Evidence collected by Community Resources Network Scotland (CRNS) shows that where a person in need is provided with basic furniture and large white goods (cooker, fridge and washing machine), their chances of sustaining their tenancy increases significantly. It is of vital importance that the furniture and white goods are provided quickly. They do not need to be new, they just need to be clean, functional and of a good quality.

The CRNS Reuse Consortium that was set up in 2016, changed the way that such furniture can be accessed. Where local authorities could previously only purchase new furniture through the Scotland Excel Domestic Furniture and Furnishings Framework, they can now also purchase reuse from the consortium.

This consortium is the first of its kind in the country and has been described as the best thing to happen to social enterprises in decades. It is able to service 24 local authorities across Scotland, offering 34 reuse items including large white goods, beds and sofas.

One of the unintended consequences of the consortium is the bringing together of different departments across local authorities, including Housing, Welfare, Education and Waste to realise potential benefits of procuring reuse instead of new for families in need.

Given the significant budgetary constraints being enforced on local authority departments, the need has never been greater to ensure that all services provide the very best value for money, not just for the local authority but also for their clients. In particular, the provision of services to people suffering from financial hardship should be tailored in such a way that not only does the client receive a beneficial service but they also receive a potential means to better themselves and their situation and in essence to enable them to avoid having to make use of the service again. If a client is introduced to the concept of reuse furniture via their SWF award, they are considerably more likely to consider reuse as an affordable and best option in the future. Providing only new goods to people on low incomes, creates unrealistic expectations and can lead to continuing cycles of debt and poverty as high street weekly payment stores or pay day lenders are accessed.

In just over 14 weeks, the CRNS Reuse Consortium has already provided 830 items to families in need, diverting 43,284 kgs from landfill and saving 93 kgs of CO2 emissions. These savings have been made by just one local authority, which has also saved considerable amounts of money, potentially extending its SWF CCG budget significantly further.
By spending less on individual SWF awards, local authorities have the option to target these savings for use in other key areas, potentially to increase awards or perhaps to support even more families who are facing some form of financial hardship.