

Improving recycling in flats

Freya Rose, Advisor
Local Authority Support
freya.rose@relondon.gov.uk



Who is ReLondon?

ReLondon is a partnership of the Mayor of London and London Boroughs to improve waste and resource management in the capital and accelerate our transition to a low carbon circular city;

- Helping **local authorities** to explore, test and roll out initiatives designed to reduce the city's waste footprint
- Supporting London's **small and medium sized businesses** to adopt or scale circular business models through advice, grants and connections
- Empowering & educating **residents** to revolutionise their relationship with stuff through campaigns



Why focus on recycling in flats?

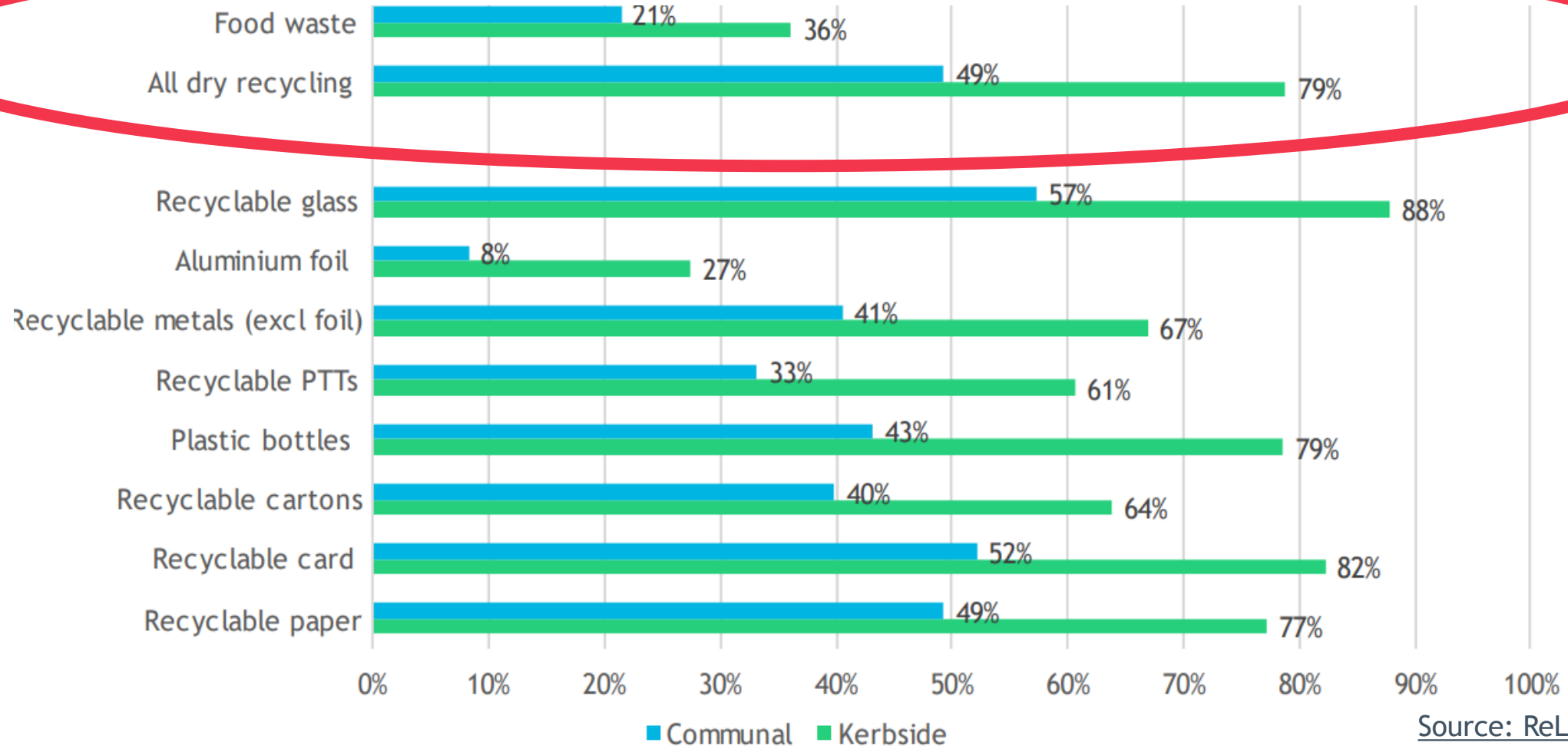
The challenge: purpose-built flats

Recycling rates from purpose-built flats are significantly lower than kerbside collections. Contamination rates are also often higher.

