



Leeds By Example

Impact Report Summary 2019





Executive summary

We consume more food and drink ‘on-the-go’ in the UK than ever before, getting through thirteen billion plastic bottles, nine billion cans and almost three billion coffee cups each year. Yet the much-needed recycling infrastructure for all this packaging used and disposed of on our streets has not kept up with demand.

Only **2 out of every 5 local authorities** offer recycling on-the-go (which is defined as recycling outside of the home). The material collected by those that do is often too poor quality to be recycled. Local authorities need support to create behaviour change through infrastructure and communications that encourage the public to use on-the-go recycling bins effectively.

Hubbub and **Ecosurety** decided to test different approaches to recycling on-the-go and develop a high-profile, multi-stakeholder campaign that aimed to find scalable solutions to the problem. Hubbub secured funding, identified Leeds as a suitable city and undertook the development and project management of the campaign. Leeds By Example was launched in October 2018, and the first phase ran for six months.

25 brands, manufacturers and retailers came on board as funding partners, and a range of local partners were agreed, including **Leeds City Council**. The aim was to introduce new recycling infrastructure across Leeds City Centre, backed up by a high-profile communications campaign and a strong, recognisable campaign brand. We worked collaboratively with 29 partners across the city, testing a range of solutions and interventions which were independently measured and evaluated.

The campaign ambitions were:

1. **Make a connection** – raise awareness of on-the-go packaging and inform the public and employees in Leeds City Centre of which items can be recycled on-the-go.
2. **Changing behaviour** - nudge people to recycle their on-the-go packaging in the correct recycling bins.
3. **Making a transformation** – leave a lasting legacy of on-the-go recycling for Leeds City Centre whilst creating a collaboration of groups to tackle the issue, and to propose a new method for recycling on-the-go nationwide.

124 new recycling points and new technology was introduced in the square mile of Leeds City Centre, including:



35 new on-street recycling bins for plastic and cans, brightly coloured with playful messaging



15 litter bins reskinned as recycling bins



Five new on-street coffee cup recycling bins, brightly coloured with playful messaging



44 new indoor coffee cup bins for managed spaces, brightly coloured with playful messaging



Seven recycle reward machines tested in different locations with different rewards



In-store coffee cup collections at 29 city centre stores



Four plastic and can bins also introduced in Seacroft a suburban area in East Leeds



The We Recycle app, developed by OPRL, was tested for the first time in Leeds to help the public locate on-the-go recycling for drinks packaging.



All plastic bottles, cans and cups were recycled in the north of England.

A range of communications were tested to support this new infrastructure, to ensure that the public in Leeds were aware of the campaign and saw consistent communications with a clear call to action.

Communications included:



Media and PR campaign with **205 pieces of coverage**



Social media campaign using the hashtag #LeedsByExample with a **reach of 4.6 million**



Digital advertising sharing key messages



Supporting messaging in managed spaces such as workplaces, retailers, shopping centres and universities



Campaign messages shared through a range of national and local partners



Messaging on recycling bins: 'Empty plastic and cans, nowt else' and #LeedsByExample, If in doubt, leave it out'



41 public engagement events, using interventions such as bins that burp and blow bubbles, a 'Re-Cycler' cargo bike that offers rewards for recycling, a seating area made of recycled plastic and two public installations.

Key results, findings and insights are outlined below.



On-street recycling bins

65,000 cans and 55,000 bottles were recycled.¹

- Average **contamination rate of 39%** for plastic and can bins, which is **above the national average**. There was a wide range of contamination levels depending on location, from 7-56%.
- A survey of over 900 people found the number of people who said they disposed of target material in a general litter bin **decreased from 77% to 63%**.
- The number of people who said they disposed of target material in a **recycling bin increased from 17% to 32%**.
- Simply changing the messaging and colour of the bin has a significant impact on the amount of recycling collected; 15 litter bins were reskinned as recycling bins which **increased target material in them from 42% to 57%**.
- Dedicated recycling bins are more effective than 'reskinned' litter bins; **37% versus 43%** contamination, though this is dependent upon location. Reskinned yellow bins captured almost as much target material.
- The public respond to **visual cues** like icons and aperture shape.
- **More than half** of people we surveyed had noticed the yellow plastic/ can recycling bins, demonstrating the value of brightly coloured infrastructure with clear, distinctive messaging.
- The quality of **recycling reduces during holiday periods** when footfall rises, with more people who are not 'regulars' in the city centre who are not familiar with the messaging and infrastructure.
- People pay less attention when in a rush and our observations showed **people spend under two seconds at a bin**. Sites next to bus stops, by

pedestrian crossings or in Seacroft performed better than where people are rushing, such as outside the train station.

