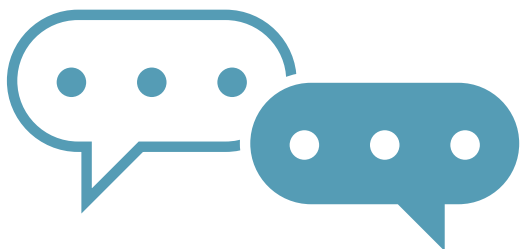


## Plastic-free refill shopping

Shopping zero waste is becoming increasingly popular as more of us try to reduce our impact on the planet. With the reduction of both food waste and packaging waste in mind, community shops may wish to consider dedicating a section of the shop space for refills.

The commitment to refills can range from just a few hoppers or vats of products on sale, taking up just a couple of shelves, to a whole array of refillable products for customers to choose from. Generally, customers bring in their own containers and refill them from larger containers in the shop. Prices are usually based on weight or quantity so your customers can buy exactly the amount they need.



### Selling loose products can be good for those customers

- In small households
- On a tight budget
- For products where you don't want a lot at one time
- For those wanting to cut down on packaging waste.

### What refill products should you consider stocking?

The most popular refill products are listed below and fall into three categories.

Non edible	Pets	Edible
Washing-up liquid	Bird seed	Muesli
Laundry liquid	Bird peanuts	Porridge oats
Multi-surface cleaning	Fat balls	Pasta
Toilet cleaner	Dog biscuits	Rice
Dishwasher tablets	Dry dog food	Red lentils

## Legalities

Food sold loose is sold in a manner known as 'non-prepacked', which, although it has fewer labelling requirements than prepacked food, must still provide consumers with certain information.

You must ensure that the containers you sell your food products from, as well as any smaller containers that you sell to consumers who don't have their own, are suitable for food use.

However, you are not responsible for ensuring that the containers consumers provide themselves are suitable but be aware of dangers e.g. plastic milk bottles filled with cleaning fluid.



## Weights and measures

The weighing and measuring of the products you sell is covered by trading standards law.

The weight of products sold into customers' own refill containers must be in metric quantities - grams or kilograms - and must be determined using legally approved equipment.

It is important to determine the weight of products sold before they are placed into the customer's container; this will ensure that only the weight of the product is being charged for. Alternatively, the customer's container may be weighed before it is filled so that the container weight may be deducted from the total, or the 'tare' function on weighing equipment can be used to remove the weight of a container from the weighing process.

Please contact your local trading standards service if further advice and information is required regarding appropriate weighing and measuring equipment, or the requirements for the measurement of particular products. It may be necessary to invest in scales that can link to your EPOS system and you will also need the facility for printing out labels for weighed loose products.

You will need to calculate if investing in this equipment is worthwhile – it may prove too expensive unless you plan on having quite an extensive range.



Alternatively, some refill hoppers can dispense set amounts, which might remove the need for weighing and labelling equipment investment, but the containers themselves would be more expensive. A third option is selling standard sized containers for the customer to re-use so the refill quantity and price are fixed and don't need to be weighed.

Whichever method is used, you will need to clean your dispensing containers regularly by emptying them, rather than constantly topping product up.



## Things to consider before investing

- How much space do you have?
- How much investment do you want to make?
- What products are likely to sell?
- How will it affect the sales of existing stock range?
- Who will look after it and keep it topped up?
- What training will need to be provided? Is this more or less work/stress for your volunteers?
- Is there sufficient demand?

## Practicalities to consider

- Are you going to have scales for self-weighing and labelling or is everything done at the till?
- Can your existing EPOS/scales/labelling machine cope, or will you need to invest in new equipment?
- Will this mean slower service for your customers?
- Where will you locate the refill range and how easy is it to access and use the dispensers?
- Be aware of allergens - cross contamination (using a container for nuts, then pasta) must be avoided.
- Loose grains are notorious for requiring good pest control procedures.
- Each dispenser needs full ingredients labelling including date and price.
- Spillages by customers are common which not only can be wasteful but can result in slip hazards – health and safety and cleaning procedures will need to be put in place.
- Safe storage may be required for products bought in bulk that cannot all fit into one dispenser.

## Recommended resources

### Where can I see plastic-free refill shopping in action near me?

Pebble magazine have a great list of 100+ zero waste shops across the UK.

[Pebble magazine have a great list of 100+ zero waste shops across the UK](#)

## Other useful links

'Oddbox', the veg box provider, have a useful blog on refill shops.

[A beginner's guide to refill shops | Oddbox](#)

'beunpacked.com' offer a free starter checklist for those wanting to start stocking refill products.

[Set Up a Zero Waste Store – Unpackaged \(beunpacked.com\)](#)

They also work with Plunkett recommended supplier, Cotswold Fayre, to offer a one-stop refill unit for shops.

[UnpackagedAT – Unpackaged \(beunpacked.com\)](#)

## Other useful links cont.

Mactra shopfitting, another Plunkett recommended supplier, can help point you in the right direction for sourcing acrylic refill hoppers

[!\[\]\(2bdfe261b986065ee0ac76460d6528c9\_img.jpg\) Mactra Shop Equipment and Fittings Ltd South West UK](#)

Please see the attached link from the Plunkett website for a video from last year's Greener Community Business Virtual Summit...

[!\[\]\(e78f798d4ea5c530c9db49e7d26e6b95\_img.jpg\) Event summary: Greener Community Business Virtual Summit, 22 April 2021 - Plunkett | Plunkett Foundation](#)

There are numerous suppliers of refill products out there, but some of the best known are;

[!\[\]\(c694a3ff3b077d76910920a6a1593ab4\_img.jpg\) The Official Home of Ecover | Join Our Clean World Revolution](#)

[!\[\]\(ec9132f1d27c8919987d92907322654d\_img.jpg\) Refills \(sesi.org.uk\)](#)

[!\[\]\(05be7c7a8995decd503647c99211f7c2\_img.jpg\) Essential Trading Co-operative Ltd | Welcome \(essential-trading.co.uk\)](#)

[!\[\]\(aa53ad6fea213b8b2226d3077e30533a\_img.jpg\) We are Suma - Suma Wholefoods](#)

[!\[\]\(dd161862f9164df98f62b726e9846241\_img.jpg\) Holleys - Premium Grocery Distributor | UK Fine Food Wholesaler \(holleysfinefoods.com\)](#)

[!\[\]\(758ebdf4629c903da74c2e079717ae32\_img.jpg\) https://petproducts.co.uk](#)

## Some Plunkett member refill stockists

Four Plunkett member community businesses that stock a significant range of refill products are;

[!\[\]\(a8f9309f944226d1420f5fed22e2b6e6\_img.jpg\) Home | Tisbury CBS Copy \(tisthefuture.com\)](#)

[!\[\]\(248b91fcdac4810ffd15cf33fb6aec6f\_img.jpg\) Home | Community Refill Shop \(thegreengram.org\)](#)

[!\[\]\(899d8b7697d64725bf017d3296cfcf1b\_img.jpg\) Home | Trawden Forest](#)

[!\[\]\(c1168d6a8b365d11e842ece304635fa7\_img.jpg\) About | Brockweir and Hewelsfield Village Shop and Cafe \(bandhvilageshop.co.uk\)](#)

If you require further guidance, support or resources, please go to [www.plunkett.co.uk](http://www.plunkett.co.uk) or contact us on [membership@plunkett.co.uk](mailto:membership@plunkett.co.uk) or **0845 5571469**