

Communications Toolkit

Communicating contamination for low and moderate contaminators

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Introduction

This guide has been created to help local authorities communicate incidences of low and moderate contamination - this is defined by the Household Recycling Charter as residents who contaminate their recycling containers infrequently and not severely.

The information provided in the Charter can be used by local authorities to develop and refine their own contamination policies. This guidance document explains how to practically communicate these contamination policies for different recycling services.

This guidance can also be used by local authorities that have already implemented their own contamination policy.

The template communication materials displayed in this document are all available for download from the Zero Waste Partners website. These templates are for the following material streams:

- Paper, card and cardboard.
- Plastics, metals and cartons.
- Glass bottles and jars.
- Food waste.
- Co-mingled food and garden waste.
- Garden waste.

For further guidance, please contact the Zero Waste Scotland Communications Team:
support@recycleforscotland.com

Background and purpose of guidance

The Code of Practice associated with Scotland's Household Recycling Charter recognises that policies to encourage the proper use of recycling containers are important in maintaining high-quality recycling.

The Charter sets out a consistent approach to the way incidents of contamination should be monitored and managed.

This guidance covers how to communicate low and moderate incidences of contamination as defined by the Charter.

For clarity we have reproduced the terminology used in the Code of Practice to differentiate between low and moderate levels of contamination.

Low Levels

Definition

Very few items that are unacceptable are visible to the operative.

Action

Box collection: Where safe to do so the collection crew should remove the recycling, leaving the contaminants in the box.

Bin collection: Where safe to do so the collection crew should collect the container taking note of the incident.

The container should have something appended to it (i.e. hanger, sticker, tag) so that the citizen can understand the range of materials that can be recycled. Future collections should be monitored.

Moderate Levels

Definition

Several items that are unacceptable are visible to the operative.

Action

Box collection: Where safe to do so the collection crew should remove the recycling, leaving the contaminants in the box.

Bin collection: Where safe to do so the collection crew should remove the contamination and collect the recycling, leaving the contaminants in the bin. If the items cannot be safely removed, the bin should not be collected.

The container should have something appended to it (i.e. hanger, sticker, tag) so that the citizen can understand the range of materials that can be recycled. Future collections should be monitored.

Consumer testing

Robust qualitative and quantitative research was carried out to inform the development of this guidance.

Qualitative Research: Focus Groups

Two local authorities were selected which had comprehensive data about the levels of contamination in their recycling collection routes.

Four focus groups were run across these two authorities in specific areas which had low to moderate levels of contamination.

The research explored the following key areas:

- Awareness of contamination.
- Testing messages for communicating low and moderate contamination.
- Overall opinion of approach.
- Additional messaging to help residents understand the consequences of contamination.



Consumer testing

Quantitative Research: National Online Survey

The research findings from the focus groups were further tested using an online survey.

A nationally representative sample of 500 people were asked a series of questions developed from the outputs of the focus group research.

Respondents were recruited from a panel provider with a pool of over 40,000 people. Screening questions were included to ensure that respondents did not reject the concept of recycling, nor were they environmental activists.

The sample selected matched the standard demographics of the Scottish population using quota controls on age and gender.

Quotas also included areas of Scotland, household type, employment status and type, and total annual household income.

The questions were designed to explore if the focus groups findings reflected the opinions of the wider Scottish population.

The results corroborated the qualitative research findings.



What's included?

Section 1: Low contamination guidance

This section contains communication materials for use with recycling collections (bins and boxes) that contain low levels of contamination (i.e. 1 or 2 wrong items).

Section 2: Moderate contamination guidance

This section contains communication materials for use with recycling bins that contain moderate levels of contamination (i.e. 5 or more wrong items).

Section 3: Supporting communication materials

This section contains additional communication materials that help residents understand the consequences of contamination and the importance of recycling correctly.

Section 4: Additional messaging

This section contains additional messaging to reinforce the consequences of contamination to residents.



Section 1: Low contamination guidance

Recycling Box Postcards

The Household Recycling Charter states if a recycling box contains low levels of contamination (a few unacceptable items), the recyclables should be collected, with the contaminants left in the box.

In this situation, a postcard should be left in the box informing residents these are the wrong items and should be removed.

The preferred headline message to communicate this is **Oops.**

The inclusion of either Yes or No lists on the back of the postcard will help residents to avoid contaminating in the future.

This approach can also be used for recycling boxes which contain moderate levels of contamination (several unacceptable items).

