

IKEA pilots new textile take-back scheme



Company: IKEA UK & IE

REBM: Textile take-back for re-use and recycling to benefit the local community. Skills development.

Sector: Textiles

Company size: Large

Product or service: Textile collection, re-use and resale through a charity partner, supporting the local homeless community and individuals on low income. Re-purposing skills development workshops.

Key facts

- The IKEA textile take-back service, piloted in the Cardiff store, provides the public the opportunity to bring in any unwanted textiles (not just IKEA branded products) – from clothing to soft furnishings – to be re-used, repaired or recycled.
- There is a dedicated area within the store for the collection of these textiles, which has been designed to promote the circular economy message with the strap line of 'Reclaim, Revive, Re-love, Repeat'.
- IKEA donate all textile products received from customers to the YMCA who process them in their Cardiff facility before donating them to those in need in the community or for resale in their shop, to help fund their work supporting the homeless.
- Workshops have been run every Wednesday in the store showing customers how to breathe new life into old textiles, or turn them into something new.
- It is intended that the service will be scaled up and rolled out across the IKEA stores nationwide and the pilot has provided the template for that.

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Introduction

IKEA's vision is to create a better everyday life for the many people. Our business idea is "to offer a wide range of well-designed, functional home furnishing products at prices so low that as many people as possible will be able to afford them".

IKEA works hard to achieve quality at affordable prices for our customers through optimizing our entire value chain, by building long-term supplier relationships, investing in highly automated production and producing large volumes. IKEA's vision is to create a better everyday life for all people impacted by our business, and are committed to having an overall positive impact on people and the planet.

IKEA has an ambition to become a circular retailer, with a goal that by 2025 IKEA will take back everything they produce. They currently take back sofas, beds, mattresses and appliances in the UK&IE.

Textile take-back for re-use in the local community

- IKEA UK & Ireland has launched a new textile take-back scheme at its Cardiff store, encouraging customers to recycle unwanted textiles and help the local community.
- In-store workshops help customers learn a new skill, breathe new life into old textiles, or turn them into something new.
- All of the textiles donated to the Cardiff store are collected by YMCA in Roath, Cardiff.
- IKEA will take back anything YMCA cannot re-use or recycle and recycle through IKEA's own waste streams.

The scheme will provide a range of textiles for people in the local community, including the homeless and low-income families.

IKEA's aims

- To revive old textiles and keep them out of landfill, but also ultimately to bring textiles back into the supply chain.
- For our customers to learn new skills that can help to keep textiles out of landfill and in-use.
- For our charity partner YMCA, to ensure textiles are re-used by those in need in the community or resold in their stores.
- To test and develop a scalable model.

What would success look like?

- The service becoming a normal part of the store, with regular volumes of textiles being collected by YMCA for re-use.
- Well attended skills workshops with positive feedback.
- YMCA would be able to re-use most of the textiles for resale or through supporting the local homeless community.
- The textiles that can not be re-used could support IKEA in our long-term aim to develop fibre to fibre recycling systems.
- Other IKEA stores would choose to take on a similar service.

Why REBus?

IKEA had seen the success of the Argos Gadget Trade-in and that organisations such as Sky, Beko and Samsung were also trialling circular models under the REBus initiative.

The time was right to trial circular business models. Senior management supported new approaches to business, focused on developing the needs of customers.

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Benefits of the service

Recent research by WRAP reveals that textiles are one of the least recycled commodities in the waste sector⁽¹⁾. Each year, WRAP estimates that the UK consumes 1.7 million tonnes of textiles, with almost a third (620,000 tonnes) ending up in landfill or incineration⁽²⁾.

The service highlights our ethos that everyone has some responsibility to better the lives of the everyday people. Our customers are able to bring their old textiles that will either benefit the local community or be responsibly recycled.

