

Simpler Recycling Collections for England: Government Response to Consultation

To: ALL APSE main contacts (England)

1 Executive Summary

In October 2023, the government announced its ambitions for simpler recycling collections and tougher regulation to a reformed waste system. The stated intention of the reforms on household and business bin collections is to crackdown on unscrupulous waste carriers and boost recycling rates and protect the environment.

Following on from this on the 9th of May 2024 the government has further announced its response to the consultation on Simpler Recycling for England. A link to that response can be found using [this link](#).

2 Key points

The new Simpler Recycling proposals hope to see the same materials collected from homes, workplaces and schools, ending the confusing patchwork of different approaches across England.

In response to previous consultancy the government has now set out how the drive to better and simpler recycling will work, with councils being allowed to collect plastic, metal, glass, paper and card in one bin in all circumstances. Similarly, food and garden waste will also be allowed to be co-collected.

The belief is that this will reduce confusion over what items can be recycled, as people will no longer have to check what their specific council will accept for recycling. The

government purports that this will also reduce complexity for councils and other waste collectors, ensuring they retain the flexibility to collect recyclable waste in the most appropriate way for their local areas.

Additionally, the Government is supporting more frequent and comprehensive bin collections. Councils will be expected to collect residual waste at least fortnightly, alongside weekly food waste collections. This is reflected in the response which states *"Government expects a minimum service frequency for residual waste collections of at least fortnightly in England"*.

Arriving at this conclusion on the issue of frequency is a surprising response given the results of the consultation which asked

Question 15: The guidance outlines a backstop on the frequency of collection of residual waste, to protect householders' local amenity. Do you agree or disagree with the content of this section?

Which found that 80% of respondents disagreed with the content of this and furthermore 58% of total respondents expressed a view that that reducing the frequency of residual waste collections increases recycling rates, with 47% considering that without the flexibility to reduce the frequency of residual waste collections, both local and central government will not meet their recycling rate nor Net Zero ambitions.

In addition to this when asked about behaviour change within households to encourage recycling 44% of respondents were of the view that reducing residual waste frequency is important in changing householder behaviour, to encourage them to recycle more and, particularly, to use their food waste collection service.

3 Where will the changes apply?

The plans will apply to all homes in England, including flats. Similar measures will apply to non-household municipal premises, including businesses, hospitals, schools and universities.

As well as these developments, the list of premises in scope of these requirements has been expanded. Places of worship, penal institutes, charity shops, hostels and public meeting places will all come under the scope of the Simpler Recycling regulations.

4 Regulatory measures

The update builds on wider efforts to increase recycling and reduce waste. [New restrictions](#) on single-use plastic plates, trays, bowls, cutlery, balloon sticks, expanded and extruded polystyrene food and drinks containers came into force on 1 October 2023 in order to reduce plastic pollution and keep streets clean. The implementation of the [Deposit Return Scheme](#) for drinks containers and [Extended Producer Responsibility](#) scheme for packaging to boost recycling and clamp down on plastic pollution and litter are also moving forward.

5 Other measures

At the beginning of 2024 it was confirmed that [disposable vapes will be banned](#) in the UK to protect children's health and tackle the environmental impact of these items.

A ban on microbeads in rinse-off personal care products, restrictions on the supply of single-use plastic straws, drink stirrers and cotton buds, and our world-leading Plastic Packaging Tax has already introduced.

6 APSE Comment

APSE welcomes, in general terms, the new announcements on Simpler Recycling but believes councils are best placed to decide how to collect a consistent set of materials for their areas.

There have been several concerns raised by APSE members regarding the implementation of the scheme. Whilst local authorities support services that aim to improve waste collection systems one of the biggest hurdles is financing new systems of collections. Despite the funding package announced by Defra, many councils will still face a financial short fall after factoring in additional collections as well potentially new vehicles and in some instances new or additional depot space. Moreover, APSE Performance Networks Data suggests that three weekly collections of residual waste has been remarkably successful in encouraging better recycling, and thus moves to a two weekly limit will be unhelpful to improved recycling as well as costly to implement.

There are also concerns on the timelines in which the implementation is expected to be completed.

Whilst APSE is pleased to see that some of the recommendations of our member councils have been taken on board, giving authorities the option of commingled collections for recycling, there is clearly a great deal of concern on the insistence for fortnightly collection as a minimum on residual waste.

The financial implications as well as time scales needs to be recognised with further support from the government to ensure the full potential of the scheme can be realised. APSE will continue to work with our members authorities to achieve these goals.

Councils need to be given the right support be able to supply solutions that increase recycling rates and reduce residual waste with the longer-term decisions on how to improve services for residents supported with well-thought through regulatory measures that recognise the core role of local authority waste and recycling services.

In light of the above developments APSE will be hosting an online roundtable to explore the following issues on the Tuesday 11 June via MS Teams. This is a FREE event for APSE member councils and will be of interest to those responsible for refuse and recycling as senior officers or elected members with an interest or portfolio responsibilities in this area:-

- What does the announcement mean in public policy terms?
- Advantages and disadvantages of co-mingling?
- Fleet implications
- Crew implications
- Impact on recycling and recycle markets
- Operational considerations
- Cost of change

This roundtable will include expert speakers from APSE. If you are interested in contributing your own authorities' views, challenges or opportunities please get in touch to join the panel by emailing me Abi on aademiluyi@apse.org.uk.

Please sign up to the FREE roundtable using [this link.](#)

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Sign up for APSE membership to enjoy a whole range of benefits

APSE member authorities have access to a range of membership resources to assist in delivering council services. This includes our regular advisory groups, specifically designed to bring together elected members, directors, managers and heads of service, together with trade union representatives to discuss service specific issues, innovation and new ways of delivering continuous improvement. The advisory groups are an excellent forum for sharing ideas and discussing topical service issues with colleagues from other councils throughout the UK.

Advisory groups are a free service included as part of your authority's membership of APSE and all end with an informal lunch to facilitate networking with peers in other councils. If you do not currently receive details about APSE advisory group meetings and would like to be added to our list of contacts for your service area please email enquiries@apse.org.uk.

Our national advisory groups include:

- Building Cleaning
- Catering (School Meals)
- Cemeteries and Crematoria
- Highways and Street Lighting
- Housing, Construction and Building Maintenance
- Local Authority Commercialisation, Income and Trading Network
- Parks, Horticulture and Grounds Maintenance
- Climate Change and Renewable Energy Network
- Sports and Leisure Management
- Vehicle Maintenance and Transport
- Waste Management, Refuse Collection and Street Cleansing

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