



Department  
for Environment,  
Food & Rural Affairs

# Simpler Recycling in England

## Frequently Asked Questions

May 2025

Version: 2.2

We are responsible for improving and protecting the environment. We aim to grow a green economy and sustain thriving rural communities. We also support our world-leading food, farming and fishing industries.

Defra is a ministerial department, supported by 34 agencies and public bodies.



© Crown copyright 2025

This information is licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/)

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at [recycling@defra.gov.uk](mailto:recycling@defra.gov.uk).

## Contents

Foreword .....	5
Policy overview.....	5
General policy questions .....	7
Delivery timeframes .....	8
Scope of Simpler Recycling .....	10
Workplace recycling questions .....	10
Workplace recycling: who is impacted? .....	10
Workplace recycling: who is responsible for meeting the requirements? .....	15
Workplace recycling: costs and funding.....	19
Workplace recycling: bins, signage and processes.....	19
Workplace recycling: food waste questions .....	22
Workplace recycling: communications and support .....	25
Workplace recycling: implementation challenges, compliance and enforcement.....	27
Workplace recycling: education sector questions.....	30
Household recycling questions .....	32
Household recycling: who is responsible for meeting the requirements? .....	32
Household recycling: costs and funding .....	34
Household recycling: bins, signage and processes.....	36
Household recycling: food waste questions .....	38
Household recycling: garden waste questions .....	40
Household recycling: communications and support .....	41
Materials recycling questions .....	42
Dry recycling: co-collection exemptions and exceptions .....	42
Dry recycling: plastics & cartons .....	45

Organic recycling: food waste treatment.....	48
Organic recycling: biodegradable and compostable plastic packaging materials.....	49
Infrastructure and markets .....	50
Further guidance and support.....	51

# Foreword

This document contains responses to some of the frequently asked questions received by Defra on Simpler Recycling in England. This has been prepared for waste sector representative organisations and trade bodies to help answer questions from their members. This version is current as per the date shown on the cover page. It will be reviewed and updated periodically so please check the latest version to ensure answers are applicable and correct.

## Policy overview

### Simpler Recycling in England

The Simpler Recycling reforms will ensure that across England, people will be able to recycle the same materials, whether at home, work or school.

Every household and workplace (businesses and relevant non-domestic premises like schools and hospitals) across England will be able to recycle the same materials in the following core waste streams: metal, glass, plastic, paper and card, food waste, and garden waste (for households only).

Capturing a broader set of recyclable materials, and ensuring they are not lost to landfill or incineration, will provide the foundation for the circular economy - a future where we keep our resources in use for longer; waste is reduced; we accelerate the path to net zero; we see investment in critical infrastructure and green jobs; our economy prospers; and nature thrives.

These reforms will make recycling easier and ensure there is a comprehensive, consistent service across England. This will reduce confusion with recycling to improve recycling rates, ensuring there is more recycled material in the products we buy, and that the UK recycling industry will grow.

Simpler Recycling will be implemented as follows:

- By 31 March 2025, all workplaces in England with 10 or more employees must recycle the relevant waste streams.
- By 31 March 2026, all local authorities must collect the core recyclable waste streams from all households in England. This includes weekly food waste collections, except in areas with transitional arrangements (local authorities with long-term waste disposal contracts which have been granted a later implementation date set in regulations).
- Micro-firms (workplaces with fewer than 10 employees), have until 31 March 2027 to comply, and plastic film collections from all households and workplaces will also

be required by then.

[Regulations](#) confirming the final policy positions were made on 10 February 2025 and will come into force alongside the legislation on 31 March 2025. These regulations make exemptions for co-collecting certain waste streams ((i) plastic, metal and glass, and (ii) food and garden waste) and a two-year exemption for micro-firms.

## Guidance and resources

Guidance has been published to assist local authorities, other waste collectors and workplaces in implementing the new requirements:

- [Paper and card guidance](#) (written assessments)
- [Household waste services guidance](#)
- [Workplace recycling guidance](#)

Defra has launched a [Simpler Recycling Communications Toolkit](#) to help local authorities and private waste collectors inform their business and non-domestic customers about the required changes.

The toolkit will be continuously developed and expanded. We encourage feedback on helpful resources for implementing Simpler Recycling through the survey on the toolkit's landing page.

We will continue to engage with stakeholders to support successful delivery of the reforms, including a programme of engagement in the lead up and following the 31 March 2025 implementation date for workplaces.

## Previous announcements

On 21 October 2023, we published the [government response to the Simpler Recycling consultation](#), formerly titled *Consistency in Household and Business Recycling in England*.

We also launched a [Consultation on additional policies related to Simpler Recycling in England](#), and separately we consulted relevant parties on exemptions and statutory guidance for Simpler Recycling in England. Both consultations closed on 20 November 2023. We published our government responses on 9 May 2024:

- [Simpler recycling in England: additional policies](#)
- [Exemptions and statutory guidance for simpler recycling in England](#)

Following the 2024 general election, ministers reviewed the final policy decisions on Simpler Recycling and provided an [update](#).

# General policy questions

## How many bins will be required?

The new default requirement for most households and workplaces will be 4 containers for:

- residual (non-recyclable) waste
- food waste (mixed with garden waste if appropriate)
- paper and card
- all other dry recyclable materials (plastic, metal and glass)

These may be various container types, including bags, bins or stackable boxes.

This is the government's maximum default requirement and is not expected to increase in the future. However, councils and other waste collectors will still have the flexibility to make the best choices to suit local need. This is a sensible, pragmatic approach to the collection of materials for every household and business in England.

We will make recycling easier: citizens will be able to recycle the same materials across England whether at home, work or school, and will no longer need to check what is accepted for recycling in their local area. A universal standard will ensure that everything that can be collected for household recycling is collected in every region.

## Where can we see the list of material descriptions within the recyclable waste streams for Simpler Recycling?

In May 2024, the [Separation of Waste \(England\) Regulations 2024](#) were made that set the descriptions of the recyclable waste streams for Simpler Recycling. In practice, this sets out what materials are in scope of Simpler Recycling collections, ready for when the policy comes into effect.

## Is all the legislation required for Simpler Recycling now in force?

The relevant legislation introduced in the Environment Act 2021 was [brought into force](#) in May 2024, meaning the core requirements and implementation dates for Simpler Recycling are now set in legislation.

[Regulations](#) have also been made that define the recyclable waste streams and specify additional relevant non-domestic premises in scope.

[Regulations](#) confirming the final policy positions were made on 10 February 2025 and will come into force alongside the legislation on 31 March 2025. These regulations make exemptions for co-collecting certain waste streams ((i) plastic, metal and glass, and (ii) food and garden waste) and a two-year exemption for micro-firms.

## Delivery timeframes

### **Why are workplaces required to collect by 31 March 2025 (a year earlier than households)?**

The implementation date for households is aligned with the timelines for Extended Producer Responsibility payments from packaging producers which will ensure that local authorities are properly funded for the collection of dry recyclable packaging from households.

The earlier date for workplaces (such as businesses, schools, and hospitals) is because these premises typically have much shorter waste contracts in place and can therefore implement more quickly.

Furthermore, our consultation impact assessment estimates greater greenhouse gas emissions savings for the non-household municipal (workplaces) sector which are necessary contributions towards our Net Zero ambitions.

We recognise there are additional challenges for micro-firms (workplaces with fewer than 10 full-time equivalent employees) so they will have until 31 March 2027 to comply with the new requirements.

### **Can a local authority or waste collector introduce the new materials on a phased basis if this means some households or workplaces will not receive collections until after the legislative deadlines?**

No. Local authorities and waste collectors must make arrangements to collect all the materials, which are described in regulations as being part of the respective recyclable waste streams, from all households by 31 March 2026, except for plastic film which must be collected as part of the plastic waste stream by 31st March 2027.

Local authorities that are given longer to transition to weekly food waste collections due to a transitional arrangement, must introduce weekly food waste collections from all households by the date listed in the commencement regulations for their authority.

### **Why will some local authorities be given longer than the end of March 2026 before they are required to collect food waste?**

The new provisions in the Environmental Protection Act 1990 require local authorities in England to arrange for the collection of food waste from households, at least once a week.

We have set out that every local authority will be required to collect food waste for recycling by 31 March 2026, unless they are linked to a long-term residual waste disposal contract (typically Energy from Waste or Mechanical Biological Treatment), and it has



been decided that this means they need longer to transition. Government is not prepared to meet the costs of breaking long-term contracts. Our evidence shows that it would not represent good value for money were government to compensate waste disposal authorities and unitary authorities for these costs, as required by the new burdens doctrine. This is because the carbon benefits may be marginal compared to far greater carbon savings per pound spent on other government projects.

In these cases, the local authority has been given a bespoke transitional arrangement in the [commencement regulations](#), which sets out the date by when they need to bring in weekly food waste collections. Affected local authority areas are not required to introduce separate food waste collections to households or to relevant non-domestic premises, until the end of their transitional arrangement. See question below *Do transitional arrangements for food waste collections also apply to workplaces?* for more detail.

We will continue to work with local authorities to identify whether they can bring forward food waste collections and the associated benefits before the end of their transitional arrangement.

### **Do transitional arrangements for food waste collections also apply to workplaces?**

Local authority areas with a transitional arrangement in the [commencement regulations](#) are not required to introduce separate food waste collections to households or to relevant non-domestic premises (such as schools and hospitals), until the end of their transitional arrangement. The relevant non-domestic premises are outlined in legislation [here](#) and [here](#), and are listed as follows:

- a residential home;
- premises forming part of a university or school or other educational establishment;
- premises forming part of a hospital or nursing home;
- a place of worship;
- a penal institution;
- a charity shop selling donated goods originating from domestic premises;
- a residential hostel which provides accommodation only to persons with no other permanent address or who are unable to live at their permanent address; and
- premises used wholly or mainly for public meetings.

The transitional arrangement applies to these non-domestic premises regardless of whether the local authority is responsible for their collection. Therefore, if they are served by a private waste collector, the transitional arrangement still applies. The requirement to separate the recyclable materials also still applies.