The role of our store in society/community is a very important theme. IKEA undertakes a wealth of circular economy initiatives globally through our People, Plant, Positive approach. The new partnership with YMCA has allowed our Cardiff store to better support individuals in the local community as well as keeping textiles out of landfill and in use.

"We are delighted to partner with IKEA Cardiff on the textile take-back scheme. This initiative not only diverts waste from landfill, but enables the YMCA to provide much-needed items to people in the community"

Mandy Caddy, YMCA, Cardiff

1. http://www.wrap.org.uk/sites/files/wrap/Household_textiles_summary_report_
2. http://www.wrap.org.uk/sites/files/wrap/Textiles_Market_Situation_Report_2016

REBus support

IKEA worked with WRAP as experts in development of circular business models. The REBus team provided specific support, including:

- Coaching the IKEA team through a range of circular business model ideas and developing each idea until we found the most feasible to pilot.
- Working with the IKEA Sustainability team to develop the outline business case.
- Supporting the IKEA team with research and ideas to make the service work and highlighting what other organisations are already doing in this space.
- Facilitating partnerships for the service.
- Developing the metrics to measure the progress of the service.

"The support and knowledge that IKEA received from WRAP was invaluable. Their commitment from initial contact, at the workshop stage and through to the launch of the pilot was both professional and insightful. The data they provided and the recommendations they made allowed us to create a robust pilot that has taken us one step closer to becoming a circular retailer."

Hege Sæbjørnsen, Sustainability Manager, IKEA UK&IE



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Pilot

IKEA ran the pilot at their Cardiff store primarily to understand what customers thought of the service and how they would like it to be developed.

“We recognise as a retailer we have a responsibility to seek ways to use more of the resource available rather than using virgin material. Through this pilot we have been able to facilitate the return of textiles to our stores and are looking to the future to take product back into the supply chain with the aim to make these into new products, thereby supporting our aspirations to create a circular economy.”

Lynn Maxwell, Sustainability Developer West, IKEA

Results

The IKEA pilot has demonstrated a range of qualitative benefits such as:

- Receiving enthusiasm and praise from customers and from the Welsh Government which in turn motivated Cardiff co-workers.
- Winning the Business in Community Award in Wales.
- High attendance and positive feedback at the ‘revive your textiles’ workshops, including from one member of the community who attended as part of her therapy for mental health issues.

Based on the results of the three month pilot, over 12 months at the Cardiff store the service could deliver the following results:

- Collection of 4.4 tonnes of textiles;
- Diversion of 1.1 tonnes from landfill;
- Prevent 20 tonnes of waste arising in the supply chain;
- Prevent the use of 8,400 m³ of water;

- Prevent 20 tonnes of Carbon emissions;
- Generate £6500 revenue from resale of textiles for YMCA; and
- Create 580 volunteer hours for YMCA.

Next steps

It is intended to roll the textiles take back service out across the UK and Ireland in a phased approach. The roll out across other stores will be based on the learnings from the Cardiff pilot. The pilot has allowed a template to be created which can be replicated across other stores. It specifies the contractual agreement with partners, logistics, the design of the collection area, messaging, promotion and advertising, workshop programme, success metrics, etc. It is intended that the service will be rolled out to a number of stores in early 2018, with full roll out across the UK and Ireland later on in 2018.

Lessons learned

Getting the message out to customers was key. Greater volume and higher quality textiles were collected in the first half of the pilot most likely due to the amount of publicity and advertising the service received in local media. As this was just being offered in the Cardiff store national advertising, for example, on IKEA main website, was not possible. Regular publicity and the correct messaging will be key to long term success of the service.

“Making sure the right people were involved. It took a long time to get to that point, but the right people who understand the “why” we are doing it, gave the rest of the team energy and it felt easy as a result.”

Allyn Burford, Marketing Manager, IKEA Cardiff

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REBus is a project delivered in partnership with:



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Case studies were generated as a result of pilots carried out for REBus by WRAP or RWS and the named organisations from 2013 to 2016.

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