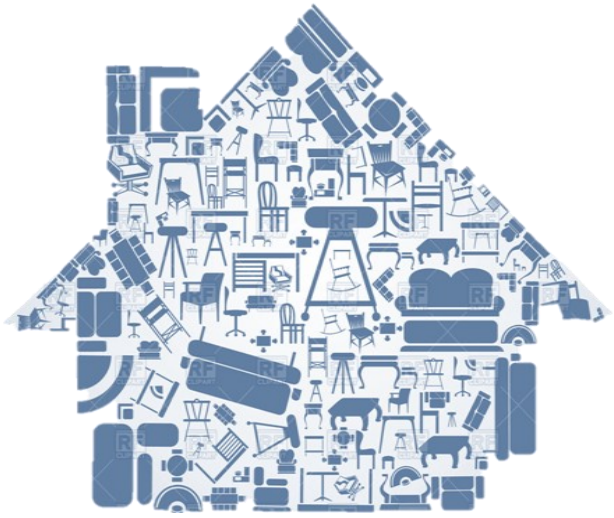


RECYCLING FIRST

Furniture and White Goods Re - Use Charity

ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 2025 - MARCH 2026

Unit 12A

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Macmerry
EH33 1RD

Email: recyclingfirstel@gmail.com

Website: www.recyclingfirstel.org

Contact Number: 01875 615797

Registered SCIO Number : SCO45286

Recycling First

Recycling First is a East Lothian-based non-profit organisation dedicated to supporting individuals in need, particularly those who are unemployed, on low incomes, or homeless. We work to reduce poverty, promote environmental sustainability, and provide pathways to employment and skills development.

Our Services

- To help meet the needs of low income households lacking basic furniture and effects.
- Accept and collect furniture donations from the general public in East Lothian.
- Store, repair as necessary, display, and sell surplus household furniture from our Warehouse.
- Offer volunteering opportunities, training, and practical work experience.

History & Status

- Founded in 1996 under the umbrella of East Lothian Voluntary Organisations Network (ELVON).
- Rebranded to Recycling First in 2005
- Registered as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) in 2014.

Our Objectives

- Prevention and relief of poverty.
- Provide essential furniture and household appliances to those in need, especially the homeless or low-income families.
- Protection and preservation of the environment, encourage reuse and recycling of donated furniture and household goods.
- Relief of employment, support the public through training employment, work experience, and volunteering opportunities.
- Environmental protection and stewardship, promoting recycling and reuse of furniture and household items to benefit the environment.

Community Payback

Recycling First has a strong partnership with the probation service, focusing on helping individuals through community payback programs. They emphasize seeing each participant's potential rather than their past mistakes. This year, **25** individuals completed a total of **2.280** community payback hours with the organisation, engaging in meaningful work that aligns with their skills.

Social value and environmental impact

RECYCLING FIRST's impact is both social and environmental.
We reduce waste by keeping useful items in circulation, while creating meaningful supported opportunities for people who may face barriers linked to disability, mental health, confidence, isolation or social exclusion.

CHAIRMANS REPORT - 2025-26

It is with great pleasure that I present this annual report on behalf of Recycling First. During the past year, the charity has continued to build on its positive momentum and has remained committed to providing a beneficial service to the community.

Our work depends on the continued generosity of the public. We are particularly grateful to our loyal supporters who donate furniture and household goods, and to the members of the public who visit our premises, browse, and make purchases—thereby helping to sustain the charity's activities.

I would also like to acknowledge the invaluable contribution of our dedicated team, who give generously of their time and energy to support Recycling First. Our volunteers—Bill Davidson, Bill Buckly, Sharon Gardiner, Mike Liebeck, Ashley, George Watt, and Jack—assist in a range of roles, including the smooth running of the administration office, answering calls, welcoming visitors, and supporting customers in the purchase of furniture. At the warehouse, volunteers undertake many essential tasks, including PAT testing and the building and dismantling of furniture.

We are equally grateful to our driver, Tam Harkins, whose responsibilities include the uplift and delivery of furniture, as well as overseeing the Community Payback personnel who support us on a daily basis while working from the van.