Collection of commercial waste (such as from hospitality, retail, or offices) under Section 45AZB is **not** covered under transitional arrangements and must be collected in line with the implementation dates (31 March 2025 or 31 March 2027 for micro-firms).

## Scope of Simpler Recycling

### Will Simpler Recycling be UK wide?

Simpler Recycling will apply to premises in England only.

Waste is a devolved policy, and the [devolved administrations](#) have their own arrangements for household and business recycling and waste collections.

### Are Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) in scope of Simpler Recycling?

No, HWRCs will not be included because the duty to provide a HWRC arises for waste disposal authorities under section 51 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, and section 45A (duty for waste collection authorities to provide separate collections for households) only applies to collections arising from the section 45 duty to collect waste. For any site which accepts waste from relevant non-domestic premises, or industrial or commercial waste, it will not apply because section 45AZA and AZB both specifically refer to collection from the premises.

Any household-like waste generated on site by the operators of the HWRC will need to be separated in accordance with Simpler Recycling.

### Local authorities have statutory litter clearing duties. What is the outcome of the application of Simpler Recycling to litter?

Simpler Recycling does not apply to litter collected under section 89 of the Environmental Protection Act (duty on local authorities to keep land and highways clear of litter).

## Workplace recycling questions

### Workplace recycling: who is impacted?

#### What do the Simpler Recycling reforms mean for workplaces?

From 31 March 2025 (or 31 March 2027 for micro-firms), all workplaces in England will need to present their waste in accordance with the arrangements made with their waste collector. As a default, workplaces will be required to present the following waste streams separately:

- residual (non-recyclable) waste
- food waste)
- paper and card
- all other dry recyclable materials (plastic, metal and glass)

Defra's [workplace recycling guidance](#) provides more information for waste collectors and workplaces on the new requirements.

## Who is affected by Simpler Recycling?

A workplace is any business or relevant non-domestic premises that generates waste that is similar in nature and composition to household waste ('household-like' waste). Examples of businesses in scope are:

- offices
- retail and wholesale
- transport and storage such as train stations and airports
- hospitality, such as cafes, restaurants, and hotels

This is not a complete list and there are others. If you are unsure if the rules apply to your business, you can [check the legislation](#). If you generate waste that is similar in nature and composition to household waste, you are likely to be in scope of the requirements.

There are relevant non-domestic premises that are also in scope. The relevant non-domestic premises are outlined in the [Environment Act 2021](#) and [the Separation of Waste Regulations 2024](#). These are as follows:

- a residential home;
- premises forming part of a university or school or other educational establishment;
- premises forming part of a hospital or nursing home;
- a place of worship;
- a penal institution;
- a charity shop selling donated goods originating from domestic premises;
- a residential hostel which provides accommodation only to persons with no other permanent address or who are unable to live at their permanent address; and
- premises used wholly or mainly for public meetings.

Workplaces (both businesses and non-domestic premises) must comply with the non-household implementation dates (either 31 March 2025 or 31 March 2027 depending on their FTE). For the purposes of Simpler Recycling, it is irrelevant whether their waste is classified as household (e.g. such as in the case of schools) or commercial waste.

We have [published guidance](#) for workplaces and waste collectors on the workplace requirements.

## What is meant by 'household-like' waste?

Waste that is produced and generated during the course of the business that is similar in its nature and composition to waste produced by a household. It includes waste from kitchens/canteens like food scraps, general 'black bin bag' or non-recyclable waste and dry recyclables like paper and card (newspapers, magazines, boxes) and plastic/metal/glass containers (bottles, cans, jars). It does not include bulky or

construction waste.

You can find the full list of materials in scope here: [The Separation of Waste \(England\) Regulations 2024](#).

## **How are micro-firms calculated for the purposes of the exemption?**

A business is a micro-firm if the number of full-time equivalent employees is less than ten. You can determine whether an organisation qualifies as a micro-firm by adding together the number of full-time staff and a fraction based on pro-rata hours part-time members of staff have worked in the qualifying 12-week period. A worked example is included below:

- Your business employs 6 full-time members of staff who each work 37 hours per week and 6 part-time members of staff who each work 18 hours a week, one of whom has only worked for the business for 2 weeks.
- For each of the 4 part-time employees who have worked at the business for the full 12-week period, you would take the total number of hours worked (216) and divide it by 12 (18), then divide that by 37 (0.48).
- For the employee who has worked for only 2 weeks, the total hours worked (36) would be divided by 2, to also get 0.48.
- Each part-time employee's full-time equivalent hours are 0.48, meaning the total number of full-time equivalent employees is  $(0.48 \times 5 = 2.4) + 6 = 8.4$ . This business would therefore qualify as a micro-firm.

## **How are micro-firms defined? (by premises or enterprise)**

Micro-firms are defined in the regulations that were laid on 3 December: The Separation of Waste (England) Regulations 2025.

Micro-firms are workplaces (businesses or relevant non-domestic premises) with less than 10 full-time employees in total. This relates to the total number of full time or full-time equivalent employees in the overall enterprise, rather than in a specific premises. For example, if a business has 3 locations with 5 employees in each location, they have a total of 15 employees. For counting part-time employees, add a fraction based on their pro-rated hours.

Volunteers are not included in determining the Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employee count for a business or non-domestic premises. This includes organisations that have volunteers across multiple premises.

## **Does the micro-firm exemption apply to non-domestic premises e.g. places of worship?**

The exemption for micro-firms applies to relevant non-domestic premises (as per section

45AZA of the Environmental Protection Act 1990) with fewer than 10 FTE employees, who will have until 31 March 2027 to comply with the new requirements.

### **Are unmanned and/or remote sites in scope of Simpler Recycling?**

If the business has 10FTE or more, the entire business' estate needs to be compliant from 31 March 2025, including unmanned or remote sites, or those individual premises with less than 10FTE, as the requirement applies to the business as a whole rather than per premises.

The services for these locations can be adapted to reflect the volume of waste produced, as there is no minimum collection frequency for dry recycling or food waste as part of Simpler Recycling for workplaces.

### **Are chains and franchises in scope of Simpler Recycling?**

Yes, they are in scope. Whether they need to comply by 31 March 2025, or 31 March 2027 will depend on whether they have less than 10 FTE across their organisation, as this applies to the business as a whole rather than per premises.

For franchises, if they are registered as separate businesses on companies house, then they should comply with the implementation date relevant to their number of full-time equivalent staff.

### **Are schools in scope for 31st March 2025 deadline, even if their waste is classified as household waste?**

Yes, they are in scope of the non-household implementation dates. The exception to this is where their relevant local authority has a transitional arrangement in place, in which case their requirement for separate food waste aligns with the local authority. This is regardless of whether the local authority is responsible for their waste collector.

### **Are events such as festivals in scope of Simpler Recycling?**

Yes, any household-like waste generated by the event would need to be separated in accordance with the Simpler Recycling requirements.

### **Are hotel rooms in scope of Simpler Recycling?**

Yes, any household-like waste generated by the hotel would need to be separated in accordance with the Simpler Recycling requirements, including from hotel rooms.

There is no obligation to provide separate bins to customers, only to ensure that recyclable materials and food waste are segregated prior to collection by the waste collector.

## **Are holiday lets, such as cottages, lodges or cabins in scope of Simpler Recycling?**

A domestic property used in the course of a business for the provision of self-catering accommodation is classed as producing commercial waste under The Controlled Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2012. Any household-like waste generated by these properties would be scope of Simpler Recycling from 31 March 2025 unless the micro-firm exemption applies (businesses with fewer than 10 full-time equivalent employees). The micro-firm exemption is based on the business as a whole, rather than per individual premises.

Residential caravan sites that are used as a primary residence would need to comply by 31 March 2026 in accordance with the household requirements. However, any shops or other facilities on site that are used in the course as a business would need to comply with the relevant workplace implementation date (either 31 March 2025 or 31 March 2027).

## **Are home-based businesses in scope of Simpler Recycling?**

Home-based businesses are likely to be micro-firms and therefore have until 31 March 2027 to comply. Whether they require a separate waste collection to their household waste is determined by their local authority and would relate to the type of business and waste they are generating.

## **Is construction waste in scope of Simpler Recycling?**

Simpler Recycling applies to waste that is household-like (i.e. similar in nature and composition to household waste) including food waste. You can refer to the full list of materials that are in scope in the [legislation](#).

Construction wastes such as bricks, concrete and rubble are not in scope under the Simpler Recycling requirements. It is important to note, however, that where the materials in scope of Simpler Recycling are produced alongside construction waste e.g. cardboard packaging, these materials will need to be presented and collected separately from the construction waste unless they are heavily contaminated, not empty or classified as waste code 15 01 10 (packaging containing residues of or contaminated by hazardous substances).

## **Does my workplace need to also recycle garden waste?**

The collection of garden waste is not in scope of Simpler Recycling for businesses and non-domestic premises, as not all workplaces generate garden waste.

Where other waste streams are generated which are outside the scope of Simpler Recycling (including garden waste) workplaces have a legal duty to dispose of this in accordance with the [waste hierarchy](#), according to the best environmental outcome for the

waste.

## Workplace recycling: who is responsible for meeting the requirements?

### Who is responsible for ensuring separate collections from workplaces?

The duty is shared. All workplaces (businesses or relevant non-domestic premises) **must arrange for** the recyclable waste streams (glass, metal, plastic, paper and card, food waste) to be collected for recycling by 31 March 2025 (or 31 March 2027 if they are a micro-firm, i.e. have fewer than 10 full-time equivalent employees) and must **present their waste** in accordance with any arrangements.

The waste collector (whether a waste collection authority or a private waste collector), must ensure the services they provide are compliant with the amended Environmental Protection Act 1990.

This requires the recyclable waste streams to be collected separately from residual waste, and organic waste to be collected separately from dry recyclable waste. Paper and card must by default be collected separately from other dry recyclable waste streams, unless it is not technically or economically practicable, or there is no significant environmental benefit to doing so. If choosing to co-collect paper and card with other dry recyclables, waste collectors will need to produce a short, written assessment. The government has published guidance for waste collectors and a template that can be used for this assessment.

