

National Green Theatres Programme Case Study

Promoting the use of Reusable Coffee Cups in NHS Grampian

April 2024

Victoria Pigot, Assistant Retail Catering Manager shares work carried out at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary in NHS Grampian to encourage and promote the use of reusable coffee cups

About

The initiative to promote reusable cups for hot drinks within NHS Grampian has sparked interest in the viability of rolling out this practice across Scotland. This case study explores the impact of NHS Grampian's implementation and how this can be replicated across NHS Scotland.



Why move to reusable cups?

It is estimated that 2.5–10 billion disposable coffee cups are used every year in the U.K. The majority of these cups end up in landfill or as litter.¹

In 2021-22, Scotland used 200 million single-use cups, with 40,000 of these discarded and littered. Without intervention, this number is projected to increase to 310 million by the end of 2025.²

NHS Grampian introduced a discount scheme encouraging customers to use branded reusable cups called Keep Cups, when purchasing hot drinks. This initiative aims to reduce single-use cup consumption and contribute to NHS Grampian's commitment to their sustainability goals. Customers using the Keep Cups are entitled to a discount on their hot drink, approximately 5%, varies slightly depending on rounding, but effectively translates to savings for customers.



An example of reusable coffee cups.

Results

Customer response to this initiative has been encouraging, with a significant increase in reusable cup sales. In January 2024, 55 units were sold compared to 35 in January 2023.

The uptake in sales prompted the team to order an additional 100 Keep Cups to meet demand. The positive response reflects a growing awareness of this initiative and willingness to adapt to more sustainable practice.

¹ Promoting the Use of Reusable Coffee Cups through Environmental Messaging, the Provision of Alternatives and Financial Incentives - <https://orca.cardiff.ac.uk/id/eprint/109996/1/sustainability-10-00873.pdf>

² Single-use disposable cups: EPECOM recommendations – Scottish Government - <https://www.gov.scot/publications/report-expert-panel-environmental-charging-measures-epecom-recommendations-single-use-disposable-beverage-cups-july-2019/pages/4/>

NHS Grampian's initiative has contributed to a modest increase in the percentage of hot drinks purchased using Keep Cups:

	Total Hot Drinks Sold	Hot Drinks Sold using Keep Cups	% of Total Purchased
January 2023	39,847	2,250	5.64%
January 2024	56,509	2,869 (+619)	5.07%

While there is still progress to be made, the upward trend indicates a shift towards reusable alternatives.

NHS Grampian ensures profitability is achieved even with the discount taken into account. The cost of the discount scheme is absorbed into their budget. Keep Cups are sold at cost price (£4.00) to encourage customer adoption.

Potential Carbon Savings

Below is the assumed carbon savings achieved in NHS Grampian using confirmed figures from January 2024:

	Total Hot Drinks Sold	Hot Drinks Sold using Keep Cups	TCO2E Savings Achieved	Plastic Savings Achieved	Single-use cup Saving (£)
January 2024	56,509	2,869	110.07kg	9.86kg	£372.84

In NHS Grampian, replacing single-use coffee cups with Keep Cups which have a lower environmental impact has the potential to save*:

	1,321kg		£4,474.08
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*Assumed figures over 12 months using extrapolated January 2024 figures. Figures taken from [Keep Cup's Impact Calculator](#).

Learning

It is apparent that promotion of this practice and its benefits is crucial to its success. Staff should consider the different methods available to share this information with their colleagues effectively.

Further Information

Below contains links to some useful information which may inform how you choose to take this action forward in your local setting.

Article #1: Contains further information about NHS Grampian's project and their success to date.
[NHS Grampian's Mission to Save 500,000 Disposable Cups](#)

Article #2: An initiative in NHS Lanarkshire started in 2019, which dedicates a day to using no single use cups across the entire board: [NHS Lanarkshire 'No Disposable Cup Day' 2023](#)

Article #3: A report compiled by Zero Waste Scotland containing many useful references and information which further supports this initiative:
[Consumption of Single-use Disposable Beverage Cups in Scotland – Zero Waste Scotland](#)

Contact Us

If you have any questions about this action, please contact the National Green Theatres Programme by emailing cfsgreentheatres@gjnh.scot.nhs.uk.