- **Visibility helps.** The top performing bins were visible from afar, often on the edge of the pavement with bright colours and messaging helping them to stand out.
- **The type of litter bin may make a difference:** the worst performing bins were next to 'belly bins' which have handles that need to be touched to be opened. The best performing recycling bins were next to litter bins with open apertures on every side, making them easy to use and therefore possibly reducing the contamination of the recycling bins.

Cup recycling

Almost 600,000 coffee cups were recycled.¹ 53,000 from on-street bins, 236,000 from managed locations such as workplaces and universities and 311,000 from retailers.²



- The average contamination rate of **on-street cup bins was 46%**, the main contaminant was lids.
- **Cup bins (indoor and on-street) had the highest contamination rates** of all of the recycling units trialled in the campaign.
- **Cup bins collected the most target material** of any collection method, suggesting high demand for cup bins around high footfall areas like transport hubs.
- **Cup bins reduced contamination of plastic and can recycling bins**, especially in areas where lots of cups are disposed of such as around transport hubs.
- **On-street cup bins that require the public to stack their cups should be avoided** as they are likely to overflow and cause litter.
- **Liquid contamination was minimal** and did not prevent any cups from being recycled.
- **The public are generally confused about whether cups can be recycled**, so more public awareness is

needed. 32% of people we surveyed in January 2019 thought cups should go in the mixed recycling bin, 30% thought they should go in litter bins, whereas in fact they should be recycled separately.

- **The public feel uncomfortable recycling a cup in a different store** to the one in which it was purchased and more public awareness is needed to promote this.



Recycle reward machines

Seven recycle reward machines were trialled, collecting 15,400 items for recycling (more than half were cans).

- **Recycle reward machines collect very high-quality material** with less than 10% contamination, although some indoor recycling bins were just as effective.
- **95% of 396 people surveyed liked the idea of recycle reward machines** (39% had used one); people would be motivated to use them if there were more of them around.
- Usage was mainly motivated by a belief in recycling than financial rewards. **Only 5% of the reward vouchers were redeemed** and removing the financial reward altogether didn't affect usage.
- **Financial rewards were more popular with a student audience**, where 10% of vouchers were redeemed.
- **Location is important.** The most popular machines were very visible, often from all sides. They are more effective in specific closed-loop locations where people buy, consume and dispose of food and drink packaging such as a large campus or food hall.
- Recycle reward machines collected significantly **better-quality recycling but did not collect as much quantity** as the on-street bins.
- At **£5,000** each the units were relatively expensive in comparison to equivalent bins.

¹ This is likely to be an under-estimate as not all managed space recycling was captured.

² Only 60% of retailers provided data and therefore this is an under-estimate.

Recycling in managed spaces

Managed space recycling is generally better quality than on-street, but on-street recycling collects larger quantities.

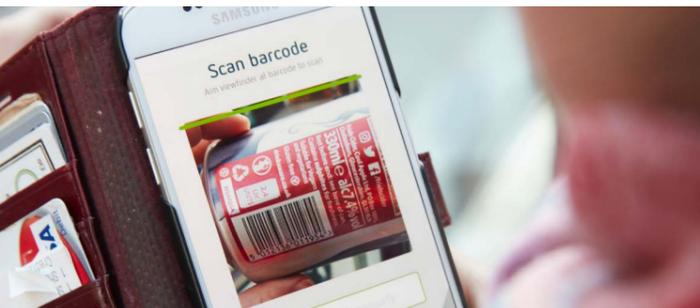


- Engaging managed spaces such as shopping centres, universities and workplaces to share communications helps amplify the call to action and ensures consistent messages across the city centre.
- 91% of managed spaces agreed the campaign had helped them engage their staff, students or customers in recycling.

