

EPA Research Programme 2014-2020

Final Report Template for Project Based Awards¹ and Green Enterprise Projects

Reuse Quality Mark Pilot Project

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1.0 SUMMARY

The QMark project aim was to establish the potential value of a reuse quality mark for Ireland / Northern Ireland in strengthening consumer confidence in reused goods. It involved establishing a baseline demand, developing quality mark standard criteria, engaging pilot participants in a certification process, promoting the standard and measuring the impact of the standard on consumers.

Over the course of the project, the quality standard "ReMark" was successfully developed. Eleven pilot participants were engaged in the certification process of which three became accredited. The branding and benefits of a quality standard were promoted in parallel and consumer sentiment towards reuse and the quality standard was measured before and after the pilot at participating stores. This showed that the ReMark accreditation process had a positive impact on consumer attitude to the stores, particularly in relation to staff and cleanliness, which has ramifications on the overall experience.

Feedback from accredited facilities themselves was also positive and showed that accreditation helped to raise operational and governance standards through, for example, improving the efficiency of collections, traceability, store appearance and customer service.

CRNI is indebted to Zero Waste Scotland for sharing in great detail the materials and insights from their Revolve quality standard programme, which were instrumental in developing the ReMark standard. We would also like to sincerely thank the project steering committee, which fed into the development and updating of the standard and formally approved any accreditations.

¹ Desk Studies, Medium Scale Project, Large Scale Project, Capability Development

2.0 BACKGROUND

Reuse is at the heart of the European Circular Economy² package. It is represented in the top two tiers of the waste hierarchy, including waste prevention and preparation for reuse.

Research has shown that in Europe, approximately 40% of all new material streams placed on the market leave the economy as waste in the same year³. Reuse aims to retain these materials as products within the economy for longer, preventing the product from becoming waste as well as reducing demand for new products and associated environmental impacts.

It is challenging to obtain a complete picture of the current amount of reuse taking place in Ireland. Data from CRNI members suggests that at least 24kt was reused in 2015 through member's activities. In addition, REPAK has confirmed that approximately 17kt of pallets were reused within industry and commerce. However, this does not account for many reuse channels such as online exchanges other than FreeTrade / SMILE (e.g. Facebook / Adverts / Gumtree), casual reuse between family members & friends or retail outlets not part of the Irish Charity Shops Association (e.g. vintage / other charity shops / consignment shops).

By comparison, EPA data shows that in 2013, 2,289kt materials went to landfill, energy recovery or recycling in Ireland⁴. This implies that the CRNI estimate for reuse (plus REPAK pallet reuse) represents roughly 1.8% of the material flow leaving households and businesses for onward management⁵. By contrast, the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) estimated that 30% of all the clothing bought in the UK in 2012 ended up in landfill⁶ and that UK homes have £1 billion worth of unused equipment. Figures are not available for Ireland, but levels of wasteful consumption can be assumed to be on a par.

There clearly is a considerable potential for further reuse to take place.

In order to stimulate the reuse economy, both supply and demand for reused goods must be developed. To promote reuse at a European level, the Circular Economy package takes a holistic view of materials management in the economy, with much focus on better design for repair and reuse (helping supply). Irish waste policy supports reuse through national policy⁷ and Regional Waste Plans which set out concrete actions for reuse including better access to materials at Civic Amenity Sites, and embedding reuse into procurement policy for local, regional and national authorities.

While the inclusion of reuse criteria in government procurement will provide a boost to demand, there remains a gap in terms of driving the demand for reuse with the general consumer.

Recent Irish research indicates that a key barrier to reuse in Ireland is public perceptions.

The (draft) EPA research report *Waste Resource Exchange Project*⁸ and (draft) EPA research report *Developing a Reuse Framework for Ireland*⁹ both flagged quality as an issue for reuse, based on interviews with stakeholders from the reuse sector. These can be described as follows:

- Research¹⁰ carried out to determine attitudes of Europeans to resource efficiency found that 68% of Irish survey respondents were willing to buy at least one of a list of second hand products. Of the other 32%

² European Commission, *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Closing the loop – An EU action plan for the Circular Economy*, 2015, [REF COM(2015) 614 final]

³ European Commission, *Analysis of the evolution of waste reduction and the scope of waste prevention*, 2010, available at http://ec.europa.eu/environment/waste/prevention/pdf/report_waste.pdf

⁴ EPA, *Bulletin 3: Residual waste treatment trends 2009 to 2013*, 2014, available at <http://www.epa.ie>

⁵ Noting the different years in this comparison

⁶ WRAP, *Valuing our Clothes: the true cost of how we design, use and dispose of clothing in the UK*, 2012, available at <http://www.wrap.org.uk/category/materials-and-products/clothing>

⁷ DoECLG, "A Resource Opportunity - Waste Management Policy in Ireland", 2012

⁸ RPS, *Waste Resource Exchange Good Practice Guide*, for EPA Research Programme 2014 – 2020, Date of Publication TBA

⁹ McLoughlin, J. and Miller, S., *Developing a Reuse Framework for Ireland*, Ref: 2014-RE-DS-4, Date of Publication TBA

that were not willing, 79% cited concern about usability and quality, 75% cited health and safety concerns, 53% were concerned about a less appealing look of the product and 11% were concerned about what others may think;

- Consumerism and marketing have created a mind-set whereby brand new, clean, fresh items are deemed preferable and of better quality;
- People have concerns with regard to trust and risks involved in passing on/receiving items
- There is a limited public awareness (among manufacturers, designers and consumers)¹¹ of ‘what reuse is’ and related benefits¹²

The positive response level (68%) of those willing to buy second hand products is encouraging. It indicates that a captive audience exists for second hand products. If this audience can be communicated with effectively as to the advantages of second hand products, it could have an important market impact. Equally, the scale of the misconceived perceptions among those with doubts about second hand products indicates that scope exists to turn these numbers around.

Reuse certifications schemes are used throughout Europe to provide consumers with confidence in the products they buy from reuse organisations and thereby help to overcome the barriers outlined above. The development of a reuse certification system and quality mark was recommended in the Irish RX3 Bulky Waste Reuse study for this purpose¹³.

A reuse certification scheme involves accreditation of a reuse organisation to an accepted operational standard. A quality mark is a recognisable logo that identifies a product or organisation as having met the requirements of such a certification scheme. For the purposes of this submission, the combination of a certification scheme and logo will be referred to as a “quality mark”.

A quality mark can:

- Help to improve the overall standard of service and customer experience with reuse organisations by encouraging them to sign up to quality protocols
- Demonstrate to the public the commitment to quality from the reuse sector
- Highlight the social and environmental benefits of the goods and thereby drive an interest in them¹⁴.

Evidence suggests that quality marks can have a positive impact on the sales of reused products. For example, preliminary evidence from Revolve Reuse Quality Standard in Scotland suggests that, in a sample of 10 stores that had a new quality mark, revenue increased by just under £45,000 since 2011¹⁵.

There are an increasing number of quality marks being established throughout Europe for reused goods. For example, quality marks existing in Belgium (Kringwinkel), England (FRN’s Approved Reuse Centres), and Scotland (Revolve). Quality marks vary in purpose from providing confidence to upstream donors (e.g. where large corporates operate take back schemes that require outlets meet a certain standard) to providing confidence to downstream consumers (e.g. to overcome public perception per above).

¹⁰ European Commission, *Attitudes of Europeans towards resource efficiency - Analytical report*, 2011, available at http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_316_en.pdf

¹¹ RSA, 2015. *Rearranging the Furniture: An RSA Great Recovery Design Residency in collaboration with SUEZ Recycling and Recovery UK*. London: RSA

¹² London CRN, no date. Third Sector Reuse Capacity in London.

¹³ Fehily Timoney, All Island Bulky Waste Reuse Best Practice Management Feasibility Study, 2013, available at <http://www.rx3.ie/>

¹⁴ Dururu, J., Anderson, C., Bates, M., Montasser, W. and Tudor, T. (2015) Enhancing engagement with community sector organisations working in sustainable waste management: a case study. *Waste Management & Research*, 33(3), 284-290.

¹⁵ Ellen McArthur Foundation, Case study: Scotland: Increasing customer confidence in reused products, available at <https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/>

3.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Quality marks or standards are used throughout Europe to provide consumers with confidence to buy from reuse organisations and thereby help to overcome negative perceptions that consumers have around second life products. This project aimed to test the effect of a quality mark on consumer perceptions in Ireland / Northern Ireland by developing and piloting a quality mark with engagement and feedback from consumers and industry.

While the project built on existing quality marks, the approach was innovative in that it involved:

- A strong focus at all stages during development on ensuring the mark was effective at addressing customer perceptions around reuse and could be used as a practical marketing tool to drive engagement with reused organisations
- A public information campaign to inform the development of the mark and obtain feedback on the effect of a quality mark before and after the pilot project.

This was designed to ensure that the quality mark was both effective and valuable to reuse organisations in achieving the long term objective of increasing demand for reused goods and the value of the goods sold.

The benefits of a thriving reuse sector can be measured in terms of environmental (greenhouse gas emissions, energy demand and resource depletion), social (jobs and training provided) and economic (number of jobs and cost impacts) indicators¹⁶. The environmental benefits associated with reuse are twofold since it reduces demand for new goods and reduces the amount of products going for recycling, recovery or disposal. The benefits of reduced demand are particularly significant, as most product-related environmental impacts occur during extraction and manufacturing¹⁷.

