of our activities.

We continue to develop our training provision and are currently adding more vocational training; establishing more progression routes for beneficiaries by developing community services/social enterprises such as an outside catering company, handyman scheme, gardening, shopping; and working with employers to ensure that we train people in the appropriate skills to match employment opportunities.



Reuse and recycling



We either collect donations of furniture and other recyclables (electrical, computers, metal, wood, fabric) directly from households or they are brought to our sites. We reuse and recycle in a number of ways:

- Direct sales through our low cost warehouse in Ludlow
- Refurbish in our carpentry workshop and sell from our High Street Renaissance Centre retail outlet in Ludlow
- Dismantle and recycle as components or scrap. Computers are stripped into their component parts; sofas without fire labels are stripped and the textiles recycled; electrical items which fail PAT test are dismantled and the components recycled
- Upcycle through our 'Funky Furniture' project developed in conjunction with Ludlow college and Thinkwater. We provide the furniture and the students provide the creativity to upcycle the items into very stylish and original works of art which we are now selling through Reviive. This project is now in its third year.



As an organisation we are continually seeking new and better ways of doing things. As a result of our pioneering spirit we now subcontract to Veolia, the local private sector waste contractor for Shropshire, to collect the Bulky Waste from households. This gives us the opportunity to re-use and recycle as many of the materials and items of furniture as possible. We also operate a common database with the other furniture schemes which has allowed for a more streamlined process for the customer.



Retail





The renaissance centre and all it offers now has an established reputation in Ludlow. Our reputation for second hand books continues to grow steadily. We provide 'reborn' items for the household in a gallery and domestic setting. We offer employment and volunteering opportunities combined with training.

In 2011 we developed new initiatives including a new Community Interest Company, Reviive CIC, our fabulous eco-chic shop in Shrewsbury. This has been set up in partnership with Shropshire Housing Alliance and as a result of an innovative and interesting collaboration with Veolia.

We continue to grow our warehouse facility, which gives the public access to purchase a wide range of reused furniture at low cost.





Development of Social Enterprise





Using our flagship social enterprise to illustrate, inform and inspire others we are at the forefront of social enterprise development in Shropshire. We offer a specialist consultancy service alongside training provision and showcasing the furniture scheme as a successful model of social enterprise. At Craven Arms Community Centre we aim to develop a Social Enterprise Hub where we will continue to support social enterprise and small businesses across Shropshire and beyond. Using the Training kitchen at Craven Arms, alongside other food related projects and links to local organisations we aim to focus on the development of an outside catering social enterprise.



Community Engagement and support





We manage two community centres, The Rockspring Centre in Ludlow and CASCA (Community Arts Sport Craven Arms), where we run successful holiday schemes for young people. Programmes include sports, crafts, gardening, cookery, drama, orienteering, den making, bike rides, fun and games.

In addition to the young people we also host activities for people of all ages.



