



# THE **WHAT, WHY & HOW TO** OF ON-THE-GO CUP RECYCLING



# INTRODUCTION

## **Confused about cup recycling? Can you even recycle takeaway cups?**

It is estimated that a staggering 2.5 billion disposable cups are used in the UK each year.  
Where do they all go?

We've compiled this eBook to answer your questions, along with insights into the latest industry developments and the consumer initiatives available to help you take action right now.

So, whether you're a socially conscious coffee lover or a business that's trying to introduce a cup recycling programme we hope you'll find something recyclable to take away from us today.

*Who are we? We're Glasdon. An established UK manufacturer with our design eye set firmly on helping improve the environment.*

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# Answers to the BIG questions



# What are disposable takeaway cups made from?

**There are three main types of disposable cup – paper, plastic and foam.**

The confusing part for us as consumers is that we hear paper and plastic used interchangeably when referring to takeaway cups – we'll explore why next.

**And if you're in the catering business, own a coffee shop or manage facilities... you've got a lot to choose from!**

## ■ The Traditional Foam Cup

Made from petroleum, polystyrene foam cups are used for hot and cold drinks. Polystyrene makes the cup sturdy and lightweight while providing a high level of insulation.

However, if you're looking for an environmentally friendly cup solution then you should avoid using these cups altogether. Very few recycling plants have the technology to process single-use polystyrene foam cups (including used polystyrene foam food containers) and it is estimated that it takes hundreds of years to decompose in landfill and then it only breaks down into smaller particles.

## ■ Types of Plastic Cup

As well as a takeaway solution, cold drinks tend to be served in plastic cups at large public events and outdoor venues.

These cups are generally manufactured with polystyrene plastic, recyclable PET (polyethylene terephthalate) plastic or recyclable PP (polypropylene). Compostable cold cups made with PLA (polylactic acid) corn plastic are also available.



## ■ Types of Paper Cup

Paper cups, also referred to as 'paper hot cups' are more commonly used for takeaway coffee and hot drinks today. Although they can be used to serve cold drinks too.

### Air Pocket Insulated Cups:

Air is trapped for improved insulation between an inner and an outer ridged layer.

### Poly-coated Paper Cups:

Features a polymer coating for additional insulation, while protecting the outside of the cup from weakening.

### Post-consumer Paper Cups:

Made using a high percentage of recycled paper and therefore using less virgin material.

### Sustainable Paper Cups:

Compostable and biodegradable cups. The whole cup is produced with natural renewable resources.

### Wax Coated Paper – Paper Cold Cups:

For cold takeaway drinks, the wax coated paper cup offers extra rigidity and protection from leaks.

## The Bottom Liner...

**Whether you are using a paper cup for a hot or a cold drink, all paper cups feature a lining inside them to prevent liquid from leaking through the paper layers, while helping the cup retain its rigid form.**

This is where a polymer (plastic) or a wax lining may be used.

Common linings include PE (polyethylene) plastic, PLA (polylactic acid) bioplastic and paraffin wax.

**It's the cup lining and how they are bonded to the inside of the cup which really makes the difference when it comes to the ease with which takeaway cups can be recycled or disposed of in an environmentally friendly way.**





# So, can you recycle takeaway cups?

**Yes – the paper hot cups with a PE lining,  
which are widely used by coffee chains, can be  
recycled.**

There has been challenges along the way, but the good news is that more waste management operators, manufacturers, retailers and specialist recycling plants in the UK are now working together, investing in the disposal, collection and reprocessing infrastructure needed to offer this facility.

# YES



# Overcoming the Challenges

**Due to PE lined paper cups needing to be recycled through a specialist plant process (to separate the paper from the lining), the limited facilities available and lack of collection infrastructure has meant that in recent years the recycling market's own demand for disposable cups has been low.**

However, following substantial investment from retailers in the form of subsidies to the UK's main waste collection companies, the plants with the capability to recycle the cups – DS Smith, James Cropper and ACE UK, have recently stated that with an improved cup collection infrastructure, they alone could sustainably manage the recycling of all of the UK's disposable paper cups.



# Recycle-friendly Disposal

Although made with paper, disposable cups cannot be disposed of in a general paper recycling bin at home, work or anywhere else.

## This is due to:

- 1 the PE plastic lining inside the cup
- 2 the waste liquid and residue in the cup which contaminates the other paper
- 3 the fact that once the cups are co-mingled with other recyclable and non-recyclable waste streams, they are difficult for processors to isolate and are often too damaged to recover

Therefore, the **most efficient method of disposal**, to give us the best chance of improving the recycling rates of the cups, is to empty out any cup waste (including liquid, apple cores, crisp packets) and then collect the cups in a separate container away from other waste streams.