4.0 PROJECT MANAGEMENT

4.1 PROJECT MANAGER

CRNI engaged a project manager for this research, Maureen O'Donnell, who worked on the project from April 2017 to April 2018. The project was on track up until this point, but Maureen unfortunately had to leave CRNI on the 14th April due to personal circumstances.

This was highly disruptive to the timelines for the project. As only two months remained in the staff budget, it was necessary to find an alternative closure plan that did not involve direct employment due to the restricted contract period. This led to a timeline (but not budget) extension initially to December 2018, and then to the end of February 2019, to facilitate a minimum number of accreditation audits and post-accreditation events.

In August, CRNI was delighted to engage Clean Technology Centre (CTC) as a third party organisation to assist in engaging with and supporting pilot members, conducting consumer surveys and undertaking ReMark standard audits. Their uptake of the project and understanding of the stage of each pilot member was facilitated by the comprehensive handover document prepared by Maureen.

¹⁶ WRAP, Final report *A methodology for quantifying the environmental and economic impacts of reuse*, 2011, available at <http://www.wrap.org.uk>

¹⁷ Arcadis (commissioned by European Commission DG Environment), *Final report Analysis of the evolution of waste reduction and the scope of waste prevention*, Framework contract ENV.G.4/FRA/2008/0112, 2010

4.2 STEERING COMMITTEE

One of the foundational aspects of the project (quality mark accreditation) was overseen by the ReMark steering committee which was created in August 2017. Members include representatives from the EPA (initially Kieron Phillips then Ann Marie Donlon), the Department of Communications, Climate Action, and Environment (Jean Clarke), the Regional Waste Authorities (Pauline McDonogh), the CRNI Board (Linda Ward), and WRAP NI (Ian Garner) though the latter dropped out halfway through the project due to reprioritisation within their organisation. A behavioural change expert (Dr. Simon O’Rafferty) was recruited in October 2017 to support the project from this aspect. The steering committee TOR are included in Annex A.

In total the committee met four times in August 2017, January 2018, October 2018 and December 2018 to agree on the standard criteria and recommendations for accreditation. Recommendations in relation to the standard and audit procedure are included in Section 5.2 below.

4.3 SUBCONTRACTORS

It was originally envisaged to engage a marketing/communications company to plan and assist branding and the delivery of the marketing campaign to disseminate information to the wider public effectively. A PR company was engaged to provide the logo and branding collateral, but the process of developing the logo was inefficient, time consuming and costly. Following this experience, the project manager and CRNI Executive assessed the timing and requirement for a marketing campaign. It was decided the most effective communications would take place following the first accreditations, as there was a lack of brand awareness and the journey would not interest the target audience. Therefore, a marketing company was not engaged and communications activities were brought in-house.

As noted above, CTC were brought in as contractors when the project manager unavoidably left. This measure was sanctioned by the EPA as necessary to close out the project. CTC undertook many of the functions of the project manager in engaging with pilot members, conducting surveys and carrying out audits.

5.0 PROJECT METHODOLOGY

The project was executed in four stages:

Stage 1: Establish baseline demand through benchmarking, and consumer and member research.

Stage 2: Engage with CRNI stakeholders to draft the quality mark certification criteria.

Stage 3: Develop the quality mark branding and execute a pilot programme to trial the certification process. Along with the pilot, run a promotional campaign to contextualise the advantages of the quality mark prior to publication of the pilot outcomes.

Stage 4: Revise the certification criteria and other foundational ReMark elements based on participant feedback and post-pilot customer surveys.

5.1 ESTABLISHING BASELINE DEMAND

A consumer research brief was sent to relevant organisations and a number of quotes, with different approaches, were received in response. Ireland Thinks was engaged on the basis of their experiment description which best met the objectives of this research.

Their proposal was to conduct a broad consumer survey as well as in-store surveys with pilot members before and after the quality mark accreditation process. They began by conducting broad consumer research in

September 2017 via a telephone poll, surveying 1149 individuals across Ireland. Questions asked resembled a similar poll conducted at the EU level in 2011.

The results of this survey are outlined below:

- Only 23% of the population surveyed had purchased a reused good (clothing & accessories, furniture & household items, appliances, and electronics) in the last six months.
- For both respondents who had purchased a reused good and respondents who had not, quality was the most frequently cited issue with reused goods as shown in Figure 1.0 below.

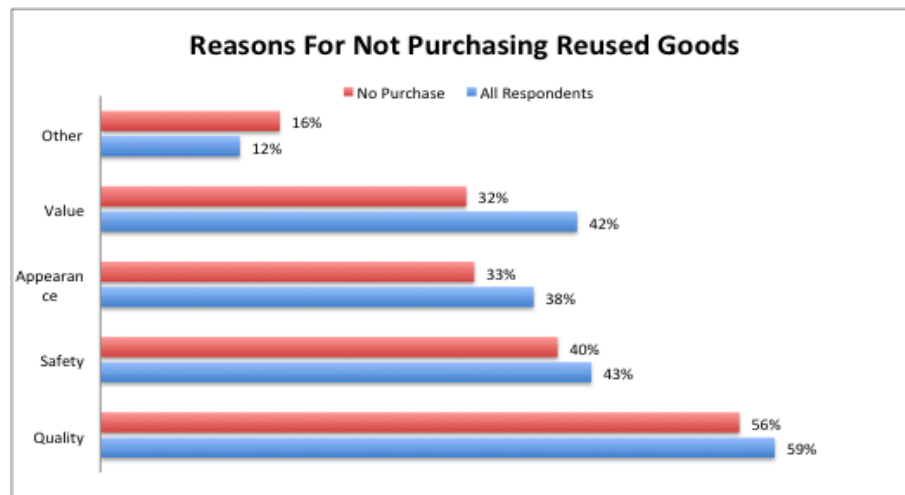


Figure 1.0: Results from consumer survey showing reasons for not purchasing reused goods

- The vast majority of Irish consumers purchase reused goods in charity shops, with on-line shopping second. In terms of online purchasing, according to a [2017 PWC survey](#) 25% of Irish consumers regularly shop online. The percentage of Irish consumers who purchase reused goods online is slightly higher (29%).
- Clothing is the most frequently purchased reused goods item, with furniture, electronics and appliances taking a smaller market share.
- Women make up the majority of reused goods shoppers overall (57% F, 43% M), but shopping behaviour follows typical gender patterns when broken down by the type of goods purchased.
- The age demographic for purchasing reused goods is broader than expected with just 18% of reused goods purchased by those over 45 years of age.
- Purchase behaviour by economic status (as measured by home ownership) shows the majority of purchasers living in rented council accommodation with private rental market purchasers following closely behind.
- The majority of purchasers of reused goods are unemployed; however, those at work and students are significant groups as well.

It is noted that these results not only informed this project in relation to consumer sentiment towards reuse, but also provided many other valuable consumer insights for the second hand retail sector.

Additional background research found that, according to a 2011 EU consumer attitudes reuse survey¹⁸ conducted by Gallup, Irish consumers are particularly sensitive to the quality and health and safety aspects of reused goods. That sensitivity is a function of many factors including demographics (age, gender, etc.) and individual influences and experiences.

The Revolve standard managers are engaged in a long-term strategy to change Scottish consumer perceptions of reuse¹⁹. To that end they have anecdotal evidence from customer satisfaction surveys, and shop reports of increased foot traffic and sales. Analysis of broader changes to consumer sentiment regarding reuse as a result of the introduction of the Revolve standard (and subsequent 2017 public information campaign) is an on-going effort.

These findings indicate that a quality mark can play a role in changing consumer experience in Ireland, but to what degree that change reduces barriers to purchasing reused goods is difficult to anticipate. They were presented to pilot participants and compiled in a press release, though this did not garner any coverage.

5.2 DRAFTING THE QUALITY MARK CERTIFICATION CRITERIA

The project's investigative phase included desk-based consumer research and benchmarking of existing standards in Ireland, the UK, and across the EU. The initial analysis then focussed on Origin Green (Irish context and high number of members certified in a relatively short period of time), Revolve (which has successfully grown over time and demonstrated consumer impact) and BKN's standard (targeted specifically at increasing the quality of reuse supply). In addition to these standards, the ICSA (Irish Charities Shop Association) Code of Conduct was reviewed. This code of conduct contains many of the same elements of the benchmarked standards, but doesn't contain auditable procedures.

The following insight was gained from the research work:

- Implementing a reuse quality standard requires significant resource commitment and culture change from the participating organisations. The initial development of all benchmarked standards took 2+ years (developing and piloting the standard)²⁰. Organisational accreditation for mature standards average from 6 months to a year. Like most change efforts, the time it takes to complete the accreditation process tends to be a function of the organisation itself (resources and commitment) and then the support/encouragement provided by the accreditation body. The complexity of the process seems to be less of a factor (less comprehensive standards like BKN and Origin Green can take as long as Revolve to implement).
- There are standards that address back of house processes (e. g. BKN) and standards that address both processes and front of house experience (e. g. Revolve). Revolve requires both because back of house processes are critical to transforming the organisation's internal functions³. This provides the building blocks for the front of house transformation, which is entirely focussed on improving the customer's experience and shifting their perception of second-hand retail. Both components are essential in the overall organisational transformation. In contrast, BKN addresses back of house processes because their standard is intended to improve relationships with suppliers (the local waste authorities in the Netherlands) who prioritise process rigour and professionalism⁴. It is a less transformational experience and more focussed on process improvements and brand differentiation.

