Ards & North Down Borough Council

Winter Coat Project 2025/26

Northern Ireland **Resources Network**

Circular Councils
The Winter Coat Project

Introduction

OurRecycling Teamhasliaisedwith twolocal charities, Orchardville and ROC Northern Ireland, to deliver a winter coat reuse programme to the community.

Orchardville

Orchardville is a registered charity and social enterprise with 40+ years' experience dedicated to empowering individuals with learning disabilities or autism, to achieve their full potential. The charity believes that with the right support, any individual with a learning disability or autism can reach their full potential and achieve their employment aspirations.
Providing services in the Belfast, South Eastern and Western Health & Social Care Trust areas, Orchardville supports people with learning disability and/or autism aged 16-65 through a range of individualised services and programmes.

ROC Northern Ireland

Redeeming Our Communities (ROC) launched in Northern Ireland in May 2012. ROC's aim is 'empowering people of goodwill to work together for safer, stronger, kinder communities across Northern Ireland'. The charity seeks to do this through working in partnership, responding to need, and empowering and equipping.

ROC's Northern Ireland office is based in The Vine Centre in North Belfast. There are 10 multi-agency ROC Action Groups. These Action Groups were formed following ROC Conversations enabling the talk to move into action. Each group is locally led with representatives from churches, community and voluntary sector groups, schools and statutory agencies as well as residents, who are passionate about community transformation through partnership working.
Social enterprises form a key part of ROC's provision, allowing participants to experience work in a real business environment with on-site support from vocational mentors.





Background

In Northern Ireland, a warm coat is essential, yet the cost can be a significant burden on families already impacted by the ongoing cost of living crisis. Christians Against Poverty NI (CAPNI) noted in their 2022 'On the Edge' client report, that '65% of their clients could not afford weather-appropriate clothing for themselves or their family.' In response, the ROC Winter Coat Project was initiated, with 14 groups across Northern Ireland distributing over 3,000 coats, along with new hats, scarves, and gloves. The initiative continued into 2023, with nine groups handing out an additional 2,000 coats in local communities.







Presentation of Findings

Our Winter Coat Project 2025/26 was a great success! Thanks to the generosity and support of our local community, approximately 300 coats found new homes, ensuring that more people stay warm over the winter months.

Analysis

It is important to note that this is a project that harnesses the power of the community and creates positive community spirit – engaging businesses, community groups, churches and schools where possible.
This is a great opportunity for the Council to add another dimension to its sustainable waste resource management programme, promoting the reuse of clothing (winter coats) in a way that also contributes significantly to social need in our Borough.

Presentation of Findings

We found using public facing Leisure centres as drop off locations increased the opportunity for donations due to the easy access and later opening times.
The Leisure Centres also had sufficient space to utilise the newly purchased collection containers.
Pop up shop locations were carefully selected ensuring close proximity to public transport depots.
Leftover coats were distributed to the mayors chosen charity St Vincent de Paul and local charity The Warehouse, Newtownards.
This action fosters a circular, sustainable community by keeping high-quality garments in local circulation, directly benefiting residents.