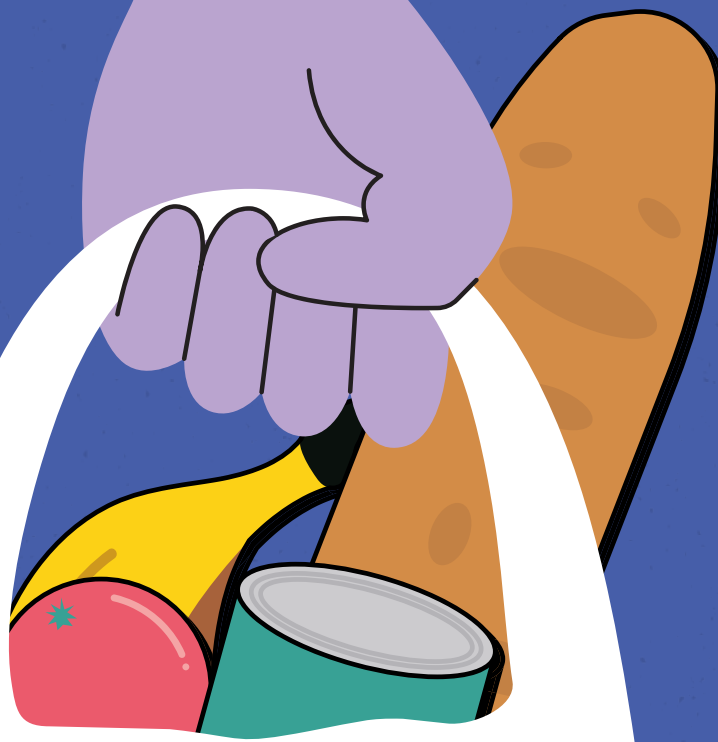


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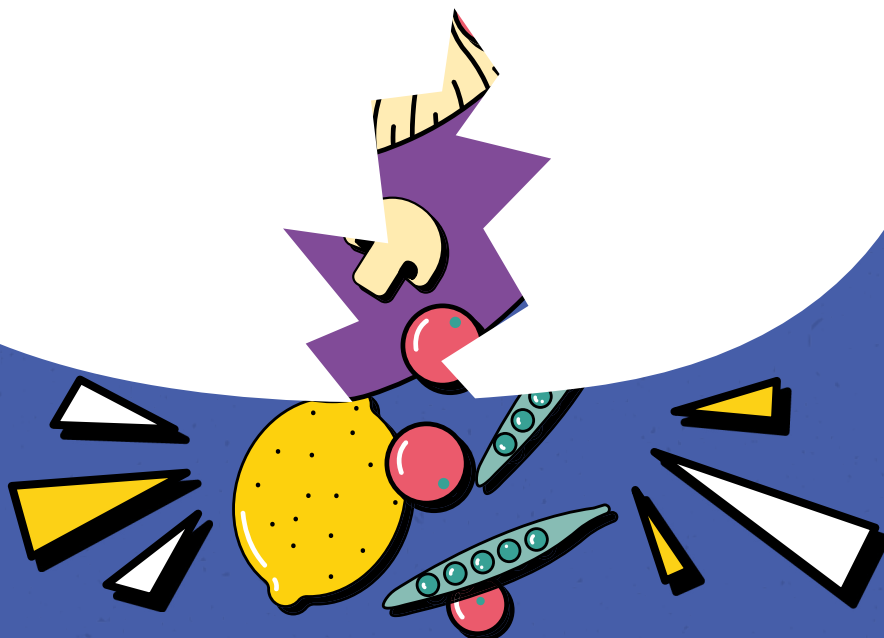


Corporation



Food Waste

**The behavioural science that will help us
reduce the amount of food we waste**



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What's the issue?

Food waste is a critical issue both in the UK and globally. According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the world wastes about 1.3 billion tonnes of food every year - equivalent to the weight of the entire Great Wall of China.

While there is enough food produced globally to feed everyone, about one third of food is either wasted or lost. It's important to distinguish between food waste and food loss, in high-income countries like the United Kingdom, food waste is more prevalent and occurs when edible food is discarded prematurely or unnecessarily. Low-income countries, on the other hand, face more issues with food loss, where food is damaged or destroyed before it reaches consumers (WFP USA, 2022).

The extent of waste in developed countries is very concerning. The UK alone wastes 9.5 million tonnes of food every year (WRAP, 2023). To put this into perspective, this is almost as much food as the entire net food production of sub-Saharan Africa (GreenMatch, n.d.).

Whilst food is going uneaten, food poverty remains an essential problem, where millions struggle to afford enough to eat. In the UK alone, 8.4 million people face food insecurity while perfectly edible food is thrown away.

Addressing food waste is essential from an environmental, economic, and social perspectives. Reducing food waste can save valuable resources, lower greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs), and help combat global hunger and food insecurity by providing food to those in need. By improving how we manage food from production to consumption, educating consumers, and adopting practices like reducing portion sizes, we can make significant progress.



What is the current picture in the UK?