During the year, we were saddened to lose one of our long-standing volunteers. Barbara McDonald, known to many as Babs, was a familiar and much-loved presence at the front of house and was an excellent minute taker. She is sadly missed by us all.

I am also extremely grateful to Tom Logan, our Project Manager, whose leadership and dedication continue to be central to the charity's effective operation. Tom is responsible for preparing the accounts and for ensuring that the facts and figures presented to you today are accurate and clearly reported.

My sincere thanks also go to our trustees, volunteers, and staff for their continued commitment and hard work. As with all charities, the preparation of the necessary details requires time and careful coordination. We also continue to work closely with partner organisations that provide referrals for individuals and families in need. Starter packs remain available in conjunction with Fresh Start, supporting those who require practical assistance to rebuild their circumstances.

I hope you enjoy reading the remainder of this report, which highlights the progress and achievements of the team. None of our work would be possible without the dedication of our staff and volunteers, and I would therefore like to offer my heartfelt thanks to them all. The charity is nothing without its people, and I am encouraged by the opportunities that lie ahead as we continue to work together.

Our joint venture with Fresh Start Edinburgh continues to be successful, and Tom will provide further detail in his report. We also express our appreciation to East Lothian Council for its financial and ongoing support.

Once again, I would like to extend a very sincere thank you to all staff and volunteers for their continued support of Recycling First, and to Tom Logan for the diligence and care with which he ensures the charity runs so smoothly.

Finally, I wish to record that this is my last year as Chairman. Due to health problems, I will be standing down at the next AGM, or at such time as a successor is appointed.

Mr D Dickson
Chairman
Recycling First.

PROJECT MANAGERS REPORT - 2025-26

Once again, the challenges faced during 2025–2026 were extraordinary, and so too was the response from every member of the Recycling First team. We recognise and applaud the commitment, professionalism, and resilience shown by our staff, trainees, and volunteers throughout the year. Our team understands that every delivery helps move people out of furniture poverty, and this shared purpose continues to drive them to give their best each day.

At the same time, we recognise that our workforce cannot be expected to sustain this level of pressure indefinitely. We are therefore working hard to become an even better workplace: one where people can do a fair day's work, continue to learn and develop, and play an active role in shaping the future of Recycling First.

During the year, we continued to raise awareness of furniture poverty, educate people about potential solutions, and work towards ensuring that everyone has access to the essential furniture and household goods they need to live securely. Each year, we aim to provide a comprehensive overview of our achievements, while also acknowledging the areas where progress has not gone entirely to plan.

We strive to demonstrate fully the impact of our operations, both intended and unintended, and to set out our targets for increasing that impact in the year ahead. In response to feedback from our trustees, we continue to move towards producing a more succinct report: one that examines our performance clearly and uses that learning to strengthen future decision-making. This renewed insight has informed and improved our approach to decision-making and social value measurement, supporting our continued journey towards ending furniture poverty.

As always, the Recycling First team has shown courage, creativity, passion, and professionalism in delivering a high-quality service. The success of the year is a direct reflection of the dedication, skill, and commitment of the people who make Recycling First what it is.

I must also give special thanks to Tom Harkins, who continues to share his skills and experience with us as our part-time Driver Supervisor. Tom achieves excellent results for Recycling First, and his advice, support, and practical knowledge are invaluable in helping others develop confidence and capability in their administrative duties.

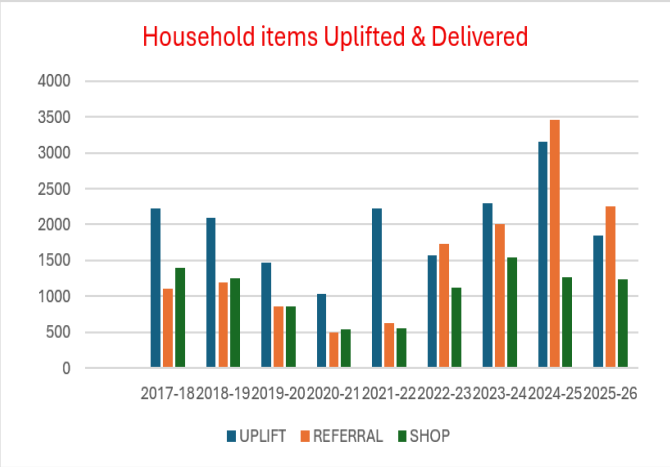
I was also fortunate to receive two unexpected gifts earlier in the year, both of which were deeply appreciated.

