



 re-use  
donate, swap, sell, buy



# The **Big** Declutter



**EUROPE & SCOTLAND**  
European Regional Development Fund  
Investing in a Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Future

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# The Big Declutter

Are you looking for ways to have less of an impact on the planet?

You're not alone. Here at Zero Waste Scotland we've been inundated with questions, requests and suggestions as people have gone from looking to reduce how much plastic they use to looking at a whole host of other ways to reduce their impact on the planet.

Having a declutter is a brilliant way to get stuff you no longer use into the hands of someone that will. Not only do you get to have a good old clear out and make some much needed space, getting your unwanted stuff back into use is also a fantastic way to reduce your impact on the planet. Everything you pass on has the potential to displace the need for someone to buy a brand new version, meaning we preserve virgin resources and stop perfectly good items ending up going to waste.

Passing things on also feels great, can help good causes and could make someone else's day. Everyone's a winner.

Here's our guide to how you can get involved.



Pass It On Week, administered by Zero Waste Scotland, is supported by the European Regional Development Fund through the £73million Resource Efficiency Circular Economy Accelerator Programme.

# How to get started

Are you looking for ways to have less of an impact on the planet?

Having a declutter is a great way to streamline your life. It's definitely not about feeling you have to give up things – more about creating some much-needed space by identifying things you simply no longer use and would be better off in someone else's hands.

But you need to be realistic – decluttering takes time. So don't think you'll blitz it in an hour – maybe consider focussing on one area per week or aim to find 10/20/30 things to pass on. We've created this guide to give you some tips – by room or type of things, so you can tackle one at a time.

So let's get started...



# The bedroom – wardrobes and drawers

A wardrobe is one of those things that however big a wardrobe you buy, most people will acquire enough clothes to fill it to the brim. According to the Valuing our Clothes report from [WRAP](#), the average UK household owns around £4,000 worth of clothes, and around 30% of those haven't been worn for at least a year.

So there's lots of scope to get those clothes out of the wardrobes and into use elsewhere. There are a couple of tips from the [Love Your Clothes](#) campaign that we'd recommend:

Do a wardrobe audit. Take everything out of your wardrobe (or drawers) and sort into piles:

- Still wear
- Needs attention  
(maybe needs a new button or a hem sewing up)
- Doesn't fit
- Can't bear to throw out
- Never again!

You can then take action as necessary:

Pile	Action	Further action
<b>Still wear</b>	Put back in wardrobe	Consider the hangers method (below)
<b>Needs attention</b>	Look at <a href="http://www.loveyourclothes.org.uk">www.loveyourclothes.org.uk</a> for tips on sewing/dyeing/stain removal etc.	If you don't have the skills or time to alter the items, considering hiring a professional. Check out local companies or community groups that offer textiles workshops.
<b>Doesn't fit</b>	Get real – will it ever fit again? How long have you held on to it just in case you become that size again? Can you get someone to alter it?	Decide whether to put it back in the wardrobe or pass it on to someone who can make good use of it.
<b>Can't bear to throw out</b>	Would you really miss it? Can you use it in a different way – frame it, turn it into a memory bear, or should you really just get rid?	
<b>Never again</b>	We all make mistakes and buy things we shouldn't have – or get given clothes that really don't suit us.	Pass it on to someone who can make use of that item.

## Passing clothes on:

- Charity shops are great places to take clothes – the clothes get another life and you get that ‘feel good factor’ knowing you’ve helped raise money for a worthwhile cause. [Revolve](#) and the [Charity Retail Association](#) have lists of stores in your area.
- You could also attend or arrange a swap shop – a great way to declutter but also get some new (to you) clothes. We have a guide to arranging one on [our website](#) (see ‘related documents’). You could have a general swap shop, or be more specific e.g. women’s clothes, men’s clothes, children’s clothes, jewellery etc. Or if you’re in the south of Glasgow, you could join [R:evolve Recycle’s](#) permanent swap shops where you can have a professional retail experience without the need for money.
- Textile banks are available in many car parks and are a convenient way to drop off items 24 hours a day.
- Consider upcycling your clothes – add embellishments to make them more attractive, alter necklines, dye them – anything that’ll make you want to wear them again.
- Sell them on sites like ebay, vinted etc.
- Don’t forget shoes and accessories. Charity shops will take them and there are ‘shoe banks’ near textile banks in many areas. Many charities will take jewellery, and some will even take broken items, such as the [Alzheimer’s Society](#) who will send you a freepost bag for your donations.