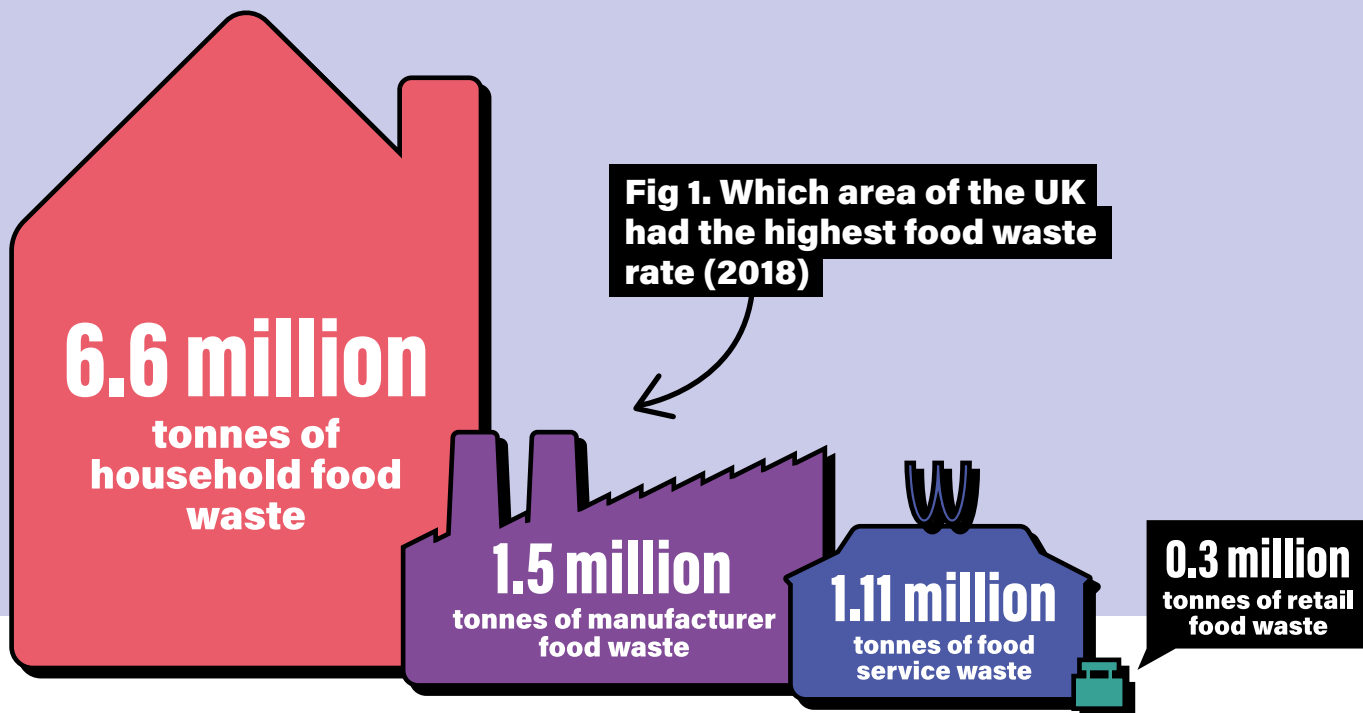
The UK throws away around 9.52 million tonnes of food waste a year. This amount of tonnes is enough to feed around 30 million people annually, yet 8.4 million live in food poverty in the UK (Waste Managed).

The source of this waste was identified to see which area or sector of the UK had a higher food waste rate. In research conducted by the charity Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP), households turned out to be the ones with higher food waste generation (WRAP, 2022).

In 2018, 70% of the UK's food waste came from households, equivalent to 6.6 million tonnes of waste (House of Lords Library, 2023). fast forward a few years (2021/22) 6.4 million tonnes of waste were generated from UK households. Even though household waste is decreasing, in 2024, every person produces 70kg of food waste per year, equivalent to 140 meals (Waste Managed,

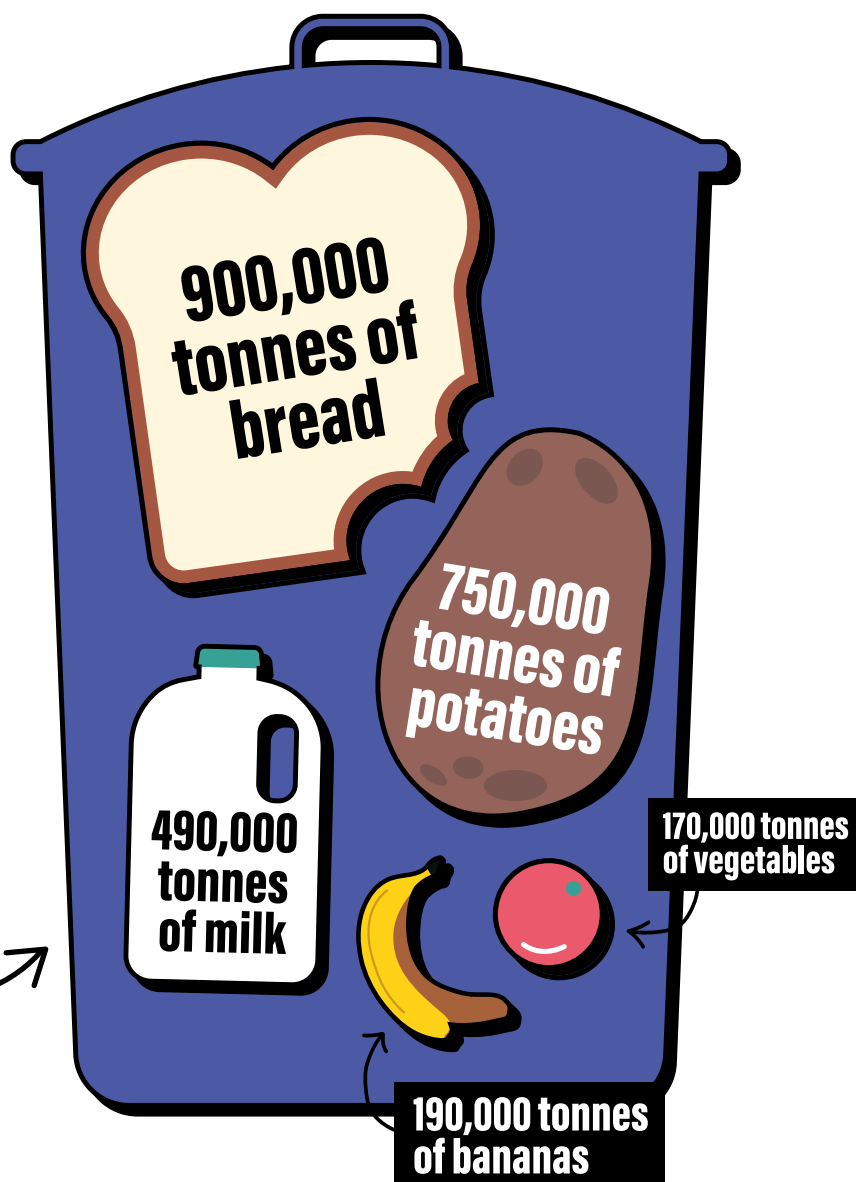
2024). This substantial waste has negative effects on both GHG emissions and hits our pockets hard. Food waste in the UK generates approximately 25 million tonnes of GHG emissions annually, contributing to climate change (Waste Managed, 2024). The GHG emissions associated with wasted food in the UK accounted for approximately 18 million tonnes of CO₂, and the cost to householders of purchasing food that was subsequently wasted in 2021/22 was £17 billion, which equates to £250 per person per year (WRAP, 2022).

It is not just householders wasting food. Other sectors of the UK also contribute significantly to food waste. Manufacturers account for 16% of the total waste, generating 1.5 million tonnes, while the hospitality and food service (HaFs) sector contributes 12%, or 1.11 million tonnes. The retail industry is responsible for 3%, resulting in 0.3 million tonnes of food waste. Household food waste generation remains the main contributor.



