



Kingston University

Case Study



The Recycling Journey

Kingston University has a long history of recycling. However, they have made some notable changes in their waste receptacles to improve recycling rates:

- **An awareness campaign** – Using digital screens and updating induction materials to educate students and staff on non-recyclable items which typically contaminate the recycling. Results were not positive when comparing recycling rates.
- **An assessment** – The Sustainability Officer trialled a different closed lid on one of the recycling bins and noted that contamination of the recycling was reduced, and the quality of recyclable material improved.
- **An increase in receptacles** – To reduce contamination it was then decided to update their waste receptacles.
- **A context-specific solution** - As many of their students are from diverse national and international backgrounds, where recycling practices vary from council to council and country to country, they realised that they needed to make their bins as straightforward to use as possible. Rather than asking the user to decide on whether an item is recyclable or non-recyclable, they have split waste down by streams and have different apertures to nudge correct behaviours.



Image: © Stephanie Todd

The Challenges

- **Initial push back about the size of the waste stations** - As they are now collecting 6 separate waste streams rather than just 2.
- **Different sizes depending on infrastructure** – In smaller areas around the campus, smaller bins were introduced covering 4 waste streams (food waste, cans and bottles, paper and card and general waste).
- **Cost of bins** – They haven't been able to replace all the bins across the estate yet, so they have rolled these bins out in high footfall areas and have made these bins part of their standard specification for new refurbishments.

Image: © Stephanie Todd



Learnings and benefits

- **Learnings** - Both students and staff notice the recycling options. Feedback from students and staff on the bins during the design stage found that many people were unsure about what was recyclable and non-recyclable and users valued icons clearly explaining what item goes in what bin.
- **Benefits** - The bins look smarter and the gamification - using different apertures has meant students and staff positively engage with the waste stations.



I never thought I'd feel anyway about bins. But these bins are great! Perfect for our new spaces

CEO of Kingston Student Union