Reasons for poor performance include:

- inconsistent and/or poor collections and infrastructure
- lack of space for storing separate materials - internally and externally
- engagement with residents is more challenging
- lack of ownership and accountability

What does this mean for recycling capture?



Source: ReLondon 2023

The impact of legislation

Simpler Recycling

From 1 April 2026 every household in England should have a collection service for:

- Glass, metal, plastic, paper and card
- Separation of paper and card from other materials (where practicable)
- Food waste (a weekly collection)

From April 2027 this will also include plastic film (plastic bags and wrapping)

This applies to houses, purpose-built flats and flats above shops. Defra have not provided any exemptions for difficult to service properties.

The impact of legislation

Packaging Extended Producer Responsibility (pEPR):

Under EPR, authorities will need to demonstrate that their collection systems are *effective* to receive full net costs. Effectiveness metrics include dry recycling rate - making it important to maximise flats recycling.

Emission Trading Scheme (ETS)

Expansion of the ETS to include waste incineration and EfW from 2028. The cost of sending residual waste to Energy from Waste will increase, particularly fossil-fuel derived waste. Decarbonising residual waste and maximising recycling from all properties will be crucial to mitigating these additional costs.



The Flats Recycling Package



Knowledge

Effective recycling
happens when:

Residents have the correct
knowledge -

Lack of easy access to
accurate information can
undermine confidence

Ease

Effective recycling
happens when:

Residents find it
sufficiently easy to
recycle

Services that fit with
people's existing routines
will feel easier to use

Motivation

Effective recycling
happens when:

Residents are motivated
to do so

Poor experiences and an
apparent lack of
accountability can be
demotivating

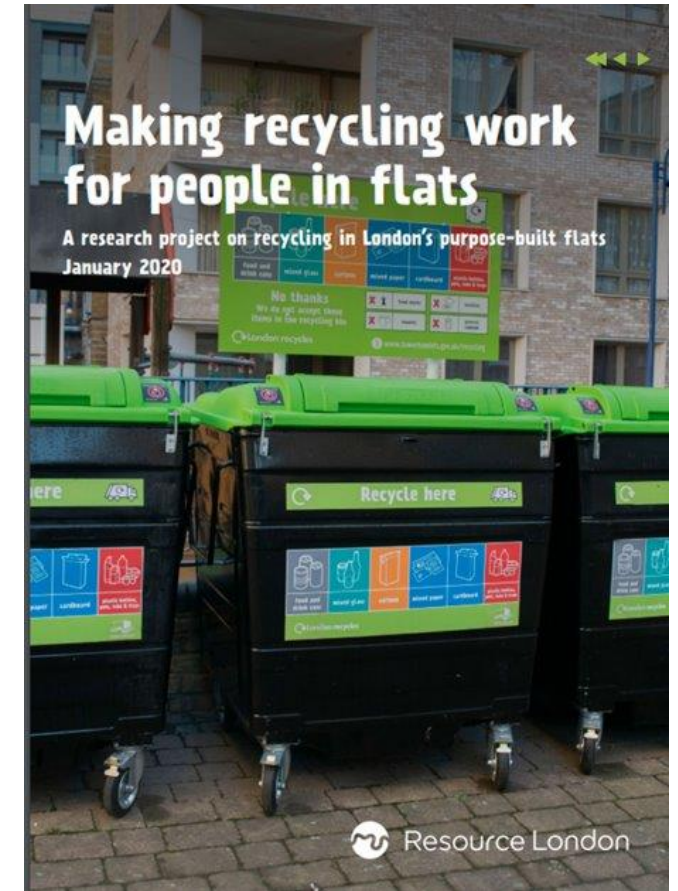
Flats Recycling 1.0

- Partnership with Peabody Housing Association and 6 London boroughs
- Detailed inventories of 132 estates in London, plus ethnographic research to really understand recycling behaviours
- The Flats Recycling Package developed - based on principles of **Ease**, **Knowledge** and **Motivation**
- Flats Recycling Package interventions for dry recycling trialled on 12 Peabody estates in London

Results:

- Recycling rate increased by 26% from 10.7% to 13.4%.
- Dry mixed recycling capture rate increased by 22%
- Contamination rate decreased by 24% from 31% to 23%.