¹⁸ European Commission, *Attitudes of Europeans towards resource efficiency*, Flash EB No 316. March 2011

¹⁹ Benchmarking conversation with Samantha Moir (Revolve Project Manager) and staff, Zero Waste Scotland. May 4-5, 2017.

²⁰ Benchmarking conversations with Zero Waste Scotland (May 4-5), Sharon Colgan, Love Irish Food and Origin Green Campaign Manager, Bord Bia (April 25, 2017), Ronald van den Heerik, BKN Project Manager, BKN Netherlands (April 26, 2017).

- During pre and post benchmarking conversations with key stakeholders, the question of whether a quality mark should be added at the product level or the organisational level was repeatedly raised. There are no known product-level quality standards for reuse⁴. All of the benchmarked standards were organisational level standards. This stemmed primarily from an intention to not confuse a standard with a warranty. This is a critical point from the perspective of quality – all organisational level standards (reuse and non-reuse) purposely avoid being characterised as a product-level warranty⁴. This is meant to indemnify both the organisation and the quality mark against reputational damage. That said, organisations that complete the accreditation process are committing to a high standard that includes stringent goods processing procedures which, when implemented, should lead to higher quality finished goods for sale.

From the investigative phase and from wider stakeholder conversations, the recommendation was made to develop a unique standard with the high level aims of the ICSA code of conduct and the auditable detail provided by Scotland's Revolve standard.

The Project Manager visited Zero Waste Scotland, which generously provided a wealth of material on which to base the Irish standard. This led to the development of the quality standard "ReMark" which includes a broad range of back end and consumer facing assessment criteria. The criteria are largely reflective of the Revolve standard in Scotland but also include some additional and more stringent criteria.

Final assessment criteria (Annex B) and an auditing procedure (Annex C) were also established to facilitate the accreditation process. The standard, assessment criteria and auditing procedure were continually revised throughout the pilot programme. This included, for example:

- Strengthening the standard in the areas of Health and Safety and in Waste management. This came about through contributions by Samantha Moir of Zero Waste Scotland (Revolve) who participated in two pre-assessments for the Dublin Simon shops. Sam audited the shops against the Revolve standard, the results of which were compared with the ReMark standard. This highlighted the varying legal standards between the UK and Ireland. Sam also noted some of the standard areas developed for Ireland (Collections and Environmental) as potentially interesting for inclusion in the Revolve standard.
- Refinement of criteria to align with legislation e.g. the introduction of new GDPR requirements
- Adaptation of assessment criteria to reflect the diversity of enterprises participating in the project. For example, on recommendation of the steering committee, a new custom projects and services section for service providers was included.
- Adjustment to the auditing procedure to reflect the accreditation validity period. During the initial accreditation meeting, the question arose about the validity period of the standard. It was agreed by the steering committee that accreditation should be valid for a three year period subject to annual inspections which may include e.g. mystery shopping, customer surveys, review of complaints (if any), operational changes and inclusion of any new statutory requirements. On the three year review, potential changes to criteria should be assessed (e.g. due to statutory or other updates) and the candidate re-evaluated against updated criteria.
- It was also recommended by the steering committee that in any potential future programme, it would be easier for candidates if templates of best practice for the back end processes / procedures involved in ReMark could be developed.

Overall this process has led to the development of a standard that can address a wider range of business models than originally anticipated and that is more stringent than the standard upon which it is based.

5.3 EXECUTING THE PILOT PROGRAMME

5.3.A ENGAGEMENT OF PILOT MEMBERS

All pilot members for this programme were selected from CRNI membership across Ireland and Northern Ireland to expedite the project. A screening process was conducted to identify those members who may be most suited to the initial criteria, which primarily targeted retail spaces. Members were encouraged to participate through presentations to a CRNI member's meeting (May 2017) and the Irish Charity Shops Association meeting (February 2018).

All organisations that volunteered were included in the pilot. The diversity of those volunteers was higher than anticipated and included:

- Second hand retailers including ICSA members Dublin Simon Community, NCBI (Inchicore), Women's Aid (Dublin), COPE Galway and Clarehaven Horizons, as well as furniture upcyclers Duhallow Revamp, Kingdom Furniture Revamp and Back2New
- The membership-based organisation ReCreate
- A service provider, The Upcycling Project
- A mattress recycler, Boomerang Enterprises

It is noted that there were no Northern Ireland participants in the pilot, although several organisations expressed an interest in engaging with a future standard.

Eleven organisations (twelve shops) volunteered initially from the CRNI member base to participate in the pilot project. Two organisations (two shops) dropped from the pilot due to resource constraints and closures. While the original aim was to engage at least five member organisations in the pilot programme, the inclusion of more than what was required was intentional – as a risk reduction measure to ensure the five needed for research purposes successfully complete the programme.

Throughout the project, efforts were made to engage with these participants, measure their progress and provide them with resources and training to complete the accreditation process. This included:

- Pre-assessment surveys (see below)
- Pilot member's meeting in January 2018
- Regular calls and visits
- Retail merchandising training on a group and individual basis (see below)

Pilot participants were also provided with high quality and comprehensive packs including

- Outline of the ReMark project
- Copy of the standard and final assessment template
- Individually tailored process maps to identify key stages of business processes where improvements can be made
- Ensuring goods are safe and fit for purpose
- High risk item safety check
- Policy, processes and procedures

The contents of this binder are contained in Annex B.

Although a “cohort mentoring approach” was originally envisaged, where each has the opportunity to contribute their organisational strengths and best practices to benefit other members of the pilot group, this did not eventuate due to the loss of the project manager. However, it would be an approach worth encouraging in any future iterations of this programme, as evident from some pilot member feedback in relation to peer influence.

Pilot members were also invited to complete surveys in October 2017, January 2018, November 2018 and February 2019 to gauge their engagement in and enthusiasm for the programme. Results from the January 2018 attitude survey of pilot participants, while not specific on their impact on operational standards, showed that participants had increased likelihood of recommending the programme to others, were more motivated to complete the pilot programme and saw it as more relevant to their organisations since the first survey in September 2017.

The survey in November 2018 saw enthusiasm for the programme drop, as anticipated following the loss of the project manager and subsequent delays to the project. One pilot participant clearly linked this delay to a loss of momentum for their organisation’s gap closure and suggested the project became disjointed. Another respondent suggested more national-level promotion of the standard was required.

Only one response was received to the February 2019 survey, which was positive and indicated the respondent was very motivated to continue with the gap closure (despite conclusion of the pilot programme). They suggested to improve the programme by developing templates that could be shared of relevant policies & procedures to meet the standard criteria rather than members working in isolation to each other. This was also suggested by the steering committee and noted in Section 5.2 above.

5.3.B PRE-ASSESSMENT & GAP ANALYSIS

The pilot participants were taken through a comprehensive pre-assessment process. The project manager then provided an analysis of gap closure activities required and tracked progress using two tools: pilot participant progress chart and the pilot pre-assessment summary.

These are shown in Figures 2.0, 3.0 and 4.0 below:

Org Name	Initial Interview	Pre-Assessment	Pre-Assessment Agreed	Consumer Research Complete	Gap Closure Plan	Retail/Customer Consulting	R/C Gap Closure	Post Assessment & Accred Review	Award Date
Duhallo Revamp									
Kingdom Revamp									
Boomerang									
Back2New									
Recreate									
COPE Galway			16/8/17 Voluntarily dropped						
Simon Thomas St/Chapelizod									
Simon Camden St									
NCBI Inchicore									
Upcycling Project									
Women's Aid						Shop closed			
Clare Haven Horizons									

Figure 2.0: Pilot participant progress chart as at December 2018

	Simon	Duhallow	Kingdom	Back2New	Boomerang	NCBI	Clare Haven	Upcycling	ReCreate	Women's Aid
Collections	Partial	Partial	Partial	Yes	Partial	N/A	Incomplete	No	Partial	No
Preparing Items	No	Partial	Partial	Partial	Partial	Partial	Partial	No	No	No
Sale of Goods	Partial	Partial	Partial	Partial	Partial	Partial	Incomplete	Partial	Partial	No
Customer Service	No	Partial	Partial	No	Partial	Partial	Incomplete	Partial	Partial	No
Data Protection	Partial	Partial	Partial	Incomplete	Partial	No	Partial	No	Partial	Incomplete
Resource Mgmt	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partial	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partial
Governance	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	Incomplete	Yes	Yes	Incomplete
Insurance Cover	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Incomplete	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Incomplete
Employment	Partial	Yes	Partial	Incomplete	Incomplete	Yes	Incomplete	Partial	Incomplete	Partial
Policies & Training	Yes	Partial	Incomplete	Incomplete	Incomplete	Partial	Incomplete	Partial	Partial	Incomplete
General H&S	Partial	Yes	Partial	Yes	Incomplete	Partial	Incomplete	No	Partial	Incomplete
Vehicle Safety	Partial	Yes	Yes	Partial	Incomplete	N/A	Incomplete	N/A	No	N/A
Staff Safety	Partial	Yes	Yes	Incomplete	Incomplete	Partial	Yes	Partial	Partial	Incomplete
Social/Environmental	Partial	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partial	Partial	Yes	Yes	Incomplete
Organisational Motivation										
Progress to Make										
Journey Progress										

