

Reduction and Recycling Plan 2023-2025

Quarter 3 2023 Progress Report

[Publish Date]



1 Background

The Reduction and Recycling Plan (RRP) is a requirement set by the GLA to ensure all London authorities are in general conformity with the London Environment Strategy. The current RRP includes environmental metrics drawn from the previous reporting cycle (2018-2022) along with a cross-cutting action plan drawn from our Strategic Plan and Tower Hamlets Waste Management Strategy. It covers a two-year period from April 2023 to the end of March 2025 and sets out our ambition to achieve a 23% recycling rate.

The main focus of the RRP is to move waste up the waste hierarchy by providing residents and businesses in the borough with greater access to services that will allow and encourage them to waste less, reuse and recycle more. This will contribute to the council's efforts to mitigate the impacts of climate change by reducing the carbon footprint of the council's waste management services.

Key Initiatives within our RRP include:

- Recycling route optimisation to deliver more efficient and effective collections from all households.
- Over £2 million investment, to roll-out of flats recycling improvement project across 2160 blocks of flats.
- Focus on making sure people have access to recycling bins and bags.
- Re-focused communication campaigning to leverage more community engagement and behaviour change. To work with community groups, faith groups, schools, mosques and local media to increase waste reduction, re-use and recycling activity in all households.

The RRP also looks to support the achievement of the council's air quality action plan objectives through the incorporation of the council's plans to green the waste services vehicle fleet.

The RRP is key to delivery of Strategic Plan “Priority 7: A clean and green future”.

Priority Theme	Pledge/Policy	Year	Annual deliverable
Priority 7: A Clean and Green Future	Work with the service to deliver further improvements, including education on recycling	2023-24	Deliver a programme of behaviour change initiatives including the flat recycling project, the recycling champions network, a recycling communication campaign and waste reduction, re-use events and workshops

[Read the full RRP](#)

2 Recycling performance

The figures below show the recycling performance from April to October 2023. November and December figures are not available yet. This report will be updated in mid-January 2024 to include November’s figures. Quarter 3 figures will be available from mid-February 2024.

The household recycling rate from April to October 2023 was 16.04%. The total household waste collected was 53,949.39 tonnes, of which 8,666.07 tonnes were recycled, reused or composted.

The Local Authority Collected Waste (LACW) recycling rate includes all waste collected and recycled by the Council from household and non-household sources. The LACW recycling rate from April to October was 16.27%. The total LACW waste collected was 63,946.91 tonnes, of which 10,404.99 tonnes were recycled, reused or composted.

The main aspects affecting our recycling rate are:

- The waste service strike that took place from Monday 18th to 26th September 2023. During this time only 5.42 tonnes of dry mixed recycling were collected. Consequently, the recycling rate in September dropped to 13.58% and has affected the overall recycling rate for the year to date.

- The average contamination rate in our dry mixed recycling up to October is 28.4% compared to 27.26% in 2022-23.
- The residual waste tonnage increases in higher proportion every year, compared to the dry mixed recycling, which only grows marginally. The property growth has a direct impact on the increase of the household residual waste generated. The total number of dwellings given by WasteDataFlow in 2023-24 is 144,240, whereas, in 2022-23, this number was 140,210. This is a 2.87% increase from last year. It is estimated that we are collecting 130 tonnes more of residual waste from households every month this year compared to 2022-23.
- The Government's new regulations for the disposal of upholstered seating containing POPs (Persistent Organic Pollutants) establish that these items can no longer be recycled and need to be sent to Energy from Waste (EfW). It is estimated that about 111 tonnes per month is being diverted to the residual waste stream, instead of being sent to a recycling facility.

During October there was a considerable increase in the amount of dry mixed recycling collected. Typically, the average amount of dry mixed recycling collected per week is 270 tonnes. However, the average in October was 281.61 tonnes per week. This is approximately 11 tonnes more per week, which could indicate early signs of recovery.