### Who is responsible for complying with regulations where there is a letting agent or facilities management company, particularly where there are multiple businesses within the arrangement?

If the letting agents or facilities management (FM) company are responsible for the waste contract for those businesses, then they would have a responsibility to ensure the service procured is compliant (regardless of their own FTE [full-time equivalent employees]) according to the businesses they provide the service contract for. If the party responsible for the waste contract refuses to arrange a compliant service for their tenants, they could be at risk of compliance action from the Environment Agency.

If any of the constituent businesses have 10 or more FTE, then the service would need to be compliant from 31 March 2025. If all the businesses have less than 10 FTE's, the micro-firm exemption would apply in this instance. Therefore, the separation of recyclables and food waste would need to be in place for 31st March 2027.

Where multiple businesses share a waste contract or have communal bins, the service must be compliant by 31 March 2025 if any of the individual businesses have 10 or more FTE across their operations. Any micro-firms using the bins are not legally required to

utilise the recycling or food waste services until 31 March 2027, but should be encouraged to do so.

Businesses should work with their letting agents/FMs to ensure they will get a compliant service.

### **Can local authorities collect from both households and workplaces in the same service?**

Yes, local authorities can collect from households and workplaces in the same collection if preferred. However, this does not change the requirement that collections from workplaces must be compliant with the Simpler Recycling requirements from 31 March 2025 (except for micro-firms until 31 March 2027).

There is no issue with a local authority aligning their household waste collection with the section 45A requirements early as they do not conflict with what is currently in force.

### **What is the responsibility of Local Authorities who do not have a commercial waste service? Is it just to provide reminders/communication about the upcoming changes?**

Local authorities have a duty to arrange the collection of commercial waste when requested to by an occupier of a premise in its area. This may mean providing a service or entering into a contract with a private waste collector. However, local authorities should take their own legal advice as to the interpretation of the duty and risks of various actions. There is no requirement for waste collection authorities to begin offering collection services to premises where they do not already have a service in place, unless a request is made by any such premises. All services arranged by the local authority to collect commercial waste must be compliant with Simpler Recycling from 31 March 2025, unless the micro-firm exemption applies.

### **Do non-domestic premises need to comply from March 2025 or March 2026 if they are served by a local authority as a household waste service?**

They need to comply from 31 March 2025 (or 31 March 2027 if a micro-firm), unless a transitional arrangement for food waste is in place for that local authority.

If the non-domestic premises (NDP) is located in an area where the waste collection authority has a long-term transitional arrangement (i.e. is listed in the table in the Schedule) then the NDP will not have to implement separate food waste collections until the end of that transitional arrangement. This applies regardless of whether the local authority is responsible for the NDP's waste collection arrangement.

However, all other recyclable waste streams must be collected separately in compliance



with s45AZA and the supporting Regulations from 31 March 2025.

**Do the exceptions allowing co-collection of paper and card with other dry recyclables ('TEEP') only relate to collections from households or is this for workplaces as well?**

The default requirement of collecting paper and card separately where practicable applies to both collections from households and workplaces (including non-domestic premises). We recognise that there are various technical, economic and environmental circumstances in which separate collection is not practical - for both households and non-household premises. In such cases, waste collectors retain flexibility to co-collect paper and card with other dry recyclable materials but must produce a written assessment to record this justification. We have published [guidance](#) for waste collectors to make it easy and quick to produce a written assessment.

For further detail on the co-collection of paper and card, see the questions below.

**Is it the responsibility of the waste producer or the waste contractor to create the written assessment?**

The waste contractor is responsible for completing the co-collection assessment.

**If my waste contractor is not offering a separate paper and card collection so do I need a copy of their written assessment that justifies why this can happen for my records?**

No, the duty is on the waste collector to undertake and hold the co-collection assessment; if the regulator needs to review it, they will contact the collector.

**Can a written assessment ('TEEP') be used to exempt premises that have little food waste or are difficult to collect from?**

No, all workplaces producing food waste will need to arrange for it to be collected separately in accordance with the new Simpler Recycling requirements. This is regardless of the volume, and applies to all workplaces, not just those that serve food or have catering facilities.

A written ("TEEP") assessment only applies where the collection of paper and card with other dry recyclables is not technically or economically practicable, or there is no significant environmental benefit to collecting paper and card separately. It cannot be used to exempt premises from the requirement to have their food waste collected for recycling.

For more questions on co-collection / TEEP – see section [Dry recycling: co-collection exemptions and exceptions](#).

## **Can a written assessment ('TEEP') be used to exempt premises that do not produce a certain recyclable material (e.g. glass)?**

No, as workplaces can be offered a dry mixed recycling service (plastic, metal, glass, and paper and card where a co-collection assessment has been completed), all workplaces will need to be able to recycle the core materials, even where small amounts are generated.

A written ("TEEP") assessment only applies where the collection of paper and card with other dry recyclables is not technically or economically practicable, or there is no significant environmental benefit to collecting paper and card separately. It cannot be used to exempt premises from the requirement to have their food waste collected for recycling.

For more questions on co-collection / TEEP – see section **Dry recycling: co-collection exemptions and exceptions.**

## **How onerous is the written assessment ('TEEP')?**

Defra have published [guidance](#) to support waste collectors with the written assessment. This guidance intends to make it easy and quick to produce a written assessment. This includes a suggested template written assessment which can be used if helpful.

Waste collectors do not necessarily need to complete a separate written assessment for each individual workplace. It may be more appropriate to complete one assessment for a group of premises which share the same collection service, provided the reason for collecting materials together is true for all premises in that group.

Defra recommends that you complete a separate written assessment for each different service where you plan to collect paper and card with plastic, metal and glass, unless the reasons for doing so are the same.

For more questions on co-collection / TEEP – see section **Dry recycling: co-collection exemptions and exceptions.**

## Workplace recycling: costs and funding

### **Is there any funding available for businesses to implement these changes?**

No, it is expected that businesses will continue to pay for their own waste management services. However, we will be providing advice and guidance for workplaces as they transition to compliance with the new recycling requirements.

### **Will any funding be considered for local authorities for workplace collections?**

Funding will not be provided to local authorities for the collection of business waste under Section 45AZB of the Environment Protection Act 1990. Businesses can procure waste collection services from either waste collectors or local authorities who are able to charge for the collection and disposal of this waste.

### **Is the government considering zoning / waste franchising?**

We previously consulted on several different options to reduce recycling costs for businesses, including several zoning options. Responses indicated that there is a wide range of viewpoints concerning these options.

Franchising (or zoning) examples are wide ranging and have been in use for some time internationally. This general approach would require further development and assessment and would require legislative change to become operational.

We plan to further consider the features and benefits of each of the cost reduction options proposed in the consultation. We will do this by working with stakeholders to better understand how these options can help limit the cost that businesses face to recycle. Where appropriate, we will explore the possibility of providing guidance on these options as part of the implementation of reforms.

## Workplace recycling: bins, signage and processes

### **Have you considered the bin procurement implications of the imminent implementation date for businesses?**

We are aware of concerns about delivery timelines, pressure on supply chains for vehicles and containers, and the need to upgrade waste and recycling infrastructure. We are engaging with waste collectors and other key stakeholders across the sector to make sure

the waste sector is prepared for the new recycling requirements due to come into force. We welcome input to help us understand the challenges and ensure successful delivery.

Specifically, we are working with WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) to scope interventions to address bottlenecks in supply chains.

### **Is there a certain bin specification that businesses should adhere to?**

There is no requirement on the type or size of bin that should be used internally in the workplace. Provided you are collecting recyclable material separately or relying on an exemption or exception, you can choose the number of bins and specification to suit the individual needs of your place of work. External bins are generally provided by the waste collector and are specified according to the contract established between the workplace and waste collector.

### **Are workplaces (such as fast-food and retail businesses) required to provide bins for customers?**

Workplaces are not required to provide bins for customers, but if you do, all household-like waste must be separately presented to your waste collector at the point of collection. This means dry mixed recycling, paper and card (by default, this should be separate unless your waste collector utilises the co-collection exception), and food waste will need to be collected separately from residual waste and presented in separate recycling waste streams if required by your waste collector.

The intention of Simpler Recycling is to make recycling the norm for citizens whether at home, work, school, or on the go, to increase the quantity and quality of recyclable material collected. For that reason, it is strongly recommended that workplaces implement customer-facing separation wherever possible. This will be supported by ongoing activity by Defra and WRAP, in partnership with industry, to support citizen behaviour change for example through best practice signage. In any circumstance, businesses should ensure they implement waste management systems that minimise the contamination of materials.

As a reminder, any household-like recyclable waste generated by the workplace itself, must also be separated for recycling.

### **If I do provide customer/visitor facing litter bins, will I be required to separate this for recycling?**

From 31 March 2025, businesses who provide litter bins (internal and external) are required to separate out the waste collected where it is deemed to be relevant waste (waste which is similar in nature and composition to household waste) and present it according to their waste collection arrangement. We recognise this could present a challenge to some workplaces, and we are keen to engage with the waste industry on how we can best implement this.

## **Will there be standard signage for all workplaces to use?**

Simpler Recycling does not prescribe or require specific signage. However, for workplaces that would like to, bin signage has been made available at the [Business of Recycling website](#) (delivered by WRAP). We have also provided a [toolkit of resources](#) for waste collectors and workplaces specifically to help communicate the changes coming up with staff, customers and anyone else affected.

Workplaces can also discuss any signage and tools available from their waste collector.

## **What will the requirements be of instore noticing?**

There is no legal requirement for workplaces to put notices up in store. However, the waste management system they implement should ensure that all recyclable materials and food waste are separated from residual waste at the point of collection in accordance with arrangements with their waste collector. and that contamination of the different waste streams is minimised.

## **If there are space constraints, will we be able to collect Dry Mixed Recycling (DMR) co-mingled in single rather than multiple containers?**

By default, the legislation requires that paper and card is separately collected from other dry mixed recyclables (plastic, metal, glass) unless it is technically or economically impracticable or if this provides no significant environmental benefit. If choosing to use an exception to co-collect paper and card with other dry recyclables, waste collectors will need to produce a short, written assessment to demonstrate that it is not technically or economically practicable to collect paper and card separately, or there is no significant environmental benefit to doing so. The government has published guidance for waste collectors and a suggested template that can be used for this assessment.

