

# UNIVERSITIES

## HOW TO

# GUIDE

EVERYTHING YOUR UNIVERSITY NEEDS TO KNOW  
ABOUT GETTING INVOLVED WITH THE REFILL CAMPAIGN





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# WELCOME TO THE REFILL REVOLUTION



NATALIE FÉE

Refill is an award-winning, consumer and corporate behaviour-change campaign to help people live with less plastic.

Through our location-based app, we connect people to places they can eat, drink and shop without the pointless packaging. Anyone can download the free Refill app to tap into a global network of places to reduce, reuse and refill. Since its launch in 2015, we've proven that Refill has the power to create a wave of change and prevent pointless plastic. From a coffee on your commute, to drinking water on the go, or zero waste shopping, Refill puts the power to go packaging free at your fingertips.

Refill started life as a campaign to connect people to free drinking water, as a way of tackling the problem of single-use plastic bottles, but we knew the problem was much, much bigger. So, in October 2020, the campaign expanded beyond drinking water and Refill is now the world's first app to help people find locations to reuse and refill.

The Refill campaign is run by City to Sea, an environmental not-for-profit campaigning to stop plastic pollution at source, founded by campaigner and author Natalie Fée in 2015. Since its launch in Bristol, Refill has grown into a global movement

with Refill Schemes all over the world, from Japan to Latin America.

We believe that working with universities offers a huge opportunity to build positive change with institutions, individuals and communities. Between 2018 and 2019, U.K. higher education institutions had a whopping 2.38 million students and well over 400,000 members of staff. Those numbers add up! Universities are where the sparks of learning ignite, where our future is made. And you can help make it a plastic-free future!

This guide is for anyone who would like to reduce single-use plastic at their university, whether you are a student, academic staff, or involved in the university estate's running. We hope it will inspire you with ideas that can create positive and permanent change both within your university and the communities connected to it.

As Ryunosuke Akutagawa said, ***"Individually, we are one drop. Together we're an ocean."***

With oceans of optimism, Team Refill x



# OUR MISSION & VISION



We're on a mission to make living with less plastic easier. Our vision is a world where everyone can eat, drink and shop without the pointless plastic.

## OUR AIMS

- To prevent plastic pollution and tackle the climate crisis.
- To help people live with less plastic by creating practical solutions to complex problems and normalising reuse over single-use.
- To create a global network of drinking water points and refill systems.
- To give 'everyday activists' a simple and sustainable way to create lasting change in their local communities by setting up a Refill Scheme.

## OUR IMPACT

Refill has a number of direct and indirect benefits on the environment, society and our precious planet. Our key areas of impact include **tackling plastic pollution and reducing waste, combatting climate change**, providing **access to drinking water** and also **empowering individuals and communities**.

Refill as a campaign supports a number of global initiatives and commitments including the **Sustainable Development Goals, The Circular Economy Global Commitments, The Drinking Water Directive**, and national level commitments such as the **Waste & Resources Strategy** and the **Plastics Pact in the UK**.



# WHY JOIN REFILL?

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## **Prevent plastic pollution.**

Refill connects people to places they can eat, drink and shop without the pointless plastic.



## **Combat climate change!**

By 2050, the production of plastics will account for up to [13% of the total remaining carbon budget](#).



## **Promote healthy hydration.**

Find free drinking water on the go and businesses that offer discounts and rewards for choosing reuse over single-use.



## **Make a lasting difference to where you live.**

Help people in your local community find the amazing businesses that are providing alternatives to single-use packaging.

# CHANGING BEHAVIOUR

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**We seek to change the behaviour of individuals, by encouraging them to carry and use reusables (both on-the-go, at home) and also businesses, to adopt reusables as a core part of their offering.**  
.....



Refill is at its core a **consumer and corporate behaviour change campaign**. We have historically focused on individual behaviour change, creating accessibility to free tap water (making the infrastructure available), breaking down the discomfort about asking for free water (authority bias) and creating a new social norm for carrying a water bottle and refilling on the go, that is more attractive than buying bottled water.

## THE ROLE OF REFILL IN DRIVING THE TRANSITION AWAY FROM SINGLE-USE TOWARDS REUSE:

**We create social norms & long-lasting behaviour change.** We create awareness around the problem of single-use plastic and through the app, provide practical solutions, making reuse easier than ever before. By continually ensuring that people are seeing other people on-the-go with a coffee cup, we create social contagion.

**We increase accessibility of reuse options.** Our role is as a facilitator, connecting conscious consumers to reuse and refill solutions by mapping them on the app and creating a network of Refill Stations that are visible via the sticker in the window. We engage directly with independent businesses, chains, and retailers to help them reduce single-use plastic. We understand the barriers to people carrying personal reusables and work to scale 'return on-the-go' and deposit return systems for reuse.