The top five most wasted foods in the UK includes bread, with 900,000 tonnes wasted annually at both production and consumption levels, potatoes totalling 750,000 tonnes due to overbuying, spoilage and aesthetic imperfections, milk, which accounts for 490,000 tonnes each year due to expiration, improper storage and surplus production, bananas, with 190,000 tonnes wasted from over ripening and cosmetic defects, and salads and vegetables, such as lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, leafy greens, accounting 170,000 tonnes wasted due to spoilage, overbuying and strict quality standards set by retailers (Waste Managed, 2024).

Fig 2. Top five most wasted foods in the uk (2024)





Socio-demographic factors are unlikely to be a direct cause of food waste generation, but they are likely correlated with behaviours that do impact on waste levels. Identifying differences between socio-demographic groups help to understand the complexities of household food waste generation, particularly related to how people act and what factors influence their behaviour. Correlating groups include household size, age and employment status of the main household earner (House of Lords Library, 2023)

While single occupancy households generate more waste per person, a larger proportion of their waste is due to food that is not used in time. This is because individuals living alone tend to buy more food per person than the average, and throw away a greater proportion of what is bought. In contrast, larger households generate less food waste per person because they are less likely to let food spoil or go past its expiration date, as their waste is less related to unconsumed food and more to leftover (House of Lords Library, 2023).

On average, households with older people generate lower levels of waste compared to those with younger people, with those aged 18-34 wasting the most. While all age groups tend to throw away significant amounts of fresh vegetables and salads, differences existed in the types of food wasted. Younger people waste more due to cooking, preparing and serving too much, whereas older people had a higher proportion of food thrown away due to it not being used in time. This may be linked to the fact that many older people live alone and are also less likely to use packaging to keep food fresher for longer (WRAP, 2022; Waste Managed, 2024).

Additionally, older adults are more likely to reside in households where the main earner is retired. There is evidence that suggests that this relationship could be linked to the availability of time. Older people were less likely to claim that their lives were so busy that they 'ate what they could while on the go', a statement correlated with higher levels of waste. Contrary to common assumptions, older people are not necessarily more concerned

about food waste than younger people, however, they may have better skills and knowledge, and have more time to act on these concerns (WRAP, 2022)

When comparing those in paid employment, those who were retired and those not working for reasons other than retirement, it was found that households where the main earner was retired had the lowest average levels of food waste. Households where the main earner is retired tend to make a shopping list, cook the right amount and are less likely to discard items past their expiration dates (WRAP, 2022)



What are the reasons for food waste in the UK?

Food waste in the UK is caused by different interconnected factors that happen in different stages of the food supply chain. One primary reason is overproduction, where more food is produced than is needed, leading to surplus that goes to waste. Overproduction is frequently impacted by market demand, which is linked to consumer behaviours.

Consumer behaviours is also an important factor. Many people overestimate their food needs, leading to over buying, which then results in waste when food is not consumed in time and in a higher demand that results in overproduction (Waste Managed, 2024). Linked to consumer behaviours, it was identified that people tend to struggle to understand the difference between “use by” and “best before” dates, leading to premature disposal of food that may still be safe to eat (WRAP, 2022).



Food standards and aesthetic requirements is a big one. Retailers often impose strict quality standards, leading to perfectly edible food being discarded. This waste not only happens at the consumer level but also affects producers who may have to throw away items that do not meet retailer standards. Another retail practice that also contributes to food waste is the focus on selling new stock instead of reducing waste from older inventory. Many retailers do not offer markdowns on near-expiry products or fail to implement effective inventory management systems, with both leading to higher levels of food waste (Waste Managed, 2024).

Another issue contributing to high levels of food waste is supply chain inefficiencies. Delays within the supply chain, combined with inadequate transportation and storage conditions, can lead to food spoilage before it reaches consumers or retailers, reducing the quality of food products. Additionally, the lack of effective food redistribution strategies results in large quantities of food being discarded rather than redirected to those in need (Waste Managed, 2024).

What are the UK's current measures to reduce food waste?

Reducing food waste in the UK is a priority for both the government and other organisations. Different measures have been implemented to address this issue, trying to cover all stages from packaging to composting.

Smaller packaging

One of the strategies that has become more popular in recent years is moving towards smaller packaging. This consists of offering products in smaller quantities to help consumers purchase only what they need. This strategy will help reduce the likelihood of food being wasted from early stages of the production-consumption process.

This strategy is particularly effective for households with single occupancy or smaller families, who, as mentioned earlier, could find it more challenging to consume larger portions before they spoil.

A report by The Guardian indicates that supermarkets like Tesco and Sainsbury's have introduced smaller packaging options for perishable goods, resulting in an important decrease in food waste (Carrington, 2023). Additionally, according to a WRAP study, there has been a notable decrease in food waste associated with products sold in smaller packaging sizes, suggesting that this measure is making a positive impact (WRAP, 2022).

Research from the University of Leeds highlights that while smaller packaging can reduce food waste, it must be paired with recycling initiatives to manage the additional packaging waste effectively (Jones, 2023). However, while this is a good way to reduce food waste it does increase plastic waste which is why a comprehensive recycling strategy is needed.



Composting programmes

Another UK strategy is the introduction of composting programmes, in which local authorities and environmental organisations have been promoting the use of composting bins, both at the



