



How to guide

Flats: Recycling electricals from communal properties



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Electrical recycling from flats

Millions of people who live in flats don't have easy access to electrical recycling services, meaning valuable materials are often lost.

By designing a service that works for communal living, local authorities and partner organisations can capture far more items for reuse and recycling.

This guide is built on our experience and expertise, and on insights from the pilots we've supported through the Electricals Recycling Fund.



Top tips

1. Clear communications are critical

- Use clear, locally relevant letters and leaflets – to tell residents about the service
- Use visuals to be accessible to all demographics.
- Inform residents before rolling out the service, and follow up with reminders.
- Regular feedback to residents will help maintain participation and reduce contamination of the waste stream.

2. Engage with stakeholders early

- Engage with stakeholders early to form good working relationships and to resolve operational issues.
- Work with collection contractors to ensure smooth roll-out and to resolve issues.
- Be clear about the contractors' roles.

3. Service design affects participation

- Use brightly branded bins, clear labelling, and visible battery containers to encourage correct use.
- The most commonly recycled items often include cables, chargers, kettles, and toasters.
- Specify what not to recycle to keep contamination low (e.g. lightbulbs can be a frequent problem).

4. Gather reliable data

- Work with contractors to ensure you have the data you need.
- From the outset, communicate clearly which streams need to be weighed separately, as inconsistent data limits your ability to assess impact.
- Data quality is better where there is a stable workforce, suitable weighing facilities, and clear monitoring processes.

5. Test approaches and plan for the long term

- Phased rollouts, or trialling bin rotations between blocks of flats, can help resolve issues before expanding.
- Risks to longevity include lack of funding, low tonnages collected, contaminated waste streams, and lack of budgeting for after the pilot.
- Consider how to build resilience into staffing, supply chains, and disposal contracts.

Checklist for setting up your own vape recycling collection

-  **Confirm project scope, target areas and objectives**
-  **Engage internal teams early – e.g. waste, comms, data, operations**
-  **Consult estate managers and facilities staff on storage, access, and responsibilities**
-  **Agree collection frequency, vehicle compatibility, and disposal arrangements**
-  **Include small electricals in contracts with waste collectors at the procurement stage**
-  **Use bright, clearly labelled bins, with drop fronts for better access to electricals**
-  **Deliver containers and information materials to drop-off points at the same time**
-  **Use a simple, consistent method for crews to record weights and participation**
-  **Monitor fill rates, contamination and user feedback and address issues promptly**
-  **Send residents reminders and tell them how the service is performing**
-  **Plan for ongoing promotion and maintenance**

Cost summary – estimated from previous pilots (p1/2)



240L bins for flats

Standard online price: £47.95 +VAT (£25 +VAT delivery for 1-2 bins).

Drop fronts: £133 +VAT (£25 +VAT delivery for 1-2 bins).



Vehicle fleet HypnoCat banner fitting

£11,000 for fleet of 12.



Servicing

Collection costs range from £3,000 (contracted collections) to £23,000 for a salaried staff member managing collections.

Cost summary – estimated from previous pilots (p2/2)



Project management

Some pilots absorb project management into existing staffing. Others have brought in temporary part-time project managers to deliver the pilot.



Communications

Previous projects ranged from £2,500 to £15,000.

See pilot spotlights for example costs.

Electricals Recycling Fund impact

Since 2020 we have funded three pilots trialling collections from flats: two in Surrey and one in Somerset.

The pilots in flats have collected over 13 tonnes of electricals and made recycling easier for over 500,000 households.



**3 funded
flats pilots**



Pilot spotlight

Resource Futures

Target population	11 blocks of flats
Funding amount	£50,413 (split between flats trial and other pilot elements, including FIXY mobile repair van and promoting the existing kerbside service in Somerset)
Pilot duration	October 2024 – December 2024
Pilot aim	To address the lack of communal collection services for residents in flats, by trialling promoting electrical amnesty days and piloting collection solutions, integrating repair and reuse messages.
Outcome	0.283 tonnes of electricals collected from 11 blocks of flats over 3 months



Pilot spotlight: **Resource Futures**

Collection approach

Flat collection trials were run with social landlords in 11 blocks, with bins delivered and collected by Suez. Three modified pink bins were placed at each site for items up to the size of a microwave, while larger items or data-bearing devices were collected through one-off bulky collections or tech amnesty events.

Residents were given clear instructions on what could and couldn't be recycled.

The trials showed high engagement and minimal contamination.

Communications approach

Communications included in-person presentations, leaflets, bins with stickers, videos, social media posts, roller banners and press work. Facebook was effective for promoting events to local audiences, while press releases in free papers were good for older rural residents. Printed flyers and in-person conversations worked well at flat trials. Costs included:

- Printing (£258)
- Design time in-house (£4,522)
- Pink bins, including vinyl stickers (£584)
- Resident engagement events (£500)

Key learnings

Piggybacking existing community activities works best – standalone recycling events struggled to attract residents, whereas linking trials to engagement sessions or community events resulted in significantly more recycling and reuse activity.

Keep flat collection logistics simple – Resource Futures found that organising pink bin collections was complex because they had to align with the housing association and their waste management company's existing schedules.

Pilot spotlight

Joint Waste Solutions Surrey

Target population	185,000 households
Funding amount	£66,821
Pilot duration	November 2023 – March 2025
Pilot aim	To improve the accessibility, capacity and public awareness of small electrical recycling services across four contract areas.
Outcome	366KG of electricals were collected through the collection from flats pilot



Pilot spotlight: **Joint Waste Solutions Surrey**

Collection approach

Fifteen vehicles were fitted with secure boxes, allowing crews to safely store and transport more small electrics. Vehicles also displayed HypnoCat banners to make residents aware of the service.

Two approaches were tested. In Woking permanent pink wheelie bins were placed at selected blocks of flats, giving residents a reliable way to recycle small electrics.

In three other areas, bins were placed temporarily at different communal properties for four weeks at a time, before being moved on to another location.

Communications approach

- Hypnocat banners on 12 bin collection vehicles (£11,000)
- Targeted door-to-door promotional postcards (£18,000)
- Organic promotion on social media
- YouTube, Spotify and Google ads (£4,600)

YouTube ads resulted in the HypnoCat film (from Recycle Your Electricals toolkit) being seen 499,859 times and generated 4,930 clicks to the Joint Waste Solutions website. Google display ads were seen 1.2 million times and generated 10,310 clicks to the site. Google ads were seen 30,640 times and generated 620 clicks.

Key learnings

Collection tonnages may reduce over time – with the highest volume collected during the first round of bin rotations.

Visible branding on lorry sides made a big difference to people's awareness of the campaign.

Partnerships are essential but operational challenges can slow delivery – the success of trials and vehicle adaptations relied on close collaboration with contractors. But day-to-day operational pressures meant requests (e.g. bin deliveries, movements) were not always met promptly, underlining the need for strong partner relationships and contingency planning.

We've created a communications toolkit of HypnoCat assets and bring bank designs, that you can use to use to promote your project.

These include: posters, leaflets, bin wraps, bin hangers, press ads, pull-up banners, lorry / vehicle sides, stickers, social media posts.

All driving people to drop off their electricals...



Clockwise from top left:
Pull-up banner
Bin hangers
Posters & leaflets
Social media posts
Bin wraps
Lorry/vehicle sides

Material Focus support

Check out our [website](#) for more information on funding opportunities, toolkits and resources to support your projects.



Material Focus is an independent, not-for-profit organisation on a mission to save valuable, critical and finite materials inside electricals from going to waste. We lead the 'Recycle your electricals' campaign.



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