- Or try the hangers method – one way to find out what you do (and don’t) wear is to try the hangers method. At the beginning of the year, put all your hangers the same way, and when you wear something, turn that hanger the other way. At the end of the year if you haven’t turned that hanger, it means you haven’t worn that item – so get rid of it! Simple!



# The kitchen – gadgets, crockery, cutlery and food

The kitchen is probably the most used room in your home – but how often do you find you're struggling to find things behind the fondue set/steamer/juicer that you haven't used in years?

**Gadgets** – gadgets are designed to make your life easier. But we end up accumulating so many that just getting them out of the cupboard can be a challenge. When did you last use that fondue set? Do you really need a gadget that does nothing but peel pineapples – when you only buy pineapples once a year? So dig them out and have a good think. *Do I still use it? If not, why not? How often do I use it? Does it still work?*

And next time you consider buying a kitchen gadget, think carefully:

- Do I really need one? E.g. do I need a rice cooker, when I've got a hob and saucepan which could do the job equally well.
- How often will I use it? If it's not often, see if a friend or tool library has one you could borrow.
- Consider buying a second hand one. Many charity shops PAT test all electrical items and provide a warranty.

Why don't I use it?	What I can try ...
<b>I don't use it because I don't know what to make with it</b>	Use a search engine to find new recipes/ techniques to use that item.
<b>I don't use it because it's hidden at the back of a cupboard</b>	Either put it somewhere more accessible, or get rid.
<b>It's broken</b>	Try fixing it. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Online tools like <a href="#">ifixit</a> have lots of guides</li> <li>- If there's one broken part, you may be able to get a replacement online from the manufacturer/or an online sales site or get one 3D printed</li> <li>- Find a local repairer</li> <li>- If all else fails, take it to the electrical section of your local recycling centre.</li> </ul>
<b>I don't really want it anymore</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Check if your local <a href="#">Revolve/charity</a> shop take electrical items.</li> <li>- Alternately some towns have 'tool libraries' which may include kitchen gadgets. They may be able to take your item and make it available for others to borrow.</li> <li>- Give it to a friend, sell or give away on Freecycle/Freegle.</li> </ul>



## Crockery and cutlery

Over the years many of us gather a mishmash of plates, glasses and cutlery due to breakages, presents etc. If you decide to have a clear out, consider whether those items could be of use to someone else.

Some possible recipients include:

- Charity shops
- Homeless charities such as [Starter Packs](#), [Fresh Start](#) and [Falkirk Homeless](#) project often need kitchen items.
- Students are often in need of items for the new college or university year, if they are moving into new accommodation.

## Food

The average Scottish household wastes £460 a year on throwing away food that could have been eaten. There are loads of reasons, but one is that food sits in our cupboards, fridges, freezers and fruit bowls until it's mouldy, soggy, inedible (past its use-by date), or unrecognisable (in the case of the freezer). There are loads of tips to reduce food waste on the [Love Food Hate Waste](#) website, but our focus here is decluttering, so we're focussing on the items that are still edible.

So here are our top tips:

- Go through your cupboards, fridge and freezer and check what needs eating up or if there are things you're unlikely to eat.
- If you can eat them, do so, or if you need inspiration, look at the [Love Food Hate Waste](#) website or other recipe websites for ideas.
- Alternately pass them on.
  - o Non-perishable items could be donated to a [food bank](#).
  - o [OLIO](#) provides an online food sharing network

- o You may have a local [community fridge](#), food swapping network, or could try sites like Freegle/Freecycle to pass things on.
- o Offer items to friends/neighbours – or you could do a food swap.







