# SOLUTIONS ON TAP

A guide to reducing waste and introducing reusable cup schemes at events





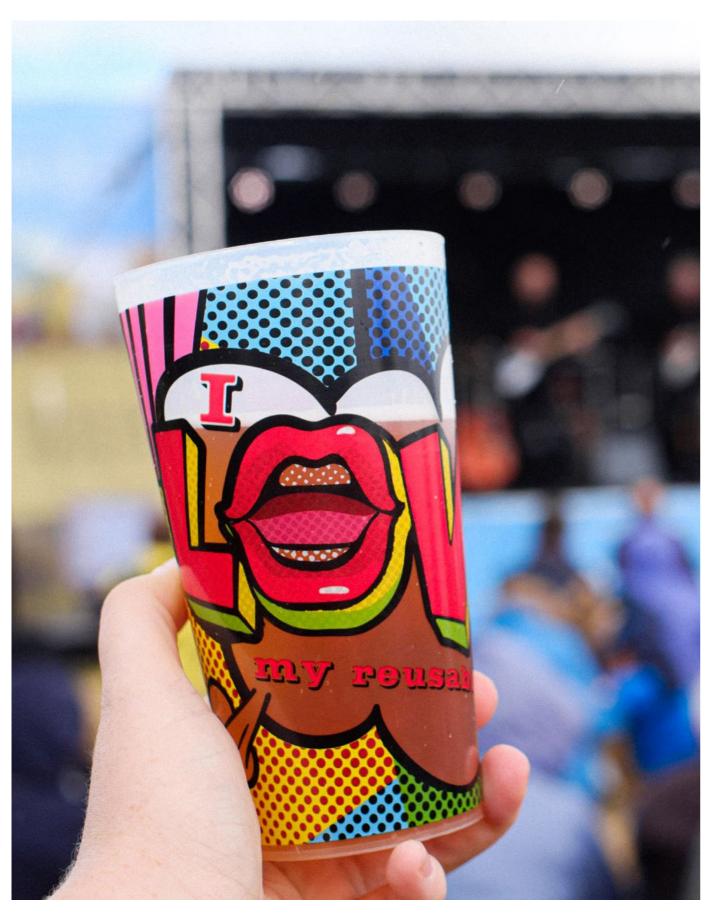


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#### REUSABLE CUPS GUIDE / 3



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## 1.INTRODUCTION

From music festivals to parish fairs, it's out with disposables and in with reducing waste streams. Single-use plastic at events in the UK is a big problem, even the 'compostable' plastic stuff (a false solution – more on that later) and the pandemic has only made it worse. If you want to produce epic events without creating piles of plastic waste, then this is the guide for you. It's about using effective ways to end our dependence on single-use plastic cups and replace them with reusable alternatives.

This is a City to Sea project. We're an environmental organisation on a mission to stop plastic pollution, and this guide is part of our Refill campaign, an award-winning initiative to help people live eat, drink and shop with less waste.

After witnessing the tidal wave of single-use plastic that became the norm in the wake of the pandemic, with many event providers confused about what the best option was, we decided we needed to act, so we carried out some industry research to explore what's currently happening plasticwise at events, and what needs to change. We know that circular reuse systems are the way forward, but they take some thinking and planning to begin with.

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#### REUSABLE CUPS GUIDE / 5

The good news is - there is a solution and reusable cup schemes are becoming more affordable and accessible, making them an ideal solution for events of all scales.

This guide is all about how to make that happen without breaking the bank! And it's more than worth doing: getting rid of those disposal cups doesn't just reduce waste streams and benefit the environment, it improves the event experience all round too.

So please join us, all event organisers (and the councils, bar companies, refill schemes and brilliant individuals needed to keep the satisfyingly circular world of cup reuse turning), to stop adding to the big plastic problem and embrace the refill revolution.

Here's to enjoying a plastic-free pint at your next event. Cheers to that!



## 2. THE PLASTIC, THE PROBLEM & ...THE SOLUTION

#### **THE PROBLEM: SINGLE-USE PLASTIC CUPS**

Plastic production is out of control, and this is having a disastrous impact on the environment and our oceans.

