



Section 3: Good Practice Guides

Furniture

What is the issue?

Furniture is usually made of timber, plastic, metal and upholstery.

Environmental impacts of furniture during manufacture include:

- The use of non-renewable resources
- Blowing agents (HCFCs) and flame retardants used in plastic production
- Discharges to air, land and water during the furniture manufacturing process
- The use of pesticides and brominated flame retardants during textile production
- Emissions to air and water from solvents and chromium during the leather lacquering process

Source: remanufacturing.org.uk

Government Buying Standards

The **Government Buying Standards** cover the following impact areas:

- Wood and wood-based materials
- Plastic parts
- Surface coating of wood, plastic and/or metal parts
- Adhesives and glues



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- Formaldehyde in panels
- Textile materials
- Durability, reparability, fitness for use and ergonomics
- Packaging materials
- Preservatives (for outdoor furniture only)
- Polyurethane foam

Any wood used must follow the Government policy on timber – essentially meaning that it must be from sustainable forests.

What else can be done?

- ✓ Give preference to furniture which is certified by eco-labels such as Nordic Swan or German Blue Angel
- ✓ Give preference to use of recycled plastics and metals
- ✓ Standardise furniture colour, size and style to increase the ease of re-use and use
- ✓ Dispose of damaged furniture in the most environmentally sound way

Suggested wording for inclusion in tender documents

“...All plastic parts >50g shall be marked for recycling according to ISO 11469 or equivalent and must not contain additions of other materials that may hinder their recycling...”

“...Products carrying the Nordic Swan eco-label will be deemed to comply. For products which do not carry this label, bidders must provide a description of the plastic materials that are present and the quantities used, the way in which they are labelled and how they are attached to one another or to other materials...”

“...Any other appropriate means of proof demonstrating that the criteria are met will also be accepted, such as a technical dossier from the manufacturer, a test report from a recognised body showing compliance, or a declaration from the manufacturer. 'Recognised bodies' are test and calibration laboratories and certification and inspection bodies which comply with applicable regional, national and/or international standards...”

“... Furniture pieces must be recyclable or adequate for re-use. To ensure this, the pieces must be made of materials that can be easily separated for recycling purposes....”

“...The bidder and the manufacturer of the final product(s) are required to demonstrate the existence and public availability of a written corporate environmental policy, consistent with ISO 14001 (International Organisation for Standardisation), or equivalent...”

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Case study 10 – Cumbria County Council

In 2010 Cumbria County Council went out to tender for a general furniture framework which included Lots for Office Furniture, Educational Furniture and Folding Dining Furniture. The overall goal was to award the framework to sustainable and environmentally companies supplying sustainable and environmentally sourced products (where possible).

The initial PQQ included a number of questions for prospective suppliers focusing on environmental management objectives and use of eco-labelling schemes.

The product specification included an emphasis on recycling, tracking of the timber and carbon reduction, including statements such as:

“Cumbria County Council is keen to work with contractors who can offer furniture that has been manufactured using materials from sustainable sources. Tenderers are required to state which of their ranges / models meet the following criteria:

- a) Environmentally friendly furniture products equivalent to the specification required*
- b) Eco-friendly furniture products from sustainable sources*

F.S.C. 80% accreditation is the minimum requirement although if you are working towards or have accreditation of 99% then please provide evidence.

Suppliers must be able to demonstrate FSC Chain of Custody Certification for the specific range(s) of furniture offered.”

Within the contract, a specific clause was included for the removal and recycling of all packaging:

“All packaging must be removed from the premises and taken to a recycling centre where possible. Please confirm that you will adhere to these requests within your tender submission.”

Further information

Envirolink Northwest can provide advice on products with recycled content which are available from North West suppliers. Contact: buyrecycled@envirolinknorthwest.co.uk

Lewisham Council has a sustainable furniture policy: <http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/Business/TendersAndContracts/Procurement/SustainableProcurement.htm>

Greening the Blue – UN guidance on procurement of furniture:

http://www.greeningtheblue.org/sites/default/files/furniturebasiccriteria_0.pdf

London Centre of Excellence (LCE) has developed a toolkit providing step by step guidance on [How to dispose office furniture in a more sustainable manner](#). It includes specifications, tender evaluation criteria and key performance indicators which can be used for similar contracts.