## Furniture from any room

Have you got too much furniture, getting new furniture, or just fed up of what you've got? We've got a few suggestions to consider:

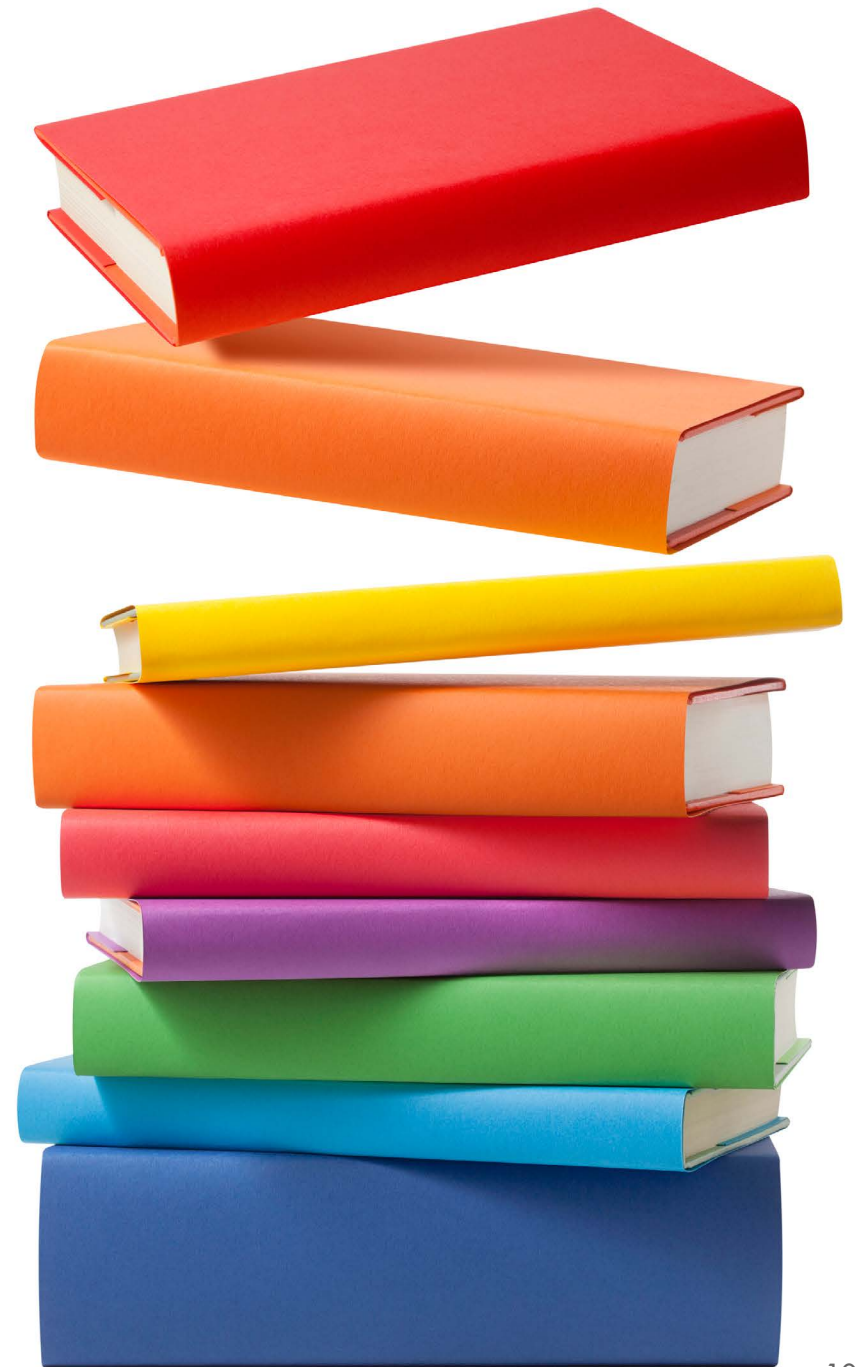
- Firstly, if you're just bored of the furniture, could you upcycle it (or pay a professional to give it a make-over)? There's loads of inspiration on line, and lots of community groups and small businesses offer upcycling workshops where you can learn the skills and borrow the tools to upcycle your own items. Even things like kitchen cupboards can be upcycled, so rather than buying a new kitchen, just take the doors off the existing cupboards and get them painted.
- Does the item need repairing? With a little research you can get all sorts of things repaired. Even amongst the Pass it on week team we've had sofas restored to hide the scratches and even had an old cooker where the symbols on the dials had worn out, and we found a company online where you give them the make/model of the cooker and they send you stickers with the symbols on.
- If you're getting rid of the item, can it be re-used (remember soft furnishings must have fire safety labels)? If so, contact the [Re-use line](#) to see if they can arrange a pick up and make sure the item gets re-used. Alternately contact your local [Revolve](#) or [charity shop](#).
- If the item can't be re-used, take it to the local recycling centre, or contact your local council to arrange an uplift (charges may apply).