**We help people take action.** We give individuals, community groups, local authorities and other organisations the tools they need to create lasting change in their community.

**We solve problems.** Through our work with Refill businesses and our REPEAT Reuse Action group, we bring together the individuals and organisations that represent reuse across the supply chain covering the infrastructure, technology and the businesses that are operating in the space.

# HOW DOES REFILL WORK?

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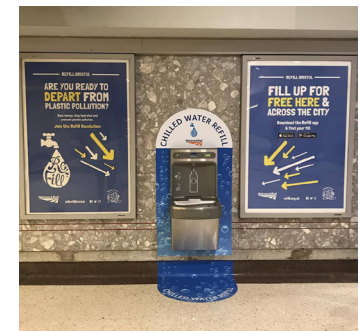


**Refill works by connecting people with locations** where they can eat, drink and shop with less waste. **Anyone can download the free Refill app** to find Refill Stations near them where they can refill on the go. Participating cafés, bars, restaurants, banks, galleries, museums, shops, hairdressers and other local businesses simply sign up to the app and put a sticker in their window, alerting passers-by that they're welcome to come on in and get a refill.

Around the world there are **thousands of local businesses**, cafes, restaurants, zero waste shops, community venues, transport hubs and public fountains where people can find refills of drinking water, coffee, lunch, groceries, toiletries, cleaning products and more!

As well as local businesses, the Refill app shows **railway stations, supermarkets, airports and high street chains** such as Starbucks, McDonald's and more that have all signed up to be part of the **Refill global community** and offer refills of things like free drinking water and hot drinks in reusable cups.

67% of people would be more likely to use a reusable bottle if they knew businesses would be willing to fill it up.





# THE PROBLEM WITH PLASTIC



**Only 10%** of the plastic we've produced has ever been recycled.



Before lockdown hit, research revealed that **75% of the British public bought their lunch on-the-go each day...**

This creates a mind-blowing **11 billion items of packaging waste a year** - that's a whopping **276 items per person every year!**



The UK uses a mind blowing **10,000 coffee cups** every two minutes. **These coffee cups would stretch around the world 5 and a half times if placed end to end.**



**The UK, Germany, France, Italy & Spain** Are among the top 13 world consumers of takeaway food, costing \$9.9 billion in 2014, forecasted to increase by 17% by 2019.



**150 million + tonnes** of plastic has accumulated in the world's oceans.



Take-away packaging is **consistently in the top 10 most commonly found items on beaches and rivers around the world.** A global report launched in August revealed that **food wrappers are now the most found item on beaches around the world** overtaking cigarettes for the first time.



Around **2.5 billion takeaway coffee cups** (30,000 tonnes) are used and thrown away each year in the UK, with **99% currently not recycled.**



**22 billion** takeaway coffee cups are thrown away globally each year.



# INFLUENCE POSITIVE CHANGE

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Universities have a tremendous opportunity to influence positive change around single-use plastics.

## YOU CAN ACHIEVE LONG TERM CHANGE THAT CREATES AN ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURE WITH LESS PLASTIC BY:

- » Fostering life-long sustainable habits and behaviours for students and staff.
- » Supporting and growing the Refill movement in your local city or area.
- » Influencing at an international level through academic research and study.
- » Reaching a variety of communities and diverse groups of people.
- » Researching solutions to the structural problems that allow for excessive singleuse plastic production.
- » Incorporating a plastic-free ethos into many aspects of university life, from courses and events to campus facilities and procurement.



# INFLUENCE POSITIVE CHANGE



## TOP TIPS FOR STUDENTS

- 1 Create a Refill Society as part of your Student Union – this will give you access to funding and create a legacy and continued momentum after you have left.
- 2 Make it FUN - Refill pub golf, plastic pub quiz, perform a Refill song or flash-mob. Let your creative side go wild.
- 3 Embed Refill into the university plans – freshers' week, university fairs, can you create a 'plastic-free week or month'?
- 4 Treat it as a job – do it well, and it will give you lots of experience and look great on your CV.

# HOW TO GET STARTED



Consider other like-minded and influential people and groups to connect with and those who may not be so aware of environmental issues—especially people from countries that may not have high tap water standards.

Encourage the student union, the university estates team and academic departments to work together where possible. Key people to get involved are the Student Union Sustainability Officer and the University Sustainability Officer (usually part of the estates' team)\*.

\*Bonus points if you can get the Student Union President or University Chancellor on board as well.