Annual totals including (a) Household waste per head, (b) kgs per household of collected residual waste and (c) kg per head of avoidable (edible) food waste will be reported in Quarter 4.

3 Priorities and actions

Ref	Action and why it is important	Status (RAG)	Achievements and progress - Quarter 3
#1	<p>Improving recycling infrastructure for blocks of flats and estates and tackling contamination through implementing Flats Recycling Package (FRP) interventions.</p> <p>Based on best practise research the project is providing essential infrastructure and addressing inequality in service provision. Many blocks require recycling bins or additional recycling bins in convenient locations, to provide enough storage capacity and enable residents to use the service. Updated lockable recycling bins will reduce contamination. Signage and bin stickers will provide constant visual information about how to recycle, what not to put into rubbish bins and how to arrange a bulky waste collection.</p>	<p style="background-color: #92d050; color: #000; text-align: center; padding: 5px;">RAG Green</p>	<p>Officers are surveying blocks of flats and producing reports with bespoke recommendations for managing agents to agree before roll-out of the changes is made.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 925 will have received interventions including new recycling bins, additional recycling bins and/or signage in 2023/24. 2170 is the target by the end of 2024. • Interventions are due to be delivered to 330 blocks by the end of Quarter 4 2023/24 increasing storage capacity at blocks by 61%. • An additional 440 blocks are due to be surveyed before the end of Q4 2023/24. • Representatives from 37 managing agents have met with the project team and attended site visits. 5 caretaker training sessions have been delivered with 60 caretakers receiving training. • Performance monitoring is scheduled to commence in January 2024 and will run until May 2024. <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">  <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 150px;"> <p>Left: recycling and rubbish signage designs for above bins</p> </div> </div>
#2	<p>Increasing participation in the kerbside food waste collection service through re-promotion of the service.</p>	<p style="background-color: #ffc107; color: #000; text-align: center; padding: 5px;">RAG Yellow</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officers carried out new participation monitoring in September-October. The participation rate on a weekly basis was found to be between 8-26%. • Previous survey work was taken to identify the location and number of low-rise properties, this data is being cleansed.

	Food waste collected for composting contributes to our recycling rate Participation needs to be improved.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A communications plan is in development which will include targeted repromotion of the service in the new financial year with 7000 properties leafleted in Quarter 1 and 2 and a target of 2333 of these properties signed up.
#3	Rolling out food waste collection service to purpose-built blocks of flats. Food waste collections from all properties will be mandatory by April 2027.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The space for food waste containers is being identified as part of the flats recycling project in readiness for service expansion. A service model for flats is in the process of being designed using best practice from other boroughs and lessons learnt from our own pilot.
#4	Reviewing the kerbside food and garden waste collection service with a view to collect food waste from kerbside properties fully separate from garden waste Previous Government reform guidance suggested that separate collections would be necessary for food and garden waste, however more recent guidance indicates this is no longer the case.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government's Simpler Recycling reforms were published in October 2023. We have responded to the closed consultation on the intention to incorporate an exemption to the regulations to allow the co-collection of food and garden and are awaiting a response.
#5	Reviewing our waste and recycling collection service policies to increase recycling		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following the Government's Simpler Recycling reforms being published in October and review of current policies, we are in the process of drafting new policy proposals to be complete in Quarter 4.
#6	Review and expand garden waste collection service to increase recycling Garden waste composting contributes to our household recycling rate.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We currently have a garden waste service for houses. Simpler Recycling reform is likely to require us to expand the service to ground floor flats with gardens on-request by April 2026. • We will look to identify the number of ground floor flats with gardens in Quarter 4.