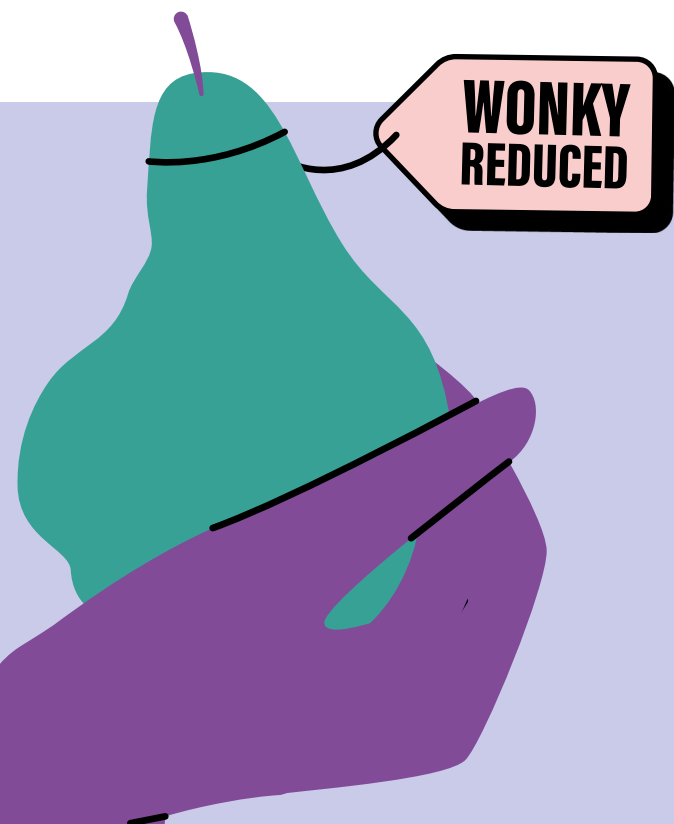
household level and within businesses. Composting not only reduces the amount of waste sent to landfill but also creates valuable compost that can be used to enrich soil. Now more people in the UK are starting to compost at home because there are now more places to take compost and local councils are giving out compost bins at a lower cost. Although going in the right direction, it's not making a big impact yet because some areas are not engaging completely. Not everyone is composting, and in cities, fewer people compost because they have less space and know less about it (Smith, 2024; Waste Managed, 2024). Composting offers a sustainable solution for food waste disposal, but its overall impact is constrained by inconsistent adoption rates and the need for greater public awareness and infrastructure (House of Lords Library, 2023).

Success stories: What works and what needs improvement?

The 'Too good to go' app and Tesco's 'Perfectly Imperfect' range are two success stories in the UK's fight against food waste.

The 'Too good to go' app has been very effective in reducing waste by helping consumers buy surplus food from restaurants at a lower discounted price. On the other hand, Tesco's 'Perfectly Imperfect' range sells aesthetically imperfect products at reduced prices, which is a good initiative to ensure that more food reaches consumers rather than throwing it away because of minor imperfections.

Despite these great initiatives, there are areas where the UK's food waste reduction efforts could improve. One significant challenge is the lack of effective food waste education and awareness campaigns that reach everyone. It is important to have more waste reduction education in schools to encourage long lasting changes in behaviour too (Carrington, 2023). Many people still are unaware of the environmental impact of food waste or how to reduce it.





Food waste legislation 2023 UK

In 2023, the UK government introduced new food waste legislation that requires companies to revise their food waste management and disposal practices to ensure compliance with environmental standards. This legislation follows the approval of the Environmental Act in 2021 and aligns with the UK government's goal of eliminating food waste to landfill by 2030 (WRAP, 2023). Under the new law, UK businesses must ensure that food waste is not disposed of in general waste bins, which encourages them to adopt more sustainable waste management practices such as recycling, donation, or composting.

The legislation is expected to significantly reduce the volume of food waste sent to landfills, but its success will depend on the enforcement method of these regulations and the cooperation of businesses across the country. According to The Times, businesses are now required to submit regular reports on their food waste management practices, which has already led to improvements in compliance and a reduction in overall waste levels (Thomas, 2024).

Solutions to food waste

Household Composting: A viable solution?

Will giving every householder a composting bin address the food waste issue?

Composting allows individuals to recycle their organic waste and while this sounds ideal, it's not a complete solution to the food waste issue.

Composting contributes to a circular economy by repurposing waste rather than discarding it. However, the success of this solution depends on how willing people are to participate and engage in this strategy and their level of understanding of what can and can't be composted. In areas where composting is widely adopted there has been a decrease in food waste, but there are still some challenges in ensuring all residents have access to the necessary resources and education.



The benefits of composting include reducing waste sent to landfills, lowering GHGs emissions and creating compost for gardening. However, there are limitations to this. Different housing types have varying barriers and challenges. For example, residents of flats and apartments, including those above shops, may find it difficult to manage compost bins due to space constraints. Additionally, not all households have the desire to compost and improper composting can attract pests or produce unpleasant smells - which many people cite as a reason NOT to compost.

These practical barriers mean that simply providing compost bins to everyone is not enough. It is crucial to ensure that properties with the space to accommodate a compost bin are provided with one, along with proper services for its management. However, composting alone can't solve the entire issue of food waste, as it only addresses the disposal of organic materials. For it to be effective, it must be part of a larger strategy that includes recycling, reducing food waste at the source and educating the public.

Responsibility for Reducing Food Waste

But who is responsible for reducing food waste? Reducing food waste is a shared responsibility that involves everyone. While it's easy to point fingers, the reality is that we all have a role to play in addressing this issue.

It is important not to place the blame on any single group. Reducing waste requires collective action from various stakeholders, each with their own roles and responsibilities.

Every individual, household and organisation has a part to play in reducing food waste. Whether is planning meals more carefully, donating surplus food or implementing better waste management practices, everyone can contribute to the solution.

What is your role? And what are people willing to do?

We are all consumers, so we can all start by being more mindful of our food purchases and waste habits. Simple actions like making a shopping list, understanding data labels and properly storing food can make a big difference. Many people are willing to make these changes, especially when they understand the environmental and financial benefits of reducing food waste.



Key stakeholders and their roles

Government and Policy makers:

National and local governments are responsible for enacting policies that encourage waste reduction, such as legislation that prevents food waste from going to landfills and supporting food redistribution initiatives. For instance, France implemented legislation that bans big shops from throwing away unsold food. Instead, they are required to donate it to charities. This law has not only reduced food waste but also supported local food banks (Gollnhofer et al., 2022).



Business and the food industry:

Food retailers, manufacturers and producers play a crucial role in influencing consumer behaviour by reducing waste through practices like offering smaller portions, improving inventory management and donating surplus food. Tesco has committed to wasting no food fit for human consumption by redistributing surplus food to charities and community groups (Tesco, 2022).

Non-food businesses:

These businesses can support food waste reduction by promoting sustainable practices among employees and customers, such as providing food waste recycling services. For example, some office buildings in London have introduced composting programmes for employees, which has not only reduced waste but also raised awareness about sustainable practices in the workplace and at home. Another example is companies like IKEA which have implemented food waste reduction programmes in their restaurants, which has resulted in a 50% reduction in food waste (IKEA, 2020).



Non-profit organisations:

Charities and NGOs are key players in raising awareness and providing practical solutions, such as food banks and community kitchens that redistribute surplus food to those in need. The organisation FareShare distributes surplus food from big shops and manufacturers to charities and community groups, helping to feed thousands of vulnerable people while also reducing food waste (FareShare, 2023).

