

# EXTRA 2.1 CASE STUDY

A Social Enterprise

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## Furniture4U

Six long-term unemployed people set up a social enterprise in 2012. They held a group meeting to discuss the idea and plan what resources and skills they would need.

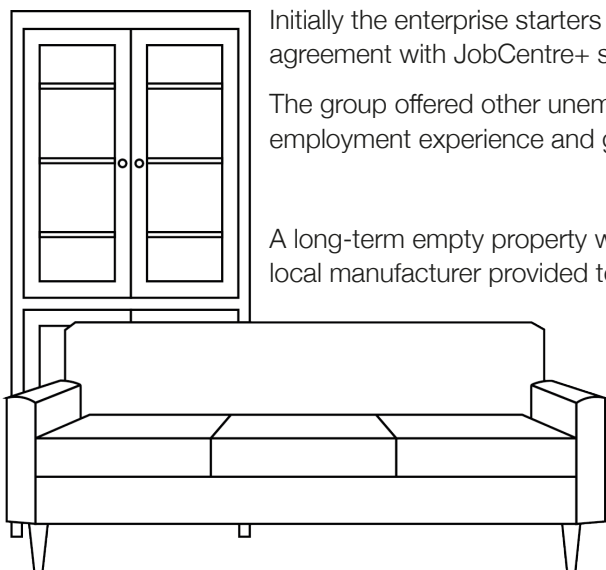
The idea was to collect unwanted furniture from the community, make it good, and offer it back to people in need.

### Resources needed were:

- Premises to house and repair the furniture
- A vehicle to collect it
- Tools
- The time of the group

### Skills needed included:

- Furniture repairs
- Business management
- Finance management
- Marketing
- Selling



Initially the enterprise starters agreed to work for free, and they secured a local agreement with JobCentre+ so they could do this without loss of allowances.

The group offered other unemployed people new opportunities to learn skills, employment experience and gain personal value by being involved in the enterprise.

A long-term empty property was donated for free for a temporary period, and a local manufacturer provided tools. The starter group invested in a vehicle and donated it to the enterprise. A business plan was organised by a local social enterprise training organisation, and the enterprise was formally opened in late 2012. Families receiving furniture were invited to donate an amount of their choosing. Furniture is also offered to the general public to purchase.



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Furniture4U works alongside local housing associations, social services, recycling organisations and other charities and enterprises to identify families in need, and not only provide furniture, but support the family members to find skills and work. Working with local partners has allowed access to business resources, processes and policies that would normally have needed time to create.

Furniture4U received a grant in early 2013 to support the running costs and a wage for managing and administering the enterprise for a 3-year period.

### Objectives and Social Aims:

- Develop and extend the reach of Furniture4U, supporting disadvantaged people and families to gain useful furniture
- Offer voluntary employment experience to people previously unemployed for a variety of reasons
- Maximise the benefits delivered using the skills and expertise of local people
- Support excluded members of the community in building an independent life.
- Improve local reuse schemes and help environmental practice

### Year 1 outcomes and impact:

- 538 pieces of furniture repaired and passed to local families in need
- Grant received to secure posts for 3 people for 3 years, and the running costs for Years 2 and 3 (rent/IT/printer/phone/internet/marketing.....)
- Upskilling of 85 people in pre-work opportunities
- Identification of paid and voluntary employment in the community for 18 people, and the process of continued support for small businesses who took a chance on employing this group.
- Income generated by offering furniture to local people, and by donations, was 80% of annual running costs, and increasing by the end of the first year's trading.



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