Repurpose: Piloting the Circular Economy of reuse on five London Housing Estates

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Repurpose- what is it?

- **EU initiated pilot** based on five housing estates across London
- **Run by Groundwork London** supported by LCRN and Middlesex University
- **Match-funded by local partners** (25%) & **additional funding** sought from other funders (25%)
3 overall programme objectives from EU

- **Increase reuse** in target estates by 25%
- **Reduce incidences of fly-tipping** on target estates by 25%
- **Increase skills, and income, for community** on target estates
Why was Repurpose set up?

» Lots of fly-tipping going on
  – 900,000 incidents of fly-tipping in England 2014/15. 2/3 of items from households.
  – On our 5 estates 1018 items were fly-tipped in 2 weeks (weighing just over 17 tonnes).
  – 74% of residents agreed there was a lot of fly-tipping in their neighbourhood.

» Expensive and upsetting
  – Fly-tipping is unsightly (it upsets 62% of us)
  – costs Housing Associations/Local Authorities increasing amounts each year to dispose of.

» Many items could be re-used
  – Of the bulky waste items collected, 24% could be reused straight away, and 40% with repair.

» System encourages it!
  – The system on estates where bulky waste teams clean up fly-tipping very quickly means that some residents don’t realise fly-tipping is a problem.
  – In our survey 36% considered fly-tipping as ‘normal behaviour as most people do it’ and 38% didn’t think it was a problem as ‘someone clears it up’.
Ctd...

» **Hard for residents to use council-wide services.**
  - Estates are often large and people don’t have cars to transport items elsewhere

» **No clear system for what people should do instead with their re-usable items**

» **Need for low cost furniture**
  - Often high turnover of residents, including those housed temporarily, who need furniture
  - Social care often sends residents to other parts of borough to source low cost furniture

» **Underused, skilled residents**
  - On most estates there are residents who have nothing to do during the day who would benefit from volunteering, many of whom have skills

» **Skills shortages on repair/reuse**
  - Estates like other areas, have skills shortages, people don’t know how to repair, make best use of items
Piloted on five estates across London
Each estate differs in size & nature

- From 250 households in SLT to over 2000 on White City
- From large amount of community activities, to no activity on site
- Recent regeneration, static estates and ongoing regeneration
- Near amenities and able to pay market to isolated estates
- Containers on SLT; Underground garages in Pembury; 4 undercrofts in White City, Shop in Graham Park
What does delivery include?

- **Monitoring & evaluation**
  - Fly-tipping data (every 5 weeks)
  - All activity recorded
  - Behaviour change surveys

- **Estate service on 5 pilot estates:**
  1. Creation of re-use hub/workshop service
  2. Collection service
  3. Engagement & behaviour change programme
  4. Training & volunteering
  5. Brokering and negotiating ongoing services

- **Dissemination**
  - Implementation guide & toolkit
  - Masterclasses/briefings etc
Creation of reuse hub

- Base for storage
- Retail
- Workshop space
- Base for volunteering/training if possible
Resident engagement & behaviour change programme

- Estate & Area profiles
- Events with different groups (schools, older groups etc)
- To tackle the root causes of fly-tipping and encourage positive environmental action.
Free doorstep collection service of reusable items

» Scheduled to meet resident’s needs
» Items also collected directly from fly-tipped locations
» Carried out on food/by hand
Training and volunteering programme

- Helping residents to develop long-term skills via training programmes and volunteering
- Ambassador training
- Local staff workshops
Brokering & negotiating ongoing services

- Working with local partners to explore options for continuation
- Exploring how could be incorporated into staff contracts, KPIs, tender specifications etc
Impact on estates

- **Removed over 5300 bulky items (76+ tonnes)** from the waste stream-600/month on average. Tripled expectations.
- **Established efficiencies** in estate waste collections (grouping items).
- Provided over **2700 items of low cost furniture** to low income and vulnerable families
- **Changed behaviour** on waste, reuse and recycling through **52 events. 2262 residents** involved in programme to date.
- Created new **community connections** and activated **unused spaces**
- Provided **local volunteering and employment for 37 regular volunteers** - £45,264 social value in volunteering opportunities alone on Grahame Park

Over made
Changing attitudes to waste

» Follow up behaviour change survey (490 respondents).
» Initial findings show interesting results:
  – Only 9% of residents who have engaged with Repurpose would ‘put a reusable item outside’ if they no longer wanted it compared to 21% of residents who hadn’t engaged.
  – 82% of those engaged with the project are concerned about reusable items going to waste compared to 45% who hadn’t been engaged.
  – 68% of those that have engaged with Repurpose report they ‘reuse more, throw fewer items away, fly-tip less or recycle more’ as a result of their engagement.
Strong social outcomes

- **Volunteering proving extremely impactful for high-needs individuals** – those with mental, physical health problems, substance abuse, prison history etc.

  “I was doing nothing really before volunteering. Coming here motivates me to get up in the morning. It makes me think I could focus and do other things with my life. I didn’t think I would ever work again but this makes me think I could do it. Since I started working here I’ve applied for an adult literacy course. I’ve always avoided applying for jobs because I’m dyslexic. That affected my confidence. But now I feel motivated to try and learn.” Volunteer on Samuel Lewis Trust estate

- **Creating social cohesion** - opportunity for residents to interact with one another, on-site activity during day

  “The Loop has provided a real meeting place in the community for new relationships; I have met many people through the Loop. It has strengthened my ties with the White City community.” Resident on White City estate
Really about people
1638 volunteer hours completed on Grahame Park alone
Key lessons learnt

- **Engaging community and other stakeholders is essential** - use existing systems/events/contacts where possible.
- Need a **single premises**, big enough for all functions. Be visible.
- **Fit out and equipment costs** and planning permission may be needed.
- Need **adequate staff** (2 FT) - multi skilled.
- **Volunteers are predominantly high needs** & take time to manage (but often highly skilled).
- **Collections are extremely time consuming**, be selective.
- Running the service **costs money** but is attractive for providers due to social impact as well as waste reduction.
- **Income generation opportunities broader** than just furniture sales.
Legacy & transferable methodology

- In negotiations over continuing projects on current estates (3/5 likely to continue)
- Already setting up new project on City West Homes estate in Pimlico in April
- Developing toolkit & policy pack for February
- High profile launch event early March
- Second masterclass for Housing Professionals
  - Early Feb (date tbc) on White City Estate
Any questions?

More information:

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