We Recycle app

Despite people saying in surveys that they would use an app to help them to recycle, the We Recycle app was downloaded and used by very few people despite being promoted across multiple channels.

- There were 284 downloads and 225 packaging scans in Leeds between October 2018 and March 2019.
- Of these packaging scans, 94% took place during the launch period in October. This suggests that after downloading the app, people did not continue to use it.



Communications

82% of people surveyed recalled hearing or seeing something about the campaign.

- The number of people who had seen or heard anything about recycling in Leeds City Centre almost doubled from 23% to 44% during the campaign period.



- The hashtag #LeedsByExample was well received and helped give the campaign a distinctive brand.



- Consistent messages on social media supported the physical communications around Leeds City Centre
- Visualising the issue and offering local statistics helps to engage people on recycling and change behaviour, as does making recycling fun. These were more effective than incentives.



The main conclusion from the trial are outlined below.



Collaboration is key to raising awareness when introducing recycling

The campaign was a unique combination of corporate partners, a local authority, the waste industry and local organisations in Leeds. This allowed various partners to input expertise, facilitate the various interventions and amplify key messages, as opposed to all of the onus being on the local authority to tackle this issue alone.



Consistent communications are crucial

We know people are confused about recycling and that they spend under two seconds at a bin. We aimed for clear, simple and consistent communications from the point of purchase to the point of disposal. This led to almost twice as many people recycling their food and drink packaging during the campaign period, and 82% of the public in Leeds City Centre remembered seeing something about the campaign.



Quality of recycling can vary and is affected by bin positioning

Quality is generally worse in high footfall areas and during school holidays, especially where people are new to recycling infrastructure and communications. The most effective recycling bins were positioned where the public had more time to take in messaging and communications, demonstrating the importance of bin positioning. Leeds By Example and previous Hubbub trials have shown that recycling bins should always be placed next to litter bins, to minimise contamination.



Recycle reward machines are popular with the public

Although few people redeemed the money-off vouchers, they are most effective in closed-loop, managed spaces with high footfall, where people buy, consume and dispose of food and drink packaging.



Cup collections are important

600,000 cups were collected during the trial. In general, cup collection yields higher quality in managed spaces, although they also work well in high footfall areas such as around transport hubs. They continued to be a major contaminant in plastic and can recycling, demonstrating the need to provide cup collection facilities and to further educate the public about cup recycling.