## **Can waste be backhauled to another premises for onward recycling?**

Businesses should be able to collect recycling, backhaul to a separate premises and have this waste collected there so long as waste is presented separated in accordance with the waste collection arrangements in place and that the method of backhauling does not result in contamination or mixing of waste streams that would render it unsuitable for separate collection.

In all circumstances, the dry recyclable waste streams must be presented separately from food waste and residual waste. However, businesses will have to consider the 'waste carrier registration implications of backhauling waste, as a waste carrier's licence may be required: [Register or renew as a waste carrier, broker or dealer - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

The [Non-Waste Framework Directive](#) provides an exemption which allows the temporary

storage and treatment of waste without to need to register with the Environment Agency.

### **Can workplaces use public litter bins (i.e. street bins) to dispose of their commercial waste?**

No, it is a criminal offence to dispose of commercial waste via public litter bins as it would be a breach of your duty of care. All workplaces must have appropriate waste collections in place to comply with Simpler Recycling and in accordance with the waste duty of care as set out at: [Dispose of business or commercial waste: Your responsibilities - GOV.UK](#).

### **Can materials be bagged and put on the same vehicle?**

It is compliant with s45AZA/AZB to transport bags of separate materials on the same vehicle, provided it does not result in the materials being mixed. For example, a cage vehicle, with colour-coded bags for each waste stream, which are then separated off the vehicle, would be compliant.

It would not be compliant to collect residual and recycling/food waste in any form of compaction vehicle, as this would likely result in the materials being mixed and therefore cannot be recycled.

The waste collector still has an obligation under [Regulation 14 of The Waste \(England and Wales Regulations\) 2011](#) to not mix waste that has been collected separately with other materials. The bags must remain closed so that the materials are not mixed in transit.

### **We are an Anaerobic Digestion/composting facility. Can we dispose of our food waste directly?**

If the arrangements for food waste / dry recycling are to separately collect it on site and put straight into your disposal system / correct container this would be compliant.

Anaerobic Digestion and composting plants must have an Environment Agency issued permit to treat food and garden waste. Digestate and compost should be of sufficient quality to be spread to land as a fertiliser. Best practice is for digestate and compost to be produced in line with the Environment Agency's Quality Protocols, including adherence to PAS 100/110 or other approved standards.

## **Workplace recycling: food waste questions**

### **Is there a minimum volume required for the collection of food waste?**

No, there is no minimum volume for food waste collections. All workplaces producing food waste will need to arrange for it to be collected separately in accordance with the new Simpler Recycling requirements. This is regardless of the volume, and applies to all workplaces, not just those that serve food or have catering facilities.

The requirements do not prescribe the frequency of collection. Workplaces (Businesses and relevant non-domestic premises) should discuss with their waste collector an appropriate frequency of collection to align with volume of waste they produce. This should take into account considerations such as the containment of food waste to mitigate issues arising from pests or odours.

Workplaces could also consider sharing facilities with neighbouring premises where quantities are small, with the agreement of the neighbouring premises and the waste collector.

### **Does the requirement for food waste collections just apply to premises with catering facilities?**

No, all businesses and relevant non-domestic premises producing food waste (including examples such as apple cores, banana peels, or teabags etc.) will need to arrange for its separate collection in accordance with the new Simpler Recycling requirements.

### **Can I ask my staff to take their food waste home with them?**

It is not the intention of the policy that organisations encourage staff to take food waste home. If food waste is left or disposed of on the premises (through litter bins etc) then it must be separated from dry recycling and residual waste and collected separately as per the legislation. Staff should not be taking any waste home that is generated by workplace (e.g. food or drink provided by the workplace such as buffet remnants, tea bags, coffee grounds) as this would be classed as commercial waste and must be dealt with in line with their duty of care arrangements.

If businesses choose not to have a food waste collection in place and instead make alternative arrangements with staff, they should be satisfied that these are compliant with the legislation and may need to seek their own legal advice on this point. It is for employers to satisfy themselves that no food waste is disposed of in residual waste and that any arrangements they put in place for staff are compliant with the waste duty of care.

The intent of the policy is to ensure as much unavoidable food waste as possible is recycled or composted rather than sent to landfill or incineration. Food waste removed from the premises by staff may not be recycled due to the availability of food waste collection services or additional steps required by staff to recycle it; businesses should consider this outcome when determining food waste services.

### **Does food waste need to be de-packaged?**

Food waste should be de-packaged wherever possible to maximise the quality of recycling. The [NWFD 2 waste exemption](#) permits workplaces to de-package food waste on-site. This exemption does not need to be registered with the EA. Where this is not feasible, workplaces should discuss with their waste collector the extent to which packaging is permissible in the food waste stream. Some waste facilities are able to

undertake de- packaging before the waste is processed. It would not be compliant to dispose of food waste (packaged or de-packaged) in the residual waste stream.

In the first instance, workplaces should follow the [food and drink waste hierarchy](#) to ensure food waste is prevented where possible, and that if surplus food does arise, priority is given to redistributing it for human consumption or sending it for animal feed over disposal though food waste recycling.

## **Can workplaces compost food waste on-site rather than have it collected separately?**

On-site composting and community composting schemes are compliant with Simpler Recycling. However, if you produce any additional food waste that you do not compost yourself, or is not suitable for composting, then you must arrange for this to be collected separately for recycling.

Particular consideration should be taken for on-site composting of food waste containing animal by-products. More details of guidance on this can be found here [Using animal material in home, work or community compost heaps - GOV.UK](#) and [T23 waste exemption: aerobic composting and associated prior treatment - GOV.UK](#).

If you intend to use the compost on the same premises where it was produced, you will not need APHA approval to do so. If you intend to use the compost at a location other than where it was produced, including selling it to other people (which brings its own regulatory requirements, you are highly likely to need approval for your compost process. The table shown on the Gov.uk guidance page can be used to determine whether you require approval or not. If you score 19 or less, you do not require approval to supply or sell your compost for use at another location. However, if you score 20 or more, you should contact APHA to discuss your approval requirements.

On-site composting is unlikely to be a practical means of compliance with the requirements for the majority of workplaces. This is particularly for establishments that provide catering or generate high volumes of food waste which would overwhelm on-site composting.

## **Are you banning commercial food waste treatment technologies that discharge food waste to the sewer such as macerators?**

Simpler Recycling does not prohibit the use of on-site food waste disposal technologies (including macerators) in commercial or domestic settings.



Disposal of food waste to landfill or into the sewer system (even if pre-treated) should only be carried out as a last resort in accordance with the [food and drink waste hierarchy](#). Any additional food waste that is not disposed of on-site must be collected separately for recycling.

The devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland have implemented separate regulations to restrict or prohibit the use of macerators and disposal of food waste to the sewer.

Defra has commissioned research into the various technologies to better understand their respective environmental impacts.

### **What is the best way to manage liquid food waste?**

Workplaces should discuss this with their waste collector in the first instance. Wherever possible, food waste should be prevented, redistributed, or sent for animal feed before being disposed of as food waste.

### **Are Fats, Oils, and Greases (FOGs) included in the food waste requirements?**

Yes, FOGs fall within the description of food waste within [The Separation of Waste \(England\) Regulations 2024](#) as “biodegradable material resulting from the processing or preparation of food”. For larger amounts of cooking oil, it is at the waste collectors discretion to determine whether a dedicated oil collection is required, for example for hospitality premises. We understand that cooking oil collections are often financially incentivised to customers by waste collectors as this commodity is valued for reprocessing as biofuel.

## **Workplace recycling: communications and support**

### **How are you are communicating this new legal requirement to workplaces?**

We are taking a multi-faceted approach to communications to raise awareness of Simpler Recycling with workplaces.

This includes social media messaging, general and sector-specific webinars, attending conferences, and making resources available.

Alongside the policy announcement on 29 November, we published updated [guidance on gov.uk for workplaces](#) to help them understand and comply with their requirements.

We have also provided a [toolkit of resources](#) for waste collectors and workplaces specifically to help communicate the changes coming up with staff, customers and anyone else affected.

In addition, WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme), working on behalf of Defra, is undertaking various workstreams which involve engagement and consultation with waste collectors and waste/ recycling companies to ensure the sector is ready for the requirements of Simpler Recycling.

We will continue to work closely with key stakeholders such as WRAP, local authorities, waste collectors and trade associations to further strengthen this work.

### **Will there be any support provided to workplaces to help them to successfully implement the reforms?**

We are working with WRAP and representative voices from each sector to develop sector-specific guidance for the [Business of Recycling website](#). This will support businesses as they transition to compliant waste collection services. Four sector-specific guides (retail and wholesale, hospitality, health and social care, food manufacturing, education, and offices) have been published so far, transport and storage) to be published imminently.

We are running a programme of engagement in the lead up and following the 31 March 2025 implementation date for workplaces. We have also provided a [toolkit of resources](#) for waste collectors and workplaces specifically to help communicate the workplace recycling changes with staff, customers and anyone else affected.

We will continue to engage with stakeholders to support successful delivery of the reforms

### **Has there been engagement/consultation with waste collectors/contractors, and will guidance for them be developed?**

DEFRA engages with relevant stakeholders including businesses, local authorities, and waste management companies through its regular forums and newsletter. Stakeholders can subscribe through the following link: [Get the latest news and updates from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on the Circular Economy Reforms](#)

We will work with the sector and provide further guidance and tools to support preparation for Simpler Recycling implementation.

We have published updated [guidance on gov.uk for workplaces](#) (businesses and relevant non-domestic premises) to help them understand and comply with their requirements.

We have also provided a [toolkit of resources for waste collectors](#) specifically to help communicate the changes with staff, customers and anyone else affected.

In addition, WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme), working on behalf of Defra, is undertaking various workstreams which involve engagement and consultation with waste collectors and waste/ recycling companies to ensure the sector is ready for the

requirements of Simpler Recycling.