<p>#7</p>	<p>Improving service delivery: Flats above shops (FAS)</p> <p>Many flats above shops do not have access to a convenient recycling service.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GIS mapping has been completed and we are cleansing the data to estimate the number of FAS. • Work is being carried out to re-introduce single use recycling bag deliveries. • Time banded collections are to be rolled out in July 2024. • The lead officer is developing a Project Initiation Document. • Simpler Recycling reforms mean that we will also need to provide a food waste collection service to FAS by April 2027.
<p>#8</p>	<p>Expansion of commercial waste service to include food waste and promote recycling collection service</p> <p>Commercial recycling and food waste contributes to our LACW recycling rate. Business fly-tipping in domestic recycling bins contributes to contamination and uses residential waste storage capacities.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Commercial Waste Manager joined the Waste Operations Team in Quarter 3. • The 2024/25 Commercial Waste Business plan will show the team engaging with the Enforcement team on a range of projects, which will tackle the issue of contamination of recycling sacks and black sack abuse. This will have an impact on the use of the recycling service as well as increasing the overall recycling rate in the borough. • The team will also be visiting multiple businesses in the borough who purely use the general waste service only, on the basis they will encourage recycling and of course the environmental and cost benefits. • Management will also be benchmarking the price point for the recycling services as the current price for recycling does not offer a wide enough cost benefit versus general waste. • As part of a major market share project the Sales officers will be signing new customers across the borough in 24/25, on the basis that each customer must take up the recycling service if using the general waste service. The team will also be issuing new marketing material for all collection services mainly aimed at increasing the uptake of recycling services. The website will also promote the use of the recycling services and the benefits associated. • As part of a major shake-up of the recycling service offering an incentive scheme will be introduced during the 24/25 financial year introducing an Environmental Partnership between the businesses and the council, which will offer recycling

			audits as well as some form of recognition for the business in the form of a sticker or certificate to be displayed in the premises.
#9	Improve recycling sack distribution		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A plan has been developed to deliver recycling sacks to low-rise properties and flats above shops from April next year. • Reusable recycling bags continue to be distributed on request as part of the Flats Recycling Project and stalls/events. • Continuing messages to encourage loose recycling.
#10	<p>Championing food waste reduction initiatives</p> <p>Contributes to our Strategic Plan target to deliver at least 32 events/activities in 2023/2024</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have been participating in the Pan-London food waste campaign which aims to reduce food waste and encourage lower carbon diets. Results to be reviewed in Quarter 4. • The engagement team engaged residents in conversation about food waste reduction at events and stalls, providing “Love food, hate waste” tips cards and food package clips and delivered one food waste reduction workshop. • LIF funded ‘food waste to soil pilot’ in the Columbia Road area due to commence in Quarter 4. The pilot is an innovative Circular Economy project which will work with high street businesses (10) and THH residents (52 units) to convert their food waste into soil. The soil will then be redistributed to local gardening groups on the THH estates.

Right: Residents take part in a “Pickles and paneer” food waste reduction workshop.



#11

Reuse, repair and recycling activities and events

Contributes to our Strategic Plan target to deliver at least 32 events/activities in 2023/2024

- 907 residents have been engaged, with 13 recycling and waste reduction information stalls at community events and Idea Stores.
- 42 staff attended a pod session about recycling and sustainability.
- 6 swap clothing and book swap events have been held. On average 52 people attend each event. Any items not taken are collected by the charity TR Aid. 4 of these swap events included clothes mending workshops.



Above (left to right). Residents take part in a clothing swap, residents learn repair skills at a workshop teaching clothes mending, and a resident plays a recycling game at a stall at the Festival of Communities.

#12

Promoting waste reduction and recycling within the local community through the Recycling Champions Scheme

Strategic Plan target to recruit 35 new champions and undertake engagement via 1 dedicated event each quarter including a thank you event and Materials Recovery Facility tours and bi-monthly newsletters.

- There are 104 recycling champions across the borough. 35 new champions have joined the network so far this year. All recycling champions receive communications materials to promote the services locally.
- Bi-monthly newsletters keep recycling champions up to date about events and other initiatives and offer volunteering opportunities.
- A recycling sorting facility tour was attended by 8 champions in Quarter 1.
- Recycling champions have volunteered at 5 events, contributing approximately 132 hours of service.
- Recycling Champions social and workshop was held 8th December. 24 champions attended. Activities included a recycling quiz, a 'world café' activity to determine champions interests and motivations, and food waste minimisation themed refreshments (reusable equipment rented from Library of Things). Feedback collected will be used to improve the how we support and work with our champions.



