

Frequently asked questions

1. What does 'Power Up' mean and what does it have to do with recycling food?

The design we've used for this campaign incorporates a fun, video game theme. In video games, a 'power up' refers to when you gain extra benefits or abilities. A free, weekly food recycling collection is more frequent than your general rubbish collection and removes the food from your home quicker. This means 'game over' for unpleasant smells that hang around your home.

'Power Up' also nods to recycled food going to anaerobic digestion where it is turned into energy to power homes, as well as fertiliser for farms in Essex.

2. Where are you rolling out and what can I expect?

The campaign launched from 1 September 2026. Eligible households include those with wheeled general rubbish bins in Braintree, Chelmsford, Colchester, Epping Forest, Harlow, Maldon, Rochford, Tendring, and Uttlesford. These households will be delivered:

- a. a free, one-off roll of food caddy liners
- b. an information leaflet full of tips and tricks about food recycling
- c. a reminder sticker placed on their general rubbish bin

Uttlesford will start deliveries of the assets from the week commencing 14th September 2026.

3. Who will be delivering the three items?

You will see a team from D2D Distribution LTD delivering the items through letterboxes and stickering wheeled general rubbish bins. They will have identifiable uniform on. They will **not** be knocking on doors, just delivering your leaflet and liners through the door, and applying a sticker to your general rubbish bin.

4. Do I have to use the food recycling service?

No, but there are many benefits to using the service. It reduces the amount of waste in your general rubbish bin and makes it less smelly. Your food recycling is collected weekly from the kerbside which removes any uneaten food from your home quicker than if it was in your general rubbish bin. It is taken to an anaerobic digestion facility in Dagenham. Here, it gets transformed into energy

for homes and businesses, and fertiliser for Essex farms. Visit www.loveessex.org/ideas/recycle/food-recycling for more information.

5. Why is Essex County Council and my local council encouraging food recycling?

Despite Essex households having access to a weekly food recycling collection, 30% of general rubbish is still food. If food goes in your general rubbish bin, it can sit there for two or three weeks before collection, which can cause unpleasant odours. So, with the help of this campaign, it's time to say 'game over' to smelly bins and use your weekly food recycling collection instead.

6. My local council doesn't provide an indoor food caddy. Can I use the food recycling service without it?

Yes, you do not need a specific council supplied kitchen food recycling caddy to be able to use the food recycling service. You can use any suitable container such as a used ice cream tub, empty mushroom punnet, or a food caddy bought from a shop that matches your kitchen decor. You can put one of the free supplied liners in this container. Tie the liner and regularly transfer it to your outdoor caddy for weekly collection. To order your outdoor caddy, please visit www.loveessex.org/food-caddy

7. Do I have to use the liners you have provided?

No, you can use the service and collect food however you choose. We will be sending liners to make things easier, but it's your choice whether you'd like to use them. Some people prefer them to help keep food contained. If you do not want the liners, please hand them to a neighbour, friend, or free giveaway group online.

8. Are the liners compostable?

Compostable liners are being delivered in all areas except for Chelmsford.

9. I don't want the liners, what should I do with them?

Every household with a wheeled bin will be receiving a free, one-off roll of liners. If you choose not to use them, please either give them to a neighbour, friend, or free giveaway group online.

10. Will it attract flies or pests?

Caddies will attract no more pests than your general rubbish bin. Even less considering your food recycling gets collected weekly. However, you can help avoid odours and pests by trying the following:

a. Indoor

- i. keep your kitchen food caddy out of direct sunlight, for example under your sink
- ii. add any leftover food directly into your outdoor food caddy
- iii. empty your kitchen food caddy regularly
- iv. let food or teabags cool down before you add them to your caddy
- v. use essential oils to freshen your kitchen caddy

b. Outdoor

- i. make sure that the caddy is locked. Different council outdoor food caddies lock in slightly different ways (e.g., swinging the handle or pressing firmly to lock it)
- ii. use liners to keep food contained within the caddy
- iii. keep in a shaded spot outside
- iv. rinse out every now and again, or leave the lid open when empty

11. What happens to the food after collection?

When food is collected by your food recycling service, it is taken to an anaerobic digestion facility in Dagenham.