This is also the case with used 100% compostable paper cups.

## So where can we dispose of our cups using this or a similar method?

The disposal and collection infrastructure for recyclable and compostable cups is evolving right now to mirror our on-the-go consumption...

➡ **Buy coffee ➡ take on train ➡ dispose**

➡ **Buy coffee ➡ take to work ➡ dispose**

➡ **Buy coffee ➡ take back with me to dispose of when I buy coffee ➡ receive incentive**

**Go to Part 2 for more about Recycling Cups On-the-Go.**





# Recycling Cups On-the-Go







**Our love for the bean was highlighted in a recent report by the Environmental Audit Committee (EAC).**

**It detailed how the number of coffee shops in the UK is projected to increase from 20,000 to 30,000 by 2025.**

However, the report also highlighted the need for urgent action. Based on the current annual usage estimates sitting at around 2.5 billion disposable cups, the increase in coffee shops would equate to an additional 1 billion disposable cups used per year!

Due to how we consume drinks in disposable cups on-the-go, it is estimated that only 1 in every 400 are actually being recycled.

The EAC has called on the Government to introduce a specific target that would see all single-use cups that are disposed of in recycling bins, recycled by 2023.

**So, what can we as consumers do to help the situation?**

**And how are coffee chains and businesses supporting the drive for on-the-go recycling?**

**There are actions you can take today...**



# Choose Your Vessel

**The choices we all make are undoubtedly critical to reducing the sheer volume of disposable cups we send to landfill.**

**According to YouGov Plc 84% of hot drink buyers are still using disposable paper cups.**

## **Takeaway Drinks Vendors**

The sourcing of recyclable or compostable takeaway cups is a top priority for many vendors and retailers now.

Polystyrene plastic and foam cups are being replaced with recyclable PP and PET or compostable PLA plastic cups for cold drinks.

While for hot drinks, the favoured replacements are paper hot cups with a PE lining which can be recycled or with a PLA lining which can be commercially composted.

Retailers are improving their green credentials further by offering reusable cups.

**Then what?  
Refer to Part 3 for our Practical Guide to Cup Recycling.**

## **Consumers**

If you're not sitting in with your drink, look out for takeaway vendors who are working hard to consider the environment.

Ask questions about the cup you are about to receive. Can it be re-used, recycled or composted? What do they need you to do to help?

**#MySocialSpirit**





# Cup Recycling in Action



The latest industry developments and the consumer initiatives available to you right now.

## Manufacturers

### Re-design of disposable cups to improve ease of recycling

Packaging companies such as Frugalpak are leading the charge in the manufacture of recyclable paper cups, specifically designing cups made from recycled cardboard and featuring an easy to separate liner.

It is suggested that with separate cup disposal and collection methods available, these cups could also be recycled in general paper mills as well as the existing specialist recycling plants.

### Increase use of 100% recyclable or compostable materials

Alternatively, food service packaging manufacturers Vegware are producing cups made entirely from plant-based materials which can biodegrade in under 12 weeks in commercial composting facilities.

### Cup Recycling Bins and Cup Collection Containers

Working in partnership with supply chain and waste collection companies, UK bin manufacturers such as Glasdon now offer purposely designed cup bins with individual compartments for liquid waste, plastic lids and collection tubes to collect the disposable cups separately.







## Supply Chain and Consumer Initiatives

### Sourcing Cup Stocks

Many coffee chains and smaller independents are sourcing their cups more responsibly, which in turn reduces the volume of virgin resources required to produce the cups. Starbucks and McDonald's are investing in the development of a sustainable cup made from materials that are recyclable, compostable or both. While Starbucks currently only offer single-walled cups with a 100% recycled and recyclable cup sleeve.

### In-store Return and Cup Recycling Schemes

Coffee chain Costa have launched a cup recycling scheme throughout all of their stores with the target of recycling 500 million disposable cups a year by 2020.

And the best bit is that you can take a disposable paper cup of any size and any brand back into their stores and they will take care of the rest.

Even with an evolving infrastructure, in-store return and recycle schemes are a simple solution with the miniscule inconvenience of holding on to your cup for a little longer.

### Latte Levy

In the same way the charge for plastic carrier bags was introduced to make us stop, think and re-use – the proposed extra charge for paper cups is considered to be the catalyst that will also nudge on-the-go consumer behaviour.

### Reusable Rewards Schemes

The big coffee chains including Costa, Starbucks, Pret and Café Nero also offer discounts and other reward cards with stamps when you use a reusable cup.

### Workplace Drives

More and more organisations are introducing cup recycling bins and collection stations in the workplace, which makes total sense when you think about how many of us pick up a coffee on the way to work.