2018 - 2020



Flats Recycling 2.0

2021-2022

- Co-funded by Ecosurety, delivered in partnership with Lambeth Council and Peabody
- Building on the findings from Flats Recycling 1.0
- Introducing **food waste recycling** to four estates
- Trialling pop up collections for textiles and WEEE, and separate bins for large cardboard
- Refreshing existing rubbish and recycling facilities and co-locating all services
- Using disruptive communications



Before

Lack of signage, broken bins/lids, overflows, rubbish chutes on some estates



After

All waste streams co-located,
chutes closed

Reverse lids, large apertures for
recycling bins, new signage

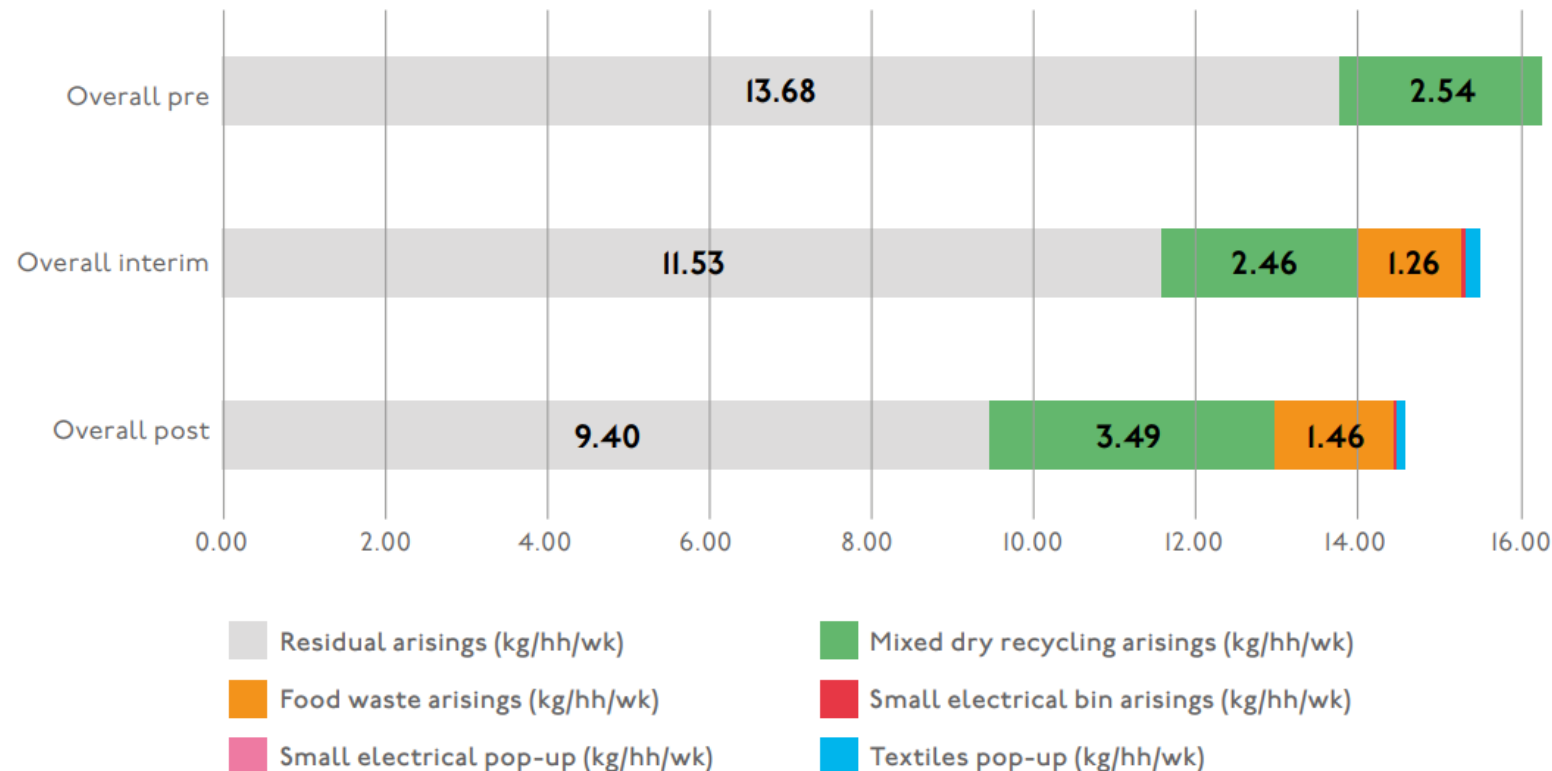
New food waste bins and push
pedal housing units

In-home storage,
communications and
engagement campaign



Results (Flats 2.0)

Chart 4: Total waste arisings pre-, interim and post- interventions (kg/hh/wk)



- We saw a 152% increase (11% - 27%) in overall recycling rates
- Overall reduction in waste arisings, including a 45% reduction in food waste in residual waste
- Dry mixed recycling capture rate increased by 44%
- Food waste capture rate averaged 35%.