Figure 3.0: Pilot participant pre-assessment summary as at December 2017

	Simon	Duhallow	Kingdom	Back2New	Boomerang	NCBI	Clare Haven	Upcycling	ReCreate	Women's Aid
Collections	Yes	Yes	Partial	Yes	Partial	N/A	Incomplete	No	Partial	
Preparing Items	Yes	Yes	Partial	Yes	Partial	Partial	Partial	No	No	
Sale of Goods	Yes	Yes	Partial	Partial	Partial	Partial	Incomplete	Partial	Partial	
Customer Service	Yes	Yes	Partial	Partial	Partial	Partial	Incomplete	Partial	Partial	
Data Protection	Yes	Yes	Partial	Yes	Partial	No	Partial	No	Partial	
Resource Mgmt	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partial	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Governance	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Insurance Cover	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	
Employment	Yes	Yes	Partial	Partial	Partial	Yes	Incomplete	Partial	Incomplete	
Policies & Training	Yes	Yes	Incomplete	Partial	Partial	Partial	Incomplete	Partial	Partial	
General H&S	Yes	Yes	Partial	Yes	Partial	Partial	Incomplete	No	Partial	
Vehicle Safety	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partial	N/A	Incomplete	N/A	No	
Staff Safety	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partial	Partial	Yes	Partial	Partial	
Social/Environmental	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partial	Yes	Partial	Partial	Yes	Yes	
Organisational Motivation										
Progress to Make										
Journey Progress										
VM Consult	Done	Done		Done			Done			

Figure 4.0: Pilot participant pre-assessment summary as at December 2018

5.3.C TRAINING & SUPPORTS







One very successful pilot member meeting was held in January 2018 in Portlaoise, which included training on organisational behaviour change (provided by Dr Simon O'Rafferty), insights from consumer research (Ireland Thinks), and retail best practices (Linda Ward, retail consultant). The feedback from this event was extremely positive.

All pilot members were provided with group training focussed on their specific materials or business type with Lesley Haggarty, the merchandising advisor for the Revolve standard. Pilot members having completed the back end processes gap closure were also provided with one-on-one visual merchandising consultation, as an incentive to complete this initial process. In total Lesley provided two online group training sessions for furniture and general pilot members, and four one-on-one consulting sessions with Duhallow Revamp, Back2New, Clarehaven Horizons and Dublin Simon shops.

There was a very positive response to visual merchandising training from those who did receive it and many of the recommendations were taken on board. Utilising Lesley's expertise was invaluable for the project, and provided ReMark pilot members with a customised experience. Her specific recommendations sought to improve the quality of "front of house" shop but in many cases required additional funding and time to implement.

Some examples of her recommendations, and what was implemented by pilot participants, are shown in Table 1.0 and 2.0 below.

Table 1.0: Duhallow Revamp before and after with visual merchandising recommendations







Duhallow Revamp – exterior		Interior
Before		
Recommendations		
After		

As shown, Duhallow Revamp undertook significant works (involving moving out of the premises for renovations) to implement Lesley’s recommendations (see Annex D). Further images of their new-look showrooms are shown in the short video here²¹.

Another example of recommendations, this time for Back2New, is shown in Table 2.0.

²¹ <https://www.facebook.com/DuhallowFurnitureRevamp/videos/2044070545854371/>

Table 2.0: Back2New before and after with visual merchandising recommendations

	Back2New - exterior	Interior
Before		
Recommendations		
After		

It is noted that, as can be seen from the before images, Back2New had only just moved premises when the recommendations. Nonetheless this greatly facilitated the efficient design of the new venue.

It is also noted that, in the after images the front signage had not yet been added (at printers).

5.3.D ACCREDITATION

In October, Duhallow Revamp was audited by CTC to the ReMark standard and achieved pass for all core criteria and full marks in the customer experience audit (see audit in Annex E). A recommendation for accreditation was made to the steering committee, which approved and officially accredited Duhallow on 24th October 2018.

In November, two retail stores and a warehouse operated by Dublin Simon Community were audited by CTC to the ReMark standard. The organisation passed the audit and was recommended for accreditation. While some items were included in comments for improvement, they were not considered barriers to accreditation (see Annex F). The steering committee approved the recommendation on the 19th December 2018 and Dublin Simon Community was officially accredited.

The final audit by CTC at the end of January at Back2New resulted in a third and final recommendation for accreditation. Scoring from the Customer Experience audit was average to above average but the organisation performed strongly on its documented management system and evidence of its effective implementation through the policies, procedures and records examined, tours of the workshop and retail premises and informal staff interviews (Annex G). The steering committee was not able to meet prior to the project end date of 28 February but committee members agreed by email²² to approve this accreditation.

As shown in Figure 2, one additional participant availed of front of house consulting and visual merchandising training for further improvement but was not able to complete accreditation prior to the end of the project. Other candidates were still implementing back-end processes at the project end date. The reasons for pilot members not completing the gap closure process within the project timeframe vary widely and include:

- Other priorities taking precedent, such as the development of a new strategy, or operational challenges posed by a lack of funding or capacity
- A lack of organisational motivation
- Communications delays facing projects under the umbrella of a wider organisation
- A perception that the standard was unduly bureaucratic
- Staff turnover or a move of premises which disrupts policies and procedures

It is clear that the loss of the ReMark project manager and time taken to replace them impacted on momentum and engagement of pilot members in the project. In particular, the pilot members had built up an important trust relationship with the project manager that was challenging to reactivate.

This is also reflected in the pilot member survey responses received in November 2018 which identified the delay as contributing to disjointedness and loss of momentum. Other feedback included that the pilot was overly focused on retail and did not offer alternative training benefits to the visual merchandising for non-retail participants. Concerns were also raised by progressive participants that more effort was required to champion the successful enterprises and raise the profile of the standard nationwide which would encourage others to apply for and engage with the standard.

5.3.E ORGANISATIONAL IMPACTS

Feedback from Duhallow Revamp on the ReMark programme was provided to a CRNI member's meeting in December 2018. This showed clearly that ReMark had helped the organisation to raise its operational standards, as highlighted in the quote below:

"To deal with such a volume of furniture, it is very important that the operations from collection to re-sale follow high standards of organization, inventory and quality controls. The Remark standard ensured that we put our operations and procedures to the test and that we remedy any aspects that would not have met the standards."

Specifically they cited improved screening processes for donations (particularly those received via phone) and improvements in traceability of every item of furniture from collection to resale and improved data collection as important benefits of implementing ReMark. They also noted improvements in the front end customer experience as follows:

"The Remark standard also looked at the front end of the business to improve individual businesses but we also believe that a high standard will improve our customer's confidence in second-hand purchases."

²² with exception of the EPA, who elected not to comment as the EPA is not a certifying organisation

This included, specifically, improvement in merchandising approach and overall appearance of premises, increased branding presence and some improvements to customer service, staff knowledge, sales and services procedures. The presentation is included in Annex H.

Dublin Simon Communities listed some of the main changes undertaken for accreditation as including new procedures and policies, such as a process for preparing items for reuse (both written and visual) and a new customer service policy. They also tightened up on certain existing processes including testing of high risk items such as baby clothes and toys and clear and accurate pricing,, and implemented a more robust vehicle policy. Finally they followed recommendations from visual merchandising training through a revamp in the Thomas Street shop and have changed the branding in shops²³.

With regards to overall benefits to the organisation, they stated:

“Team morale and pride are probably the biggest benefits which is fantastic. Also knowing that you are working to a high standard and can stand over it. Clearer process and procedures so more clarity. Provides more structure. Also great to be acknowledged for such an important environmental and social mission. Great for raising the profile of the shops and the DSC brand and a great initiative to be part of.”

The main challenges they identified in implementing the programme included delays associated with internal policies being developed for compliance with GDPR regulations, creating new policies and procedures, getting the team on board and collating all the various pieces for the standard. Although it was time consuming overall, Dublin Simon Community found the process was worth it.

5.4 DEVELOPING THE QUALITY MARK BRANDING & PROMOTIONAL CAMPAIGN

A brand brief was sent to a number of PR companies. Rogue Advertising was engaged to develop the logo and worked closely with CRNI on the purpose of the standard and what the logo should convey.

The logo developed for ReMark initially included the word “ReUse”, which was felt by some pilot participants to be more widely understood terminology. However, this was revised to “ReMark” to be more inclusive and specific in its communication. The final logo is included below.



It is acknowledged that, as the word “ReMark” is not widely recognised, in the long term work will need to be done to link the “ReMark” logo to reuse as a concept, through for example, a marketing campaign logo and/or social media and print communications. If the standard continues as a national programme, it is recommended to undertake a more comprehensive branding impact review exercise with potential rebranding as a sustainment activity for post-pilot.