Educators and other influencers:

Schools, universities and media figures can educate the public about the importance of reducing food waste and provide guidance on how to do so effectively. For instance, Denmark's Stop Wasting Food movement, led by a consumer activist, has raised significant awareness and influenced national policies on food waste (Juul, 2020).

Educational institutions also play a key role, in Japan, schools integrate lessons on food waste reduction into their curriculum, teaching children from a young age the importance of valuing food (UNEP, 2021).



Consumers and households:

Ultimately, consumers are responsible for their own waste. By making conscious choices about how they buy, store, and use food, individuals can have a significant impact on reducing overall waste. In a lot of countries, such as South Korea, Germany, Japan and Switzerland, a pay-as-you-throw system for food waste has been implemented, where residents are charged based on the amount of food waste they produce. This system has successfully reduced household food waste by 30% in South Korea (Kwon, 2019).

Collaboration efforts and partnerships:

Reducing food waste requires collaboration across all sectors. Partnerships between governments, businesses, non-profits, and communities can lead to innovative solutions and more effective implementation of waste reduction strategies. For example, restaurants and local charities can collaborate with the donation of leftover meals to feed people experiencing food insecurity instead of discarding it. Governments could offer grants or tax incentives to businesses that adopt sustainable practices, encouraging more companies to take action. Educational institutions can also partner with local businesses to develop programmes that raise awareness and educate the public on the importance of reducing food waste.

Innovative methods for reducing food waste:

Countries around the world have implemented innovative methods to tackle food waste, let's have a look at what the UK could improve.

Successful strategies from other countries

France

As mentioned previously, in 2016 France introduced legislation that bans supermarkets from throwing away unsold food. Instead, they must donate it to charities. Since the implementation of this law, food donations have increased by 22%, significantly reducing food waste and providing meals for millions of people in need (The Local France, 2021).



Denmark

Denmark has focused on public awareness campaigns and food-sharing initiatives, encouraging people to share surplus food with others rather than discarding it. These initiatives have contributed to a 25% reduction in food waste per capita over the last decade (Stop Wasting Food Movement, 2020).



Japan

Japan uses technology and apps to track and reduce food waste. For example, some apps allow consumers to buy discounted food that is close to its expiry date, reducing the amount of food that goes unsold and eventually wasted. These has led to a 20% reduction in food waste from participating retailers (Japan Times, 2019).





Italy

The 'Gadda Law' in 2016 encourages businesses to donate unsold food to charity by simplifying the donation process and providing tax incentives. Since its introduction, food donations have increased by 21%, significantly reducing the amount of food waste and supporting the country's vulnerable populations (FAO, 2018).

Australia

In 2017 they launched its National Food Waste Strategy, aiming to halve the country's food waste by 2030. The strategy includes partnerships between government agencies, businesses, and non-profits, as well as public awareness campaigns like 'Love Food Hate Waste'. It also led to the creation of 'End Food Waste Australia', which supports programs like the 'Fight Food Waste CRP', promotes research initiatives, and encourages community action. Additionally, it supports initiatives like 'OzHarvest' and 'SecondBite', which redistribute surplus food to those in need. These efforts led to a 10% reduction in food waste within the first three years (Australian Government, 2020).



Canada

'Food Policy for Canada' includes a focus on reducing food waste as part of a broader strategy to create a more sustainable food system. The policy has supported food rescue organisations, leading to a 12% increase in the amount of food recovered and redistributed to those in need (Government of Canada, 2021).

The behavioural science that can help tackle food waste

Behavioural Science can tell us how people make decisions, respond to incentives, and engage with policies, which can be crucial in addressing the issue of food waste.

By understanding the psychological factors, cognitive biases and habitual behaviours that contribute to food waste, effective strategies can be developed to nudge people towards more sustainable practices.

The Behavioural Science Report (2021) explains the food journey, and how from planning and shopping to storing, preparing and consumer, certain behaviours can contribute to food waste:

Planning

- Failing to plan meals or make shopping lists leads to overbuying or purchasing unnecessary items.
- Not checking household stock before shopping can result in duplicate purchases.
- Poor communication within the household or lack of control over the food supply can lead to excess food being bought.



Shopping

- Trying new or unfamiliar products that end up being disliked and wasted.
- Impulse buying, especially when items are on sale or offered in bulk, can lead to purchasing more than needed.
- Buying large family-size packages that exceed consumption needs contributes to waste.

Storing

- Misinterpreting date labels often leads to food being discarded prematurely. Organising items by placing those nearing their expiration date at the front can help reduce unnecessary waste.
- Setting refrigeration temperatures incorrectly can cause food to spoil more quickly.
- Failing to use freezer space effectively leads to unnecessary waste
- Inappropriate storage of food reduces its shelf life.



Preparing

- Preparing too much food often leads to leftovers that go uneaten.
- Not measuring ingredients results in excess portions that may be discarded.
- Overcooking or improperly seasoning food can render it inedible.
- Not using the entirety of an ingredient or product, such as discarding vegetable peels, leads to waste.

Consuming

- Choosing to eat out or opting for convenience foods instead of cooking at home can lead to food spoiling in the fridge.
- Serving or taking too much food often results in leftovers that are thrown away.
- Using large plates or bowls can encourage overeating and wasting food.
- Discarding or forgetting about stored leftovers contributes to waste.



How to Reduce Waste as a Consumer

As a consumer, there are several practical steps you can take to reduce food waste:

Plan Meals and Make a Shopping List: Planning meals for the week and sticking to a shopping list can prevent impulse buys and ensure you only purchase what you need.

Buy Only What You Need: Be mindful of portion sizes and only buy quantities you can realistically consume before they spoil.

Proper Storage: Learn how to store different types of food properly to extend their shelf life.

First In, First Out: Place newer items in the back of your fridge or pantry and older items in the front to ensure they are used first.



Understand Date Labels: Know the difference between “best before” and “use by” dates. “Best before” refers to quality, while “use by” indicates when food should be consumed for safety reasons.

Love Your Leftovers: Get creative with leftovers to reduce waste.

Portion Control: Serve smaller portions to reduce the likelihood of food being left uneaten.

Compost Food Scraps: If you have a garden, consider composting fruit and vegetable scraps to reduce waste and create nutrient-rich soil.

Preserve and Freeze: Consider freezing, canning, or pickling surplus food, or making sauces, soups, or smoothies to use up extra ingredients.

Let People Know: Share what you’re doing to reduce food waste with friends and family to inspire others to do the same.



What behavioural science can we use to understand and tackle food waste?