Templates are available to download in Adobe InDesign format:

www.zerowastescotland.org.uk/partners



Section 1: Low contamination guidance

The colour of the postcard can be matched to the colour of the recycling box.



Templates are available to download in Adobe InDesign format:

www.zerowastescotland.org.uk/partners

Section 1: Low contamination guidance

Recycling Bin Hangers

The Household Recycling Charter states if a recycling bin contains low levels of contamination (a few unacceptable items), the container should be emptied and the incident noted.

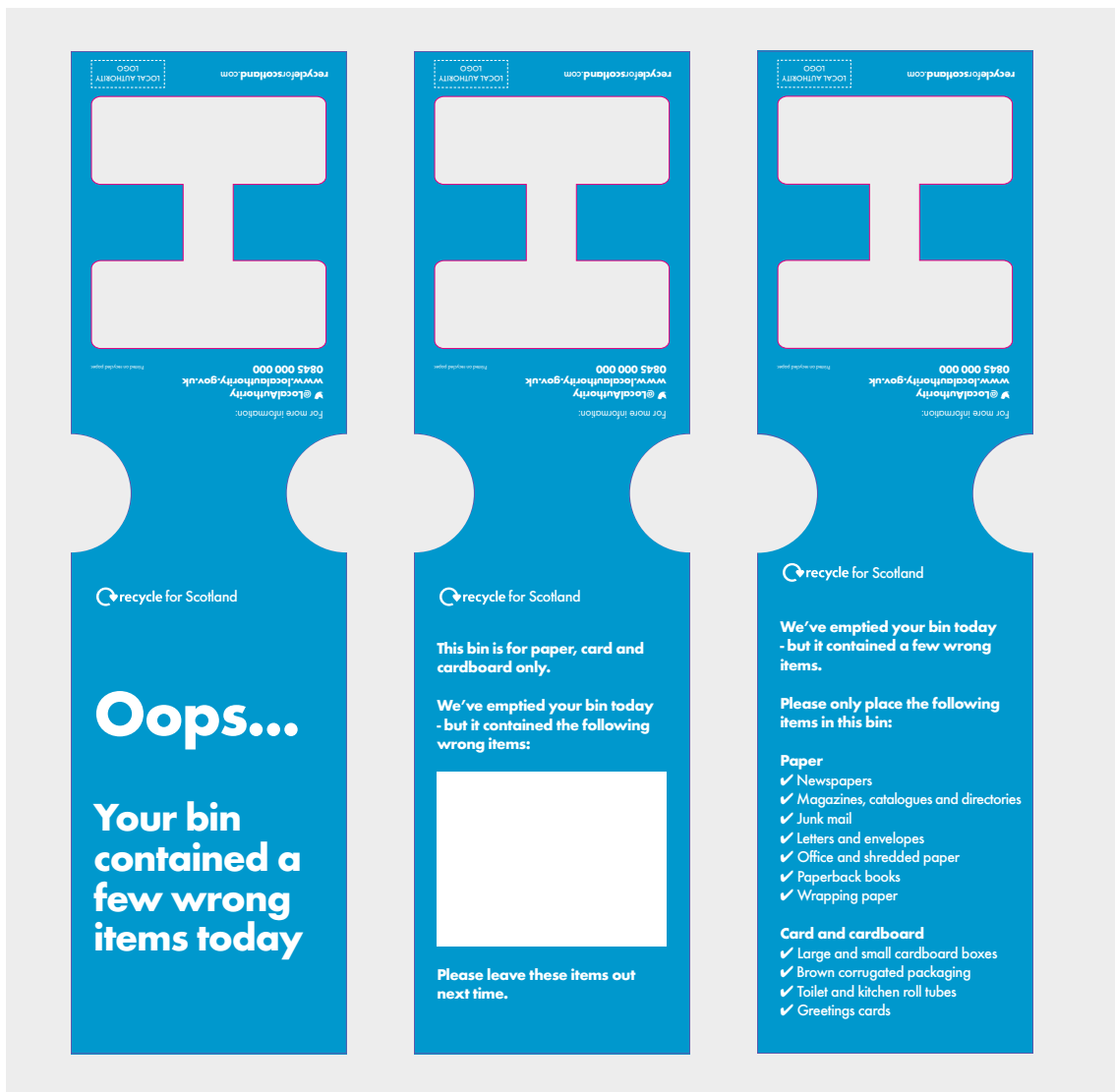
A hanger should be attached to the bin informing residents that even though their bin was emptied it contained a few (1-2) unacceptable items.