Above (left to right): Recycling champions attend a recycling facility tour/education session and participate in a workshop. Right: champions volunteer at a clothes swap event.



<p>#13</p>	<p>Education and behaviour change – Schools recycling programme</p> <p>Recycling and food waste collected from schools contributes to the household recycling rate.</p> <p>Education of students will help increase recycling now and in the future.</p> <p>Contributes to our Strategic Plan target to deliver at least 32 events/activities in 2023/2024</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 recycling education sessions have been delivered this year with 296 children engaged. • The engagement team are visiting all schools and undertaking an audit of recycling and food waste facilities with the aim to help schools improve their own recycling performance. 32 schools have been audited so far. <div> </div> <div> <p>(Left): A recycling session at an assembly at Marner Primary School</p> </div>
<p>#14</p>	<p>Expand locations for the recycling of small WEEE and batteries</p> <p>WEEE and small batteries should not be disposed of in the rubbish or recycling bins and this will provide convenient opportunities for recycling.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial agreement from Swan Housing and Gateway to trial WEEE and batteries in reception/concierge office areas on estates. Galliard Homes and Pinnacle have also expressed an interest. • Review of batteries and WEEE containers at Idea Stores complete. Bins have been replaced where necessary.
<p>#15</p>	<p>Expand opportunities for residents to reuse and recycle textiles</p> <p>Waste prevention and reuse are at the top of the waste hierarchy and will contribute to reducing municipal waste.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have partnered with the charity TR Aid to promote their on-request doorstep textile service. This provides an additional service without the need for more textile banks. A soft launch via social media channels was delivered in November. Further communications to continue in January with a promotional event in February. • 311 people have attended clothing and book swap events across the borough. 4 swap events included clothes mending workshops.

				<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Left: Traid doorstep collection service is being promoted</p> </div>
#16	<p>Collaboration with faith groups and targeted/local media to promote recycling and waste reduction</p> <p>Improved communication and engagement to improve recycling quality and quantity.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translation of recycling animation video into Bengali has been commissioned. • Discussions have commenced with Faith Action about organising a focus group on recycling. • Further work will take place in due course. 	
#17	<p>Directory of repair / circular economy companies in the borough to promote/work with (any reuse schemes, refill shops, container reuse)</p> <p>Waste prevention and reuse are at the top of the waste hierarchy and will contribute to reducing municipal waste.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directory of locations for online map created. GiS and Google maps options being explored. • Webpage for waste reduction has been drafted. • New webpage with map to be completed in Quarter 4. 	
#18	<p>Promoting reduction of single use plastics</p> <p>Waste prevention and reuse are at the top of the waste hierarchy and will contribute to reducing municipal waste.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plastic and waste reduction festive season messages have gone out on X (formerly Twitter), Facebook and LinkedIn in the lead up to Christmas. Examples: 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. https://twitter.com/TowerHamletsNow/status/1737837328377495620?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Etweet

- https://twitter.com/TowerHamletsNow/status/1737112838991471031?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Etweet



Support local markets and greengrocers and make a more sustainable choice by buying fruit and vegetables without plastic wrap. 🥕 🥔 🥬

Small changes can lead to a big difference! 🌍 ✅

For tips to reduce waste over the festive period and beyond → orlo.uk/Vu14h



2:09 pm · 19 Dec 2023 · 601 Views

- https://twitter.com/TowerHamletsNow/status/1736763009106681905?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Etweet

- We use reusable cups and cutlery at our events.