At the moment, the event industry relies heavily on disposable plastic. Around 100+ million plastic cups are used every year at UK festivals and live events, and most of these are incinerated or sent to landfill.1

Despite many event providers having waste management and recycling systems, recycling rates at events are often surprising low. The problem often starts with cups being dropped on the floor. Once someone starts dropping cups on the floor, others will too. Obvious litter at an event gives the impression that it's normal and socially acceptable, and ultimately leads to other people then doing the same.<sup>2</sup> But there's a way to avoid subliminally inviting event goers to wade through an everrising, self-made sea of plastic litter: introducing reusable cups.

1. It Doesn't Stack Up: How Disposables Compare to Reusables, Hope Solutions and ZAP Concepts (UK and Ireland) (2018). 2. www.maccinfo.com/USING\_BEHAVIOURAL\_SCIENCE\_TO\_REDUCE\_LITTERING.pdf

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#### **REUSABLE CUPS GUIDE / 7**

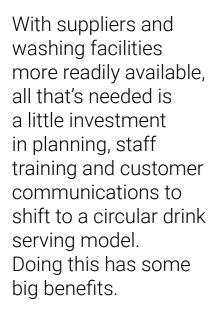


#### THE TIDE IS TURNING:

- in 4 music festivals now use
- a priority for festivals above
- reusable event cups in regular waste could be avoided.<sup>1</sup>
- A reusable cup can withstand up to 500 uses and washes

#### **THE SOLUTION: REUSABLE CUPS**

The good news is reusable cups have become more widely available and affordable for the UK events industry over the past few years.





**Reduce waste:** by switching from single use to reuse you'll be preventing thousands if not millions of pieces of plastic from entering our waste stream (and our environment)



Reduce your event's carbon footprint: less carbon is emitted, which will support company climate targets



Better for the environment: no microplastics left in the natural environment from dropped and broken plastic cups



Cost neutral: The aim is for hiring cups to be a cost-neutral exercise by using levies to cover the hire costs.



Saves other expenses: reduced material, litter picking and waste disposal costs

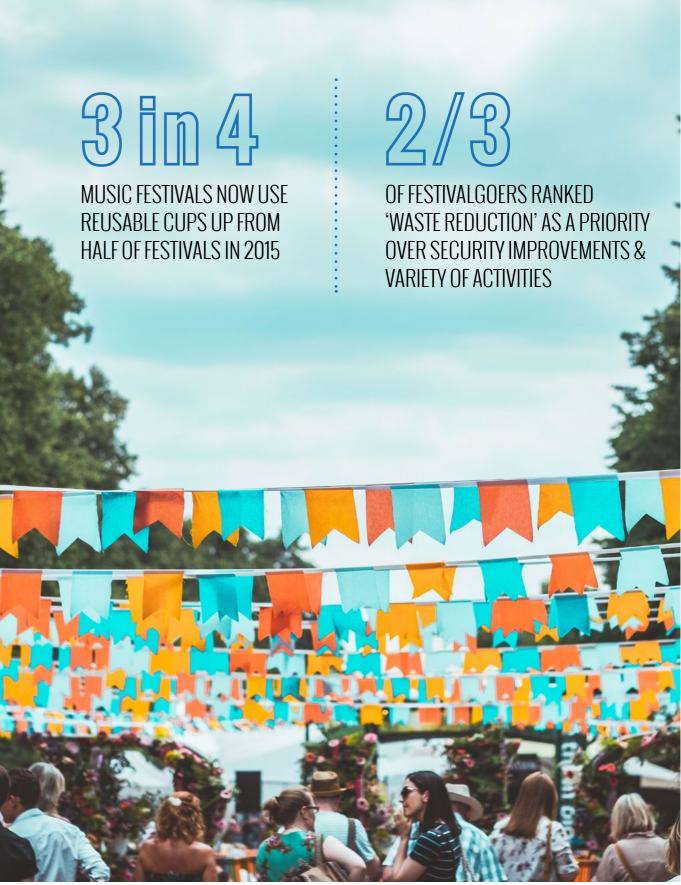


Builds positive brand perception: most people want to align with brands that take responsibility for their environmental impact



