

Cost savings and waste reduction through sustainable procurement: Hywel Dda University Health Board case study



Summary

In 2018, Hywel Dda University Health Board began exploring ways to save money and resources, with an emphasis on recognising when equipment could be re-used rather than replaced. As a result, the health board has delivered financial savings of £230,000. This equates to 41 tonnes of waste diverted and a reduction of 161 tonnes of CO₂e.

All of this was achieved through use of the Warp It platform - an online tool which serves as a clearing house of assets available for re-use within, and across, organisations.

This case study highlights what can be achieved when [sustainable procurement hierarchy](#) principles are implemented within an organisation. The procurement hierarchy is designed to exemplify best practice in sustainable procurement with re-use and re-thinking the need to buy among the most preferred options. If implemented successfully, this approach can lead to financial and environmental benefits as part of a circular economy approach.

The Welsh Government's [Beyond Recycling Strategy](#) aims to make the circular economy a reality in Wales. A headline action in this strategy is for the public sector in Wales to prioritise the purchase of goods and products made from remanufactured, refurbished, and recycled materials, or that come from low carbon and sustainable materials like wood. NHS Wales has set out an ambitious [Decarbonisation Strategic Delivery Plan](#) to ensure the NHS advances their contributions to a net zero Welsh Public Sector. Both strategies make clear that public procurement is an important lever to achieve a low-carbon circular economy. Adopting tools such as Warp It can help public sector organisations to realise these goals.

Key Facts

- Helping staff to 're-think the need' can deliver significant cost/resource efficiency savings, with wider environmental and community benefits.
- Hywel Dda UHB used Warp It software to enable the repurposing and re-use of surplus equipment and assets across the estate.
- This approach delivers annual cost savings equivalent to £126,000, avoids over 25 tonnes of waste sent to landfill and saves 96 tonnes CO₂e.
- The key to achieving greater savings lies in driving real culture change across the organisation and securing buy-in from staff.

About Hywel Dda

Hywel Dda UHB provides healthcare services to a total population of around 384,000 throughout Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, and Pembrokeshire, employing over 10,000 staff. It provides services including Acute, Primary, Community, Mental Health and Learning Disability services via General and Community Hospitals, Health Centres, GPs, Dentists, Pharmacists, and Optometrists.

In 2018, the Health Board began exploring ways to save money and resources, with an emphasis on recognising when equipment could be re-used rather than replaced. Hywel Dda was determined to get the maximum value out of resources and avoid the unnecessary disposal of re-usable equipment and assets. The Warp It platform helped them reach these goals.

How Warp It Works

The Warp It platform is an online tool created to help increase the visibility of assets available for re-use within and across organisations. By enabling users to upload information about surplus assets and search the system to see if already-owned items can meet their needs, Warp It helps organisations keep their equipment and supplies circulating, reducing procurement spend and avoiding unnecessary waste.

Registered users can input:

- The type and amount of assets available
- A description of its condition (e.g. new, nearly new)
- The original equipment list price
- Availability - equipment can be **issued with an 'available until' date**

Warp It users can access dashboards which provide an overview of the number and type of transactions being delivered across the organisation, and in addition, the economic, carbon and waste savings achieved. Separate permissions can be allocated to different levels of access - for example, access rights can be granted to view or claim unwanted equipment within, or across, organisations.

Users can also decide if/when items can be opened-up to be claimed by other parties (e.g. charities). When exchanging equipment with third parties, messages provide a formal confirmation of the exchange. These can be customised to ensure trading across organisations is undertaken in a documented and transparent manner, creating a traceable record of where items end up. This collaboration with the third sector delivers added community benefit and can support the local economy through the creation of new jobs in repair and refurbishment. This is especially important as Wales looks to embark on a green recovery and strengthen local economies.

Warp It also equates internal actions to quantifiable savings, which can strengthen the internal business case to avoid purchasing new items unnecessarily. By tracking the cost and carbon savings associated with the re-use of existing assets, users can see the benefits of sustainable procurement practices first-hand.

How Warp It Helped

Had Hywel Dda continued with 'business as usual', procuring new equipment would have cost them both financially and environmentally. By implementing Warp It the health board have seen a range of benefits and brought their procurement practices closer in alignment with the vision for public procurement laid out in Beyond Recycling and the Wales Procurement Policy Statement.

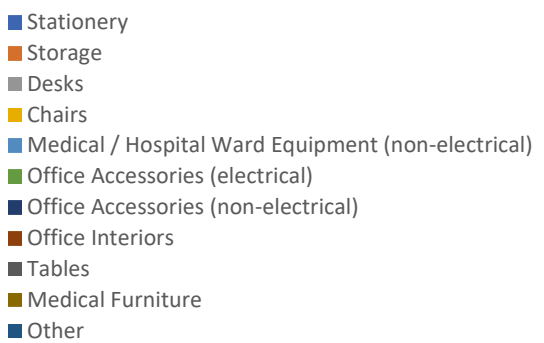
These benefits include:

- The Health Board has achieved approximately £230,000 of savings through avoiding new purchases.
- This represents 161 tonnes CO2e and 41 tonnes of waste diverted from landfill.
- Nearly £70,000 worth of unwanted equipment has been successfully repurposed and donated to local charities.
- By adopting Warp It early, Hywel Dda is well-positioned to continue to align their procurement practices with the goals set out in Beyond Recycling and the NHS Wales Strategic Decarbonisation Plan.
- 10% of Hywel Dda UHB staff - approximately 1,000 people - are now registered users of the Warp It tool,

demonstrating that even modest uptake of the tool can result in high-impact benefits.

- Most assets posted as being available are claimed within 10 days, freeing up valuable storage space and minimising wait times for the recipient of the items.
- The most common categories of equipment exchanged on Warp It by quantity include stationery, storage, desks, chairs, and non-electrical medical equipment, representing low risk and frequently used and procured items (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Hywel Dda UHB most commonly re-used equipment categories



Lessons Learned

Changing procurement policy and processes to align with the sustainable procurement hierarchy is an effective method to ensure that the need to buy new is only considered once other options have been explored. Hywel Dda UHB is currently exploring an initiative whereby purchasers must review availability of equipment via Warp It before making any purchasing **decisions. ‘Sustainability Champions’ can play a vital role in changing organisational culture, challenging ‘business as usual’ practices and re-evaluating the decision-making process to adopt a more sustainable approach to purchasing.**

This circular economy approach is about retaining value in resources and products for longer, primarily by extending the life of an item. Sustainable procurement will be essential for public sector bodies looking to maximise their contributions in creating a circular economy, an essential part of achieving a low-carbon Wales. By utilising the sustainable procurement hierarchy, public sector organisations will be aligning their procurement practices with the Well-being of Future Generations Act goals, and headline actions in Beyond Recycling. These actions include supporting organisations in reducing their carbon footprint and becoming more resource efficient, prioritising re-used items for public purchases, and taking full responsibility for the waste created.

Moving to more circular approaches to procurement and following the [sustainable procurement hierarchy](#) (Figure 2) can provide:

- Reduced environmental impact - less resource consumption, waste, and climate impact.
- Social benefits - creation of new, skilled jobs supporting a green recovery (e.g., in repair and refurbishment) and increased inclusivity, often benefiting SMEs and the social sector.
- Financial benefits - including reduced purchase, wait time, and disposal costs.
- Strategic benefits - from reduced risk to supporting the delivery of wider policy objectives.

Figure 2: Sustainable Procurement Hierarchy