There are many things influencing our behaviour. We have highlighted a few cognitive biases and behavioural theories that are potentially driving food waste up. They can also be used to drive food waste down.

Get 'nudging'

Behavioural nudges 'subtly' guide people towards better decisions by altering the way choices are presented, without restricting their freedom to choose.

Things to try:

Small is the new BIG.

Reducing plate size can help people serve and eat smaller portions, which decreases waste [assuming you have not made too much food to begin]. Encouraging people to buy and use smaller plates and understand portion size is really important. In the hospitality industry, a move towards smaller portion sizes by default or having different size meals as an option would be welcome by a lot of people. Finally, placing foods near expiration at eye level can encourage consumption before they 'go off'!



Loss Aversion

Loss aversion is the tendency for people to prefer avoiding losses over acquiring equivalent gains, feeling the pain of loss more strongly than the pleasure of gain. Leverage this idea by framing food waste as a loss -highlighting the financial and environmental costs of food waste to make the loss feel more tangible. For instance, advertising campaigns can stress the money lost by throwing away food [money going off the plate and into the bin].

Challenge social norms: make it socially unacceptable to waste food

Highlighting that others are reducing their food waste and that wasting food itself is 'unacceptable' can encourage households to make changes. You could leverage descriptive norms – such as signs in restaurants stating, "Most of our customers order only what they can eat – join them in helping reduce food waste." Or reinforcing injunctive norms – such as "The Smith family saved 30 meals' worth of food from being wasted last month!" or creating norm visibility such as using clear bins or visual waste trackers in café's or restaurants to showcase the quantity of food waste, making over-wasting feel socially out of place or applying social pressure. For example, signs like "Thank you for taking only what you need – most of our guests do!" in hotel buffet which will encourage conformity.

Immediate vs. delayed gratification [temporal discounting]

Temporal discounting describes how people tend to value immediate rewards more highly than delayed ones, even if the delayed reward is larger or more beneficial. This tendency arises because immediate gratification provides a sense of reward or pleasure now, while delayed gratification requires patience and often feels uncertain. The perceived value of future rewards decreases (is "discounted") the farther away they are in time.

The answer? Make sustainable choices more convenient and rewarding in the short term. For example, offer instant discounts on near- expiry products or use apps that streamline meal planning to encourage quick, waste-reducing decisions.

Examples

Overbuying food (immediate gratification):


People might buy excessive quantities of fresh produce because it feels satisfying to "stock up" now, without considering the likelihood that the food may spoil before consumption.

Avoiding composting or food prep (delayed gratification):

Cleaning and freezing leftovers or composting food scraps might feel like effort without immediate payoff, even though it leads to long-term benefits like reduced waste or savings.

Eating larger portions (Immediate Gratification):

Individuals may eat more than needed to avoid wasting food right now, even if it leads to negative outcomes like overconsumption or wasted money later.

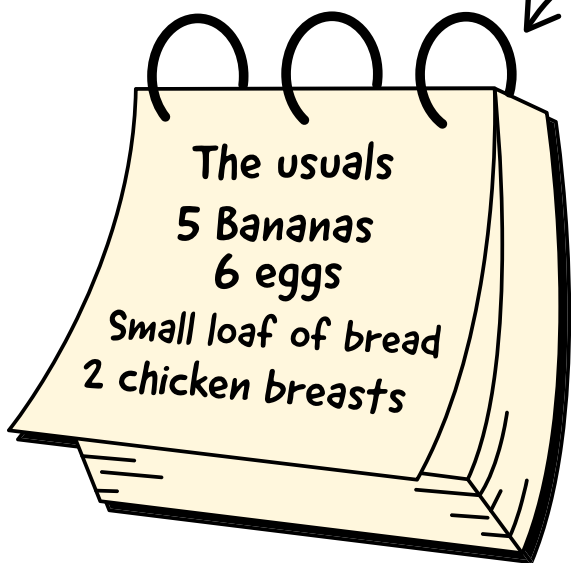


Bob's Buffet thanks you for only taking what you need

Best before: TOMORROW!

REDUCED

Best before: TOMORROW!



Status Quo Bias

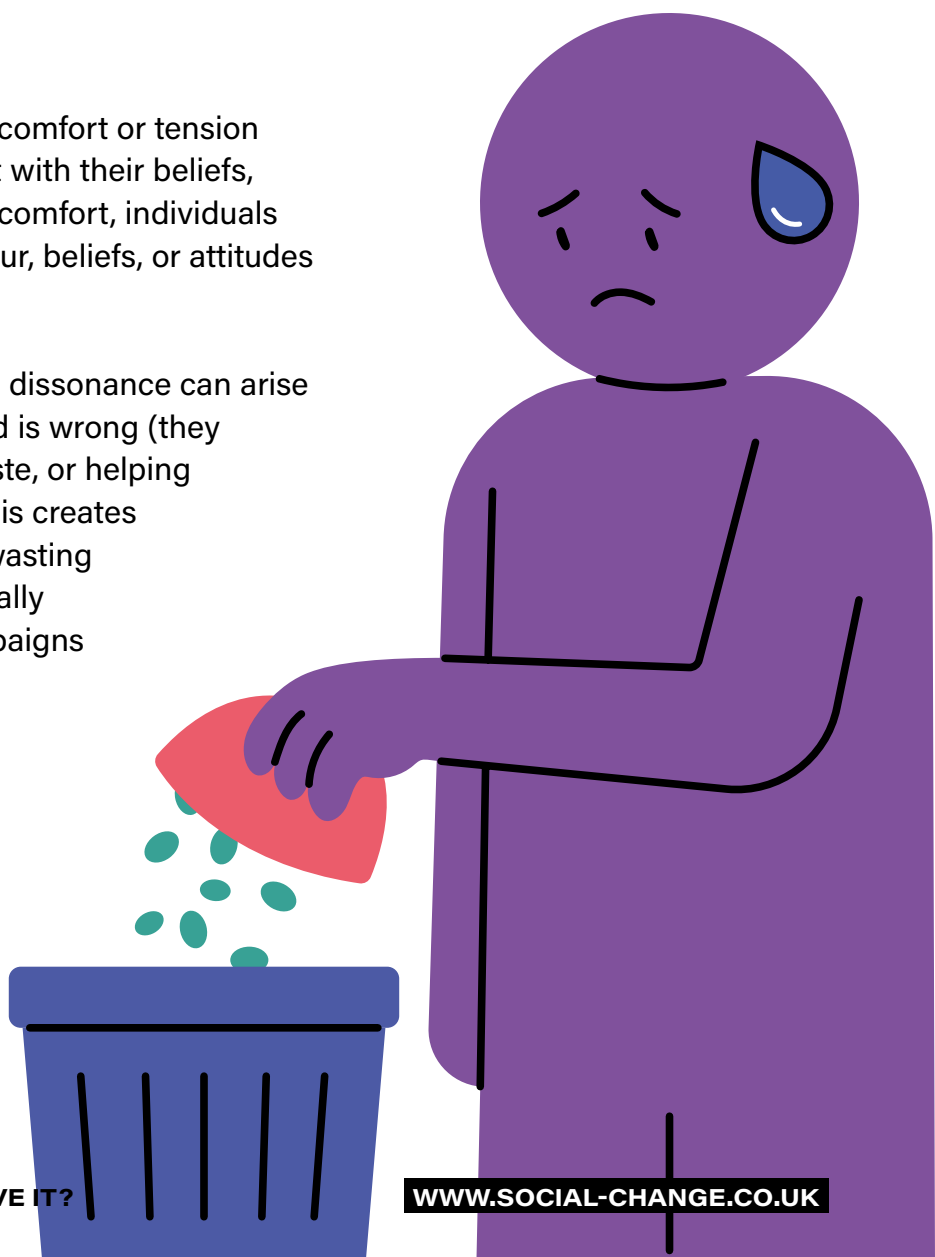
People tend to stick with their current habits or the “status quo,” even when better alternatives exist. This inertia can lead to continued food waste if we are accustomed to over-purchasing or improperly storing food. We need to change that!