Anything that is not food, such as caddy liner bags or packaging, is separated from the load. Food is then processed and transformed into a biogas and fertiliser. This biogas is used to generate energy that can be used to power homes. The fertiliser is used on Essex farms.

To find out more about this process, watch [What happens to your food waste in Essex?](#)

12. What is anaerobic digestion?

After the food arrives at the anaerobic digestion plant and it has been weighed, tipped out and inspected, the food is then turned into a 'soup'. This is then fed into an enclosed oxygen-free tank, where it's broken down by microorganisms. This lets off a low-carbon biogas, which is transformed into energy that can be used to power our homes.

After this process, they are left with a material called biofertiliser, which is rich in nutrients and is a sustainable alternative to chemical fertiliser. This biofertiliser is then supplied to local agriculture customers and farmers to improve soil health and to grow more food. A great example of the circular economy in action.

13. My general rubbish bin is large enough to contain my food. Why should I separate my food?

Your food recycling is collected weekly. Your general rubbish bins are collected fortnightly, so removing food from your general rubbish bin will keep this bin fresher for longer. It also lets your leftover food have a purpose; when recycled it is turned into energy for homes and fertiliser for Essex farms! It's a win-win!

14. Does food recycling really make a difference?

It's always best to only buy the food you need and eat the food you buy. However, if you do need to throw food away then you can reduce your impact on the environment by recycling it. When food is recycled, it is turned into something useful - fertiliser for Essex farms and energy to power our homes.

Recycling food also saves money. Disposing of food in the general rubbish costs Essex taxpayers £9 million a year to dispose of - money that could be used on other essential council services.

15. Is using a food recycling caddy smelly and unhygienic?

Your food recycling caddy won't smell any worse than if you were to put food in your general rubbish bin! With food recycling collected every week, those smells will be gone faster than with less frequent general rubbish collections.

If you take care of your indoor caddy by cleaning it often and regularly transferring the food into your outside caddy, this will help to reduce any potential smells.

We recommend keeping your caddy out of direct sunlight and to keep the lid closed.

16. I don't produce enough leftover food, is it worth using the food recycling service for a small amount?

There is no amount too small – every crumb counts! The best thing we can do with our leftovers is to get creative and eat them. However, some food waste is inevitable, and this should be recycled in a food recycling caddy. Composting is also a great option, but not all food can be composted – all food can be recycled.

17. I don't have enough room for an indoor caddy in my kitchen, what should I do?

Try keeping your caddy under the sink, next to the kitchen bin, or on the worktop. You can even use your own container such as an old ice cream tub, or stack on a single plate as you prepare and finish each meal - whatever works for you! If you don't want anything in the house, you can empty directly into an outdoor food recycling caddy as and when you need. This beats it sitting around in your general rubbish bin for longer!

18. Won't using an outdoor food recycling caddy attract wildlife?

If you have a food recycling caddy, it will have a lockable handle or lid that helps to prevent wildlife being attracted or getting into your bin. Make sure you secure your outdoor caddy after each use to avoid this concern. Some residents have shared they keep it secured with something heavy on top between collection days.

19. Doesn't my food just end up in landfill?

Previously, when food was placed in your general rubbish bin, it would have been buried in landfill. There, it would let off harmful gases that contribute to climate change. But since September 2025, general rubbish in Essex is no longer sent to landfill. Instead, it is taken to an Energy from Waste facility.

However, when food is collected by your food recycling service, it is taken to an anaerobic digestion plant in Dagenham.

Anything that is not food, such as caddy liner bags or packaging, is separated from the load. Food is then processed and transformed into a biogas and fertiliser. This biogas is used to generate energy that can be used to power homes, and the fertiliser is used on Essex farms.

20. I already recycle my food, why are you targeting me?

We are so glad to hear that you already recycle your food – thank you! Please enjoy the roll of free liners and the information leaflet that includes tips and information so that you can stay up to date.

If you already recycle your food, you may have started to notice how much you throw away each week. The average household wastes £83 a month by throwing away edible food. Take part in our Money Saving Food Challenge to help your food go further – you can also win some fantastic prizes!