The Flats Recycling Package (revised 2022)

Operational:

1. Collection of the six main dry recyclable materials* and food
2. Co-location of rubbish, dry recycling and food bins
3. Appropriate dry recycling and food bins (including caddies and liners)
4. Adequate capacity and collections to prevent overflows and appropriate dry and food recycling capacity (minimum 60 litres/hh/wk and 10 litres/hh/wk respectively)
5. Clean and well maintained bins and bin areas
6. Regular monitoring of sites

*paper, card, glass, food and drink cans, plastic bottles and mixed rigid plastics (tubs, pots and trays)

Communication:

7. Clear and visible signage on rubbish, dry recycling and food bins and at bin storage areas
8. Service relaunch and disruptive communications
9. Ongoing annual communications (yearly recycling leaflet and posters displayed in communal areas)
10. Informing residents what they should do with their bulky waste items

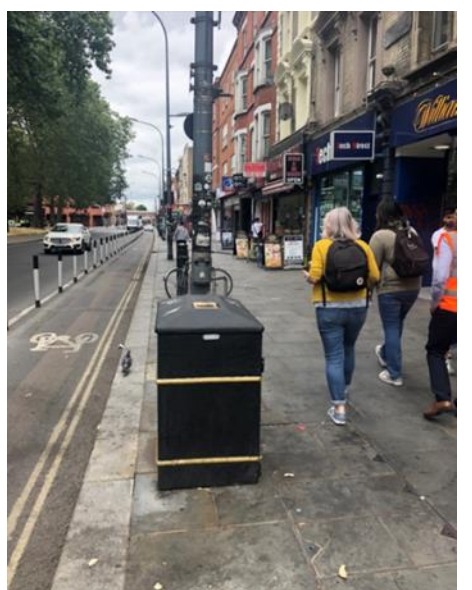
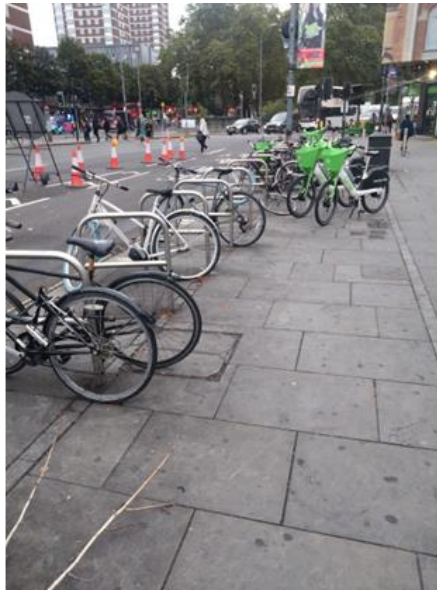
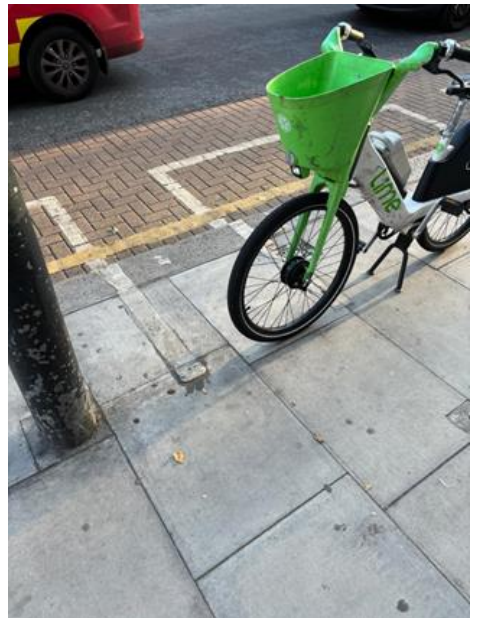
Flats above shops ('FLASH')



So, what do we mean by 'FLASH'?