As noted in Section 4.3, it was decided that the most effective national or regional communications would only take place following accreditation, so rather than engaging an external PR consultant all communications activities were brought in-house. A communication strategy was implemented with initial focus on in-store communications to Staff/Volunteers and existing customers, through branded fliers (informing customers

²³ Feedback received via email from Dublin Simon Communities on accreditation process

about the pilot process – see Annex J) and a branded notice board made by a Wicklow artist specialising in reused materials, Eoghain Phelan (see across).

The ReMark project was disseminated at exhibitions and events as follows:

- Zero Waste Festival, Dublin (Sep 17)
- RREUSE conference, Belgium (Nov 17)
- Waste Summit, Cork (Nov 17)
- Sustainability Summit, Dublin (Jan 18)
- Irish Charity Shop Association AGM (Mar 18).

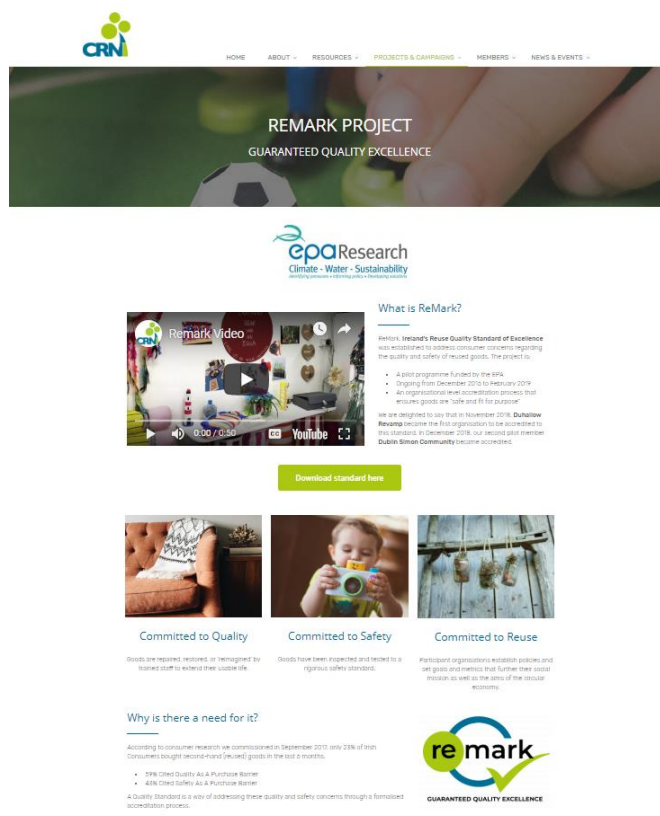


At the Sustainability Summit in Dublin, a pop up shop was installed to showcase quality products as well as the quality standard principles, which generated much interest.



As noted above, the project was also presented to the ICSA AGM, which was used as the basis for a promotional video. This and other material was compiled into a ReMark page on the CRNI website (www.crni.ie/re-mark), which included a signup page for organisations interested in accrediting to the standard in the future.

CRNI has since been approached by at least three organisations requesting further information and seeking to participate in a future pilot process.



As member shops became accredited, they were provided with decal stickers with the ReMark logo to demonstrate accreditation in their showrooms. A ReMark trophy for in-store display, designed by an Austrian

social enterprise “Trash Design” from reused components of electrical equipment (see below), was also provided for accredited organisations to display instore.



Further information about accreditation events and videos is provided in Section 5.6.D below.

5.5 IMPACT ON CONSUMERS

The initial nation-wide consumer baseline survey is described in Section 5.1 above. This section covers the findings from the in-store surveys with pilot members before and after the quality mark accreditation process.

5.4.A METHODOLOGY

To evaluate the effectiveness of improving one's store 18 surveys were conducted across 10 retailers. The group included a mix of charity shops and recycling communities. For 8 retailers a survey was conducted before and after the gap closure process lasting approximately one year. One retailer dropped out of the process (NCBI) and a second (Women's Aid) went out of business. The case of the Women's Aid Store is another useful comparison.

5.4.B ASSESSING THE VALUE OF REUSE

Questions asked at store level were designed to replicate those asked nationally (see Section 5.1) to understand the difference between those that enter reuse stores and those that do not. To understand more about what users of these shops see in their behaviour of using these stores, they were asked: “What words come to mind to describe reused goods”. There is a mix of phrases used to describe reused goods with significant numbers talking about (1) environmentalism (2) their relative price, being cheap, bargains and (3) the products themselves, colourful, interesting, treasures etc as shown in Figure 5. When the same question was asked in the national survey significantly more people mention (4) lack of reliability of the goods as shown in Figure 6.



Figure 5: In shop responses to: “What one word would you use to describe re-used goods”



Figure 6: National survey responses to: “What one word would you use to describe re-used goods”

5.4.C OVERALL RATING

To evaluate the overall experience a ‘recommender question’ was used. That is, responses to the question: “On a scale of 1 (not at all likely) to 10 (highly likely), how likely is it that you would recommend this shop to family & friends”. This is a crucial figure as it is a good measure of the level of business one might expect not just from recommendations but actually from the person that is responding.

Figure 7 below maps the relationship between the recommender score and the self-reported likelihood of when they might return to the store. It shows that those with a higher recommender score of 9, or ten are more likely to return to the store within a shorter period of time. Those with low scores, below 5 are less likely to return to the store with a short period of time. It is notable that overall a very large proportion of consumers return to the store within a week. This suggests how much these stores are dependent on a relatively small group of people.

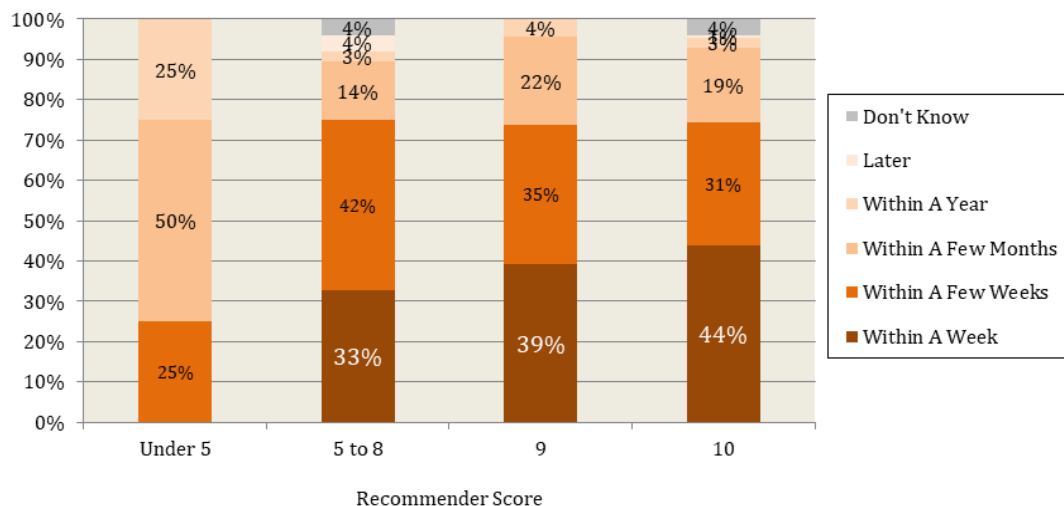


Figure 7: Relationship between recommender score and likelihood of returning to the store

To further understand the nature of the relationship between customers and the store respondents were asked how long they had been coming to the store. As shown in Figure 8, the largest proportion (60%) stated that they had been coming for years. It is important to recognise that these customers are loyal and visiting

the store forms a not insubstantial part of their lives. This perhaps suggests that changes to the store must be made in a cautious incremental manner.

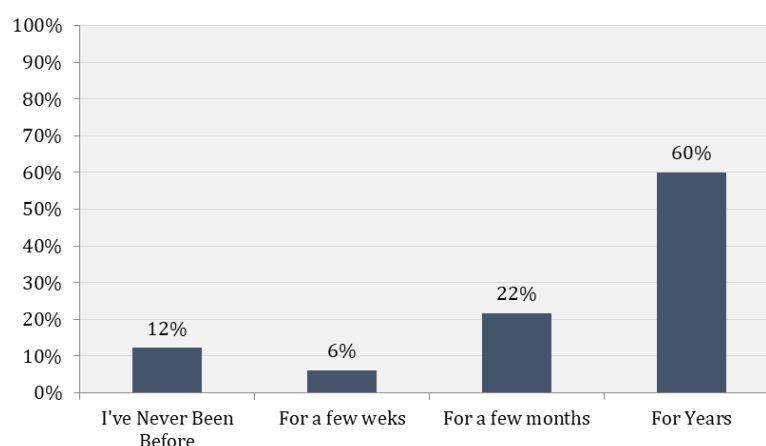


Figure 8: Length of time customers had been visiting the store

Figure 9 shows the average scores in response to the recommendation question before and after the consultation period. There was a slight improvement in the overall rating from 9.0 to 9.2.

Most stores tended to have a loyal base of customers that were very positive about their experience. Two stores in the before study had slightly lower ratings: The Simon Camden St store and Women's Aid. Both had ratings of 8.1 in these surveys compared to the overall average of 9.1. The outcome of the Women's Aid Store reflected this relatively weaker rating whereas the Simon Camden Street Store improved dramatically to 8.9.