# HOW TO GET STARTED

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## » ESTABLISH YOUR PRIORITIES AND SET GOALS

Do you want to be single-use plastic-free? Improve Wellbeing? Reduce Student Costs? Reduce Waste? Improve student and staff experience? Adapt to a warming climate? Have fun whilst looking after people and the planet?

## » PLAN. PLAN. PLAN.

Get Refill into project plans -the sustainability strategy, students union officer's election manifestos, building refurbishments, new student intake.

## » WORK TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE MORE

Form working groups –e.g. installing water fountains, events and publicity, a zero-waste shop, community outreach.

.....  
"What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make."  
.....

**Dr Jane Goodall, Scientist & Activist**  
.....



# HOW TO GET STARTED



## UNIVERSITIES

- » Estates team
- » University sustainability officer
- » Catering
- » Academic departments
- » University Marketing team
- » Events/ arts /theatre centres
- » Faith centre
- » Associated university institutions –e.g. teaching hospitals, Innovation, enterprise and business hubs

## COMMUNITIES

- » Local transport hubs -can you get a water fountain installed at your local train station or bus stop?
- » [Your local Refill Scheme](#)
- » Local sustainability hubs, environment centres or business networks
- » Other education centres
- » Local council
- » Faith groups



# HOW TO GET STARTED

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## STUDENTS

- Student Union Sustainability Officer
- Student Union fulltime officers
- People and Planet societies
- The volunteer coordinator/service
- Campus wellbeing teams
- People concerned with the student experience
- Other student societies (Ecology society, sports societies - they could use Refill water bottles whilst competing)



# BECOME A #PLASTICFREECAMPUS

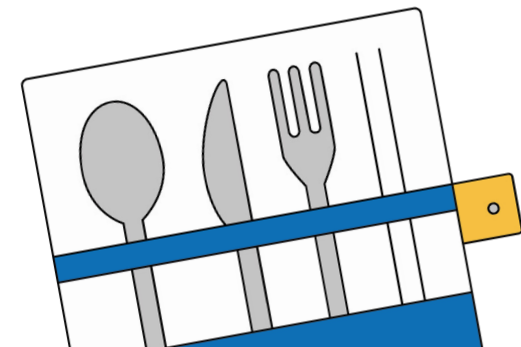
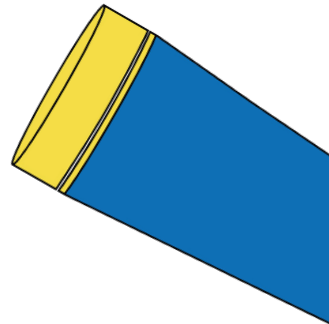
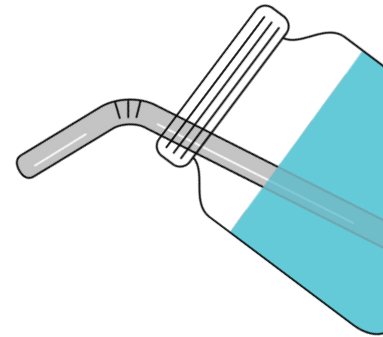


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While individual actions to reduce the use of single-use plastic - like using a reusable container - are important, systemic and institutional change is needed to achieve true and lasting solutions to the plastic pollution crisis.

Educational institutions play a key role in developing responsible citizens who will take the lead in bringing about the systems change necessary to end plastic pollution.

**Break free from plastic.**



# JOINING THE REFILL REVOLUTION

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## WHAT COULD YOU DO?

### CREATE A REFILL SCHEME

Getting involved with the Refill campaign is one of the simplest and most effective ways to start reducing single use plastic at your university.

The role of a [Refill scheme](#) is to establish the campaign in your local area, signing up Refill Stations and mapping the places on the Refill app, where people can access free tap water, or shop plastic free. These businesses could be anything from high-street chains and businesses like Costa Coffee, to local Zero-waste shops, bakeries, greengrocers or even local park or tourist attraction.

You'll also engage your local community, and sign post them to the Refill app to help them live with less plastic. You'll connect with other initiatives working to reduce single-use plastic and support other reuse schemes like deposit return schemes and cup schemes. Between them, our community-based Refill Schemes have put thousands of Refill Stations on the map, working in their local community & helping to stop millions of plastic bottles at source. There are now hundreds of Refill Schemes around the world from London to Latin America. You will meet some of our [university-based Refill schemes](#) in the case study section.



# JOINING THE REFILL REVOLUTION

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## LEVERAGE YOUR KNOWLEDGE & TALENT

From psychology departments using their knowledge of behaviour change to chemists and engineers creating closed-loop designs for the circular economy, utilise your university's extraordinary brainpower to reduce plastic in your local community and the wider world.