Enhances customer experience: more reusable cups mean less litter to walk through, and sturdier cups to drink from mean less spillages





**REUSABLE CUPS GUIDE / 9** 

#### **CASE STUDIES: MAKING A POSITIVE IMPACT & SAVING MONEY**

#### SPOTLIGHT ON COUNCILS:

Manchester Council's research on reusable cups in 2019 identified that across their land, they could save around 2.7 million cups, 50 tonnes of plastic waste and 147 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.<sup>3</sup>

#### SPOTLIGHT ON FESTIVALS:

After removing single-use cups, in 2019, Manchester Food And Drink Festival reported a 40% saving in waste management costs due to less bin emptying and litter picking.





#### NO EXCUSE FOR SINGLE USE

Our research revealed that many of the event providers we spoke to have switched from single-use plastic cups to bioplastic (or 'compostable' plastic), and then discovered it was not the solution they hoped it would be, as they still had bins full of cups, couldn't find a local compost facility and the cups had cost them much more. This shows whilst there's willingness to reduce dependence on disposable plastic, it's sadly not the ideal solution we all want it to be. Generally, all disposable cups are problematic, even the 'good' ones.

We're not anti-plastic, and some of the best reusable options are made of plastic. What we're trying to address is our disposable single-use, throw-away lifestyle. And it's not just single-use plastic that's the problem. ALL single-use items are an issue – whatever they're made from, nothing should be grown or extracted, manufactured, transported and then recycled or incinerated just to be used once and thrown in the bin! Here's a breakdown of some of the problems connected with each of the relevant single-use materials.

#### **SPOTLIGHT ON MATERIALS:**

#### PAPFR

Paper production is carbon intensive, and cups are lined with plastic. They usually end up in landfill or are incinerated rather than recycled, as they require a separate cup recycling stream.

#### ALLIMINIUM

Although single-use aluminium cups are infinitely recyclable, aluminium has a high carbon footprint. And their plastic lining can be removed by washing, so they can't really be reused.

#### PLASTIC

There are different types of plastic, all made from fossil fuels, each with a specific environmental impact.

- · Polycarbonate: Hard, looks like glass, brittle if breaks. Not recyclable.
- · Polystyrene: Clear plastic. Not recyclable.
- · Polypropylene (PP) and polyethylene terephthalate (PET): Recyclable if taken to an appropriate recycling bin.

#### **BIOPLASTICS**

Look like plastic but made from plants. The need for high-heat composting facilities means they cannot be widely recycled in the UK.

3. Public Pack Agenda Document for Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee, 11/01/2022 10:00 (manchester.gov.uk)

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is, they don't degrade like plants. Instead, they need to go to



where it hasn't been possible to avoid disposable cups, there are ways you can minimise the environmental impact.

Check that items can be recycled and your waste contractor accepts them. if you've switched to can't be mixed with your

#### **REUSABLE CUPS GUIDE / 11**



#### A CLOSER LOOK AT 'COMPOSTABLE' BIOPLASTICS

2 Clearly sign post what goes in each bin.





Provide separate bins at the event for recycling, general waste and food.

## Single Use Reusable

This reusable cup can service 500 events before being recycled. Please do not take it home or putitin the bin.

ecodisc0

## 3. MAKING IT HAPPEN: HOW TO GET STARTED

#### **BUSTING SOME REUSABLE CUP SCHEME MYTHS**

Cups need to be bought and then washed on site

No, cups can be hired. And while on-site washing facilities can be provided, cups can also be returned for washing if preferred.

Punters have to keep the same cup for the 2 whole event

Not necessarily. Hire companies can provide enough cups so that people get a fresh one each time they order a drink.

Washing cups off site leads to higher carbon 3 impact than washing on site

Actually, efficient off-site washing facilities can use less energy and water.

Event cups must be funded by sponsorship

4

Sponsored cups may not be able to be reused. Event specific cups may be kept as souvenirs. It is normally best to use generic cups - this will ensure the best return rates

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#### **REUSABLE CUPS GUIDE / 13**





Stack Cup edit:

### FAQS

#### WHAT KIND OF RFUSABLE CUP SHOULD LUSE?

Reusable plastic cups are best for outdoor and open-site events. They're the most affordable and from flutes to pints, there's a style for every occasion. But not all reusable plastic cups are made equal.