At this year's Christmas dinner, I was surprised and honoured to be presented with an engraved Royal Scot Crystal glass marking my 30 years of service to Recycling First from all my staff.

I was also honoured to receive a gift hamper from Tranent Co-op Funeralcare, which runs an annual Christmas Hamper Appeal to recognise and thank local heroes across East Lothian. This thoughtful gesture was greatly appreciated and reflected the strong community spirit that surrounds and supports our work.

Mr T Logan
Project Manager

2025 - 2026 Key numbers and activity



We Supported

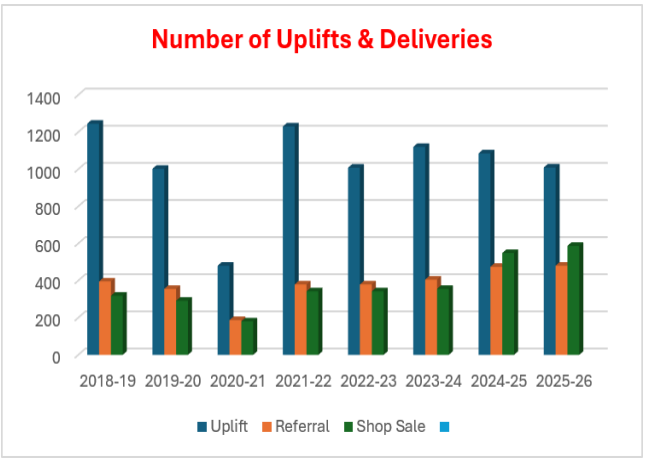
480

households who needed help



Tonnage Donations

76 tonnes of furniture donated. This makes a total of **746 tonnes** donated in the last **10** years



Tonnage Sales

31 tonnes of furniture sold, Just under **343 tonnes** of furniture sold in the last **10** years.

Tonnage Referrals

48 tonnes of furniture handed out on referrals, making a total of over **409 tonnes** reused over **10** years.





Every donation, purchase, collection, volunteer hour and partnership helps

RECYCLING FIRST

deliver practical social and environmental benefit across East Lothian

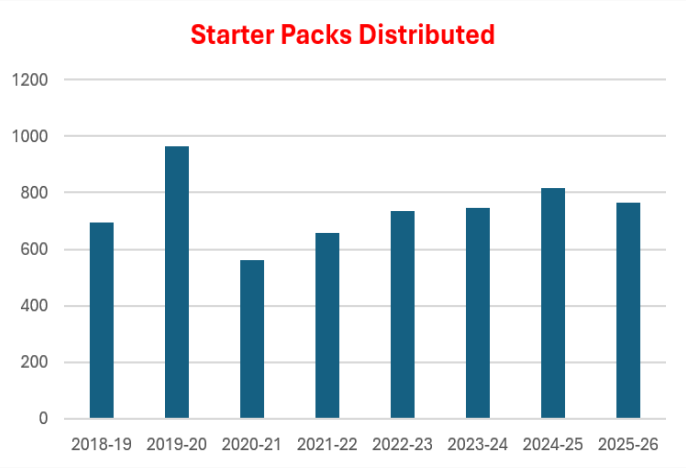
2025- 2026 Key numbers and activity

	2024 - 2025	2025 - 2026
Households Participated	1.185 Households participated	1.089 Households participated
Items Donated	2.851 Items donated	1.883 Items donated
Tonnage Donated	78 Tons items donated	75 Tons items donated
Referrals Honoured	435 Referrals honoured	480 Referrals honoured
Items Re - Used	3.460 Items re-used	3.502 Items re-used
Tonnage Re - Used	83.25 Tons were re-used	79.17 Tons were re-used

STARTER PACKS

Moving into a new tenancy can be both an exciting and stressful time for those moving on from homelessness. After a period of instability where they have often been left with nothing, having to purchase all the essentials needed to make a house a home can be outside their means - this is where Fresh Start - Recycling First can help.





