

OnSite Support Research Team

Simpler Recycling: Are you ready?

Insights and Guidance on Workplace and Domestic
Recycling - helping towards a truly circular economy



This and other White Papers have been developed by the OnSite Support Research Team
in collaboration with leading independent bodies and other partners

2025: THE UK GOVERNMENT HAS ESTABLISHED GUIDANCE ON SIMPLYFYING RECYCLING FOR BOTH THE WORKPLACE AND HOME. THIS ALLOWS FOR A MORE HARMONSIED RESPONSIBLE APPROACH TO RECYLING THUS MINIMISING THE IMPACT ON THE PLANET, CREATING VALUE AND BENEFIT FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS

The UK government is committed to moving towards a zero waste, circular economy. This will create a future where:

- we keep our resources in use for longer and reduce waste
- we accelerate the path to net zero
- we see investment in critical infrastructure and green jobs
- our economy prospers
- nature thrives

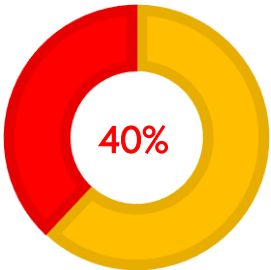
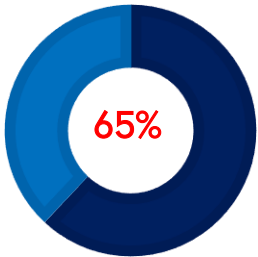
To do this the UK are building a circular economy strategy and a series of sector-based roadmaps for reform.

An OnSite Research Team Study found that

The UK generated 191.2 million tonnes of total waste in 2020.

62% of all UK waste in 2018 was attributed to the Construction, Demolition and Excavation (CDE) industry

In 2023, 64.8% of UK packaging waste was recycled



Still, 40% of all plastic generated on a construction site ends up in landfill



Background

As early as In 1987, the United Nations (UN) Brundtland Commission defined sustainability as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

The challenge we face isn't just about the avoidance of landfill but according to the UN Sustainable development is our most urgent priority and the core aim of the 2030 Development Agenda for sustainable development.

According to the UN the three pillars of sustainable development are economic, social and environmental.

Now more than ever we all have a responsibility to all our stakeholders to be more considered in the procurement of, use and end of life treatment of the resources we use.

Simpler Recycling will also end the 'postcode lottery' of bin collections in England whereby councils collect different materials for recycling, causing confusion.

New Default Requirements

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.

Timelines

The government will deliver these reforms to previously announced timelines, subject to the outcomes of the forthcoming Spending Review. The implementation timelines for Simpler Recycling are as previously announced:

- by 31 March 2025, businesses and relevant non-domestic premises in England will need to arrange for the collection of the core recyclable waste streams, with the exception of garden waste (glass, metal, plastic, paper and card, and food waste)
- micro-firms (businesses with fewer than 10 full-time equivalent employees) will be temporarily exempt from this requirement. They will have until 31 March 2027 to arrange for recycling of core recyclable waste streams
- by 31 March 2026, local authorities will be required to collect the core recyclable waste streams from all households in England. This includes introducing weekly food waste collections for most homes, unless a transitional arrangement applies
- by 31 March 2027, kerbside plastic film collections from businesses and relevant non-domestic premises, and households will be introduced



Guidance on residual waste collections

As householders will receive comprehensive and consistent recycling services through Simpler Recycling, we expect residual waste amounts to decrease.

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. Waste collection authorities determine the appropriate approach to residual waste and dry recycling collections in their area.

The government's priority is ensuring households' needs are met with regard to the provision of residual waste and recycling services, so we are writing guidance to support local authorities in making these decisions. We have published non-statutory guidance for local authorities on factors to consider, within their existing and new legal obligations, to ensure they continue to provide reasonable waste collection services to households, as they currently do.

The guidance on household waste collections advises local authorities to ensure the following outcomes:

- households receive reasonable residual waste collections (local authorities should consider additional services for particular needs, such as households with medical needs)
- there will be no build-up of bad-smelling waste at kerbside
- changes to collections do not lead to 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.

Your Responsibilities

According to the UK Government: You must keep waste to a minimum by doing everything you reasonably can to prevent, reuse, recycle or recover waste.