<https://pages.news.essex.gov.uk/p/essex-money-saving-food-challenge>

21. Isn't this just a waste of taxpayers' money?

This campaign is part of our mission to reduce the amount of food that goes into the general rubbish bin. General rubbish is more expensive to process than recycling. By recycling our food, less money is spent on waste disposal. Plus, recycled food is turned into energy and fertiliser. This campaign is tried and tested and successfully increased food recycling rates in nine areas across Essex in 2023. You can also save money by reducing the amount you throw away in the first place. Take part in our Money Saving Food Challenge to help your food go further – you can also win some fantastic prizes!

<https://pages.news.essex.gov.uk/p/essex-money-saving-food-challenge>

22. Why aren't the liners always free? Your food recycling collection service is managed by Uttlesford District Council. Essex County Council has provided funding for a one-off delivery of liners to encourage people living in your area to make the most of their free, weekly food recycling service. Local councils may not have allocated funding to continue providing free caddy liners, but if you prefer to use a liner, you can purchase caddy liners at most supermarkets or online.

23. Why are you saying it's a free weekly collection? It's one of the services that we pay our taxes for.

Food recycling collections are a standard service offered to all residents at no **extra cost**, for example, unlike bulky waste and garden waste collections. This campaign aims to raise awareness of the frequency and ease at which people can recycle their food. This will hopefully encourage people to make the most of this service and get rid of food smells that build up over time.

24. Why are only people with wheeled general rubbish bins getting free caddy liners?

This campaign follows best practice methodology that has been tried and tested in Essex already. Insight shows that the most impactful way to encourage use of the food recycling service is to provide a free roll of liners, send residents an information leaflet, and place a sticker on their wheeled general rubbish bin. This means that those without wheeled bins cannot receive this package, which includes a sticker.

Three of the districts in Essex do not currently meet these criteria. However, we are always looking at new opportunities to work together to reduce waste and increase recycling.

Which area do you live in? We can find out whether your local council provides free caddy liners already.

25. Shouldn't we be trying to waste less food?

Yes, it is important to reduce the amount of food you throw away, not only for your wallet, but the environment too. However, we know that not all food can be eaten, such as bones and out-of-date food. Therefore, it is important that these items are recycled.

Recycling your food is a great way to help understand where and when you're throwing food away. Our Money Saving Food Challenge is a great next step to help you make the most of your weekly food shop and use up the food you buy. Sign up today: <https://pages.news.essex.gov.uk/p/essex-money-saving-food-challenge>

26. Why did you put a sticker on my bin?

Essex County Council and Uttlesford District Council have launched a campaign to increase food recycling in Essex. This involves delivering a free roll of food caddy liners, an information leaflet, and a sticker for your general rubbish bin. All households in Uttlesford with a wheeled bin have received these items. If you already recycle – thank you – we hope you can make use of the free liners. If you don't yet recycle your food, we hope the sticker and leaflet provides the information and friendly reminder for you to begin.

27. Why did you post a sticker through my door?

Essex County Council and Uttlesford District Council have launched a campaign to increase food recycling in Essex. This involves delivering a free roll of food caddy liners, an information leaflet, and a sticker for your general rubbish bin.

Your wheeled general rubbish bin may have been taken in before the delivery crews could place a sticker on top. Please use this sticker on your general rubbish as a friendly reminder to you and your neighbours to keep your general rubbish bins fresh by recycling your food.

28. You say that in September 2026 households will receive a free one-off roll of compostable bags. Does this mean such bags will no longer be freely available?

This is a one-off campaign run by Essex County Council's Love Essex, where residents in eligible households will receive a leaflet, sticker, and a roll of caddy liners.

If you live in an area where food caddy liners are **already provided for free** by your local council, this will **continue as normal**. The 'Power Up' campaign is an addition to your normal service and is rolling out across the whole of Essex where not everyone receives free liners. This is with hopes that more people feel encouraged to use the weekly food recycling collection service. Please note, people don't have to use liners to use the service, but some prefer to use them to help keep food contained.