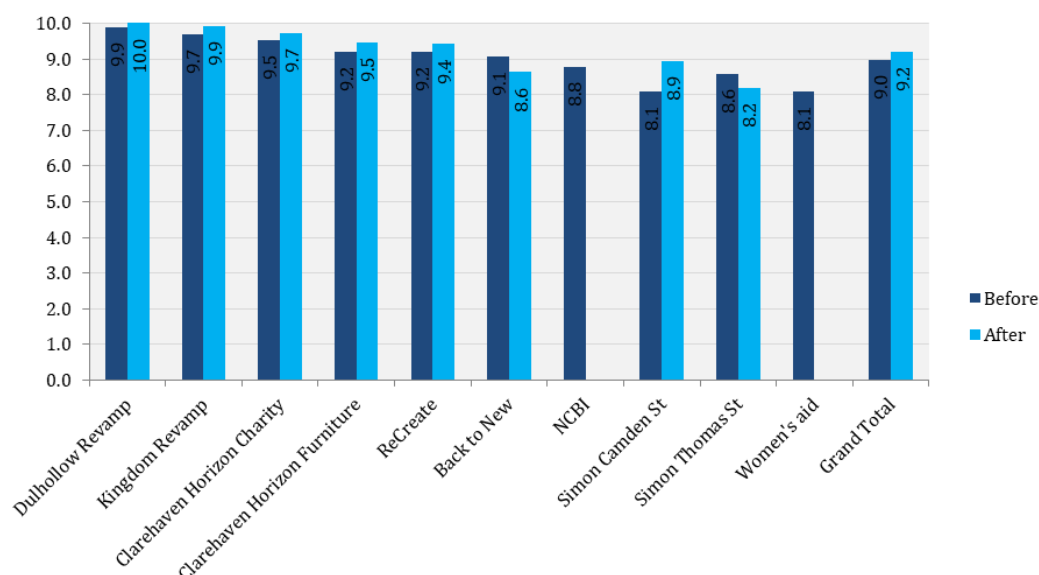


Figure 9: Average scores in response to the recommendation question before and after the consultation period

It is notable that the Upcycling stores tended to have better ratings than the charity shops. Six out of eight stores improved following the consultation process. Two stores – Back2New and Dublin Simon (Thomas St) disimproved marginally on this rating. In the case of Back2New, this may have been a function of a relatively shorter period between surveys and thus measuring more narrowly the effect of the consultation. While ReCreate did not complete the accreditation, they moved store and inevitably benefitted from that move. While Clarehaven Horizons have yet to formally undergo the accreditation, their store had improved significantly over the course of the consultation period.

5.4.D ANALYSIS OF FEATURES

To measure the relative importance of features of the shop participants were asked to rate seven features of the shop: the staff, the quality of products, the range of products, the shop internal design, the price of products, the shop cleanliness, and the shop front entrance. To evaluate the relative importance of these features the correlation coefficient is estimated between scores on these features and the overall recommender score. This indicates, regardless of how high or low they scored on these items to what extent these individual scores are related to the recommender score, thereby giving an idea as to how important each feature in the shop is, or in other words to what extent does a high score in say staff contribute to a high overall recommender score. If the coefficient value lies between ± 0.50 and ± 1 , then it is said to be a strong correlation. Moderate degree: If the value lies between ± 0.30 and ± 0.49 , then it is said to be a medium correlation. Low degree: When the value lies below $\pm .29$, then it is said to be a small correlation.

The results, shown in Figure 10 below, reveal that all are positively correlated with the recommender score. It reveals that the strongest correlation is between evaluations of the staff (0.59) and the overall recommender score. It furthermore reveals that while the quality (0.51) and range (0.50) of the products are the next most important features the internal design (0.48) and shop cleanliness (0.47) are just as important. Pricing has a similar level of importance. This is an interesting development considering how price sensitive this type of shopping is. The front entrance is somewhat less important. This is unsurprising given that most customers appear to be regulars.

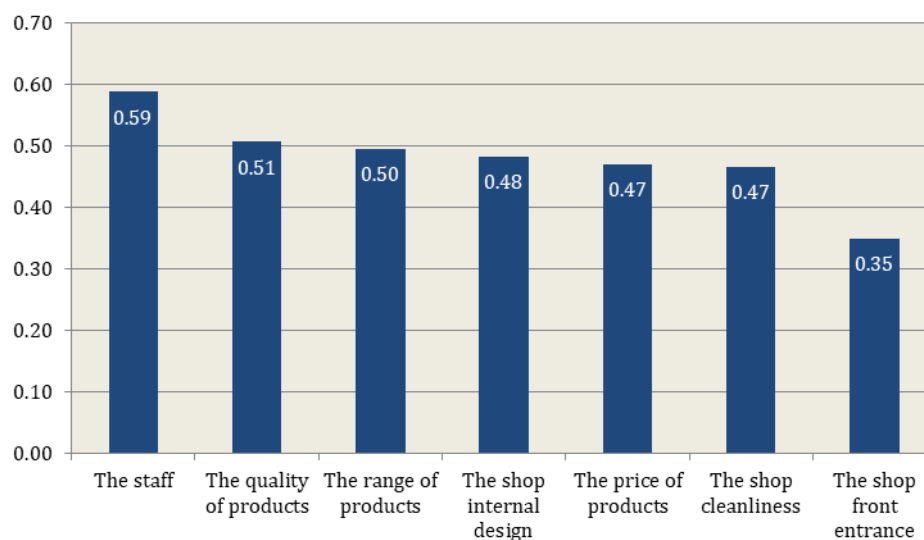


Figure 10: Correlation of features of the shop participants correlated with the recommender score

In terms of which features are rated higher, as shown in Figure 11, there is very little difference between the different features aside from the staff which have a significantly higher score. The fact that the staff appraisals both correlate with the overall recommendation score and are on average significantly higher is indicative of a major feature of this study.

Our interpretation of the data, as well as incidental experience of conducting the surveys, is that the staff members are an enormous asset to the businesses. They provide a community function and should be regarded as critical assets which ensure that loyal customers return to the store. Without the community function that the staff provides, these charity shops would be much less viable. The shop front and internal design tended to get lower scores overall highlighting scope for improvement in those features.

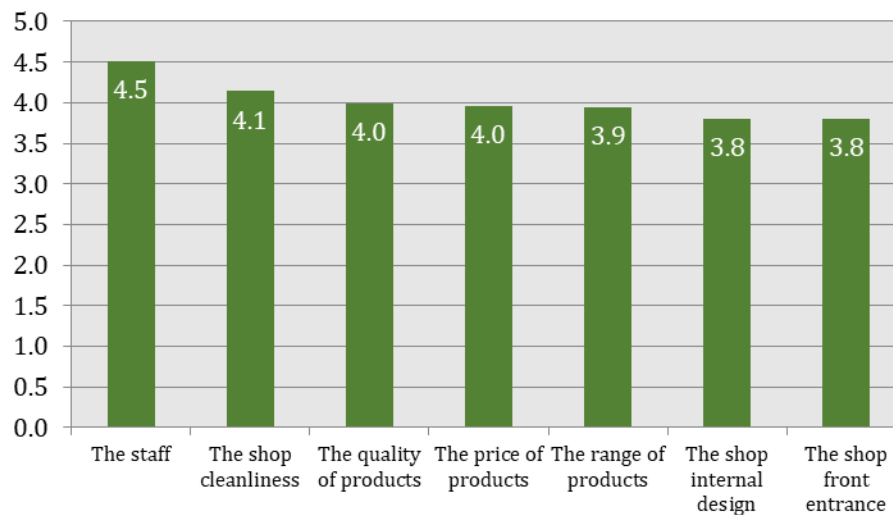


Figure 11: Ranking of features of the shop participants

We can compare the features before and after the consultation period in Figure 12 below, excluding stores for which there was no 'after' survey (NCBI and Women's Aid) and this reveals increases in ratings of staff and cleanliness with small increases in ratings of internal design and range. It is for these reasons that the recommender score improved. In relation to the staff perhaps the consultation process empowered the staff and helped to identify the important role they play, but there is also evidence of other improvements to the store such as cleanliness.

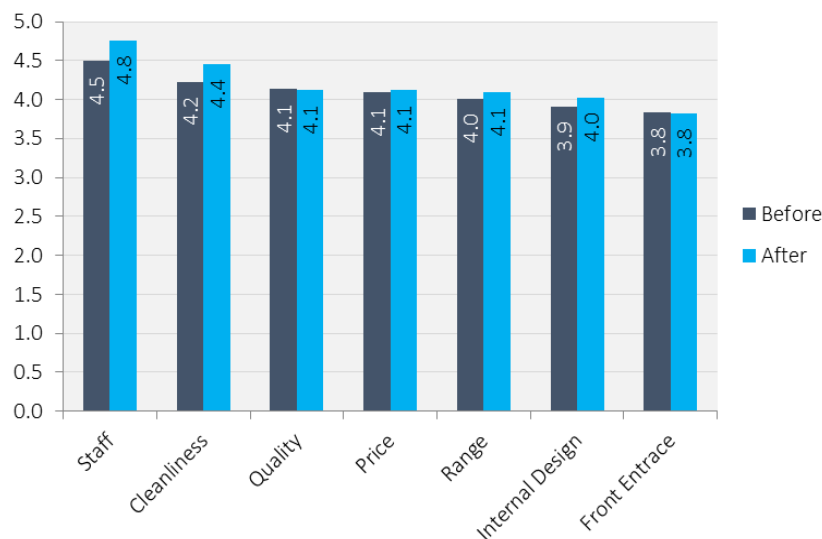


Figure 11: Comparison of features of the shop participants before and after

5.4.E CONCLUSION

The consumer research highlights the reliance on a small group of customers in each store and the inherent risks of not appealing to new customers while also the clear importance of retaining and supporting the existing relationship between customers and staff.