766 Starter Packs were distributed to **180** families.
This makes a total of **5.945** packs supporting **1.328** families over the last **8** years .

Recycling First : A year of Volunteering-Driven Success

Recycling First has had another successful year, thanks to the dedication of our amazing volunteers. The vast majority of our work is carried out by volunteers, and without their commitment we simply could not operate. We run structured training placements for volunteers in the office, warehouse, workshop and on the vans. For many, volunteering has become a crucial stepping stone toward paid employment.



Volunteers come to us from a variety of sources, including training programmes, agencies and local community members who want to make a difference. We are proud to share that the majority of our work placements have transitioned into paid employment after leaving the project, as participants gain valuable skills and confidence. We are also delighted to have retained some placements in paid

NEW VOLUNTEERS



Mick Liebeck

I first visited the warehouse in 2012 as a customer, accompanied by my mother-in-law, who was already aware of the charity.

I met and married my wife, who is from Prestonpans, in 2013. Shortly afterwards, we both moved to Australia to begin a new chapter in our lives. After 12 years in Australia, my wife and I decided to return to Scotland.

We purchased a home in Prestonpans, and I began looking for furniture to decorate our new home. While visiting the warehouse, I read the information about the charity and noticed a sign looking for volunteers. I made enquiries and was given more detail about the charity's basic workings.

I later made further enquiries about volunteering at several charities and at a local golf course. Having retired, I was looking for a place where I could give back to the community, meet new people and hopefully make new acquaintances. Recycling First gave me that opportunity.

Now that I have a better understanding of what the charity is about, I have enjoyed every day since I started volunteering. It has also given me the motivation to continue helping those in our community who are less fortunate than ourselves..

7 Volunteers contributed an estimated

1.098 hours to support Recycling First

What volunteering can offer

People volunteer with RECYCLING FIRST for many different reasons. Some want to give back, some want to gain experience, some want routine and connection, and some simply want to be part of something positive.



Jack Clapperton (Bill Junior)

I decided to become a volunteer at Recycling First Charity because I wanted to do something positive for my community while also gaining new skills and experience.

I liked the idea of supporting a charity that focuses on recycling and giving unwanted items a new purpose, rather than allowing them to go to waste.

Since becoming a volunteer, I have enjoyed being involved in a wide range of tasks. I help sort and organise donations, keep the shop and work areas tidy, assist customers, move items around, and support the team with whatever jobs need to be done. I am always willing to learn something new and take on different responsibilities when needed.

One of the things I enjoy most about volunteering is that every day is different. It has helped me become more confident, responsible, and hardworking, while also showing me the importance of teamwork. I enjoy being useful and knowing that the work I do can make a positive difference.

I became a volunteer because I wanted to help others, learn new things, and gain valuable experience. Volunteering at Recycling First Charity has given me the opportunity to do all of those things. I am happy to get involved wherever I am needed, and I take pride in being someone the team can rely on.

Ashley

I want to volunteer because I believe that positive change starts with individual action. When we step up to serve others, we build bridges, foster empathy, and create a more compassionate world.

Volunteering gives me purpose by shifting focus from myself to something bigger helping others, connecting, and making a real difference. It builds my self-worth through steady, meaningful work, gives me healthy routine and small wins, and reminds me I'm capable and needed. It heals isolation, lets me rebuild trust in myself, and redefines my story beyond my past: I'm not just surviving I'm contributing, growing, and creating value every day.



In Memory of Barbra McDonald

At the start of this year, we were deeply saddened to learn that one of our long-standing volunteers, Barbra McDonald, passed away after a courageous battle with cancer.