- Hard polycarbonate plastic cups (the ones most like glass) are more • likely to shatter if dropped and become a litter-picker's nightmare, and they're not recyclable at the end of their life cycle.
- Flexible polypropylene plastic cups are ideal as they don't break easily • and can ultimately be recycled too.
- Stainless steel cups available, although these are expensive to purchase.

For an up-to-date list of cup suppliers go here www.refill.org.uk/refill-guide-for-events/resources

### 2 HOW MANY CUPS WILL INFED?

- This will depend on the type of event you run and how boozy it is.
- If you have bought disposable cups previously, and your event numbers are the same, you can order the same amount of reusables as disposables. This is based on everyone having a fresh one each time.
- Talk to a hire company for your specific event.

#### A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A **REUSABLE CUP**

reusable cups are made have calculated that a (depending on the washing

## 3

#### HOW DO I SOURCE REUSABLE CUPS?

- 1. Hire them through a company which delivers cups and collects for washing after the event. Different companies have different minimum orders. Collaborate with a bar company that has their own reusable bar cups or can hire them in.
- 2. Buy the cups outright and wash and manage inhouse or locally. This is best if you have multiple events to use them for. With this option, you could also consider:
  - Whether there's storage space for the cups
  - · What washing facilities are available. Fast, efficient dishwashers (like bars glass washers) are the best option but washing large numbers of reusable cups by hand or in regular dishwashers may not be water and energy efficient.
  - · Who will organise and manage the cups
  - · Cup transport to and from the event
  - Whether cup branding is a good idea
- 3. Selling the cups to event attendees, so they can keep the cup and use it for the entire event. This needs to be done with awareness of health and safety precautions - cups should be kept away from beer spouts. Plus, this doesn't guarantee the cup will be used for the 3-10 times needed to reduce the production of the cup.



#### **REUSABLE CUPS GUIDE / 15**

#### **BRAND GESTURES**

cup schemes.

- If the branding or sponsorship changes
- Cups need to be used between 3 and 10 times,

## 4 SHOULD I BUY OR RENT?

#### To buy or not to buy?

Where to get your cups from depends on the type of event you're holding. Take a look at the table below to see which will work best for what you have planned.

#### SMALL EVENT

- Find a supplier who can supply the minimum volume you require.
- Investigate if local bar companies offer hire
- Club together with other local events to rent cups and meet the minimum order requirements
- Lobby your local council to provide local cups
- As a last resort buy a cup for each attendee that they use for the whole event. The challenge with this is that the cup needs to be used multiple times to have a lower life cycle impact.

#### **IARGE EVENT**

- Renting unbranded generic cups from a renting company for your first event before committing to buy any
- Renting unbranded generic cups and buying a percentage of branded cups
- Asking your bar company to rent cups or have a stock of their own

- VENUE
- Buy cups if you can wash onsite or locally.
- You can also buy them and send away for washing with a hire company.
- Rent cups for a big event when you need more than you already have.

### 5 WHAT ABOUT CUP WASHING?

Used cups need to be washed according to basic hygiene standards at a minimum. Cups should be washed at 80°c as soon as possible after use, and then dried properly. This doesn't need to be done during the event: it can be done off site afterwards, or on site if you have the facilities. The best way to get the cups clean and ready for use again often depends on the scale and type of event they're being used for.

#### SMALL EVENT

Ask if there are any local music, sports or hospitality venues with an efficient dishwasher that you can use.

#### **LARGE EVENT**

If you have rented cups, the company usually collect them at the end of the event and washes them. Or they can provide a washing station at the event if you prefer.

If you own the cups, again, ask if there are any local music, sports or hospitality venues with an efficient dishwasher that you can use.

#### **CASE STUDY: LOCAL OPTIONS FOR SMALLER SCALE EVENTS**

The answer was to initiate a local cup hire scheme. Below are some examples of these in action.