Encourage small, incremental changes to existing habits, making it easier for people to adopt new, waste-reducing behaviours. For example, creating a new default option and designing a thoughtful shopping list that includes only the required amounts of ingredients every week. When used properly, it can be a valuable tool in reducing food waste by guiding consumers to buy only what they need.

Cognitive Dissonance

Cognitive dissonance refers to the discomfort or tension people feel when their actions conflict with their beliefs, values, or attitudes. To resolve this discomfort, individuals are motivated to change their behaviour, beliefs, or attitudes to bring them into alignment.

In the context of food waste, cognitive dissonance can arise when people believe that wasting food is wrong (they may value sustainability, reducing waste, or helping others) but continue to waste food. This creates a tension between their beliefs (that wasting food is bad) and their behaviour (actually wasting food). Public awareness campaigns can highlight the negative impact of food waste, and make people feel uncomfortable prompting individuals to align their actions with their values.



Anchoring Effect

People rely too heavily on the first piece of information they receive (the “anchor”) when making decisions. For example, food products labelled with an expiration date (e.g., “Best Before”) can cause consumers to prematurely discard food once that date passes, even if the food is still perfectly safe to eat. The expiration date acts as an anchor, causing people to equate the date with spoilage or safety concerns, despite the fact that many foods last well beyond the “Best Before” date. This leads to unnecessary food waste when the anchor encourages discarding food prematurely.



Still good!

Stocked food

8 total

3 ⚠️

2 ⌚



Apples

4
Near expiry



Cheese

1
Expired



Cherry tomatoes

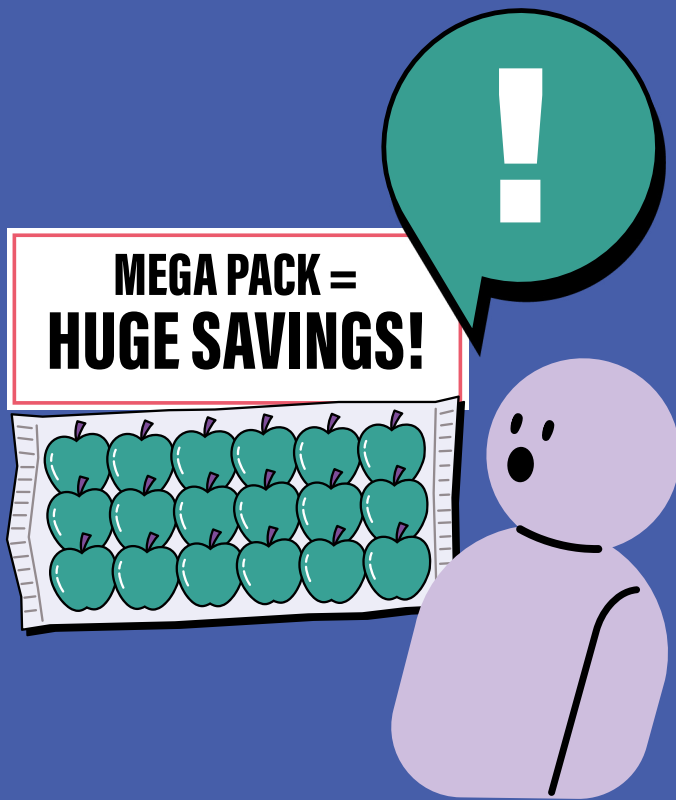
2 packs
Still fresh



Yoghurt

Optimism Bias

This leads people to believe they are less likely to experience negative outcomes than others. This can result in overbuying food with the assumption that it will all be used before it spoils. Providing realistic reminders of how much food typically goes to waste in households can counteract optimism bias. Tools like meal planning apps that predict the likelihood of food spoiling based on purchasing habits can also help manage expectations.

