MATERIAL FOCUS

How to guide

Reuse: Collecting electricals for reuse in your area

Contents

Collecting electricals for reuse

Over 1.5 million people in the UK lack access to a computer at home – while many others would donate their old electricals if they knew how.

This guide shows how reuse projects can help bridge the gap between people who have electricals they don't want and people who need them. It is built on our experience and insights from the reuse pilots supported through the Electricals Recycling Fund.

Top tips

1. Prioritise safety

- Check for recalls. If an electrical has been recalled, do not use or repair it. Follow the manufacturer's instructions. See https://www.gov.uk/product-safety-alerts-reports-recalls.

- If ordering spare parts, use ones approved by the equipment manufacturer.

2. Use staffed collection points

- Staffed drop-offs provide data security, build trust, and allow for a personal 'thank you' — which boosts engagement and word-of-mouth promotion.

- Staff can explain the process and answer donor questions.

3. Keep the process simple for everyone

- A clear, straightforward process is easier for staff and donors to understand.

- Step-by-step guides and refresher training for staff help maintain quality and consistency

- Quick reference sheets and repeat briefings keep staff confident over time.

4. Use secure and visible drop-offs

- Secure boxes reassure staff and donors.

- Clear signs at public-facing points drives use.

- Placement is critical — work with venues to find the most visible spots and check regularly that signs are still in place.

5. Ongoing promotion is key

- Initial engagement can be strong, but without continued visibility, donations dip.

- Plan the campaigns in phases and adapt messaging for different communities.

- Make full use of partners' communications channels and local media.

Top tips

6. Motivation matters

- People respond to social impact — knowing their tech could help someone else is a strong motivator.
- Use messages that make donating simple (e.g. 'any device welcome') to encourage people to have a clear-out.

7. Plan for reuse and recycling

- Accepting a wide range of items helps maximise donations but requires clear routes for both reuse and recycling.
- Linking donation points with existing small electricals recycling can boost both streams.
- Design a clear triage process to manage items that are too old to reuse.

8. Share good news stories

- Share results and personal stories to keep donors, staff, and partners motivated.
- Say 'thank you' at the point of donation — donors are more likely to spread the word when they feel appreciated.

9. Partnerships make it work

- Collaborate across sectors — councils, refurbishers and charities.
- Ensure clear roles, communication, and mutual support.
- Sustainable schemes need a lead partner with strong networks, waste management resources, communications reach, and project management capacity.

10. Test, learn, adapt

- Every project will face unique challenges.
- Engagement will vary according to place— e.g. affluent areas may generate more donations.
- Monitoring systems should be simple and digital.

Checklist for setting up an electricals reuse service

✓ **Build your partnerships** – identify and confirm key partners (e.g. council, refurbisher, charity)

✓ **Define roles and responsibilities** – agree who's doing what and set up communication channels

✓ **Confirm budget** – and what it will cover (e.g. logistics, comms, training)

✓ **Choose donation locations** – pick secure, accessible and visible collection points

✓ **Order secure containers** – use tamper-proof donation boxes and label them clearly

✓ **Organise logistics** – plan regular collections, transport and safe storage of devices

✓ **Create a triage process** – decide how items will be sorted for reuse or recycling

✓ **Train staff and volunteers** – provide a simple step-by-step guide and refresher training as needed

✓ **Prepare comms materials** – posters, flyers, and social media content to explain how and why to donate

✓ **Launch with local promotion** – use partner channels and press to raise awareness

✓ **Add signs at donation sites** – make drop-off points easy to find and understand

✓ **Track data and progress** – monitor items collected, reused, recycled and passed on

✓ **Gather feedback and adapt** – review what's working, listen and make improvements

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

Donation boxes

Tote boxes (Cheaper option, but goods may be damaged): approx £15 each.

Padded donation boxes (keep tech items safe): £180 each.

Lockable storage cabinets

£300 each.

Staffing and training

If using existing staff, there may be no extra costs beyond time.

Briefings and printed guides are low cost.

PAT testing training can be approx £100–£300 per person.

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

Transport and logistics

Collections and storage vary depending on scale and frequency — budget approx £100–£500 per collection round.

Storage might be in-kind or approx £50–£200/month to rent.

Refurbishment and recycling

Refurbisher fees typically £20–£60 per usable device.

Data wiping and recycling of unusable items may be included or charged separately: approx £2–£10 per device or by weight.

Communications

Design, leaflets, posters and basic local promotion: £500–£2,000.

Digital advertising (Facebook, Google, etc.): £1,000–£5,000.

See pilot spotlights for example costs.

Electricals Recycling Fund impact

Since 2020 we have funded 22 reuse pilots across the UK

We have rehomed 32,900 used electricals through redistribution charities and partners such as Community TechAid, Reconome, and Tech Takeback, and by selling at accessible prices through charity shops and social enterprises.