The preferred headline message to communicate this is **Oops**.

There are two options for the back of the hanger. One has a blank space for the collection crew to write the type of contamination on the back of the hanger - this allows the resident to be informed about the specific details of the wrong item(s). A second option has a Yes list of correct items to help residents avoid contaminating in the future.

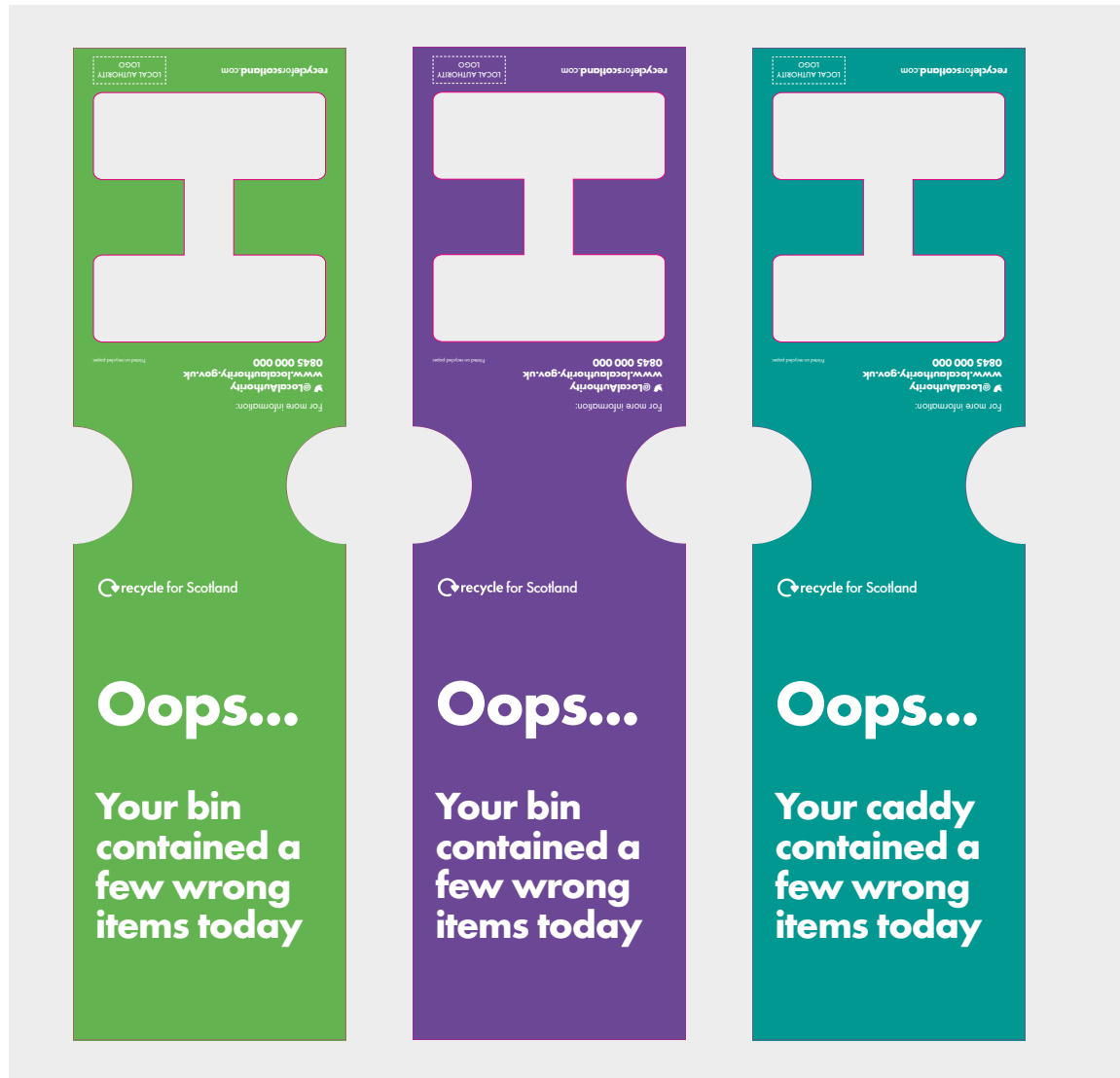
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Section 1: Low contamination guidance

The colour of the hanger can be matched to the colour of the recycling bin.