- Litterfree Dorset have bought 500 cups for local events to borrow, on the basis that they find a local
- For 14 years, Manchester Council has a stock of cups for their Christmas Market traders to use. The

We are advocating for local councils to explore this option and provide a stock of generic cups that can be

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#### **AIMING HIGH. AIMING HIRE**

- The hire company takes
- You don't need to worry or keeping up with demand
- For one-off events, renting
- The costs for hiring the cups can be passed to the consumer either via a levy or a deposit





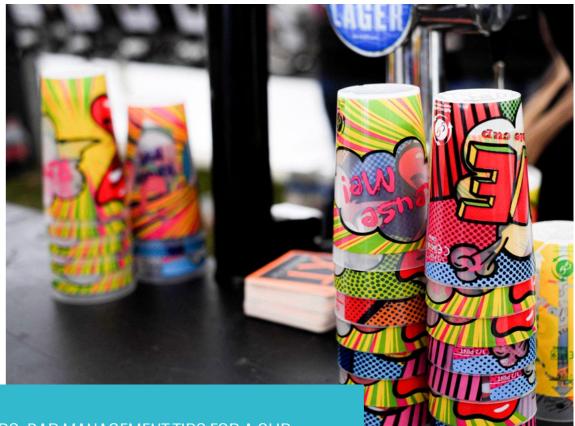


#### **REUSABLE CUPS GUIDE / 17**

#### VENUE

Send cups away for washing, or wash on site if you have facilities.

### THE HIRE AND WASH MODEL - HOW IT WORKS **CUPS TO RENT** 5 The event or bar company 2 hires in the reusable cups $\sim$ they need for an event The cups are collected, The customer pays a deposit or levy (between £1 and £5) counted and returned to the for their first drink hire company for washing When they get their next drink, they swap their used At the end of the event, customers return their cups and get their money back cup for a new clean one



#### LAST ORDERS: BAR MANAGEMENT TIPS FOR A CUP **DEPOSIT SCHEME**

- be charged.
- boxes as they're returned.

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#### **REUSABLE CUPS GUIDE / 19**



## 4. PICKING UP THE TAB: FINANGIAL CONSIDERATIONS







hidden surprises.

### **ESTIMATING HIRE COSTS**

As a rule of thumb, you should plan for a 20% loss rate for cups taken, lost or accidentally binned. To estimate costs for hiring reusable cups (excluding transport costs):

15p + VAT to rent and wash a cup.

Add 40p + VAT if the cup is not returned.

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#### Using disposable cups comes at huge cost to the planet and a significant cost to event producers too.

Choosing reusables can help you avoid the price of buying, transporting and organising waste management for single-use cups. But it's a good idea to get to grips with the finances of circular cup use schemes, so that there are no

#### **ESTIMATING BUYING COSTS**

A typical estimate for buying reusable cups:

> 50 - 60p +VAT to buy one branded cup

### **STAY IN CHARGE: DEPOSITS AND LEVIES**

Charging for cups helps remind people that they're not disposable and greatly improves return rates. This can be done with a levy or a deposit scheme.

