

FAQs - Plastics

- **What plastics can we recycle in West Sussex?**

Currently residents in West Sussex can only recycle **Plastic Bottles**. Most bottles are made from PET, HDPE and some from PVC plastic. There are two key questions you need to ask yourself: "Is it plastic?" and "Is it a bottle?" If the answer is yes to **both** of these questions, then put the plastic bottle in your recycling bin.

- **Why can't we recycle plastics such as food trays, even if it is made from Type 1 (PET) plastic?**

The reprocessors that accept our plastics for recycling specify that they only want bottle plastic as this often has different chemical properties to the PET food tray plastics. Items such as yoghurt pots and margarine tubs are made from a different type of plastic and these are not readily recyclable as limited markets exist. Plus, these items can often be contaminated with food debris, which can prevent the material being recycled.

- **Can we recycle plastic bottle lids?**

No, lids are often made from a different type of plastic to the rest of the bottle and will therefore have different chemical properties. If the two are recycled together chemical reactions occur affecting the end product. As the lid is screwed on to the bottle it becomes difficult to remove automatically and so can contaminate the plastic by mixing the two types together. Also non-squashed bottles with lids on make it more difficult to bale the sorted and graded bottles.

- **Why can't we recycle plastic bags?**

Some supermarkets offer recycling points for plastic bags, however three different types of plastic bags exist: biodegradable, non-biodegradable and compostable. There is no easy way to separate these and the three types cannot be recycled together. The best solution is to use re-useable or 'bag for life' shopping bags, which reduces the amount of carrier bags in circulation.

- **I've noticed numbers on plastic items; do they tell me it can be recycled?**

No. The identification codes – numbers or letter abbreviations – were originally developed by the American Society of the Plastics Industry to indicate a specific type of plastic. Unfortunately, they do not serve as reliable indicators to show if the plastic item can be recycled or not.

Remember: In West Sussex we can recycle **plastic bottles only**.

- **Will we be able to recycle more plastics in the future?**

A government body, WRAP (Waste and Resource Action Programme), has been set up to create and develop stable and efficient markets for recycled materials. It is likely that in the future more and more plastics will be able to undergo reprocessing.