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Section 2: Moderate contamination guidance

Recycling Bin Hangers

The Household Recycling Charter states if a recycling bin contains moderate levels of contamination (several unacceptable items), the bin should not be emptied.

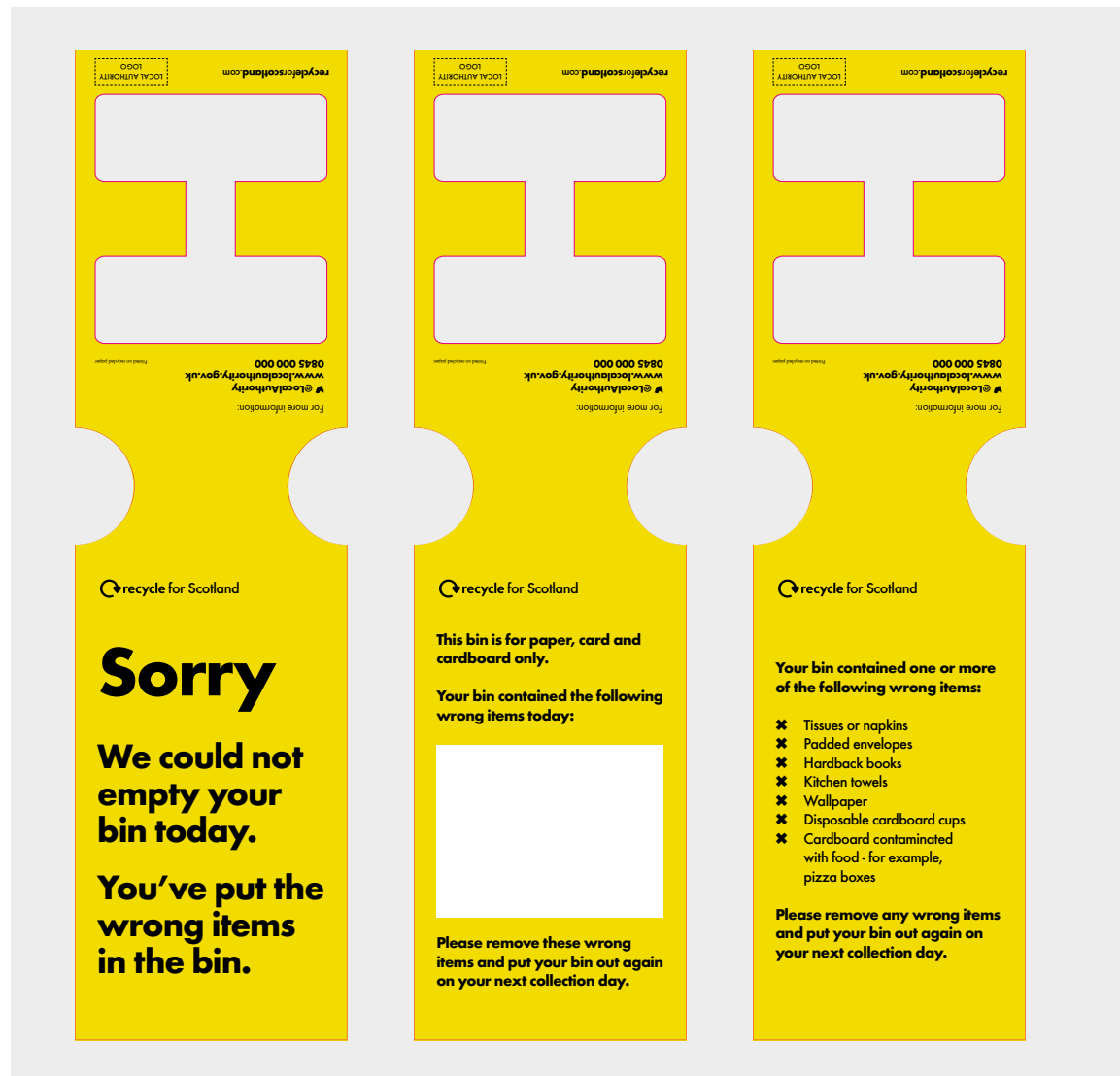
A yellow hanger should be attached to the bin informing residents it has not been emptied because it contained several (more than 5) wrong items. These items should be removed and the bin put out on their next collection day.

The preferred headline message to communicate this is **Sorry**.