If you are a student, what are you studying? Is there a way to link aspects of your course to the plastic problems and solutions? Can you do research that will be useful to the campaign?

[Precious Plastic Lancaster](#) is a collaborative alliance between the University and the community. They create and sell products using plastic which would otherwise be burned or sent to landfill. This generates revenue for local businesses, gives local people and students a shared objective, and teaches new skills such as design, manufacturing, and entrepreneurship. They use all this knowledge to educate people about the problem and opportunity we face.

# JOINING THE REFILL REVOLUTION



SAM PIERPOINT

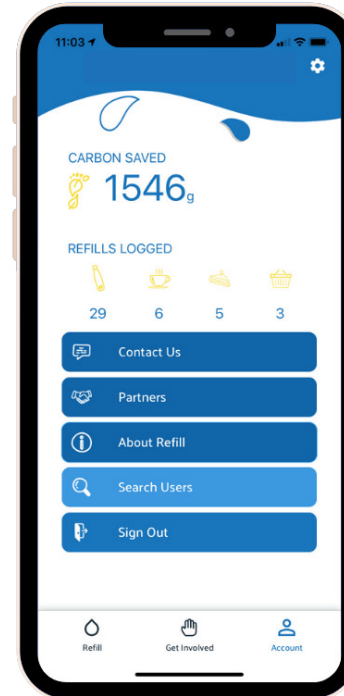
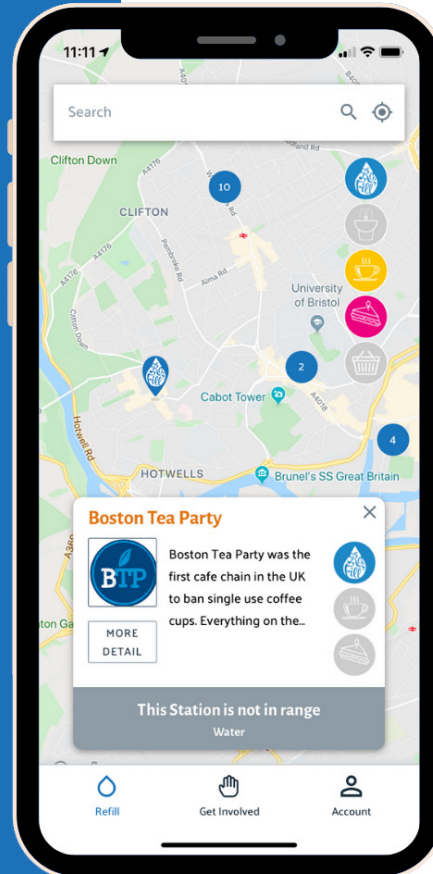
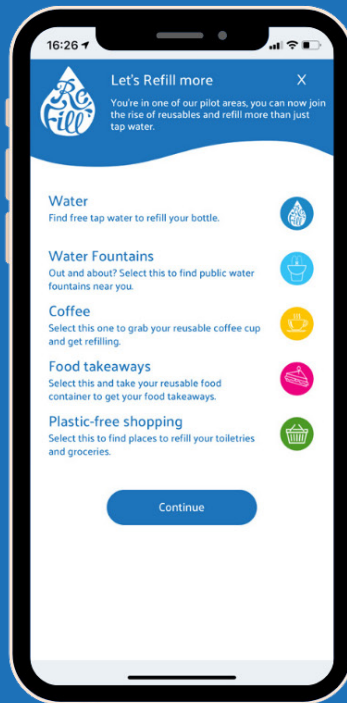
## MAKE A SPLASH

Here are some ideas to get you started with your Refill scheme.

- Organise a launch event.
- Get an article or regular update in your student newspaper.
- Set up a stall at Freshers week to educate your fellow students.
- Can you use campus TV screens? We have design work ready to use.
- Sell [Refill co-branded](#) reusable bottles in your shops.
- Take over your university social media for a week and or separate departments.
- Create your own Refill social media channels and follow [@refillHQ](#) and [@citytosea\\_](#).
- Support the latest campaign hashtags.
- Download the Refill app and arrange action days to sign up new Refill Stations in your town.

# DOWNLOAD THE REFILL APP

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TO EAT,  
DRINK  
AND SHOP  
WITH LESS  
WASTE.





# THINK OUTSIDE OF THE UK

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Not all countries have such high-quality water as the UK. Think about how to reach international students and inform them that in the UK it is safe to Refill.