# Books

Do you hoard books that you've already read and are unlikely to ever read again? If so, pass them on so someone else can enjoy them.

Consider:

- Your local [charity shop](#)
- Book banks exist in many car parks if you can't make it to the charity shop.
- Depending on the type of book, consider universities, colleges, schools, hospitals or libraries.
- Sell or donate them via online sites.





## The children's room – clothes, toys and furniture

Children grow out of clothes and get fed up of toys all the time. Having a good clear out on a regular basis is a great idea to help make it easier to keep the room clutter free.

Check what has been outgrown or ignored and consider what could be done with those items:

- Are clothes clean/re-usable? If not, use as rags or put in a textile bank. NB Charity shops and textile banks still get some money for clothes that can't be worn again but can be recycled.
- If items are re-usable, donate to a [Revolve](#) or [charity shop](#) that take kids' items. There are a few stores that specialise in children's items such as [Merry Go Round](#) in Glasgow
- Sell items at events like the [Jack & Jill markets](#) or online.
- Donate to homeless/refugee organisations or other charities.
- Donate to a toy library (or set up one in your area).

## The garage and shed – tools, bikes etc.

Garages and sheds are never big enough, so a regular declutter is very worthwhile. We'd recommend having a really good think about the items in there, how often they're used and whether you really need to own them.

Bikes – when did you last use that bike? Is it still in good working order?

- If the bike needs maintenance, there are lots of courses, and tools to help you – or get a professional to do the job.
- If you feel you rarely use a bike, or just use one for journeys around a city with a bike share scheme, consider signing up to a scheme like [Next Bike](#) or [Bike and Go](#).
- There are loads of bike projects around Scotland that will take second hand bikes to sell, upcycle, lend out to people etc. See the [Revolve](#) site for some, but there are many more. Even if your bike isn't in good working order, they may be able to make use of the components.
- Your local council recycling centre may have an area for bike re-use where they get picked up by a local organisation who can make use of them.
- Sell or donate via online sites.



# Tools

When did you last use them? Are they in working order? Do you really need to own one? Have you really got the space to store something you rarely use?

Various sources suggest that the average power tool is used for a matter of minutes in their lifetime, so why store, maintain and own these items? Tool libraries are popping up around Scotland to allow you to borrow the tools you need for the job and then return them. Check out the [Edinburgh](#), [Glasgow](#), [Stirling](#), [Greener Kirkcaldy](#), [Ecology Centre](#) (Fife), [Linlithgow](#) and [South Seeds tool libraries](#), [West Dunbartonshire](#) and [Cumbernauld](#).

If you have unwanted tools:

- Donate them to your local tool library
- Donate gardening tools to local gardening/growing projects such as at allotments, communal space, schools etc.
- Sell or donate them online or give to a friend.