It shows that the ReMark accreditation process had a positive impact on the stores, particularly in relation to staff and cleanliness of the stores which has ramifications on the overall experience as observed from the

recommender score. This recommender score is crucial as it also drives the ability of the store to retain frequent custom.

5.6 OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS

The original application proposed the following research outputs:

- Developed accreditation process for a reuse quality mark, ready to be rolled out
- Successful pilot of mark with 5 x members accredited and branding packs
- Interim report showing consumer and industry feedback on the value of developing a quality mark
- Consumer and industry feedback on the value of the quality mark once piloted
- Outreach to > 5,000 consumers using social media platforms (particularly Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) and other marketing techniques

5.6.A DEVELOPED ACCREDITATION PROCESS AND SUCCESSFUL PILOT

Section 5.2 outlines in detail the development of the accreditation and auditing processes for the ReMark quality standard. This was greatly assisted by Zero Waste Scotland, who provided in considerable detail the materials and insights from their Revolve quality standard programme, and by the steering committee.

As highlighted, the ReMark standard, assessment criteria and auditing procedure were continually revised throughout the programme to accommodate improvements in Health and Safety and waste management criteria, refinement to align with GDPR requirements, adaptation to a wider diversity of business types, and confirmation of the validity period and follow up inspection requirements. Overall, this led to a standard that is more flexible and yet more stringent than originally anticipated.

Of the nine pilot participants three were audited and all three accredited to the standard. This included Duhallow Revamp, Dublin Simon Community and Back2New.

While the original goal of accrediting five pilot participants was not met, background research flagged early on that implementing a reuse quality standard requires significant resource commitment and culture change from the participating organisations. The initial development of all benchmarked standards took 2+ years (developing and piloting the standard)²⁴ with organisational accreditation for mature standards averaging from 6 months to a year. This compares with an original project timeline (and resourcing) for the ReMark project of just 14 months total. It is noted that while the project timeframe was extended, resourcing was not.

5.6.B CONSUMER FEEDBACK

An interim report and press releases were issued following the nation-wide consumer survey as shown in Section 5.1. This found that only 23% of the population surveyed had purchased a reused good in the last six months and that Irish consumers are particularly sensitive to the quality and health and safety aspects of reused goods. These findings justified continuing with the project.

Baseline consumer surveys were carried out at all participants' outlets (with the exception of Boomerang Enterprises and The Upcycling Project) with follow-on consumer feedback being gathered at the end of the pilot programme.

²⁴ Benchmarking conversations with Zero Waste Scotland (May 4-5), Sharon Colgan, Love Irish Food and Origin Green Campaign Manager, Bord Bia (April 25, 2017), Ronald van den Heerik, BKN Project Manager, BKN Netherlands (April 26, 2017).

The consumer survey research highlighted the reliance on a small group of customers in each store and the inherent risks of not appealing to new customers. It demonstrated the importance of retaining and supporting the existing relationship between customers and staff. Finally and crucially, it showed that the ReMark accreditation process had a positive impact on the stores, particularly in relation to staff and cleanliness of the stores which has ramifications on the overall experience as observed from the recommender score.

It is noted that, due to the timeline drift, these surveys took place only once after gap closure work began and for those accredited, they took place within a short period of pilot member accreditation (e.g. end October to mid December in the case of Duhallow). While the gap closure process had been impacting procedures and activities at pilot participant shops from the beginning of the accreditation process, most of the change up until the end point was internal. The “front of house” (visual merchandising and customer experience) changes took place as the last step in accreditation. This meant that it was not possible to capture all aspects of changes to customer sentiment (breadth and depth), incorporating for example seasonality, quality “slippage” at the shop level and other post-accreditation variables into the research findings.

It is also noted that CRNI divided pilot participants into broadly four categories: those who are highly engaged in the project and who have supportive systems (structures, resources, and culture) in place; those who are highly engaged without the supporting systems; those who are marginally engaged with systems; and those who are marginally engaged without systems. The accredited shops, which progressed more rapidly through the process, are in the category of “highly engaged with supporting systems in place”. This is highlighted in Dublin Simon Community’s feedback on the accreditation programme:

“Due to Dublin Simon Community being an established organisation with organisational internal policies in place we had a somewhat advantage and were lucky in this regard. We had evidence of policies already in place more around broader areas such as HR and governance. However, there was still a lot of work to do around gathering the information and creating processes for our gaps.”

This lends some bias to the results and does not allow for insight into the degree to which these specific variables have a knock on effect in customer confidence.

5.6.C STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Knowledge sharing has been a critical component of the project. The project manager met with Zero Waste Scotland twice as anticipated in the original submission – once in Scotland and once in Ireland where Zero Waste Scotland participated in two pre-assessments to help strengthen the ReMark standard.

There were four meetings with the steering committee, including two meetings to establish and feedback on the standard and accreditation, and two accreditation meetings. The steering committee combined the original “working group” and “accreditation panel”. One workshop took place with pilot participants in January 2018 and one with CRNI members in December 2018 fulfilling all stakeholder engagement proposals.

5.6.D OUTREACH AND MARKETING

General promotional activities undertaken to disseminate the ReMark standard are outlined in Section 5.4 above.

As indicated, the approach to dissemination was modified during the project to reflect experiences from Zero Waste Scotland which found a national campaign did not make sense until a critical mass of accredited stores had been attained. Therefore, while some promotion (conferences, website) was undertaken at national level a greater focus was placed on communicating with pilot member staff and customers and local stakeholders to build local support for participating projects. Emphasis was also placed on promoting successful accreditations

through award events and/or video case studies, although these came too late in the project to measure any impact.

TRADITIONAL & SOCIAL MEDIA

The original objectives of the project were to promote milestone achievements on the CRNI website, social media streams and local and national print and radio media. More specifically, the goal was to outreach to > 5,000 consumers using social media platforms (particularly Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) and other marketing techniques.

At the early stages of the project press releases were issued following consumer research. However, these did not attract any media interest. This was not unexpected, for reasons highlighted above.

In July 2018, a video of the upgraded showrooms at Duhallow Revamp, following ReMark recommendations, received over 11,000 views. IRD Duhallow also covered Duhallow Revamp's accreditation to ReMark in its February 2019 newsletter, which reached over 15,000 householders.

Social media posts by CRNI about ReMark have reached over 4,900 users. The ReMark webpage has also had approx. 690 views.

A press release for the Dublin Simon award event at the end of February was issued by the Dublin Simon communications team and widespread social media coverage was sought. However this did not attract any media interest. Further efforts will be made once the videos have been completed (see below) to interest radio and press in the ReMark story.

CONFERENCES & JOURNALS

As noted in Section 5.4, ReMark was promoted through conferences and exhibitions including:

- Zero Waste Festival, Dublin (Sept 2017)
- Irish Charity Shops Member Event (October 2017)
- European RREUSE Network Conference, Charleroi Belgium (Nov 2017)
- Waste Management Conference, Dublin (Nov 2017)
- Sustainability Summit, Dublin (January 2018)
- Irish Charity Shops Association AGM (February 2018)

Following completion of the research, these findings will be shared with the RREUSE network Europe, the CIWM journal, edie.com and other publications.

AWARD EVENTS

In order to celebrate their achievements and promote the ReMark brand, CRNI offered to support accredited organisations in organising events and funded case study videos.

Only one organisation took up the event offer within the project timeframe. Dublin Simon held a ReMark award event on the 28th February at their Camden St store as shown below with local stakeholders and customers.



Local, regional and national press coverage was sought for this event as noted above, but did not attract any attention. The event was very well attended by the Dublin Simon Community team and was supported by representatives from the EPA, the Department of Rural and Community Development, the Irish Charity Shops Association and CRNI as shown below.



Duhallow Revamp plans to hold an award event in Q2. Their event was delayed to accommodate a high profile guest at the event. Press coverage will also be sought for this event.

CASE STUDIES

The original project proposal committed to developing case studies about the development of a reuse quality mark to inform other reuse organisations / governments / future quality mark applicants.

One video was developed early in the programme to promote the concept of a Quality Mark and explain its purpose to other reuse organisations and authorities. This is available online here: <https://www.crni.ie/re-mark/>.

Two videos were also developed about the journey taken by Duhallow Revamp and Dublin Simon Community toward accreditation. These aim to show potential future applicants that ReMark is a worthwhile exercise and to show policy makers and funders the value of such a standard in helping to grow demand for second hand goods. These will also be uploaded to <https://www.crni.ie/re-mark/> once completed (expected mid March 2019), and disseminated as widely as possible through social and traditional media.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 CONCLUSIONS

It was originally anticipated that this project would inform the impact of a full scale organisational level quality mark programme on **strengthening customer and supplier confidence in reused goods**. This was to be achieved through promotion of the standard and measuring the impact of changes within ReMark accredited organisations on its customers.