There are two options for the back of the hanger. One has a blank space for the collection crew to write the type of contamination on the back of the hanger - this allows the resident to be informed about the specific details of the wrong item(s). A second option has a No list of wrong items to help residents avoid contaminating in the future.

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Recycling Service Leaflets - Low Contamination

As well as placing a tag on their bin, if a resident has placed a few (1-2) unacceptable items in their recycling container it may be useful to provide them with a copy of the recycling service leaflet.

This additional information should be provided as soon as possible after the contamination event and can help inform and/or remind residents how to use their recycling service correctly.



Contamination Leaflets - Moderate Contamination

As well as placing a tag on their unemptied bin, if a resident has placed several (more than 5) unacceptable items in their recycling container they should be provided with a contamination leaflet.

These leaflets can be used to provide residents with more detailed information about the impacts of contamination and explain how to recycle correctly.

Electronic versions of these leaflets can be hosted on the local authority's waste and recycling web pages. They can also be used to train contact centre staff about the most common contamination problems so they can confidently communicate with residents about these.

Templates are available to download in Adobe InDesign format:

www.zerowastescotland.org.uk/partners

recycle for Scotland

Sorry...

You've put the wrong items in the bin

recycleforscotland.com

LOCAL AUTHORITY LOGO

Include local authority branding

Section 3: Supporting communication materials

These leaflets contain the following information:

- What can be recycled.
- What happens when the wrong items are placed in the container.

Your blue bin is for paper, card and cardboard


Yes	No
<p>Paper Clean and dry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Newspapers✓ Magazines, catalogues and directories✓ Junk mail✓ Letters and envelopes (including windows)✓ Office and shredded paper✓ Paperback books - consider donating to charity before recycling✓ Wrapping paper - no foil or glitter <p>Cardboard Flattened</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Large and small cardboard boxes - for example, cereal, detergent boxes and packaging✓ Brown corrugated packaging - remove tape and staples✓ Toilet and kitchen roll tubes✓ Greetings cards - no glitter	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✗ Black bag waste✗ Food waste✗ Tissues or napkins✗ Padded envelopes✗ Hardback books - please donate to charity✗ Kitchen towels✗ Wallpaper✗ Disposable cardboard cups✗ Cardboard contaminated with food - for example, pizza boxes

Did you know?
Paper is one of the most valuable recyclable materials - but only when it is clean and dry

Why it's important
If you put the wrong items in your bin, it costs the Council money to transport, sort and dispose of them. This is money that could be better spent benefiting your community.

Top tips

- ✓ Remove any plastic wrapping and free gifts from newspapers and magazines and put them in the bin for non-recyclables.
- ✓ Remove all plastic inserts, polystyrene and tape from cardboard packaging.
- ✓ Tear off any glitter and remove badges and batteries from greetings cards.



Additional messaging can be used to encourage residents to recycle correctly

Instructional messaging can help to avoid contamination

Clear imagery can help to communicate your message to people with literacy difficulties or those who do not have English as a first language


Templates are available to download in Adobe InDesign format:


www.zerowastescotland.org.uk/partners


Section 3: Supporting communication materials

Additional information is also included to encourage residents to recycle correctly and includes recycling journey facts and the impacts of contamination.

What happens to the paper, card and cardboard I recycle?

- 

Your paper, card and cardboard is taken to a recycling facility.
- 

It is de-inked, pulped and made into giant rolls of paper...
- 

...then turned into new newspapers and packaging.

Putting the wrong items in your bin can cause problems at the recycling facility by damaging machinery and risking the safety of workers.

Cleaner recycling means less waste, less landfill and more value.

Contact Us

If you need more space for your recycling you can request additional recycling containers free of charge. To order these, or for further information to help you recycle correctly, please contact us:

email@localauthority.gov.uk
www.localauthority.gov.uk
0845 000 000

Include local authority contact details for people to find out more

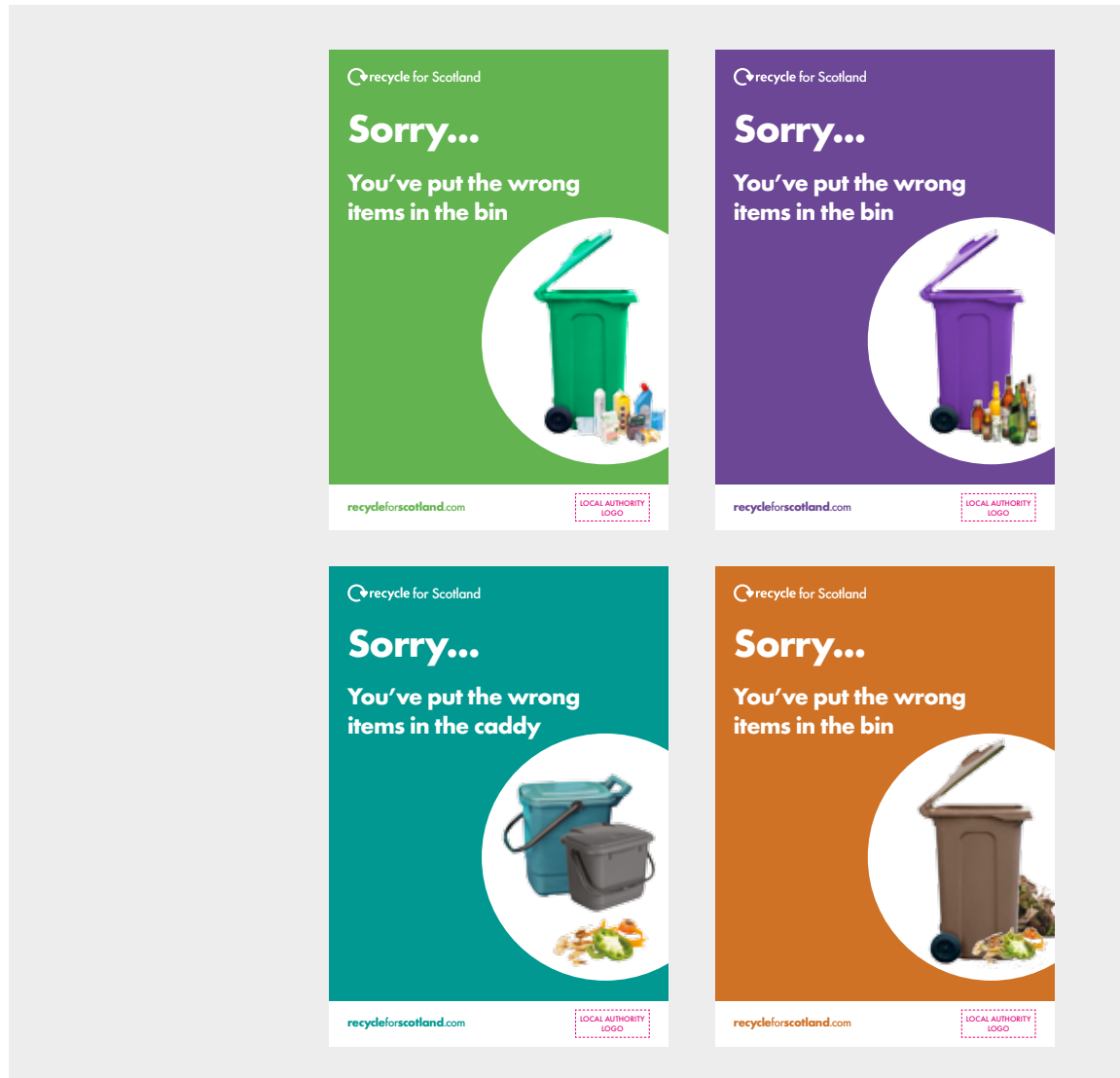
Templates are available to download in Adobe InDesign format:

www.zerowastescotland.org.uk/partners

Section 3: Supporting communication materials

Templates have been produced for each of the material streams:

- Paper, card and cardboard.
- Plastics, metals and cartons.
- Glass bottles and jars.
- Food waste.
- Co-mingled food and garden waste.
- Garden waste.



Templates are available to download in Adobe InDesign format:

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Section 4: Additional messaging

The following messages may also be helpful to explain why it is important to recycle correctly and avoid putting the wrong items in recycling containers.

These can be applied to leaflets, letters, or other collateral.

Category	Message
<i>Generic benefit</i>	Cleaner recycling means less waste, less landfill and more value.
<i>Financial</i>	Transporting, sorting and disposing of items that cannot be recycled costs money.
<i>Health and safety</i>	Wrong items can damage recycling machinery and risks the safety of workers.
<i>Loss of resources</i>	If too many of the wrong items are put in recycling bins the entire lorry load may be sent to landfill.

Further support

Please contact us, requesting '*Recycle for Scotland support*', if you have any questions about this document or need further support.

support@recycleforscotland.com



A **Zero Waste Scotland** initiative
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