



Embargoed until Monday 19th April 2021.

“Choose to Reuse”: Reusable Nappy Week 2021 to raise awareness of the environmental benefits of choosing reusable nappies.

Reusable Nappy Week is an annual event organised by the reusable nappy industry with the support of NGOs and local government which shows parents and caregivers how easy it is to change from disposable nappies and reduce their part in the nearly 3 billion single-use nappies that end up in landfill or incineration in the UK every year. Now in its 25th year, Reusable Nappy Week will take place in 2021 between **19th and 25th April** with the theme “Choose to Reuse”.

As part of the fun online activities and educational events being organised, families already using reusable nappies will advocate the benefits and demonstrate how easy reusable nappies are. By helping parents and caregivers understand the reusable nappy journey – from how to get started, to where to source nappies, to top tips on laundry – they will be encouraged to take their first step by pledging to swap out single-use nappies for one day a week reducing single-use plastic waste equivalent to 17 plastic bags.

Nappy industry players such as, manufacturers, retailers, cloth nappy libraries, nappy networks and washable nappy laundry services will also be involved in events throughout the week, including reusable nappy demonstrations, workshops and information on claiming incentives, and hiring or using a laundry service to help support parents to get started.

Using the hashtag **#PassTheNappy**, parents and caregivers will also be encouraged to pass on no longer needed, good quality reusable nappies to families expecting a baby or with a child in nappies, posting their donations on social media to welcome families to the online reusable nappy community and symbolise the environmental and cost-saving benefits of switching to reusable nappies – that they can be used over and over again, either within the same family or within the community.

Alice Walker, representative of the UK RNW Steering Committee, a group made up of reusable nappy industry representatives that coordinates the week, said:

“Reusable Nappy Week is about drawing on our community to show parents that ditching disposable nappies for reusable cloth nappies doesn’t have to be complicated or labour-intensive, and that just a small action, such as switching for one day a week, can have a meaningful impact on the environment. The week offers information and support through participation in engaging activities, as well as the opportunity to play a part in a societal shift to a circular waste system that prioritises reuse.”

Guy Schanschieff, Chair of the reusable nappy industry association the Nappy Alliance, said:

“Now is a great time for the UK reusable nappy industry as more and more parents seek out environmentally-friendly and cost-saving alternatives to single-use nappies. Reusable Nappy Week is a great opportunity for us all to continue raising awareness of the many benefits of reusables, and the Nappy Alliance will be meeting with politicians and policymakers throughout the week to offer our ideas around the important role that reusable nappies can play in a modern circular economy.”

Reusable Nappy Week is part of a series of actions on behalf of the waste and recycling community to inform and support government initiatives to move towards a more resource-efficient economy. This includes a new UK Government Waste Prevention Programme taking action across seven key sectors, including plastics and single-use items, as well as an updated Life Cycle Assessment of single-use and reusable nappies, to be published shortly. In addition, in London, eight local councils currently participate in a voucher incentive scheme run by Real Nappies for London that provides financial assistance to families using reusable nappies for the first time. Research has shown this to be a cost-effective mechanism with a real impact on public waste disposal budgets: councils save eleven times as much on waste disposal as they spend administering the scheme.

To find out more and how to get involved, visit the [Reusable Nappy Week website](#) and follow #ReusableNappyWeek on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).

-ENDS-

Notes to Editors

Contact: Alice Walker, UK Reusable Nappy Week Steering Committee
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The UK Reusable Nappy Week Steering Committee members are currently:

- Alice Walker – Real Nappies for London
- Dotty Bromley-Morgans – South London Nappies (part of the UK Cloth Nappy Library Network)
- Eilidh Pollard – South London Nappies (part of the UK Cloth Nappy Library Network)
- Elisabeth Whitebread – The Nappy Alliance
- Emily Norman – TotsBots / Frugi (part of The Nappy Alliance)
- Wendy Richards – The Nappy Lady (part of The Nappy Alliance)
- Miranda Stamp – Twinkle on the Web
- Ian Rapley – Number One for Nappies (Washable Nappy Laundry Service)

