



**toogoodtowaste**  
*increasing reuse and recycling through community action*

(Valleys Furniture Recycling Ltd)

## The effect of European Funding

Community regeneration through waste minimisation  
is toogoodtowaste!

## Introduction

toogoodtowaste which was established in 1995 is an independently registered Charity and Company Limited by Guarantee.

## Legal Status

Registered Name: Valleys Furniture Recycling  
Trading Name: toogoodtowaste  
Registered company: Limited by Guarantee No: 3286173  
Governing Document: Memorandum & Articles of Association  
Registered Charity for the "Relief of the poor" No: 1064588

## Purpose

Registered as a Charity for the "relief of the poor" 1 the Company Objects are for a Social purpose and are outlined in the Articles of the Association 2:

1. To assist in the alleviation of deprivation by providing people in need with access to affordable furniture, and in so doing, reduce waste to landfill.
2. To provide opportunities to people to volunteer; gain work experience and become socially involved in a Community Enterprise

## History of the organisation

Informal discussions in 1993 identified that low income households within the County Borough, needed access to affordable furniture.

Since then, the organisation has consistently increased its range of services, the numbers of people employed and the number of people supported through volunteering and work based learning. The income generated has increased as has, the volume of waste diverted from landfill and the number of people provided with re-use items.

Through a range of capacity building grants, this organisation has grown from an initial grant of £50 from the Princes Trust (in 1993) to an organisation that is now considered to be an "essential service" by referral organisations and low income households.

Registered in 1995 as Valleys Furniture Recycling Limited, this organisation adopted the trading name of toogoodtowaste in 2000, to communicate the messages that the aims and aspirations of individuals and communities, as well as their recyclable products are all **too good to waste**.

Since 1995 the organisation has attracted over £2.5 million of inward investment and in so doing, created and sustained paid employment, engaged with over 100 volunteers each year, provided waste minimisation and re-use services and provided practical help to thousands of low income households within the County Borough. The inward investment has supported a number of local suppliers and services, for example garages, printers, contractors and the various café and mobile sandwich operators that are needed to support our team of hard working volunteers.

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<sup>1</sup> The modern meaning of "poor" – A person does not have to be destitute to qualify as "poor." Anyone who is in need or suffering hardship or distress might be eligible for help. Charity Commission, CC4 Pg.2.

## Financial & Statistical data

	2008	2009	2010	2011
Own income generation	£197,939	£267,692	£289,931	£311,283
Grants secured	£233,047	£117,171	£105,980	£134,099

## Social Benefits

	2008	2009	2010	2011
Number of referrals received for furniture packages for low income households	85	71	77	199
Number of volunteers	57	66	65	87
Number of work based placements	42	79	39	47
School placements	3	7	27	25
No. unpaid hours	30837	38403	24703	37853
No. of people buying from charity shops	3002	5057	5243	5861
No. of items supplied for re-use	6846	16872	22841	26057

Note: 2009/10 Government initiatives impact on volunteering e.g. Future job fund.

## Current levels of paid employment

10 core staff plus 1 additional staff member through the Engagement Gateway programme and an additional staff member through the South East Wales Economic Development project. TOTAL 12

In 2012 with funding through the BIG Lottery Welsh Assembly Community Asset Transfer grant a further 4 new employment positions will be created.

## Valuing the services - measuring the impact

In 2011 we responded to 199 referrals from L.A. Social services departments, women's aid, church groups and other charities. There were 170 children in these families. We provided children's bedroom packages, complete home start up packages (which include pots, pans & bedding).

The young people referred are vulnerable, starting their first accommodation. They were referred because they have little or no furniture; some were on a training course or still at school. One of the beneficiaries was 16 years and pregnant, another moving into her first tenancy with her son. Working in partnership enables us to target our

services at those most in need, e.g. with the housing advice centre and women's aid, as this has made a real difference to women with children fleeing domestic abuse. By working together we are able to help the re-settling of families quicker and this reduces the amount time children spend in temporary accommodation, resume their education, meet new friends etc.

One of the difficulties is assessing the level of need for our services in the future and therefore the costs in providing this service. As professional support staff in other agencies, become more aware of the value of our services, the referrals have increased. The increase in demand for children's bedroom furniture has meant we had to increase the quantity of new mattresses and bed bases we purchased as there were insufficient donations to meet the level of requests.

### History of European Funding

Dates	Type	Value	
1999 – 2001	Rechar Funding	£40,200	To start to deliver services
2001	ERDF Obj. 1	£88,000	To increase service delivery
2003	ERDF Obj 1	£356,900	Take services into community – employ additional staff.
2008	SRS	£614,432	To refurbish unit, employ staff
2011	Engagement gateway WCVA	£46,439	To engage & train those furthest from the labour market.
2011	SE Wales Economic Dev.	£7,700	First few months of 3 year project

Experiences:

**Positive:** Has enabled the organisation to build its capacity to develop services whereby an income can be generated. It has been important to develop services of a quality and price, that makes them valued by the community (either when they are buying for themselves, or where services are purchased on their behalf).

The SRS funding refurbished a derelict building and provided the organisation with the infrastructure from which to provide services that were accessible to the community and that were presented as a high quality product.

**Negative:** Time delays:

Example - In July 2010 we completed an Expression of interest for the SE Wales Community economic development (ERDF). We could not access an application form until June 2011 (11 months) and it took a further 3 months for the application to be assessed.

Example: Engagement Gateway ESF - the tender did not come out until February 2010 but the programme ends in June 2012. Because of the time delay in assessing the tender, the project had to be reduced.

**Negative:** paper hungry & bureaucratic

Example: In SEW Economic Development project, we have now been asked to provide payroll summary AND individual payslips AND timesheets with ½ hour intervals AND to provide this weekly - even though staff are on monthly salaries.

Also, photocopy each invoice, copies bank statements (expenditure not repaid unless cleared through bank account). Overhead costs not allowable (even for the additional photocopying). Company financial audit not accepted as evidence of a satisfactory project. Storage of documentation for 15 years. THERE IS MISTRUST of how organisations deliver projects.

**Negative:** lack of clear information

State aid – when it is / is not a problem and how to deal with it.  
Deminimus rule – Recording & reporting

**Negative:** Consortium bids

Not accessible.

Unsatisfactory feedback when attending potential partnership meetings - new way of working - mistrust amongst groups and organisations. Culture of organisations not necessary a good fit for partnership working.

For further information, please contact:

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