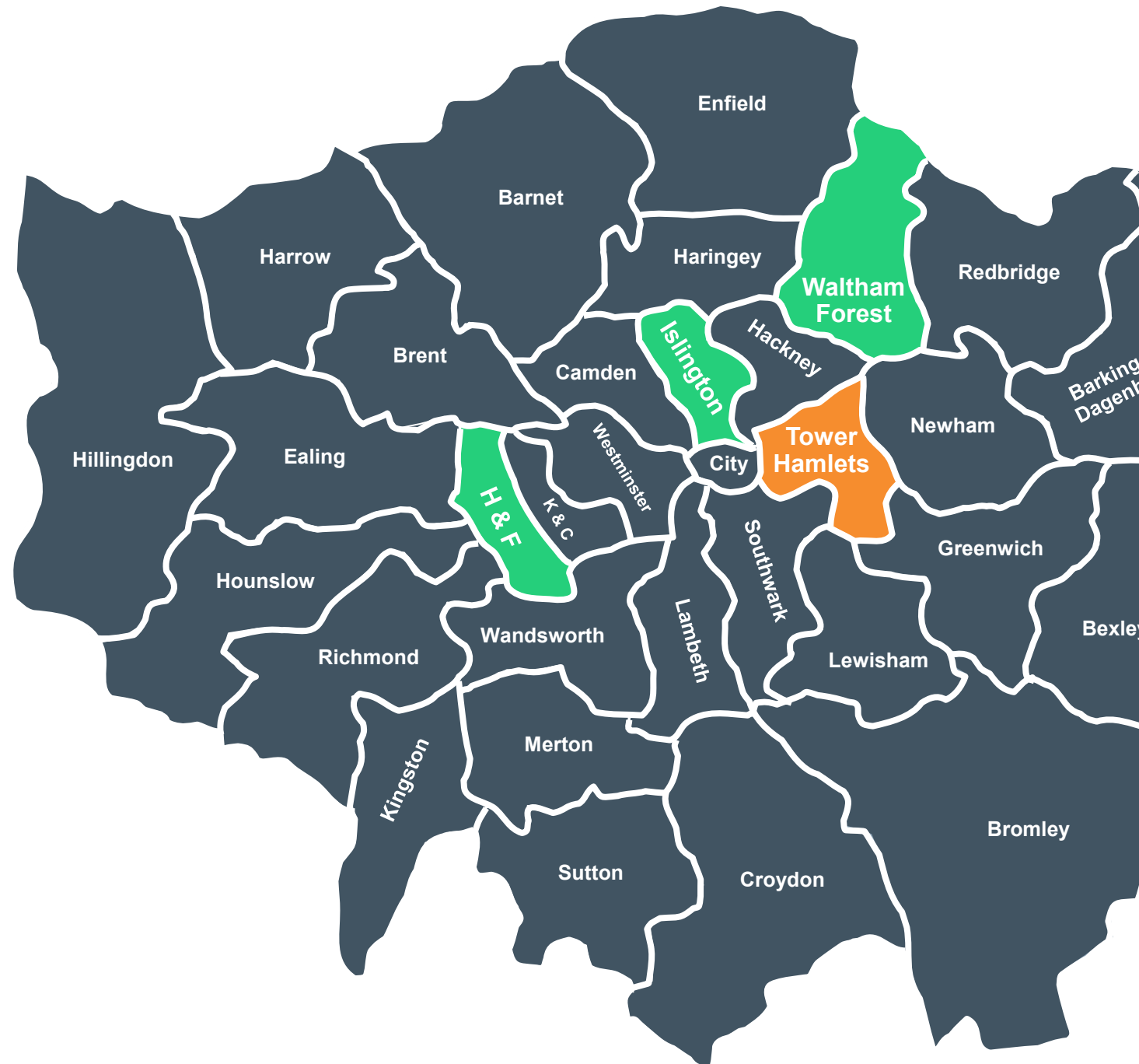
- FLASH are flats which are situated above a cafe, a retail unit, etc. Sometimes, flats are *below* shops, i.e. basement level dwellings.
- In general;
 - Properties have a single door which faces out to the main street which all residents use to enter and exit the property
 - This main door has a letterbox which post for all the residents is posted through
 - In many cases, each flat is on a different floor level and there are no lifts
 - Waste is presented in sacks on the pavement
 - Residents copy the behaviours of others, use trial and error or ask neighbours what to do with their waste, e.g. placing sacks where others put them





Our FLASH project

- Three pilot boroughs (+ Tower Hamlets)
 - On-street presentation in sacks
 - Time banded collections
 - No food waste service prior to pilot
- Aims: to explore ways in which local authorities can **boost dry recycling, reduce contamination, and introduce a food waste service**



Five key behaviour change principles



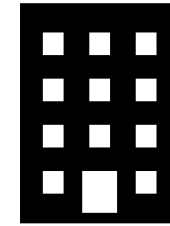
Find new ways of
getting
things to people



Simplify
instructions and
information



Use the pavement
to its full
potential



Take it into
people's homes



Bring it together
to create a clear
moment of
change

On street



In the home



RECYCLING MADE SIMPLE

FOLLOW OUR EASY STEPS

- 1** Tie it up.