#19	<p>Improving waste reduction and recycling arrangements in new developments</p> <p>Providing responses to planning applications and carrying out pre-occupation site visits ensure that waste facilities at new developments are fit for purpose in-line with our SPD and enable good waste and recycling management.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical Officer role dedicated to waste planning was filled and the new officer started on 29 August. Since this time feedback has been provided on 86 planning applications and 8 pre-occupation site visits have been conducted.
#20	<p>Promoting waste reduction and Circular Economy principles in the business community</p> <p>Waste prevention and reuse are at the top of the waste hierarchy and will contribute to reducing municipal waste</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LIF funded small-scale ‘food waste to soil pilot’ in the Columbia Road area due to commence in Quarter 4. The pilot is an innovative Circular Economy project which will work with high street businesses (10) and THH residents (52 units) to convert their food waste into soil. The soil will then be redistributed to local gardening groups on the THH estates.
#21	<p>Greening the waste collection fleet</p> <p>Electrification of the fleet will reduce emissions and help to improve air quality.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The electrification of the fleet is delayed due to insufficient infrastructure and uncertainty about the number of sites including Commercial Road and Blackwall Depot. • Electrification of the smaller fleet will begin in 2024, with progress depending on the number of chargers installed and the availability of suitable vehicles, as not all types are readily available on the market yet. The electrification of larger vehicles, like HGVs, is planned for around 2030 or shortly after, subject to infrastructure development and funding.

4 Other actions and progress

4.1 Recycling communications campaign

The "Let's rethink it" recycling campaign ran throughout 2023 with the final phase scheduled for January 2024.

January-March 2023

- [Dedicated campaign landing page](#)
- Endorsement message from Mayor of Tower Hamlets in the residents newsletter and information shared in the member's bulletin encouraging councillors to get involved and support the campaign.
- [Our East End \(March edition\)](#) – launched campaign in the magazine.
- A sturdy A5 leaflet for residents to keep on their fridge was distributed alongside Our East End, which is delivered to every home in the borough.
- Visuals on outdoor advertising spaces, digital screens and social media pages, supported with programmatic advertising targeted at people who live in flats in Tower Hamlets.
- Social media survey to test knowledge of recycling, identified aerosols and plastic items has the most common items not recycled and food waste has the most common contaminate.

April-August 2023

- Visuals were rolled out across corporate outdoor advertising sites, social channels and programmatic advertising.
- Around the same time the phase 2 visuals were rolled out, the campaign ran a second survey online to compare awareness levels. It found a positive shift in awareness of what items can be recycled but a mixed response for what items can't be recycled, showing that more work needs to be done in the latter area.
- [Our East End \(June edition\)](#) – article about why it's important to recycle properly and what you can put in the recycling bin.

September-December 2023

- [Our East End \(September edition\)](#) – article "Can I recycle this plastic?" focused on educating residents on which plastics to recycle and which needed to be put in the waste bin.
- November – ongoing: programmatic advertising about which plastics can be recycled, outdoor park banners and digital outdoor advertising on which plastics can be recycled.

- In December communications materials were adapted to support waste reduction messages on social media over the festive period.
- [Our East End \(December edition\)](#) – article about recycling over the festive season.

January-March 2024

- The final phase of this campaign will feature an [animation about the journey of recycling](#) once it is collected and focuses on the contamination message and why it is important for people to get this right – this will be promoted.
- Translating video about what happens after recycling is collected to Bengali.
- Social media reinforcing which plastics can be recycled and thank you messages to encourage people to start the year off right with new recycling habits.
- Campaign evaluation and work to develop a communication plan with new messaging for 2024-25, with continued use of communication materials/branding.

4.2 Improving engagement with managing agents

- In Quarter 4 we are working with ReLondon on an enforcement protocol and development of our policies to include a workshop with managing agents.

4.3 Route optimisation

- All routes have been checked and reviewed by the service and sent to an external partner to make the changes to frequencies, provide draft outputs for the new routes (maps) and edit this data in a format which can be uploaded onto Whitespace. The final draft of the route optimisation plan is being drafted for early January with a phased rollout of new routes; completion is expected at the end of this financial year.