## **Workplace recycling: implementation challenges, compliance and enforcement**

### **What will happen if workplaces do not recycle correctly?**

We will work with stakeholders to support readiness for these new obligations. Defra has launched a Simpler Recycling Communications [Toolkit](#) to help local authorities and private waste collectors inform their business and non-domestic customers about the required changes.

For workplaces, the Environment Agency will be the regulator. The Environment Agency is the regulator for Simpler Recycling for Non-Household waste, and are committed to supporting businesses – both waste producers and collectors – in understanding their duties.

As a Regulator they are required to have regard to the Regulator's Code which requires them to: support growth, engage with business, take a risk-based and proportionate approach to regulation, and to help those we regulate get it right.

They use advice-led regulation to secure compliance (particularly when legislation is new or changed), with the first stage being educating and raising awareness of legislative requirements, followed by providing advice and guidance on how to comply and eventually risk based interventions where non-compliance is discovered.

The Environment Agency are aware that some stakeholders may find the introduction of the reforms more challenging than others. They will take a pragmatic approach, prioritising helping stakeholders understand new requirements and working with them to support them in overcoming any difficulties they might face in relation to compliance.

It is important that businesses are actively taking steps and making arrangements to comply with the Simpler Recycling requirements.

### **What if our customers use the bins incorrectly?**

If the Environment Agency finds that a business or relevant non-domestic premises has made every effort to enable customers to recycle, yet, the customers aren't doing so, their regulatory response would be fair and proportionate based on the circumstances. Where it is considered appropriate, they would seek to work with businesses to resolve compliance issues in the first instance. If you have concerns, it may be beneficial to speak to your waste collector about possible solutions to such issues.

There is no expectation that where waste streams are heavily contaminated, that staff should remove contaminants. The Separation of Waste (2024) legislation permits (see section 3(4b)) that where materials are heavily contaminated, they should not be disposed

of as recycling. The Environment Agency would take this into account as part of their proportionate approach to compliance and enforcement.

See here for further sector-based guidance on recycling for businesses and non-domestic premises: [Business of Recycling | WRAP Website](#).

## **I have no room for bins so I have bag collections. Do I still need to comply with the different streams when I have bag collections?**

Yes, you will need to separate the recyclable streams and food waste in accordance with the arrangements with your waste collector. The regulations do not specify or prescribe how the waste should be collected (e.g. size of containers, or containers vs sacks), nor how frequently it should be collected. This can therefore be determined in agreement between the workplace and the waste collector.

The waste collector will specify their requirements based on health and safety, vehicle, and environmental considerations such as pests and litter in determining whether they provide a bag collection service for any or all of the waste streams.

## **Where does legal responsibility lie if a waste collector empties a bin of general waste from a workplace customer and it has food or other recyclable waste in the bin?**

Waste collectors must provide a collection service compliant with Parts 1 to 7 of Section 45AZA or Section 45AZB of the EPA 1990. A waste producer (such as a business) must present the waste in accordance with the collection arrangements provided by their waste collector.

In the first instance, the waste collection authority/waste collector should offer advice and guidance to the waste producer. If the situation continues, they can refer it to the Environment Agency.

If the Environment Agency were made aware of the situation, dependent on the specific circumstances, they may either provide advice and guidance or serve a compliance notice on the waste producer.

The Environment Agency can serve a compliance notice to the waste producer. A compliance notice must specify the failures to comply with sections 45AZA or 45AZB; specify the steps to be taken to prevent the failure continuing or recurring; and specify the period within which those steps must be taken. The period given to comply will depend on what the failure is and the steps which need to be taken. Failure to comply with a compliance notice is an offence and the Environment Agency will consider what action to take in accordance with their Enforcement and Sanctions Policy.

## **What if waste collectors are saying the volume of waste produced at the premises is too small to offer a collection of food waste to?**

Workplaces (Businesses and relevant non-domestic premises) may be able to agree less frequent collections to align with the volume of waste they produce. Workplaces could consider sharing facilities with neighbouring premises where quantities are small, with the agreement of the workplaces and the waste collector.

## **What if we don't have the space for new bins?**

The business should discuss this with their waste collector. Some collectors will offer sack collections that will reduce the need for storage and you can adjust the frequency of your collections.

There are also stacking bin systems that can reduce the footprint of bins. You could also reduce the size of your residual waste container to make space for recycling bins.

## **Can the EA issue on the spot fines?**

The EA cannot issue on the spot fines (fixed penalty notices). This is because civil sanctions are not available for the non-compliance with a compliance notice offence under Simpler Recycling. This is instead a criminal offence that they could pursue through the courts.

## **Workplace recycling: education sector questions**

### **Does university accommodation need to comply with Simpler Recycling by 31 March 2025 or by 31 March 2026?**

It is the intention of the policy and legislation that universities, all associated facilities, and affiliated accommodation are in scope for the non-household requirements, as we consider they will form part of the university.

The following factors should be considered when determining if the accommodation forms part of the university:

- is the accommodation managed and controlled by the educational establishment, or a contractor on its behalf
- is the accommodation provided in partnership with an educational establishment primarily for the use of the university students
- is the accommodation for the exclusive use of the university and its students during term time (only available to students at the university)
- does the university (independently or through its contractor) have a duty of care over the occupants of the building, e.g. maintenance of facilities, provision of services such as cleaning
- does the university set expectations and hold jurisdiction over the behaviour/conduct of students on the accommodation premises?

Where some of these factors are relevant, we consider that the accommodation will form part of the university.

Any universities and associated organisations that intend to comply according to the household implementation dates (31 March 2026) should seek their own legal advice.

**Is there a difference between university-controlled accommodation and private-sector-controlled accommodation in terms of dates for compliance?**

Any halls of residence which cannot be said to form part of the university are likely to generate household waste on the basis that they are used wholly for the purposes of living accommodation. However, if this is not the case, for example if the site is let as tourist accommodation outside of term-time, then the waste generated at that time will be commercial and therefore subject to the s45AZB requirements from 31 March 2025.

**In our university student accommodation, do we need to provide food waste/recycling bins for self-service kitchens/pantries?**

All waste presented by the university to the waste collector must be separated as per the waste collection arrangement, therefore food waste bins should be available to students to ensure all food waste is captured and disposed of appropriately.

# Household recycling questions

## Household recycling: who is responsible for meeting the requirements?

### **Is there a requirement on householders to recycle?**

For recycling collections from households, the statutory duty is on waste collection authorities to collect the core recyclable waste streams from households. Local authorities can issue a notice to householders setting out how waste should be presented for collection, such as what containers should be used and what days or times these should be presented for collection.

### **Will local authorities have targets for recycling?**

The government is committed to reducing waste by transitioning to a circular economy. To support the government in achieving this goal, a Circular Economy Taskforce of experts has been established from across government, industry, academia, and civil society to help us develop a Circular Economy Strategy for England.

The taskforce will consider the evidence for sector-specific interventions from right across the economy and will be exploring a wide range of levers to drive circularity.

### **Why does the new guidance for household collections not specify minimum levels of service frequency for residual waste collections?**

Local authorities are already legally required to deliver waste collection services to all households in their area. We have gone further by mandating weekly food waste collections under the Environment Act 2021.

We recognise that as recycling services are expanded and improved under Simpler Recycling in England, local authorities may choose to review residual waste services to ensure they are providing best value for money in line with local need. The government's



priority is ensuring that households' needs are met, and we expect local authorities to continue to provide services to a reasonable standard, as they do now.

Defra recently published [guidance](#) to ensure that local authorities consider certain factors when they review services, to ensure that reasonable standards are maintained. These include ensuring that there are no disamenity impacts, such as the build-up of odorous waste at the kerbside or an increase in fly-tipping of residual waste. We expect local authorities to monitor any changes to collection frequencies to ensure there are no unintended adverse consequences.

### **What are the implications for non-compliance by local authorities?**

Public authorities (such as waste collection authorities) are expected to comply with their statutory duties. If they do not comply, they are at risk of judicial review.

We want to work with local authorities to support readiness for these new obligations.

We are also working with sector specialists WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) to provide guidance on best practice and scope additional areas of support.

Local authorities are independent bodies and are accountable to their electorate rather than to Ministers or government departments. If citizens have concerns about their local authority, they should try to discuss these with their council in the first instance. The Local Government Ombudsman is charged by Parliament with investigating complaints of injustice arising from maladministration by local authorities and is free of charge.

### **Will written assessments help if a judicial review is brought against a local authority?**

As section 45AZD of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 requires all waste collectors to complete a written assessment if they are relying on an exception to collect two or more waste streams together, local authorities will be in breach of statutory duty if they fail to do so. Having a written record of the assessment should also help to demonstrate that the principles of good decision making have been followed should any challenge to the waste collection service implemented arise.

## Household recycling: costs and funding

### How will local authorities be funded to implement these reforms?

The costs to deliver the new duties on local authorities will be paid by a combination of:

- Reasonable new burdens funding from government to provide weekly food waste collections from households. Funding is expected to include capital costs (such as vehicles and containers), resource costs and ongoing service costs, subject to spending review.
- Extended Producer Responsibility payments will be provided to local authorities for the costs of collecting and managing household packaging waste through efficient and effective services. This includes the collection of additional packaging materials for recycling such as plastic films and flexibles.
- It remains the case that under section 45(3) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, and the Controlled Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2012, waste collection authorities may recover a reasonable charge for the collection of garden waste.

### When will local authorities be notified of their transitional resource and ongoing funding for food waste collections?

We wrote to English local authorities on 4 March 2024 to notify them of their transitional resource allocations for the 2024/25 financial year. Local authorities will be notified of their transitional resource allocations for food waste collections for the 2024/25 financial year in early 2025 and will be notified of their 2025/26 payments early in the 2025/26 financial year.

Funding for ongoing resource funding from 1 April 2026 is subject to agreement through a spending review. We are not able to provide further detail until funding has been agreed. The next spending review is expected to be in the first half of 2025 and will update local authorities as soon as possible following this.