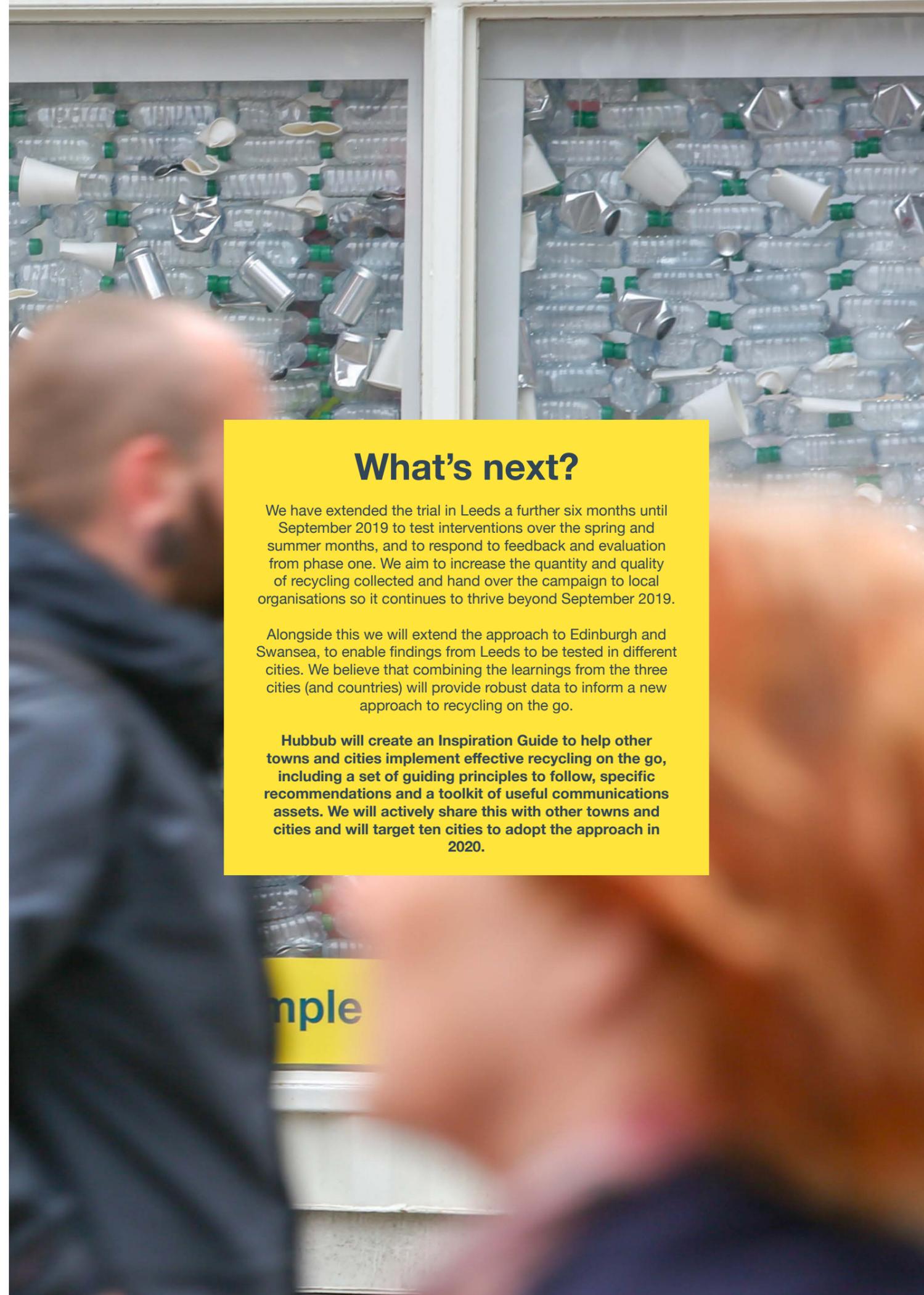
Consistent monitoring

To date there has been limited comparable research to measure the effectiveness of on-the-go recycling. Leeds By Example provides some robust research on this issue, but further insight is needed to understand the impact of recycling in different locations and to establish a robust set of recommendations for other towns and cities.



Make recycling simple, visual and fun

The trial showed that the public respond to playfulness, bold messaging and interventions that visualise the issue and make recycling fun. These were more effective than incentives.



What's next?

We have extended the trial in Leeds a further six months until September 2019 to test interventions over the spring and summer months, and to respond to feedback and evaluation from phase one. We aim to increase the quantity and quality of recycling collected and hand over the campaign to local organisations so it continues to thrive beyond September 2019.

Alongside this we will extend the approach to Edinburgh and Swansea, to enable findings from Leeds to be tested in different cities. We believe that combining the learnings from the three cities (and countries) will provide robust data to inform a new approach to recycling on the go.

Hubbub will create an Inspiration Guide to help other towns and cities implement effective recycling on the go, including a set of guiding principles to follow, specific recommendations and a toolkit of useful communications assets. We will actively share this with other towns and cities and will target ten cities to adopt the approach in 2020.



The Re-Cycler

Get rewards for Re-cycling on the go

- 1 Finish your drink, come say hello, we'll recycle your packaging on-the-go.
- 2 We'll reward you with a gift in a flash, forget your wallet we don't take cash.
- 3 Spread the word, just tweet & share, #LeedsByExample everywhere.

The Re-Cycler



Leeds By Example and the overall Recycling on the Go initiative is backed by: Alupro, Asda, Association of Convenience Stores, Ball Beverage Packaging Europe, British Plastics Federation, Bunzl, Caffè Nero, Coca-Cola GB, Costa Coffee, Co-op, Crown Packaging, Danone, Ecosurety, Greggs, Highland Spring, Innocent, Klöckner Pentaplast (kp), Lucozade Ribena Suntory, Marks and Spencer, McDonald's UK, Morrisons, PepsiCo UK, Pret A Manger, Starbucks and Shell.

Affiliate partners are: Cromwell Polythene, RECOUP and WRAP.

Local partners are: Forge Recycling, HW Martin, Leeds City Council and Zero Waste Leeds.



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