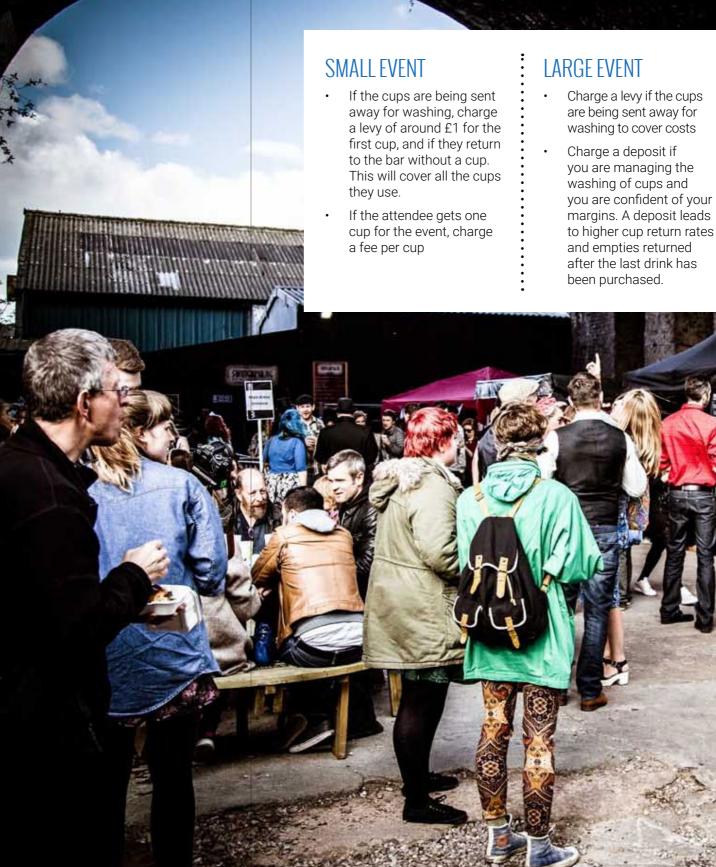
### LEVY

- A non-refundable £1 fee added to the price of the first drink, which covers hire and washing costs of multiple cups.
- A levy scheme should be cost neutral for an event and removes the • need for managing deposits at the bar.
- To improve compliance, messaging should be clear to explain that • no-one makes money from the scheme.
- Issue tokens if people don't want to hold on to their cup for the • whole event.
- People may believe they have paid for a cup and want to keep it. Staffed collection bins at exits with positive messaging and incentives can help minimise this.
- Be prepared for collecting cups from around the event if people have • not returned their cups.

#### DFPOSIT

- Typically £1 or £2 paid on first drink purchase. Each time the user gets a new drink they return their cup and get a clean one. After their last drink, the user returns their cup and gets their deposit back.
- Lower deposits (£1) work best if you own the cups and have low • costs for washing and managing them.
- Higher deposits (£2) usually mean fewer cups are taken off site and more cups are returned
- A management system is needed to provide deposit refunds when • people have finished drinking. This can slow down service if it's at the bar.
- There may be less revenue to cover the cost of cup hire and washing, • but this can be factored into the event ticket price.

A £1 levy covers someone using three cups and taking it home (3 x 15p + 40p) or using 6 cups (6 x 15p) and not taking it home.



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#### **REUSABLE CUPS GUIDE / 23**

#### VENUE

- Charge a levy if the cups • are being sent away for washing to cover costs
- Charge a deposit if washing cups onsite



## 5. COMMUNICATION: THE KEY TO SUCCESS

Event goers have got used to single-use cups and despite them wanting event providers to do more to reduce waste, like any changes, it requires some education and getting used to. To make sure your customers are on board with the new reusable system, you'll need to provide clear and compelling information about it. Say it loud, say it proud, and you'll get cooperation from the crowd. Effective comms before, during and after your event will let people know what they need to do, how, and why.

Getting a good return rate depends on how you communicate your scheme, how easy it is for event attendees to return and collect the cups, and crowd demographics and conditions on the day. Offering an incentive, like entry into a competition, for returns can help, as can reassuring customers that it is a cost-neutral solution (not moneymaking). If there are any profits from a levy scheme these can be donated to an organisation like City to Sea or a local charity.

#### BEFORE

Give people a heads-up that they will be attending a reusable event. Preevent communications like social media and emails can manage expectations, help people prepare, and may even create a sense of intrigue. Making sustainability and green waste management a core message will help event goers be proud of what they'll be achieving together. Let them know how much of a difference they can make.