Environmental Impacts

- Disposable nappies, a significant identifiable product within the Local Authority Collected Waste stream, totals approximately 4% of the residual fraction in England and equates to around 3 billion units, weighing an estimated 690,000 tonnes, costing LAs over £60 million per annum for disposal. Source: Wrap (2016) Comparing the Cost of Alternative Waste Treatment Options – Gate Fees Report 2016.
- Single-use nappy usage equates to throwing away 17 plastic bags a day: 6,205 per year, per child. Source: The Nappy Alliance (2021).
- The average composition of a UK disposable nappy is made up of 61% plastic. Source: Environment Agency (2008) [An Update Lifecycle Assessment Study for Disposable and Reusable Nappies](#).
- The majority of single-use nappies are sent for incineration - or in countries without adequate waste management, openly burned - contributing to air pollution and climate change.
- If landfilled, a single-use plastic disposable nappy can take approx. 450 years to break down. Source: BBC News (2017) [Seven Charts that Explain the Plastic Pollution Problem](#)
- Research by NLWA finds 1 in 10 parents admit to throwing dirty disposable nappies in household recycling, costing £1.5m of contamination met by North London taxpayers every year. Source: NLWA (2019) [1 in 10 Parents Admit Throwing Dirty Nappies in the Recycling](#)

Environmental Savings

- Reusable nappies use around 98% fewer raw materials by weight than single-use nappies per child. Source: The Nappy Lady (2020) [Nappy Fabrics – Pros and Cons](#).
- Reusable nappies generate 99% less waste. Source: Break Free From Plastic (2019) [The Environmental & Economic Costs of Single-use Menstrual Products, Baby Nappies & Wet Wipes](#).
- Where electric washing machines are used, carbon footprint of nappy usage could be reduced by 40% if reusable nappies are used instead of single-use (where hand washing is the norm, this benefit will be much greater). Source: Environment Agency (2008) [An updated lifecycle assessment for disposable and reusable nappies](#).

Financial Impacts

- Single-use nappies are a major expense for low-income households: in the UK a family with two children in nappies could spend up to 46% of child benefit just on single use nappies. Source: APPG on Poverty (2019) [The hidden hurdle of nappy need for struggling families](#).
- Families who use reusable nappies can make a financial saving of up to £1,000 over 2.5 years. Further savings can be made if using the same reusable nappies on subsequent children. Source: Real Nappies for London (2021) [‘Why Real Nappies: Better for You’](#)
- UK councils which offer financial incentives to parents to purchase reusable nappies have saved eleven times as much on waste disposal as they have spent administering the scheme, and this saving could be further improved by modernisation and expansion of these schemes. Source: Warner, Vick, Walker & Hill (2017) [Contribution of ‘Real Nappies for London’ to local authority waste prevention, 2012-2016](#)

Health Impacts

- The age at which children are fully toilet trained is getting later, with some clinicians and educators linking this to increased use of single-use “pull-up” nappies. Source: ERIC & NDNA (2020) [More children toilet training later - how early years can help parents](#).
- Carcinogenic and endocrine disrupting chemicals have been found in single-use nappies, leading the French government to call for a restriction on their sale. Source: ANSES (2020) [Disposable nappies: consultation with stakeholders regarding the Europe-wide restriction of chemicals that are harmful to babies' health](#).
- One person dies every 30 seconds from plastic pollution. Single-use nappies are commonly a major source of plastic pollution, and hence a major contributor to this problem. Source: Williams, M.; Gower, R.; Green, J.; Whitebread, E.; Lenkiewicz, Z. and Schröder, P. (2019) [No Time to Waste: Tackling the Plastic Pollution Crisis Before It's Too Late](#).

Information to Develop a Circular Economy

- The UK Government needs to recognise the importance to tackle single-use plastic nappy waste and publish strategies with targets to reduce waste and encourage circular activities such as, supporting washable nappy laundry services; cloth nappy libraries; free reusable nappies in national baby box schemes for new parents.