Barbra was a valued and dedicated member of the Recycling First team. She generously gave her time twice a week to help support our recycling work, and she brought kindness, care, and reliability to everything she did.

Her commitment made a meaningful difference to our community and to those around her. Barbra will be greatly missed, and our thoughts are with her family and loved ones.

Photos and what People say about Recycling First



Lovely Lot You lot

I chose to volunteer at Recycling First for its stand on helping the local disadvantaged group"

" Always go out with smile on our faces! Great items at reasonable prices, love coming here "

"Very well appreciated, it helps us buy things that we can't afford in the high street stores. Thank you to Recycling First

Thank you so much for helping me. So nice to talk to such kind people.

Well done you all do a super job



Super great service, Driver and team very friendly and polite, will use the charity again.

Great place for a look about! Had some lovely things from here over the years. Great charity





And finally… get involved!

There are many ways to support recycling First:



Spread the word: Follow us, share our work and tell your friends. The more people who know about us, the more impact we can have.



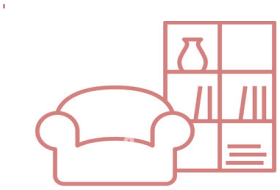
Volunteer with us: Join our growing team and make a difference in your community. Whether it's helping in store, office or joining our van teams, there's a role for you.



Donate your pre-loved furniture: Your unwanted items can help someone furnish their home affordably. We offer free local collection across the East Lothian.



Partner with us: We believe in doing more together. If you're a local organisation, school, or business, we'd love to explore how we can collaborate to support our communities.



Shop with us: Everyone is welcome in our Warehouse! Pop into our Sales Room and browse quality and affordable furniture - and say hello while you're there.

Outlook for 2026-27:

- Recycling First's primary objective is to improve customer service within their warehouse operations, focusing on supplying essential furniture to local authorities and providers of furnished tenancies.
- Recycling First intends to broaden its customer base by identifying and pursuing opportunities in the social housing sector, aiming to support a wider range of individuals and families in need.
- A further goal is to increase sales within Recycling First's warehouse outlet, thereby making more pre-loved surplus goods available to the general public.
- Ongoing efforts will be made to deepen partnerships with referral agencies, and to raise the volume of donations distributed to those facing challenges.
- Together, these initiatives demonstrate Recycling First's dedication to sustainability, community welfare, and ensuring access to essential resources for vulnerable groups.

Our Achievements 2025 - 2026

We collected
1.883
Items from local residents





3.502
Items were selected for Re - Use

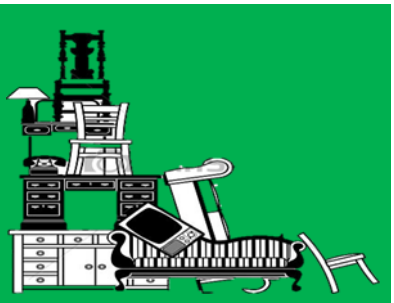
REVOLVE
First Choice for Second Hand



Over
79 Tons
of electrical & Household items Diverted from Landfill



7.430 People used our Charity Warehouse to access affordable Household Items



The Value of Furniture provided to those Referred to us for help was
£60.772



We received
632 requests for help
Benefitting **474**families

1.089 Uplifts were carried out.





We supplied **766**
Starter Packs
to **180** families

RECYCLING FIRST

Recycling First is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation - SCO45286

Registered Address:

Unit 12a Macmerry Ind Est, Macmerry EH33 1RD

Phone: 01875 615797. Email: recyclingfirstel@gmail.com Website: www.recyclingfirstel.org

Chairman

Mr David Dickson

Trustees serving in 2025- 26

William Buckley

William Davidson

Paula Edmond

Pamela McKinlay

Gail Murray

Barbra McDonald

Independent Examiner of Accounts:

Stuart Glass of Glass Accountancy Ltd

Recycling First gratefully acknowledges the support of:

East Lothian Council

REVOLVE First Choice for Second Hand

FreshStart helping people make a home for themselves

CIRCULAR COMMUNITIES SCOTLAND

reuse NETWORK