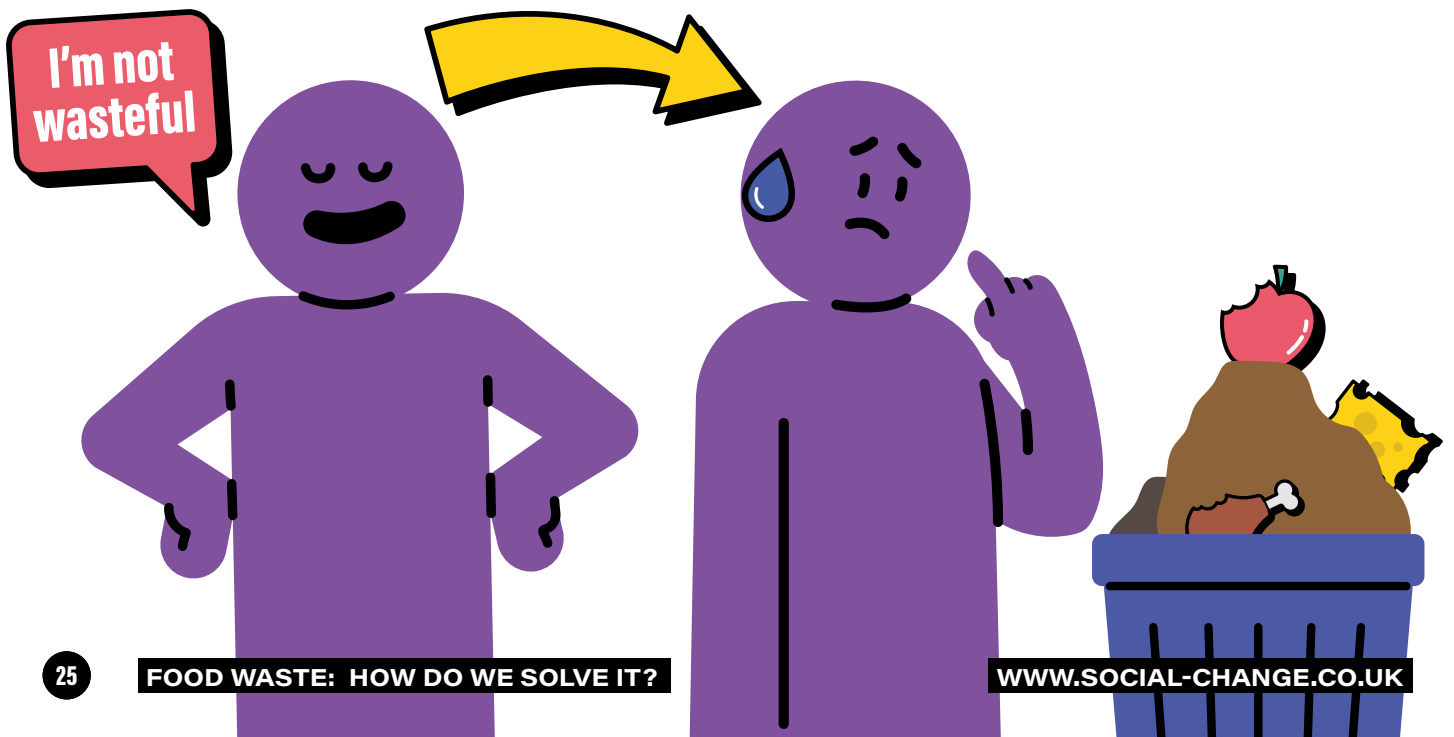


Framing

This is when the way information is presented influences our decisions. **"Family Size! 2-4-1"** or **"Mega Pack = Huge Savings!"** encourage people to buy in bulk, even if they don't need such large quantities. The framing focuses on perceived value (getting more for less), but it often results in excess food that spoils before it can be used. Even though 'fresh' and picked from the farm today' is positive, it emphasises freshness and immediacy, and the impact is that consumers may prioritize buying "fresher" items over older ones in their fridge, leading to waste of previously purchased food.

Confirmation Bias

This leads people to search for, interpret, and remember information in a way that confirms their pre-existing beliefs. For example, someone who believes they "never waste food" might overlook instances of waste in their own household. Educating consumers to critically evaluate their own food waste behaviours, and providing objective data (like waste tracking apps) can help counter confirmation bias. Encouraging self-reflection on actual versus perceived food waste can promote more accurate awareness and action.



Feedback and accountability

Give people real-time insights into their waste. Smart bins are the future, but whilst we wait for the technology, is there a way to provide reports on waste, or make waste more 'tangible' to the household. For example, half of all bins emptied contain food that could have been eaten? Perhaps after people to reflect on their shopping list before buying and after buying and consuming, using charts to track progress in reducing waste at home or within organisations.



Recommendations for policy makers and organisations

So, how can we use all this information to make positive change?

To tackle food waste effectively, policymakers and organisations must use an elaborate plan that incorporates behavioural insights and targeted interventions. First, designing and implementing clear labelling systems, such as standardised “use by” and “best before” dates can significantly reduce confusion among consumers and prevent premature disposal of perfectly edible food. Education campaigns that increase awareness about the environmental and economic impacts of food waste should be expanded encouraging consumers to plan meals better and understand portion sizes.



Additionally, building partnerships between the private sector, nonprofit organisations and government entities can create a system that enhances current food distribution and ensures surplus food reaches those in need rather than ending up in landfills. Incentivising businesses to innovate in packaging and food preservation technologies will also help to increase product shelf life, ultimately reducing waste.

Finally, establishing food waste reduction goals within organisations and incorporating them into social responsibility frameworks can increase accountability and encourage this good behaviour across industries. By incorporating these strategies, policymakers and organisations may help to create a more sustainable and waste-conscious society.

Conclusion

In summary, this whitepaper exploring food waste has highlighted the essential role that behavioural nudges can play in reducing the amount of food we waste.

Understanding and influencing consumer behaviour can help reduce waste, whether through better labels, increased education or innovative technologies. These recommendations can work as a roadmap for policymakers and organisations to implement practical solutions that can lead to significant reductions in food waste.

However, the fight against food waste can't be resolved by working in solitude. It requires a collective effort, where stakeholders at every level – government, business, and individual consumers – work together to create a culture that values food and recognises its limited nature. This collaboration is essential for implementing a systemic change that is needed to address the root causes of food waste.

As we move forward, ongoing innovation and research is very important in discovering new methods and improving old ones. By staying committed to this cause and collaborating with one another, we can make significant progress towards reducing food waste. The time to act is now and we must all take the responsibility.



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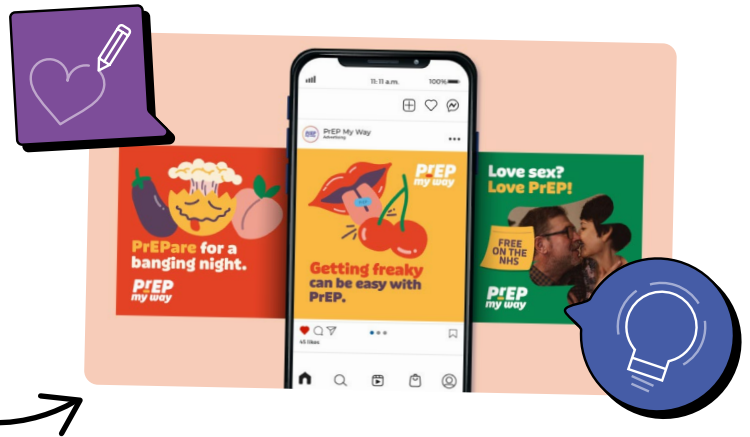
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