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#### DURING

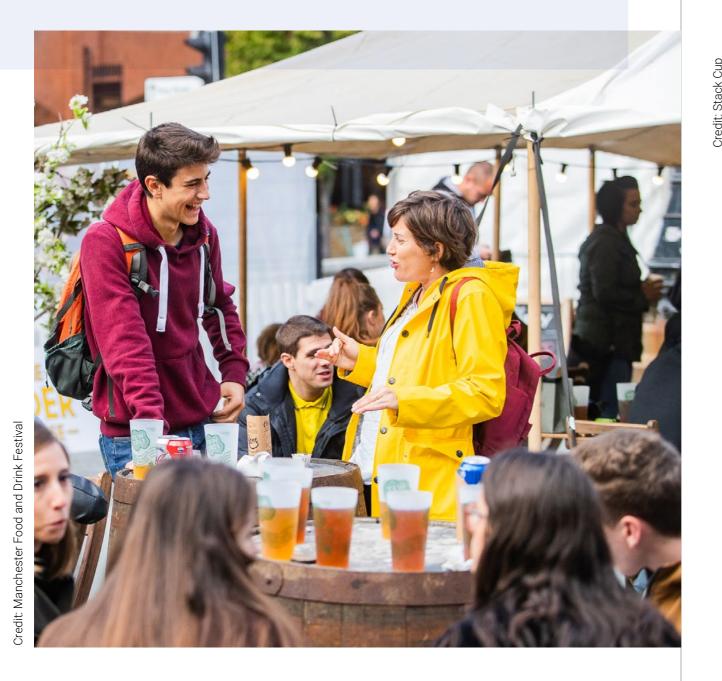
Your serving staff are your key messengers. Make sure they fully understand the cup reuse system and why it's so important, and encourage them to share this with customers as they buy their drinks. Once those serving the drinks are onboard, the people buying them will be too.

Signage is also an important way to keep people informed. Think carefully about where it's positioned. It needs to be noticeable and with plain messaging that's easily absorbed. Large posters with clear and simple information placed behind the bar, at exit points, and around bins work well.

#### AFTER

If you're running a deposit scheme, make sure its location is clear throughout the event, and staff know where to direct people to. Levy cup collection points at exits should be visible and accessible, and ideally with staff or volunteers there to remind people to leave their cups on their way out. If you need volunteers, check on Refill to see if there's a local plastic scheme that will get involved.

## 6. HEALTH, SAFETY AND LEGISLATION







#### HEALTH AND SAFETY

Reusing cups is a safe choice for humans, and healthier for the environment too. But with a notably transmissible coronavirus lurking in the shadows over the past few years, there's been an added need for reassurance that cup reuse is reliably safe and hygienic. Near the start of the pandemic in June 2020, over 125 health experts from 19 different countries signed a document addressing the safety of reusables. And it resolutely concluded that:

- reusables are safe to use
- not safer to use
- single-use disposable items are not being specifically promoted by health authorities as preferential
- measures to inactivate viruses

#### **SPOTLIGHT ON COUNCILS**

Councils are key to event licensing and legislation and can use this to support and encourage more environmentally friendly approaches.

#### SITE PERMISSIONS

Councils can use the site permissions process to stipulate that event organisers must stick to certain conditions, like the types of materials used on site. Cambridge City Council, for example, has banned the use of single-use plastics at events on its land.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL** ASSESSMENTS

Other councils require environmental assessments as part of the event application process. Brighton and Hove Council asks organisers to commit to ten or more actions from their 'Sustainable Event Commitment' guide as part of their planning.

#### Tips for councils on how to increase reuse on your land

- Provide this guide on your website for how to adopt a
- Ban single-use cups as part of the site permissions process
- Ask event organisers to complete an environmental assessment, and give them examples of how to improve environmental standards at their event
- Provide training on reducing environmental impacts for community- and volunteerscale events.

#### **REUSABLE CUPS GUIDE / 27**

single-use disposable items are

heat and detergents are effective

There's plenty more information about making the most of reusables as we live with COVID-19 on the City to Sea Covid and Reusables Hub, and the Sustainable Event Alliance Global Best Practice Guidelines: Reusables Hygiene at Events.

#### LICENSING AND LEGISLATION

In the UK, current waste legislation prioritises reuse for all businesses. The 2011 Waste Regulations state that waste generators must follow the waste hierarchy, and prioritise prevention and reuse before recycling.

reusable scheme at events

Ð)
9

#### Buy or hire a supply of local cups to make available for smaller events to use.

Set up a washing facility for bar cups and other reusables with a community cell provided by Use Again.

For examples and case studies our dedicated councils' page

www.refill.org.uk/ refill-guide-for-events/councils



#### **SPOTLIGHT ON FESTIVALS - SHAMBALA**

Shambala, a UK festival, runs two campaigns to encourage reusables.