The approach to promoting the standard was to focus on building local support for participating projects through communicating with pilot member organisations' staff and customers and promoting accreditations through award events and/or video case studies, although these came late in the project. Consumer feedback gathered at the beginning and end of the pilot programme indicated that the ReMark accreditation process had a positive impact on the stores, particularly in relation to staff and cleanliness of the stores which has ramifications on the overall experience.

Other expected results were **benefits to reuse organisations**. It was anticipated the standard could help to raise operational and governance standards for reuse organisations and develop staff skills in the areas of, for example, compliance and retail.

Feedback from Duhallow Revamp and Dublin Simon Communities, as outlined in Section 5.3.E, showed that the accreditation did help these organisations to raise their operational and governance standards. This led to, for example, more efficient collections and screening of donations, improved checks and stock management with better traceability, and improved data collection. It also led to improvements in merchandising approach, overall store appearance, greater branding presence and customer service. Finally, staff members were positively impacted with increased team morale and pride and better structures for staff to work within.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.2.A REMARK CONTINUITY

One of the key aims of the project was to gauge consumer sentiment towards a quality standard in order to inform whether it should be continued or not. As noted above, consumer feedback gathered before and after accreditation indicates that the ReMark accreditation process has a positive impact on participating stores.

It is acknowledged that the repeat surveys took place only a short time after accreditation or at participants' stores without accreditation and whose change programme may have been less evident, so it was not possible to capture all aspects of changes to customer sentiment. The accredited shops are also in the category of "highly engaged with supporting systems in place" which lends some bias to the results. Therefore, further surveys as part of any future ReMark programme would help to strengthen these findings.

The operational benefits to pilot participants were clear. Many pilot participants undertook significant operational and governance changes to complete gap closure which led to important back end and consumer facing improvements as outlined in Section 6.1 above.

On the basis of these findings, CRNI would like to recommend the ReMark standard for further rollout.

6.2.B OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to recommending the standard for further rollout, a number of potential operational improvements were identified during the research. These include:

- ***DEVELOPING TEMPLATES TO SUPPORT MORE EFFICIENT GAP CLOSURE***

It was a recommendation of the steering committee and of the pilot participants that in any potential future programme, templates of best practice for the back end processes / procedures involved in ReMark should be developed to make it easier for participants.

- ***BOOSTING TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH COHORT MENTORING***

A “cohort mentoring approach” was originally anticipated where each participant has the opportunity to contribute their organisational strengths and best practices. Unfortunately this did not eventuate due to the loss of the project manager. However, it would be an approach worth encouraging in any future iterations of this programme, as highlighted through pilot member feedback and also due to the very specific nature of operations (i.e. wherein generic training may not be as practical).

- ***UNDERTAKING A MORE COMPREHENSIVE BRANDING IMPACT REVIEW EXERCISE WITH POTENTIAL REBRANDING AS A SUSTAINMENT ACTIVITY***

The steering committee recommended a more comprehensive branding impact review to provide a better understanding of how the pilot brand appeals (or doesn’t appeal) to the general consumer population. Further work would also be required to better link the concept of reuse with the term ReMark as it is not widely recognised. This could be effectuated through for example, a marketing campaign logo and/or social media and print communications.

- ***CONTINUITY OF ACCREDITATION***

It will be important to consider in any future iteration of the programme whether those organisations now accredited to the pilot standard are automatically entitled to accreditation to the next phase of the standard. It is noted that in Scotland when a similar situation arose, those organisations retained accreditation but the standard and continuous improvement elements were revisited.

As noted in Section 5.2, the agreed accreditation validity period is 3 years subject to annual inspections. This is to ensure that changes noticed at the customer level for the high performing shops are maintained after the accreditation. Findings from these annual inspections will inform future recommendations for sustainment models (frequency of re-accreditation, etc.).

- ***REVIEWING GOVERNANCE***

The governance of any future ReMark programme and participant criteria will need to be reviewed depending on the funder and intention. The role of, and who participates in, the steering committee will require consideration. It will also be important to determine whether the standard is open to all reuse and recycling organisations or only certain subcategories.

Both elements may also depend on whether the standard can be managed by low cost accreditation bodies such as SGS, BSI-UK, Intertek or Bureau Veritas and to what level those bodies would engage with participants to bring them along the journey.

- **REPEATING AND CONTINUING WITH CONSUMER SURVEYS**

Although the consumer surveys indicated that the ReMark accreditation process had a positive impact on the stores, it is also recognised that insufficient time had elapsed between initial and final surveys to capture all aspects of changes to customer sentiment. Therefore it is recommended that a programme of repeat surveys be conducted as part of any future ReMark roll out and surveys are continued for the initial phase of the roll out to further affirm these findings.

- **RETAINING AN EXTERNAL AUDITOR**

While the initial plan was for CRNI to conduct ReMark audits, this function was outsourced to CTC due to the loss of the project manager. Interestingly, feedback on this outcome was positive as it was noted that CRNI's involvement in pre-assessment audits and assistance with gap closure would have lent bias to the final audit. Therefore it is recommended in any future ReMark programme that an auditor external to the programme management team be retained.

6.2.C UNANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

One key unanticipated outcome was that the quality standard would be adapted to such a broad range of different types of organisations. This is a positive development that will help future proof the standard and act as inspiration to other standard operators.

7.0 NEXT STEPS

During the course of the pilot programme, work was undertaken on the potential continuity of the project. An approximation of the cost of running the ReMark standard and some initial thinking from this work is provided below. Potential funding opportunities have not been identified at the time of submission of this report and the steering committee plans to meet in March to discuss this further.

7.1 LOGIC OF THE COST MODEL

Based on research for the benchmarking process, it is anticipated that this standard programme would require full or partial funding at least until critical mass is achieved. If fees are to be charged to participating organisations, only a small "commitment" fee is likely to work based on the small scale of the sector. This would provide a minimum contribution to covering costs.

It is also likely that considerable guidance and engagement with participating organisations will be required on an ongoing basis in order to progress further accreditations. This is due to the low level of recognition for ReMark (it is not yet "desirable") and the small scale of organisations in the sector (meaning there can be a lot of work in developing procedures and policies). In Scotland 1.5 FTEs are deployed to enable the full roll out of the Revolve programme.

Taking this into consideration, a future ReMark programme could evolve as follows:

STAGE 1 (CURRENT PILOT PROGRAMME):

- 1.15 yrs research project - Pilot members & brand building
- Fully funded by EPA

STAGE 2 (PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT):

- Interim support funding as below - Build subscribers & brand further to “critical mass” (100 shops?) with NI participant focus (cross-border)
- Explore small overall fee, or how participants could cover specific costs
- Establish a participant collaboration platform to facilitate sharing of knowledge, training, templates
- Establish a permanent steering committee (guidance vs. accreditation)
- Work towards Remark as a packaged product including templates that can easily be introduced and delivered with additional contextual training recommendations after pre-assessment stage.
- Improve communications and marketing through the website, press and social media to build the brand

STAGE 3 (2025 AND BEYOND):

- Develop a fee based model subject to large number of subscribers.
- Run a national Ad campaign when critical mass reached
- National agency sponsorship/policy/framework alignment
- Explore incentive schemes

While it is not currently possible to develop this model further, CRNI will continue to work with key stakeholders to explore options for rolling ReMark out as a national programme.

7.2 ESTIMATED COST OF RUNNING STANDARD PROGRAMME

The below estimate includes high and low cost options depending on the desired momentum of the programme (e.g. part time vs full time staffing) and scale. Both are based on roughly 10 accreditations per year, assuming an average moderate growth.

Cost Item	Cost – Low estimate	Cost – High Estimate	Assumptions
Staff	€28,241 (incl Emp PRSI)	€47,068 (incl Emp PRSI)	Low: Per pilot project - one PT staff @ 3 days/week High: One FT program Admin & Comms @ 5 days/week
External Accreditations	€5,000	€20,000	Low: Estimate €500/accreditation by external auditor High: SGS est €20,000/year
Travel & subsistence, overheads	€6,000	€9,000	Low: 1 x day trip plus one overnight trip / month + office rent, phone. High: 3 x day trips plus one overnight trip / month + office rent, phone.
Visual Merchandising & related Training	€4,260	€5,964	Based on ZWS €426/session x 4/year (training). Low: 10 per yr vs high: 10 + group training x 4/yr
Materials	€6,000	€15,000	Low: Binder, plaque based on pilot programme – est €600/shop High: as above with additional budget for flyers and other materials - €1,500/shop
General Project PR	€4,000 per	€20,000	Low: 1 video, pics, press & website

	annum		High: Increase number of videos and PR budget for wider press coverage
Shop Accreditation PR	€10,000	€20,000	Low: Awards events based on pilot budget €1,000 / event High: Based on €2,000 / event (more weight on local publicity)
Brand Protection	Trademark the brand €70 application fee €177 trademark fee €1,000 legal fees		https://www.patentsoffice.ie/en/About-Us/Frequently-Asked-Questions/Trade-Marks/
External PR (Events & Conferences)	€6000		-1 per quarter (2 speaking events, 2 tradeshow) - 2 seminars for participants -50% subsidised by RWA as education
TOTAL	€71,300	€144,800	