*Does your workplace offer this facility now? We look at workplace cup recycling initiatives and how to introduce one in Part 3.*



## Collection Services

### Improvements to the Bininfrastructure

There are now 12 waste management companies signed up to the official cup recycling scheme. This scheme is helping waste management companies offer cup recycling collection services to local authorities and businesses.

Find out who they are in Part 3.

## Reprocessing Plants



### Fibre Recovery and Polymerisation

During the process of fibre recovery, the paper and the polymer lining are separated, the cups are pulped and the floating polyethylene is skimmed off and separated from the denser paper fibre.

Through the process of polymerisation, new polymers derived from used paper cups are also being developed which can then be used in the manufacture of other products.

# The Cup Recycling Takeaways

*There is action we can all take right now.*

## Top Tips to Boost On-the-Go Cup Recycling



by Glasdon



### Tip 1: Choose to Refuse

Avoid polystyrene foam cups which can't be easily recycled and take hundreds of years to breakdown.

### Tip 2: Ask More Questions

If 'recycle your cups here' signs aren't loud and clear, ask more questions about the cup you are about to receive



### Tip 3: Switch to a Reusable Alternative



### Tip 4: Hold on to Your Cup!

Or place it in your bag... until you pass one of the coffee chains who already offer in-store recycling schemes



### Tip 5: Start a Workplace Scheme

Wherever you work, capture cups at the end of their on-the-go journey



Turn to Part 3 for a practical guide to introducing cup recycling programmes.





# Practical Guide to Recycling Cups in the Workplace





## Even when your main business activity isn't selling coffee, you can guarantee that disposable cups have been making their way into your offices and business premises!

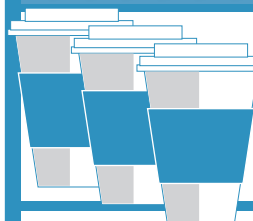
In fact, recent YouGov Plc figures revealed that **52% of consumers dispose of their coffee cup at work and that 88% of the nation would use a purpose-built cup recycling bin if one was available to them.\***

As individuals we're more switched on now to what we need to do, but what new processes and recycling programmes can we adopt in the workplace to support businesses in their 'zero waste to landfill' missions?

Introducing cup recycling into the workplace has many benefits including cost savings on your landfill waste disposal.

### Cup Recycling Facts

by Glasdon



By 2025  
**3.5 billion**  
disposable cups will  
be used every year  
in the UK

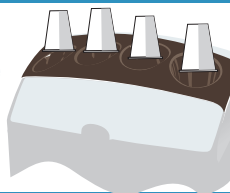


In 2018  
**1 in 400**  
**RECYCLED**



**PE Lined  
Paper Cups  
CAN BE RECYCLED**

**88%** of the  
nation would use a  
purpose-built cup  
recycling bin



**52%**  
of consumers dispose of  
their coffee cup at work



Costa coffee stores have  
opened up their Cup Bins to  
**ANY BRAND**



Paper Cups Should  
**NOT** Be Disposed of in  
a Paper Recycling Bin



**£** Recycling Cups can **SAVE**  
your organisation **£s**  
££££££££££

**12 UK Waste Management Companies now on board with  
Cup Recycling Scheme and it's growing!**



Sources  
YouGov Plc, on behalf of Veolia UK and Ireland (June 2017)  
[www.recycle-more.co.uk](http://www.recycle-more.co.uk)



## Step 1: The Waste Audit

**If you're in a facilities management, operations or a general management role you will be more than familiar with the waste management audit.**

Establishing the need for action and the type of action required is the first step towards implementing an efficient waste management programme.

If you work in facilities where single-use cups are used or where colleagues bring them into the workplace, you may have already identified the potential for a cup recycling programme.

A waste audit focused on quantifying the volume of disposable cups passing through the organisation will help to identify the type of solution required by indicating;

- the capacity of the collection container and number of containers needed,
- where the cup collection points should be positioned for optimum usage;
- and the collection service requirements.

Don't forget – if the majority of single-use cups on your site are generated through in-house takeaway facilities, you will need to also review the type of cups being used. Is there room for improvement to switch to a recyclable or biodegradable/compostable alternative? Go to Part 1 for info.

*Need advice or assistance  
with your waste audit?  
Free no obligation help is  
available here.*

## Step 2: Identifying a Cup Collection Service

The next step is to talk to your existing waste contractor or investigate whether any of the 12 waste management companies (WMCs) offer collection services for cup recycling or commercial composting in your area.

This is a developing infrastructure and so even if you're existing waste contractor does not offer a cup collection service right now you still have options.



Request your existing WMC explore the service with the Cup Recycling Scheme administrators - Valpak



Explore the opportunity with an official Cup Recycling Scheme WMC for this individual service – see current list below.