## **Will new burdens funding be provided to local authorities for moving to separate paper and card collections?**

Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging will cover net costs of collecting, managing, recycling and disposing of household packaging waste. Local Authority Chief Executives in England will have received an indicative estimate of their year 1 Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for packaging payment (the Provisional Notice of Assessment) on 28 November 2024. These payments take into account collection scheme. If a local authority changes collection scheme type, this will be included in the assessment for future years and payments will be made accordingly.

Under Simpler Recycling in England, although paper and card should be collected separately from other dry recycling by default, local authorities are able to co-collect paper and card with other materials where separate collection is technically or economically impracticable, or there is no significant environmental benefit. We have published [guidance for local authorities and other waste collectors](#) to support their decision-making regarding the co-collection of paper and card with other dry recyclable materials.

The need to produce a written assessment if co-collecting paper and card with other materials is considered a new burden for relevant local authorities. We are working with WRAP to provide an online tool to allow LAs to deliver this written assessment quickly and easily, to minimise this new burden - further details to be announced shortly. Subject to agreement, new burdens funding will be provided to fund the local authority officer time required to complete this written assessment tool.

## **Will new burdens funding be provided for producing written assessments?**

The need to produce a written assessment if co-collecting paper and card with other materials is considered a new burden for relevant local authorities. We are working with WRAP to provide an online tool to allow local authorities to deliver this written assessment quickly and easily, to minimise this new burden - further details to be announced shortly. Subject to agreement, new burdens funding will be provided to fund the local authority officer time required to complete this written assessment tool.

## **Will the efficient and effective metrics within Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging mean local authorities will be penalised for co-collecting dry recyclables?**

Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging will cover net costs of collecting, managing, recycling and disposing of household packaging waste. Local Authority Chief Executives in England will have received an indicative estimate of their year 1 Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for packaging payment (the Provisional Notice of Assessment) on 28 November 2024.

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for packaging payments will be provided to local authorities (LAs) for efficient and effective household collections. EPR for packaging recently provided some additional information on what is meant by efficient and effective to LAs, alongside the indicative payment letters.

‘Effective’ intends to be outcome focused, and will assess if a service recycles a reasonable proportion of packaging waste, taking into account certain factors e.g. demography and geographical characteristics

‘Efficient’ will assess if costs are as low as reasonably possible, taking into account the collection service type.

These payments take into account collection scheme. No penalty would be given for co-collecting paper and card with other materials, where it is appropriate. We recognise that there are various technical, economic and environmental circumstances in which separate collection is not practical - and fully support local authorities and other waste collectors to make use of the exceptions where they are appropriate.

## **Can local authorities charge for collecting mixed food and garden waste from households?**

Where food and garden waste are collected together, this service must be weekly to meet the requirements relating to food waste. Where food and garden waste are collected together, a charge is only permitted for the collection of garden waste but not food waste, which must be collected free of charge. Householders should be made aware that they do not have to have a garden waste service (if they do not want to pay for one), and that they are entitled to a free food waste collection service regardless.

We are working with sector specialists WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) to provide guidance on best practice, including co-collection of food and garden waste, and scope additional areas of support.

## **Household recycling: bins, signage and processes**

### **What about hard-to-reach properties?**

Under existing legislation in section 45(1)(a) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, waste collection authorities are required to arrange for the collection of household waste unless:

- it is situated at a place which in the opinion of the authority is so isolated or inaccessible that the cost of collecting it would be unreasonably high, and

- the authority is satisfied that adequate arrangements for its disposal have been or can reasonably be expected to be made by a person who controls the waste.

Where there is a duty to collect waste under section 45(1)(a) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, section 45A will apply in England.

### **How will this policy work with flats/other shared properties where provision of recycling bins may be more complex?**

The core set of recyclable waste streams (plastics, glass, metal, paper and card, food waste and garden waste) must be collected from all households including flats and other shared properties in accordance with the new requirements. Local authorities may choose to provide bespoke services for flats and other shared properties, such as communal bins to collect the recyclable waste streams where this is more practical.

We recognise there are challenges for those living in flats and for collections from these properties. There are, however, many examples of good practice on how to deliver services to flats and shared properties. Organisations such as WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) and ReLondon have both published guidance on this. We will also provide support and advice through guidance and ensure best practice is widely available to assist local authorities.

### **For glass bottles, can a local authority provide a bring-bank instead of collecting from households?**

No. Where there is a duty to collect waste under section 45(1)(a) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, new section 45A of the Environmental Protection Act will apply.

The expectation is that households should receive an equivalent collection service for recycling as they do for residual waste services. By this, we mean that where there is a duty to collect household waste, the recyclable waste streams should also be collected directly from the premises. New section 45A does not allow for comparable alternative arrangements. As a result, providing a 'bring bank' recycling service would not fulfil the duty to collect household waste. These services should only be provided to supplement collections from households.

For some flats and communal properties, it may be more suitable to collect residual waste from a communal on-site bin. In these cases, it may be appropriate to similarly collect the recyclable waste streams from communal on-site bins.

## **Will bin colours be consistent across authorities to help ensure materials go in the right bin?**

We sought views on bin colour standardisation in our 2019 consultation on consistency in household and business recycling. Most respondents were broadly in favour of it. However, whilst there are clear benefits to having standardised bin colours, it is also clear that there are practical concerns about implementation.

We know it would be costly and time consuming for local authorities to provide new bins for all their residents and so do not intend to legislate for this.

In our 2021 consultation we stated that when replacing existing bins or waste containers, local authorities should consider moving to the most appropriate bin colours to reduce confusion, which might include working collaboratively and procuring with neighbouring local authority areas, or in waste partnerships.

## **Household recycling: food waste questions**

### **Can you confirm if food waste collections are required from all households?**

Amended section 45A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 requires local authorities in England to arrange for the separate collection of food waste from all households, at least once a week. All local authorities should provide a food waste service for every household by 31 March 2026, unless they have been given a transitional arrangement where long-term waste disposal (mechanical biological treatment and energy from waste) contracts present a barrier to introducing separate food waste collections. Affected local authorities are listed in the [commencement regulations](#) with the date by which they must introduce food waste collections from households. Defra will continue to engage with affected local authorities.

We will work with WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) and other partners to provide guidance on best practice, and work with local authorities to help them to deliver services to all householders.

### **Can local authorities opt out of providing a food waste service?**

No. The amended Environmental Protection Act 1990 will require local authorities in England to arrange for the separate collection of food waste from households, at least once a week.

Councils can choose to co-collect food and garden waste if preferred, as permitted in the [regulations](#). Therefore, councils will be able to choose the most appropriate collection and

treatment system for their local area, taking into account the reprocessing options available to them.

### **Can councils phase roll out of household food waste collections from April 2026 taking into account the potential limited supply of vehicles and continued uncertainty of New Burdens funding?**

The implementation dates and materials in scope for Simpler Recycling were confirmed in the government [consultation response in October 2023](#). Following this, the relevant legislation that was introduced in the Environment Act 2021 was [brought into force](#) in May 2024. This means that the core legislative requirements of Simpler Recycling and implementation dates are now set in legislation. In May 2024, regulations were also made that set the descriptions of the recyclable waste streams for Simpler Recycling. In practice, this sets out what materials are in scope of Simpler Recycling collections, ready for when the policy comes into effect.

We are aware of concerns about delivery timelines, pressure on supply chains for vehicles and containers, and the need to upgrade waste and recycling infrastructure. We are engaging with key stakeholders across the sector and welcome input to help us understand the challenges and ensure successful delivery.

We are working with WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) to scope interventions to address bottlenecks in supply chains. For instance, WRAP recently published procurement guidance for food waste: [Weekly food waste implementation supplementary procurement guidance | WRAP](#)

### **Will food waste be collected from blocks of flats/other shared properties? If so, how will this work in practice?**

Amended section 45A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 requires local authorities in England to arrange for the separate collection of food waste from households, at least once a week.

We want all householders, including those living in flats/other shared properties, to recycle and to have access to food waste collections. Many local authorities already successfully collect food waste from blocks of flats and other shared properties. It will be for local authorities to decide what works best in terms of local arrangements, taking into account their new duties.

We will work with WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) and other partners to provide guidance on best practice, and work with local authorities to help them to deliver services to all householders.

## **Are local authorities required to collect food waste from remote or isolated properties?**

Under existing legislation in section 45(1)(a) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, waste collection authorities are required to arrange for the collection of household waste unless:

- it is situated at a place which in the opinion of the authority is so isolated or inaccessible that the cost of collecting it would be unreasonably high, and
- the authority is satisfied that adequate arrangements for its disposal have been or can reasonably be expected to be made by a person who controls the waste.

For properties that are already too remote or costly to collect from, the requirements in new section 45A, including the requirement to collect food waste once a week, will not arise and existing legislation will continue to apply. Of course, we will also reflect rurality in our new burdens calculations for future collection costs.

## **If food waste is left uncollected for too long, it will attract vermin. What is being done to reduce the risk of problems associated with decaying food?**

We are conscious of the need to have reliable and frequent food waste collections which is why there will be a legal requirement for food waste to be collected from households at least weekly. This will ensure it is removed quickly and will not attract vermin. Evidence also shows that weekly collection of food waste helps to increase recycling.

We will work with WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) and other partners to provide guidance on good practice, and work with local authorities to help them to deliver services to householders.

## **Will caddy liners have to be provided to householders?**

There is currently no obligation for local authorities to provide caddy liners to households.

## **Household recycling: garden waste questions**

### **Do Local Authorities have to provide garden waste collections?**

The Environment Act 2021 amends section 45A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to include the requirement for all local authorities in England to collect a core set of recyclable waste streams for recycling or composting, including garden waste where requested. This requirement will begin from 31 March 2026.



The duty to collect garden waste only arises once the householder has requested its collection and paid any charge. Householders will be able to make their own decision about whether they wish to use this service or make other arrangements to dispose of their garden waste.

### **Is Defra anticipating all local authorities will start charging for garden waste?**

Local authorities have had the option to charge for a garden waste collection since 1992, as per the [Controlled Waste \(England & Wales\) Regulations 2012](#). Some local authorities may choose to continue charging for collections of garden waste due to local circumstances and local economic drivers. Local authorities will retain the flexibility to make the best choices to suit local need.