- Can you engage your universities English Language services or invite international student societies to join with Refill?
- Do your academic departments have international connections?
- Inspire other universities and institutions to join their local Refill community.

## A GET TOGETHER!

Get lecturers to pledge to only use reusable bottles and cups when presenting. Lecturers are authority figures and role models to students and students spend a lot of time looking at them during their studies.

Pull your best plastic brains together for a cross department plastic reduction event. Cardiff University held a cross departmental event around the theme of plastic reduction. It included talks from experts on sustainable fashion, plastic pollution, zero waste businesses and was topped off with a debate, drinks and nibbles. Read about this in our case studies.



## SIGN UP ALL POSSIBLE REFILL STATIONS ON THE UNIVERSITY GROUNDS

A core role for your Refill team initially is to sign up Refill Stations, adding them to the Refill app and getting stickers in the windows to show that they are happy to provide free tap water and/or other Refills.

These could be water fountains, and bottle fillers; cafes and dining halls, libraries, bars, the student union, theatres, sports facilities and anywhere else it is possible to safely Refill a water bottle. Make sure they are visible by using the Refill stickers, posters (available in the resource pack) and even floor markers. Please only put Refill Stations that are publicly accessible onto the Refill app though do mark ones that aren't with posters and stickers and get them marked on your university map.

## IDENTIFY PLACES IT IS HARD TO REFILL OR WHERE THERE IS HEAVY DEMAND

Then work together to install a water fountain or bottle filler. [Our guide to installing water fountains](#) gives detailed information on how to do this.

# WATER REFILLS



## THINK ABOUT PLACES IN YOUR LOCAL AREA YOU CAN SIGN UP AS REFILL STATIONS

If you are a city university, there may be many buildings and areas to consider. Is your university connected to a teaching hospital or business units or other institutions? Once you have covered all places connected to the university it may be time to branch out into shops and businesses in the local area. Connect with your local Refill Scheme if there is one.

## STOP SELLING SINGLE USE PLASTIC

Persuade shops on your campus to stop selling water in Single Use Plastic bottles. Get the bars, shops and cafes to sell reusable bottles instead, install a water fountain or as a small step in the right direction, water in aluminium cans with a high recycled content instead.

## DO SOME RESEARCH

Find out who is buying single use plastic water bottles at your university and work out the best way to reach them. Make sure that you are not communicating only with those people who are aware of environmental issues. Think about how you will reach a range of people.

## REUNITE AND REHOME REUSABLE BOTTLES

It can be easy to lose a reusable bottle. Not only is doing so expensive but it is also not good environmentally if the bottles are not used numerous times. Find a way to reunite lost reusable bottles with their owners and when that isn't possible to rehome them.



# WANT TO DO MORE?



## Branch out

Reach outside your campus and sign-up local businesses as Refill Stations. Engage with your local community and connect to your local Refill Scheme or start one if there isn't one nearby. Actively work to include a wide variety of people and communities.



## Alumni

Ask them to buy a Refill branded bottle to raise funds for your campaign and introduce them to Refill. Encourage them to reduce plastic in their workplaces and homes.



## Save money

1 litre of Buxton water a day for a month costs £22.50, nearly half the average student going out budget of £49 a month according to [the National Student Money Survey](#).



## Promote knowledge of the circular economy

Many plastics are very difficult to recycle and those where it is possible produce a low grade of plastic. Raise awareness of the limitations of recycling and encourage people to reduce and refill instead.



## Encourage new habits

Keys, Phone, Bottle! Remind people to carry their reusable bottle/ mug/cutlery with them when they leave their home in the morning. Create washing facilities in the university so they can be cleaned easily while they are out and about.



## Stay safe

Working with our Refill partners and the REPEAT (Reuse + Plastic Experts Action Taskforce), we've now created [guidance for Refill Stations on safely accepting reusable bottles for drinking water refills](#).

# IMPORTANT DATES

22



3rd March  
**World Wildlife Day**

18th March  
**Global Recycling Day**

22nd March  
**World Water Day**

22nd April  
**World Earth Day**

5th June  
**World Environment Day**

8th June  
**World Ocean Day**

16th June  
**World Refill Day**

**Plastic Free July**

19th September  
**World Clean-up Day**

Find more days to get  
involved with >>>



# CASE STUDIES



## CARDIFF METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY



## WREXHAM GLYNDWR UNIVERSITY



## CARDIFF UNIVERSITY



## LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS



## SWANSEA UNIVERSITY





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Mae Trafnidiaeth Cymru yn eiddo i  
**Lywodraeth Cymru**  
Transport for Wales is owned by the  
**Welsh Government**