### Cup Recycling Scheme - WMC's

Veolia	all UK except Highlands
Grundon	London and Home Counties
Simply Cups	England
First Mile	Collection (London) / Post Back Scheme (UK)
Select Environmental Services	All RG postcodes, excluding RG28, All SL postcodes, excluding SL0, SL7, SL8 and SL9, Guildford, Oxford
Paper Round BPR Group	London and Brighton
Bywaters	Service all of London and will service nationally on a case by case basis
Suez UK	See website for details
Biffa	Central London, Manchester
Helistrat	London, Worcester, Leicester, Derby, South Coast, Exeter, Bristol, Brighton, North East, Bolton, Manchester, Scotland, Scottish Borders & West Scotland
Printed Cup Company	England
Cawleys	Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire

Source: [recycle-more.co.uk](https://recycle-more.co.uk). August 2018

**Your chosen WMC will advise on how they will collect the cups from you. Some companies will provide biodegradable sacks or boxes for you to transfer the cups into ensuring that when they are emptied out of the cup bin they remain stored away from other waste streams to avoid any cross contamination.**

### Step 3: Finding the Right Solution

#### Cup Recycling Bin, Collection Stacker or Recycling Station?

The most effective way to recycle used disposable paper cups is to ensure they are emptied and disposed of into a separate container away from other waste.

Industry leaders - Veolia, recommend solutions which can incorporate a 'tip, flip and stack' method of disposal, whereby any remaining liquid or other contaminant can be tipped away or removed into a separate container, the cup can be flipped over and stacked neatly upside down to aid further drying.

Look for solutions that are specifically designed for the appropriate application or location:

- Compact solutions such as the Eco Nexus® Cup Recycling Station for front of house or areas of high footfall and communal areas
- Wall mounted collection tubes such as the Centrum™ Cup Stacker for back of house or kitchen collection

Will you require:

- Dedicated cup recycling bins and stations to take a higher volume of cups?
- Or a space-saving multi-purpose recycling solution that will take cups, but also features compartments for other types of waste?

The initial waste audit should also be of assistance in identifying the capacity of container and the floorspace available.

And if you are not sure or can't find what you need, we can tailor solutions to your requirements. Talk to us today.

### Step 4: Maximise Usage

#### Positioning

The audit will also help you identify where your cup recycling containers should be located, internally and externally, for maximum visibility and accessibility to maximise their on-the-go usage.

Car parks, entrance halls, reception areas, main corridors and communal kitchen facilities are all popular locations for frequent disposal.

#### Communication is Key

Think about how you will ensure employees, customers and visitors know about your cup recycling programme and how to dispose of their cup in the correct bins.

Launch your programme through internal communication channels such as email, intranet, information boards, payslips, newsletters and posters.

Use your launch communications as a way of sharing knowledge about the importance of recycling paper cups and also how it helps the organisation achieve its environmental goals.

Indicate where your cup bins are stationed and explain how the key to improving the recycling rates of cups is in the way they are disposed of separately to other waste.

Clear signage around the bins will also help boost internal awareness of your programme. With disposable cup bins and recycling stations by Glasdon you also have the option to add standard signage and graphics or to design your own through our Personalisation Service.

Don't just limit your communications to inside the organisation. Shout about your efforts through press releases to local media, blog posts on your organisation's website and through your social media profiles.

### Step 5: Emptying and Sorting

The frequency in which emptying is required will depend on the volume of cups you expect to collect. It may take a short period of time to assess and adjust routines to the best times of emptying for your organisation.





## Step 6: Explore other Opportunities

### Partnerships

If you're a small business or the volume of takeaway cups being disposed of in your organisation is low and a workplace scheme isn't deemed viable, you can still take action to divert the cups away from landfill.

Why not join forces with other businesses nearby and create a collaborative cup recycling programme sharing collection points, emptying schedules and contractor costs.

If the cups that end up in your offices, can be pinpointed back to one or two of the team's favourite coffee shops – talk to them about how together you can improve the recycling of the cups. They may already be providing it!



*Looking to introduce a workplace  
cup recycling scheme?*

*We can help.*

*Talk to us today  
01253 600410*



# CONCLUSION

The cup recycling infrastructure is growing. What changes will you or your organisation make today that will benefit tomorrow?

As manufacturers, suppliers, consumers, waste contractors and re-processors we all have a part to play in stopping disposable cups from needlessly being sent to landfill.

The means to do this are here, so let's get started.

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This eBook was brought to you by Glasdon.  
We are a UK manufacturer with over 50 years' experience designing products that help to improve all of our environments.



[www.glasdon.com](http://www.glasdon.com)

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