Pop your glass jars, tins, cans, card and plastic bottles into your recycling sack (leave the back of this leaflet for a full list of items). Give you and this a quick check if they've got any food in them.
- 2** Take it out.

Take your recycling and rubbish out on a Monday, Wednesday, and Friday – pop it out between 8-9am or 9-10pm.
- 3** We'll do the rest.

LOOK OUT FOR YOUR NEW COLLECTION POINTS NEAR YOUR FLAT!

Please don't put your sacks out on any days or times that aren't listed – we might not be around to collect it, so taking to the collection times helps keep Hoe Street clear.

HOE STREET
Monday, Wednesday & Friday 8-9am or 9-10pm
Find out more at walthamforest.gov.uk/flash

THese SACKS TAKE UP LESS SPACE SO IT'S EASIER TO RECYCLE LITTLE AND OFTEN

Run out of sacks?
Sacks are delivered every 2 months, or collect more from Waltham Forest Library.

KNOW WHAT YOU CAN RECYCLE

Please give your jars and tins a rinse – your recycling is sorted by people first before the machines do the rest!

YES – POP ME IN:

- Cans and tins
- Cartons and "TetraPac"
- Glass bottles and jars (you can keep the lids on)
- Paper and card
- Plastic bottles
- Plastic pots (like yoghurt pots)
- Plastic tubs
- Plastic trays

NO – KEEP ME OUT: BULKY BAGS ONLY:

- Neppies
- Polythene
- Tissues and wipes

FOOD RECYCLING SERVICE

Please pop your food in your new food waste caddy.

LARGE CARDBOARD BOXES

If you can, safer your box to fit into your bag. If not, fold it up and put it at your new recycling point.

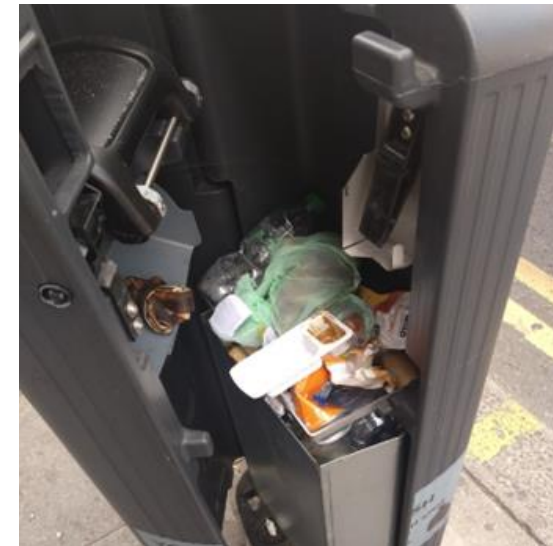
Remember to remove all polystyrene or plastic packaging – otherwise the crew can't collect it.

WHERE DO MY RECYCLING SACKS GO?

Your recycling is taken to a recycling plant in Edmonton where it's sorted at the very best. To be by machines into different materials, and it's sent on to be made into new items.

Food waste contamination

Between 40-70% FW bins visibly contaminated with on-the-go street litter



To summarise...

- Far more resource intensive than working with purpose-built flats
- The street is a more complex and challenging environment with physical barriers
- Every street is different
- Food bins will be contaminated; requires procedures in place
- Residents are positive about changes and are those engaged are willing to use the services
- Recommendations:
 - Engage stakeholders early
 - Follow the behavioural principles
 - Monitor and ensure the correct procedures/processes are in place (and followed)
 - Provide direct, regular and targeted communications

FLASH Resources at <https://relondon.gov.uk>



Communication materials



A4 Business Poster



A5 Business Strut



Floor Vinyl



Lampost Sign

Project planning and implementation templates

Download site visit checklist (Word) →

Download project checklist (Excel) →

Download food 'ready reckoner' (Excel) →



A5 Dry Mixed Postcard



A5 Food Waste Postcard



A6 Bag Tokens Postcard



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Thank you

If you're interested in our support, please email:

freya.rose@relondon.gov.uk



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