

Fife Council leads the way in reuse furniture

Friday 10 March, 2017

Fife Council has become the first local authority to trial a change in the way it provides furniture and other household items to Scottish Welfare Fund customers.

Since April 2013, all 32 local authorities in Scotland have provided Crisis Grants and Community Care Grants through the Scottish Welfare Fund to people on low incomes who need support to establish or remain in their homes in their communities. Funding for these items is allocated to each local authority from the Scottish Government. Scottish Welfare Fund customers can be provided with the main household essentials such as white goods, a bed, sofa and table and chairs. Traditionally these items have been supplied new, however with the introduction of an alternative option via the newly established Community Resources Network Scotland (CRNS) Reuse Consortium, Fife Council has become the first local authority to change the way it provides goods to customers.

The Reuse Consortium, created by CRNS, is the first consortium of its kind in Scotland and has been described as 'transformational' as it changes the way people in need are given access to furniture. The Reuse Consortium can potentially support 24 of Scotland's local authorities and is made up of 17 accredited reuse members.

The two consortium members based in Fife who will service the Fife Council contract are Castle Furniture Project, with stores in Glenrothes and Cupar, and Furniture Plus with stores in Dysart and Dunfermline.

The benefits of utilising the CRNS Reuse Consortium to provide quality reuse furniture to families and individuals in need from a local authority's perspective are significant:

- In a time of financial constraint, budgets can be stretched to support more people in need
- Exposure to reuse may encourage people to consider reuse in the future, potentially discouraging them from using high street weekly payment stores and pay day lenders
- Local authority budgets are spent in the local social enterprise organisation providing the reuse furniture, contributing to their financial viability
- The financial viability of reuse organisations is essential for them to continue to be an integral part of the local community support network that provides opportunities for employment and volunteering to those who are furthest removed from the job market
- Deliveries of reuse furniture are quick and efficient
- Items are diverted from landfill resulting in a more circular approach to the local economy.

Fife Council has recognised that this contract could add additional value and provide an enhanced insight into the needs and expectations of clients, ensuring that the level of support they receive is suitable to their situation and that council money is being spent appropriately. As of 13th February 2017 Fife Council is trialling a change to the way it provides goods to Scottish Welfare Fund customers. The Council will acquire reuse furniture and white goods from the CRNS Reuse Consortium in addition to its current supplier of new items.

Lauren Forrest, Fife Council's Welfare Fund Manager, said: "We're excited to be part of this trial. It's a great opportunity for us to change the way we deliver goods.

"As well as getting better value for money, it's also supporting Fife-based charities who are providing a local service to local people.

"Another benefit of providing furniture in this way is that customers can choose the items of furniture they need rather than just being given something. They have the option to visit a store or speak to someone over the telephone. It gives people a greater sense of ownership and pride as it's something they've picked."

"It has been a pleasure working with Fife Council officers to implement the trial to ensure that this works well for Scottish Welfare Fund customers, the local authority and our consortium members. The staff from Procurement and the Scottish Welfare Fund teams have been so helpful and have made taking forward this trial very easy. Fife Council has been innovative in their thinking and we hope that this will encourage other local authorities to come on board with a trial in the new financial year," says Alison Brown, CRNS Reuse Consortium Co-ordinator.

For further information on the Reuse Consortium please contact Alison Brown on 01786 469002.

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