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22 funded reuse pilots

Pilot spotlight
Redcar and Cleveland

Target population	136,718 households
Funding amount	£40,000
Pilot duration	November 2023 – November 2024
Pilot aim	To make it easier for residents to donate working electricals for reuse, helping people in financial hardship while reducing waste.
Outcome	• 591 electrical items donated (2 tonnes) • 443 electricals passed safety testing • 270 items redistributed or sold/donated

Pilot spotlight: **Redcar and Cleveland**

Collection approach

A central recycling site was the main donation point, supported by other community locations.

Third-sector partners collected donations, carried out PAT testing, and distributed items through local networks. Volunteers were trained to help build long-term community capacity.

To support residents without cars the team partnered with a supermarket to trial a Donations Weekend in the store's community room. This offered a more accessible drop-off point. Volunteers collected items the following Monday.

Communications approach

The communications campaign (total spend £2,000) aimed to increase the amount of electricals being recycled and reused. Particularly successful campaigns were one around Christmas and one promoting a supermarket drop-off event. Media included:

- Organic social media
- Pull-up banner (£80)
- A5 flyers (£40)
- A4 and A3 posters (£40)
- Ads in residents' magazine
- E-newsletters
- Websites
- In-person events

Key learnings

Accessibility of donation points drives participation – although Dunsdale Recycling Centre worked well for many, it was a barrier for non-drivers. Adding local drop-off points (libraries, village halls) and piloting supermarket donation weekends significantly increased engagement.

Build in volunteer rota planning and flexible training – to make sure you have enough volunteers in case anyone is ill or drops out. Consider using recorded training sessions, and running sessions at multiple locations.

Pilot spotlight
Veolia Southwark

Target population	1,000 households
Funding amount	£32,000
Pilot duration	July 2024 – July 2025
Pilot aim	To establish a Southwark-wide small electricals reuse and recycling service, making it easy for residents to donate through accessible collection points and driving awareness through targeted community engagement.
Outcome	• 1,133 items collected • 50 items rehomed to people who needed them through Community TechAid

Pilot spotlight: **Veolia Southwark**

Collection approach

Veolia Southwark created a convenient, visible, and accessible network for people to donate or recycle small electricals by installing secure collection points in the borough's 12 libraries and at the household waste recycling centre (HWRC).

They partnered with Community Tech Aid to collect, refurbish and redistribute laptops, phones, and tablets, prioritising items with reuse potential. All other items were sent for recycling.

Targeted marketing and communications encouraged participation and awareness.

Communications approach

The communications campaign aimed to reach 1,000 households. As well as digital media, it included out-of-home adverts at bus stops and railway locations at 24 sites across the borough, and delivery of thousands of leaflets to households within a 200 metre radius of the 13 drop-off points. Materials included:

- Digital media (£4,000)
- 13,000 x A5 leaflets (£526) 200 x A3 posters, and 120 x A4 posters (£288)
- Leaflet delivery (£2,750)
- 2 x vinyl signs (£400)
- Adshel 6 sheet advertising (£6,500)

Key learnings

Sustained promotion is needed – after initial success, item donations dipped, showing the importance of ongoing visibility and fresh campaigns to maintain momentum.

Staff should be engaged in the process – talking to library staff, developing a briefing document, and speaking to donors solved an initial problem with contamination of the waste stream.

Partnerships enhance delivery – consistent collaboration between Veolia, Community TechAid, libraries, and Material Focus built trust, smoothed operations, and amplified impact.

Pilot spotlight
Nottingham

Target population	126,100 households
Funding amount	£13,017
Pilot duration	January 2024 – August 2025
Pilot aim	To design and implement a pilot to drive donation of devices and improve digital inclusion in Nottingham City, which could be scaled and rolled out across the UK.
Outcome	• 139 tech devices collected (laptops, tablets, smartphones, chargers and other items) and sent for assessment • 24 items refurbished, graded and donated

Pilot spotlight: **Nottingham**

Collection approach

Nottingham City Council set up six new collection points for small electricals alongside existing waste collection sites.

They launched a communications campaign using Recycle Your Electricals assets, to promote tech donation.

Partner Reconome collected and sorted items for refurbishing, redistributing or recycling.

Framework Housing Association redistributed items to people who needed them, including through the Homeless Prevention Service and Women's Complex Needs service.

Communications approach

- Roll-up banners at donation points
- A4 and A3 posters
- Digital screens
- Flyers
- Meta digital advertising
- Out-of-home adverts
- PR – Nottingham World, Love Business, BBC East Midlands Today, BBC Radio Nottinghamshire, Notts Today

Key learnings

Cross-sector collaboration is critical to build solutions that last – it takes time to agree roles and build shared understanding.

Digital inclusion schemes need a core partner – with a strong network, waste management resources, good communications channels and project management capability.

Cleaning, refurbishment and transportation are the main and unavoidable costs – so budget for them.

Collection points in more affluent areas receive more donations – so prepare for additional collection capacity.

We've created a communications <u>toolkit</u> 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 <u>website</u> for more information on funding opportunities, toolkits and resources to support your projects.

![Material Focus logo]

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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