#### **BRING A BOTTLE**

There's no water for sale at Shambala and customers are asked to bring an empty bottle or buy one on site, and fill it up at water points.

#### **BRING A CUP**

In 2019, Shambala traders charged 25p for a single-use coffee cups and give a discount for reusable cups. Today, all singleuse cups are banned.



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## 7. MORE TIPS AND RESOURCES





#### OTHER MEANS TO **REDUCE WASTE** Providing reusable cups at your event is an excellent start to

reduce waste impact. And there are other things you can do to boost its credentials even more.

#### Water

- Clearly label taps so people can find them
- Advise people in advance to bring a bottle
- or Tetra Paks®

#### Hot drinks

Run a reusable coffee cup scheme

- Provide free drinking water (if you have mains water access)
- Don't sell water in bottles, cans

- Ask traders to offer a discount and ideally to charge for singleuse cups
- Remind people to 'Bring a Cup'

#### Food

Investigate reusable food box options. See supplier list for more details.

#### **MORE RESOURCES**

events, including posters, social media content, and producers. <u>www.refill.org.uk/</u> refill-guide-for-events

#### **MEASURING IMPACT**

Collecting data about your reuse scheme will help you understand the environmental and cost savings it provides. It can help you celebrate your wins and find out what you need to improve on.

#### How to estimate the environmental impact of changing from single-use to reusable cups

#### PLASTIC WASTE AVOIDED

Number of cups been used

that would have X 20g = weight of plastic waste saved

PLASTIC WASTE AVOIDED

Number of cups that would have X 63.8g = been used

CO<sub>2</sub> emissions saved

70g per cup [Whole life cycle assessment calculation ] - one wash @ 6.2g) = CO, emissions saved

**CO**<sub>2</sub>

Use our easy online CO<sub>2</sub> calculator, which does all the hard work for you. www.refill.org.uk/refill-guide-for-events/resources

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**CUP PROVIDERS** 

Stack Cup - our preferred reusable cup. Hire and purchase options available with a range of products. Experts in launching and running reusable cup schemes for stadiums, festivals and major events. Their flagship product, STACK-CUP<sup>™</sup>, removes the need for cup carriers and trays, decreasing queue times and increasing bar spending. Stack Cup make reusable cup programmes simple for clients putting on large events. stack-cup.com

Green Goblet - Hire and purchase options available with a wide range of products. www.green-goblet.com

**Ecodisco** – Hire option. Sustainable nightlife consultancy and reusable cup rental service for London focusing on events and nightclubs. www.ecodisco.uk

ReCup - Hire and purchase options - www.recupuk.co.uk

Branded Cups - Hire and purchase options. www.branded-cups.com

One Planet One Chance - Hire and purchase options. oneplanetonechance.co.uk

### **REUSABLE FOOD BOXES TO PURCHASE**

Street Food Box - our preferred takeaway on-the-go food packaging system customised for events streetfoodbox.world

**FSG** - Supply a wide range of reusable food containers to universities and organisations who can wash onsite. www.fsg.uk.com

### **REUSABLE FOOD BOXES TO HIRE**

www.green-goblet.com

#### **REUSABLE CUPS GUIDE / 31**

Green Goblet - supply a range of sized and shaped boxes for hire.

## REFILL- LIFE WITH LESS PLASTIC, MADE EASY

This guide was brought to you by City to Sea.

City to Sea brings you Refill - the award-winning campaign helping people live with less plastic.

Anyone can download the free app to tap into a global network of places to reduce, reuse and refill. From a coffee on your commute to drinking water on the go, or even shopping with less plastic. Refill puts the power to go packaging free at your fingertips.

By providing a framework and platform for communities, businesses and consumers to take action we are supporting the transition towards reuse systems and tackling the global issue of plastic pollution by reducing waste. Refill has saved 100 million plastic bottles from entering our waste stream, #SwitchTheStick, #PlasticFreePeriods and even more planet- protecting, behaviour change campaigns.

Find out more about how to reduce waste at your event and how to get involved with Refill by visiting - **refill.org.uk/refill-guide-for-events** 