### **Do local authorities have to provide garden waste collections to all properties and what if they are difficult to access in the existing vehicles?**

From 31 March 2026, local authorities are required to provide a garden waste collection service, which meets the new requirements set out in amended section 45A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, to households where it is requested and, if they choose to charge for it, paid for. Householders will be able to make their own decision about whether they wish to use this service or make other arrangements to dispose of their garden waste.

Under existing legislation in section 45(1)(a) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, waste collection authorities are required to arrange for the collection of household waste unless:

- it is situated at a place which in the opinion of the authority is so isolated or inaccessible that the cost of collecting it would be unreasonably high, and
- the authority is satisfied that adequate arrangements for its disposal have been or can reasonably be expected to be made by a person who controls the waste.

## **Household recycling: communications and support**

### **What support will government give to local authorities to communicate the requirements to residents? Will there be any national communications campaigns?**

Local authorities are best placed to communicate the new collection requirements with their residents when rolling out services. To support local authorities, we will provide

transitional resource funding for food waste communications. Under Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for packaging, producers will also be required to contribute to the costs of public information campaigns to promote the correct recycling and disposal of packaging waste. We are also working with WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) to provide guidance on best practice to help local authorities to deliver services to all householders. For instance, WRAP recently published communications guidance for local authority household food waste collections:

<https://www.wrap.ngo/taking-action/citizen-behaviour-change/recycle-now/campaign-assets/household-food-waste-collections-communications>

We continue to consider the most appropriate approach to supporting local authorities and other waste collectors with public engagement and communications related to Simpler Recycling collections in England. We will provide further guidance on this in due course.

We also plan to work with our internal Social Research and Behavioural Insights Team to further consider citizen behaviour change and possible interventions in this space.

Furthermore, the UK Government and devolved administrations have committed to introducing a mandatory labelling regime to make it easier for consumers to understand how to recycle packaging correctly.

## Materials recycling questions

### Dry recycling: co-collection exemptions and exceptions

#### Which dry recyclable materials can or cannot be co-collected and why?

By default, the primary legislation requires that the recyclable waste streams are collected in separate containers, unless this is technically or economically impracticable, or provides no significant environmental benefit.

The government has made an **exemption** in regulations to allow local authorities and other waste collectors to co-collect plastic, metal and glass in the same container in all circumstances without the need to produce a written assessment, based on the evidence that co-collection does not significantly affect the potential for those materials to be recycled.

Paper and card must by default be collected separately from other dry recyclable waste streams, unless one of three **exceptions** applies: it is not technically practicable, it is not economically practicable, or there is no significant environmental benefit to doing so. This is because paper and card are particularly vulnerable to cross-contamination from food and liquid commonly found on other recycling materials, which could significantly reduce the potential of collected material to be recycled.

If choosing to co-collect paper and card with other dry recyclables, waste collectors will need to produce a short, written assessment to demonstrate that it is not technically or economically practicable to collect paper and card separately, or that there is no significant environmental benefit to doing so. The government has published [guidance](#) for waste collectors and a template that can be used for this assessment.

### **Can the exemptions / exceptions apply only to certain property types, routes and service provisions?**

The **exemption** allowing co-collection of plastic, metal and glass together in one container will apply in all circumstances without the need for a written assessment.

However, if choosing to co-collect paper and card with other dry recyclables, waste collectors will need to produce a short, written assessment to demonstrate that it is not technically or economically practicable to collect paper and card separately, or that there is no significant environmental benefit to doing so. The government has published [guidance](#) for waste collectors and a template that can be used for this assessment.

Sometimes, it makes sense to provide a different recycling collection service for different:

- geographical areas
- collection routes
- type of premises or housing stock

This is not a complete list - there could be other cases where you provide different services.

Defra recommends that you complete a separate written assessment for each different service where you plan to collect paper and card with plastic, metal and glass, unless the reasons for doing so are the same.

### **What does 'TEEP' stand for?**

Waste collectors must produce a short, written assessment to record their justification for co-collecting paper and card with other dry recyclables, if it is deemed not technically or economically practicable to collect paper and card separately, or there is no significant environmental benefit to doing so.

Some stakeholders may informally refer to this as a 'TEEP' assessment. TEEP stands for technically, economically or environmentally practicable.

**Will waste collectors need to demonstrate that the separate collection of paper and card is technically impracticable, AND economically impracticable AND has no significant environmental benefit in order to co-collect with other dry recyclables?**

Waste collectors will only need to demonstrate that the separate collection of paper and card is either technically impracticable, or economically impracticable or has no significant environmental benefit in order to co-collect with other dry recyclables.

**Do waste collectors have to use the written assessment template provided by Defra?**

No. Defra has provided a suggested template for the written assessment required by waste collectors choosing to collect paper and card with other dry recyclables ([see the guidance](#)), to help make this process very easy and quick. The use of this template is optional, and waste collectors may choose to use a different format if preferred.

**Won't the written assessment mean more work for local authorities and waste collectors?**

Waste collectors must produce a short, written assessment to record their justification for co-collecting paper and card with other dry recyclables, if it is deemed not technically or economically practicable to collect paper and card separately, or there is no significant environmental benefit to doing so.

To clarify, waste collectors do not need to submit their written assessments for approval. Defra has provided a suggested template for the written assessment to help make this process very easy and quick. The use of this template is optional, and waste collectors may choose to use a different format if preferred. We are also working with WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) to provide an online tool to allow local authorities to produce this written assessment quickly and easily.

Defra has provided further [guidance](#) on circumstances in which it might not be technically or economically practicable to collect paper and card separately, or in which it might not offer any significant environmental benefit. This will support local authorities and other waste collectors to easily and confidently make the most efficient decisions.

**Who do waste collectors need to submit their written assessments to?**

Waste collectors do not need to submit their written assessments for approval. However, the Environment Agency has powers to request to view a written assessment to understand the justification for a waste collector's decision to co-collect paper and card

with other dry recyclables. Citizens can also request to view this information for local authorities and other public bodies under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

### **Can the need for local authorities to produce a written assessment for collections from non-domestic premises be changed so that we have to do it by 2026, not 2025?**

Section 45AZD of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 requires all waste collectors to complete a written assessment if they are relying on an exception to collect two or more waste streams together, from the relevant implementation dates that are now set in law.

We will work with local authorities to support readiness for these new obligations. Defra has published [guidance](#) to make the written assessment process as easy as possible.

We appreciate the challenge of time pressures. Per the guidance, please note that if local authorities are in existing contracts which would make transitioning to separate paper and card collections economically impracticable, this might be an appropriate circumstance in which to consider use of an economic exception to co-collect with other dry recycling.

## **Dry recycling: plastics & cartons**

### **Is there a clear definition of what kinds of plastic is in the legislation?**

Part 4 of Schedule 1 to [The Separation of Waste \(England\) Regulations 2024](#) provides a list of plastics which are included in the recyclable plastic waste stream.

Part 4 is reproduced below.

#### **Part 4**

Recyclable household waste and recyclable relevant waste within the plastic waste stream

**4.—** (1) Subject to sub-paragraphs (2) and (3), the prescribed descriptions of recyclable household waste and recyclable relevant waste in the plastic waste stream are—

- (a) polyethylene terephthalate plastic bottles, pots, tubs, trays and tubes,
- (b) polypropylene plastic bottles, pots, tubs, trays and tubes,
- (c) high-density polyethylene and low-density polyethylene plastic bottles, pots, tubs, trays and tubes,
- (d) aseptic and refrigerated cartons made of a fibre-based composite,
- (e) polyolefin plastic film packaging and plastic bags which contain a minimum of 90% by weight of mono-polyethylene, mono-polypropylene, or both.

(2) Paragraph (1)(e)—

(a) includes any polyelofin plastic film that has been metalised through vacuum or vapour deposition;

(b) does not include any polyelofin plastic film which contains aluminium foil or paper.

(3) The descriptions of waste prescribed in sub-paragraph (1) do not include—

(a) any plastic which contains any pigment which prevents the item from being near-infrared detectable;

(b) any item which does not measure a minimum of 40mm by 40mm.

### **Can you clarify the definition of ‘cartons’ and in which waste stream this sits?**

[The Separation of Waste \(England\) Regulations 2024](#) define cartons within the plastic stream as follows:

- Aseptic and refrigerated cartons made of a fibre-based composite are included in the plastic stream.

For ‘cartons’, this would include Tetrapak cartons such as milk or juice cartons.

### **Will fibre-based composites still be collected with plastics, metals and glass?**

Aseptic and refrigerated cartons made of a fibre-based composite are included in the plastic stream.

Other fibre-based composite materials that are in scope of Simpler Recycling collections, which meet the necessary requirements, are included in the paper and card waste stream. From the regulations, the paper and card waste stream includes the following:

All paper and card except—

- (a) fibre-based composite where the non-paper fibre content is more than 15% by weight,
- (b) fibre-based composite which has layers of plastic on both sides (double-sided lamination),
- (c) fibre-based composite cups,
- (d) paper and card to which glitter has been adhered,
- (e) paper and card to which foil has been adhered, where the non-paper fibre content is more than 15% by weight,

- (f) greaseproof, siliconised or waxed paper,
- (g) stickers,
- (h) padded polyethylene lined envelopes,
- (i) paperback and hardback books,
- (j) wallpaper.

See the full regulations here: [The Separation of Waste \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)

An exemption has been provided in regulations to allow local authorities and other waste collectors to co-collect the plastic, metal and glass recyclable waste streams in the same container in all circumstances, without the need to produce a written assessment. By default, paper and card must be collected separately from other dry recyclable waste streams, unless separate collection is not technically or economically practicable, or provides no significant environmental benefit. See further guidance on co-collection of paper and card with other materials here: [Collecting paper and card with other dry recyclable materials: written assessments - GOV.UK](#).