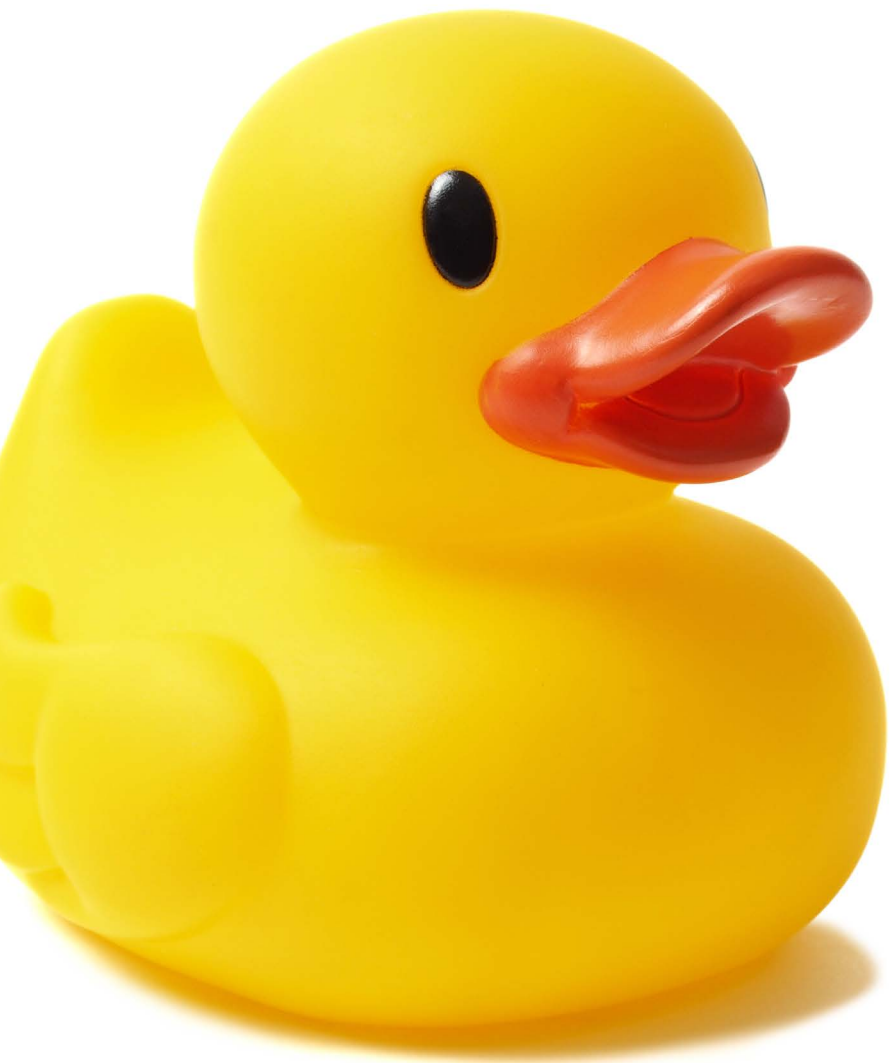
# Paint

Painting projects rarely use the whole tin of paint, so many of us are left with half used tins in the shed. [Community Repaint](#) is encouraging groups to set up schemes around the UK to take unwanted paint, but there hasn't been much uptake in Scotland so far unfortunately.

But in the meantime:

- check with your local charity/community organisations if they can take paint for re-use
- offer it out for free for community groups or schools who may want to do projects
- offer it on Freecycle/Freegle.





## The bathroom

Bathroom cabinets are often overflowing with all manner of items that have been forgotten, were 'liberated' from hotel bathrooms or given as Christmas presents. We mostly get around to using these eventually, but some can sit there for years and just take up space. So empty those bathroom cabinets and have a good clear out;

**Medicines** – medicines have expiry dates, so it's recommended you check dates regularly and dispose of expired medicines appropriately at your local pharmacy (don't put them in the bin or flush them down the loo).

**Glasses** – unwanted glasses can be donated to organisations such as [Marie Curie](#) and [Vision Aid Overseas](#).

**Shampoos/creams etc.** – use them yourself or see if a local homeless project or food bank can make use of them.

# Attic and other items

**Attic** – don't forget the attic – attics often contain items you've completely forgotten you ever owned!

**Gadgets** – as per the kitchen gadgets – consider whether you still need them, and whether they work. Fix, use, donate, or as a last resort – recycle.

**Paperwork** – paperwork creeps up on us all and you can find you have filing cabinets/in-trays and general piles of paper taking over. Similar to the clothes audit – go through your paperwork and sort out:

- Do I still need it? If so, file it somewhere you can find it when you need it.
- If you're finished with it, does it have confidential data on it? If so, shred it, then recycle it.
- If there's no confidential data on it, does it have print on one side only? If so, create a scrap paper pile for the kids, shopping lists, etc.
- If it has print on both sides, recycle it or turn it into [briquettes](#).

**Musical instruments** – donate to a musical instrument library such as [Music Broth](#), a charity shop, a school or community group, a friend or sell/donate online.





## More links

We hope you've been inspired to get decluttering. We'd love to hear how you get on, so please keep in touch on [facebook.com/RecycleForScotland](https://www.facebook.com/RecycleForScotland) or on Twitter using the hashtag [#PassItOnWeek](#) and/or [#TheBigDeclutter](#).

And, if you're feeling inspired and want more ideas, have a look at these useful sites:

[The Spruce](#)

[Becoming Minimalist](#)

[Lifhack](#)

[Zero Waste Home](#)



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