### **Are plant pots in scope of the plastics waste stream?**

Yes, if they meet the criteria as set out in Part 4 of Schedule 1 to [The Separation of Waste \(England\) Regulations 2024](#). This provides a list of plastics which are included in the recyclable plastic waste stream. This includes PE, PET and PP pots which are larger than 40x40mm and do not contain any pigment which prevents them from being near-infrared detectable (e.g. carbon black pigment) within the plastic recyclable waste stream.

Plant pots that are not considered in scope would include (for example) black pots, pots that are smaller than 40x40mm, or are not made of PE, PET, or PP.

Plastic plant pots are not recyclable in the garden waste stream.

### **What action is government taking in the lead up to the implementation of plastic film collections from households and workplaces?**

In the lead up to the requirement to collect plastic films from kerbside, existing kerbside, front of store and postal take back collections of plastic films for recycling will continue and are expected to increase in response to certainty over the timing of the introduction of this new collection requirement. Investment in new UK plastic reprocessing facilities is also expected.

To support our ambitious goals to recycle plastic film, Defra alongside the Flexible Plastic Fund, UK Research and Innovation and Zero Waste Scotland, is funding a multi-million-pound pilot project on flexible plastic kerbside collections.

The FlexCollect project was launched in May 2022 and provides financial support for selected local authorities to roll out kerbside collection trials over a three-year period. The [interim report](#) in January 2024 found that 90% of material collected was recyclable, 60% of households in the trial areas participate regularly, and over 89% of participants are 'very satisfied' with the service. Collections have been successfully added to existing collection services. Insights will continue to be gathered from the project to help councils introduce new collections.

The project is being managed by a consortium of organisations including: Ecosurety, Suez, RECOUP and WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme). A cross-section of industry stakeholders including LARAC (Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee), NAWDO (National Association of Waste Disposal Officers), CIWM (Chartered Institution of Wastes Management) and ESA (Environmental Services Association) are also involved to ensure all parts of the value chain involved in the collection and recycling of this material are considered.

## Organic recycling: food waste treatment

### **Can separately collected food waste be sent to energy recovery facilities?**

No. The legislation requires that separately collected food waste must be recycled or composted.

The preferred method for treating food waste is by anaerobic digestion (AD), which is considered a form of recycling, as this produces biogas and digestate which can be spread to land as a fertiliser.

Composting is also permitted, and in some circumstances where wet AD is not suitable (i.e. where food and garden waste has been co-collected) composting may be a more appropriate method of treatment.

### **Is Anaerobic Digestion legally classed as 'Recycling' or 'Recovery'?**

The processing of separately collected food waste via anaerobic digestion facilities is considered to be a form of recycling.

As is widely accepted across the waste sector, Defra's view is that anaerobic digestion (AD) is both a form of recycling and energy recovery. Evidence from WRAP has found that 85% of the output by mass of AD plants is comprised of digestate (a recycled material) and just 15% is biogas (energy recovery). AD plants that accept food waste are permitted by the Environment Agency and should produce digestate that is of sufficient quality to be used as a fertiliser (in line with the PAS110 standard). As a result, where food waste is collected and sent to AD, this will meet the requirements in new sections 45A-45AZB of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to collect the recyclable waste streams for



recycling or composting.

This is in contrast to where AD is carried out at Mechanical-Biological Treatment (MBT) plants (where food waste is separated from other types of waste in residual waste and then put through AD). In these circumstances, the digestate end product (compost-like output) is too contaminated to spread on land, therefore, the AD part of the treatment process cannot be considered to be recycling. As a result, sending food waste to be treated under MBT would not meet the requirements in the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Energy from Waste (EfW) plants only recover energy and so are not a suitable treatment option for food waste collected separately for the purpose of recycling or composting.

## Organic recycling: biodegradable and compostable plastic packaging materials

### **Will biodegradable and compostable packaging (i.e. Vegware) be considered food waste?**

Plastic packaging or non-packaging items labelled as “compostable” or biodegradable” are not in scope of the food waste stream and are therefore not required to be collected for recycling or composting with food waste.

There are concerns over suitability for recycling, as highlighted by the waste and recycling industry in our [call for evidence on bio-based, biodegradable, and compostable plastics](#).

We encourage innovative technologies, having funded ground-breaking research and innovation to make plastic packaging fit for a sustainable future through the £60m Smart Sustainable Plastic Packaging Challenge. We also understand the importance of any new sustainable products, materials, and processes, to be in line with circular economy principles and fit with existing and readily available waste management practices.

We will continue to engage with the sector as the evidence develops to inform future guidance.

### **Why are biodegradable and compostable plastics not in scope of the recyclable waste streams?**

Biodegradable and compostable plastics will not be included as a separate recyclable waste stream in the amended Environmental Protection Act 1990, and we do not propose to include these materials in any of the other recyclable waste streams. There are, however, provisions in section 45AZC of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to add additional waste streams in the future, subject to certain conditions. Given the above, the mandatory collection of biodegradable and compostable packaging (as a separate recyclable waste stream in the Environmental Protection Act 1990, which must either be collected separately or co-collected with another waste stream, such as food waste) is not proposed to occur unless several conditions are met. These include ensuring that the

material is suitable for collection and recycling and that end markets exist for the material.

At the present time there cannot be certainty over the above criteria being achievable for biodegradable and compostable materials. Consequently, mandatory collection of this material from households and businesses is not proposed. This would not preclude local authorities or businesses from arranging for a separate compostable/biodegradable packaging collection which would be outside of the scope of these Simpler Recycling reforms. If collected, these materials would have to be collected separately from the recyclable waste streams under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 requirements.

## Infrastructure and markets

### **Can you guarantee end markets for the dry recyclable materials local authorities and other waste collectors will be required to collect?**

By making recycling clearer and easier, we will help to reduce contamination, better preserve material value, and help to grow demand for recyclables. This should mean both more recycled material in the products we buy and growth of the UK recycling industry.

In May 2024, [regulations were made](#) that set the descriptions of the recyclable waste streams for Simpler Recycling. In practice, this sets out what materials are in scope of Simpler Recycling collections, ready for when the policy comes into effect. This includes some which are not currently widely collected for recycling, such as cartons.

Together, the Collection and Packaging Reforms – Simpler Recycling, Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging (pEPR) and a Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) – should guarantee a consistent supply of recyclable materials and increased income streams from pEPR. This should provide certainty, increasing investor confidence and unlocking investment in waste infrastructure – the Environmental Services Association expects the recycling and waste sector to invest £10 billion in new recycling infrastructure over the next decade.

Alongside the Collection & Packaging reforms, HM Treasury's Plastic Packaging Tax on plastic packaging is expected to increase demand for secondary material plastic and increasing reprocessing infrastructure will help meet this demand.

Defra is currently strengthening the evidence base regarding waste and recycling infrastructure needs and we will continue to work closely with key stakeholders including local authorities and waste management companies on this.

### **What is government doing to address bottlenecks in supply chains?**

We are aware of concerns about delivery timelines, pressure on supply chains for vehicles and containers, and the need to upgrade waste and recycling infrastructure. We are engaging with key stakeholders across the sector and welcome input to help us understand the challenges and ensure successful delivery.

We are working with WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) to scope interventions to address bottlenecks in supply chains. For instance, WRAP recently published procurement guidance for food waste collections from households: [Weekly food waste implementation supplementary procurement guidance | WRAP](#)

## **How are waste processors gearing up for Simpler Recycling?**

DEFRA's [Circular Economy forums and newsletters](#) engage with both waste collectors and waste processors, some of which provide both services.

We are working with WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) and waste industry representatives to support readiness for the Simpler Recycling requirements. Specifically, we have engaged with Materials Recycling Facilities (MRF) operators and local authorities through WRAP's MRF Forum to identify challenges with MRF capacity, investment and upgrade timelines, and to work with the sector to identify interventions to support MRFs as they prepare for Simpler Recycling. Those engaged with us are aware of their obligations and are working hard to upgrade their facilities to ensure they can separate the target materials as required by Simpler Recycling.

Further workstreams have included engagement with the organics processing sector who are also clear of the obligations on them and the increase in food waste material which will be generated in the coming years.

## **What policy/support does government have for waste planning and permitting under Simpler Recycling?**

We are actively investigating how to facilitate the investment in waste infrastructure that we need to realise the full potential of Simpler Recycling and our other waste reforms. This work will consider all stages of the investment process, and we will be working closely with a wide range of stakeholders – including Local Authorities, waste management companies, and experts such as the National Infrastructure Commission (who are running a separate project on the costs associated with building new infrastructure in the UK). Once we understand how government can support investment in sorting and recycling infrastructure most productively, we will focus our efforts accordingly.

## **Further guidance and support**

### **What guidance and support is available?**

Guidance has been published to assist local authorities, other waste collectors and workplaces in implementing the new requirements:

- [Paper and card guidance](#) (written assessments)

- [Household waste services guidance](#)
- [Workplace recycling guidance](#)

Defra has launched a [Simpler Recycling Communications Toolkit](#) to help local authorities and private waste collectors inform their business and non-domestic customers about the required changes.

The toolkit will be continuously developed and expanded. We encourage feedback on helpful resources for implementing Simpler Recycling through the survey on the toolkit's landing page.

We will continue to engage with stakeholders to support successful delivery of the reforms, including a programme of engagement in the lead up and following the 31 March 2025 implementation date for workplaces.

### **Will government publish additional guidance for local authorities and waste collectors?**

We are working with WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) and the sector to provide further guidance and tools to support preparation for Simpler Recycling implementation dates. We will provide more detail soon.

### **How does the government plan to engage with stakeholders going forward?**

We are committed to engaging stakeholders on the implementation of these proposals. This will maximise effective delivery and minimise additional burdens.

We will continue to engage through a number of different working groups, events and forums, including our regular [Circular Economy forums and newsletters](#) which are open to all stakeholders and cover Simpler Recycling and wider Circular Economy topics.

Working with the Local Government Association we have established a joint Sounding Board to support policy development and implementation. The Sounding Board is based on the Waste Networks Chairs Group and includes representatives from National Association of Waste Disposal Officers (NAWDO), Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee (LARAC), Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport (ADEPT), District Councils Network (DCN) and Local Partnerships.

We will also engage directly with representative industry networks and use relevant channels to reach those affected by this policy.