Any waste that comes from a commercial activity is business waste.

Business waste also includes any waste that comes from:

- construction
- demolition
- industry
- agriculture

<https://www.gov.uk/dispose-business-commercial-waste>



What Goes In What Bin? - Recycling Bin Colours Explained

Introduction

Whilst there have been some longstanding accepted norms the world of recycling is changing because of

1. UK Governmental regulations
2. Greater adoption of recycling
3. Differing practices between commercial sectors, business and domestic environments, geographical area, etc.

Examples of Variations on Colour Coding

Be aware of the

- Regional Variations
- UK Govt Guidance introduced in 2025
- Different Domestic vs. Commercial Norms

Advice

Using Your Recycling Bin Colours Correctly
With a veritable rainbow of recycling bin colours in the UK, it is easy to understand why we are all getting confused, but help is at hand. All councils provide information on what recycling bins you are entitled to, what days of the week they are collected, and what you should be putting in each bin. If in doubt, pop over to your local council's webpage and become an eco-warrior by Reusing, Reducing, and Recycling as much as you can.

www.gov.uk/guidance/simpler-recycling-workplace-recycling-in-england
www.gov.uk/dispose-household-waste
www.gov.uk/find-local-council

Best Practice

The best advice is to pick the most appropriate colour for the intended use following traditional norms or Governmental Guidance but most importantly

1. Train and educate your staff
2. Use signage to clearly label the bins

3. Put up posters, etc to make clear their use

If someone is 'getting rid' of your waste for you
If you use a private business that provides a waste collection service, you must check the company is correctly registered.

- 1 Find people or businesses registered as; Waste Carriers, Brokers or Dealers, allowing them to transport, buy, sell, or dispose of waste on the [register of waste carriers](#).

For example: OnSite Support Ltd Carrier, Broker, Dealer - Upper Tier CBDU363397

- 2 Insist that you get a report. Simply disposing of it to landfill or by incineration isn't good enough. Ask for proof of how they are reprocessing the waste they collect into new things.

OnSite Support are proud to offer our larger customers free access to our PLUS programme, please get in touch to find out how we can support your organisational goals.

www.onsite-support.co.uk/plus

NB

If you give your waste to someone who cannot legally take it and you did not do the necessary checks on them, you might:

- have to pay a '[fixed penalty notice](#)' to your local council
- be prosecuted and have to pay a higher penalty - for example, if you do not pay your penalty notice on time or if you've previously had a penalty notice for a similar offence
- This could happen, for example, if something that has been fly-tipped (dumped illegally) is identified as yours.



Solutions

Click these links to see a few of the available options to make this easier

www.onsite-support.co.uk/category/bins

www.onsite-support.co.uk/construction-signage-service

www.onsite-support.co.uk/recycling

Explanation of Commonly Accepted Norms

Black Rubbish Bins / Recycling Bins

In many parts of the UK, black wheelie bins are for general waste that cannot be recycled or composted. If this is the case in your area, you can use these bins for all non-recyclable household waste, including food waste, if you do not have a separate waste food container. However, if you have a Black Recycling Bin or Box, then you should use it to collect plastic bottles, pots, tubs, and trays, food and drinks cans, the metal lids from jars, tins, empty aerosols, foil containers and lids, kitchen foil, and foil chocolate wrappings.

There are exceptions as to what you can put in your black wheelie bins and your black recycling boxes, so ask your local council for a full list of exclusions or check their website.

Blue Recycling Bins

Blue recycling bins are most used in the UK to collect 'dry' recyclables.

Commercially these are often used for PPE Recycling and Associated Packaging (including card, paper and plastics), For more details click

www.onsite-support.co.uk/recycling

Domestically dry recyclables include

- Paper
- Newspapers & magazines
- Cardboard
- Junk mail
- Telephone books & catalogues
- Cereal boxes (without the plastic liner)
- Egg boxes
- Greeting cards
- Drink and food cans
- Biscuit tins

However, some councils use red recycling bins instead of blue recycling bins, while others issue both colours, so check with your local authority if you are unsure.

Red Recycling Bins

As a general rule, red recycling bins are used for plastics, although many councils will allow you to collect plastics in your 'dry' recycling bin, whatever colour it may be. If you have a red recycling container, you can use it for the following:

- Plastic bottles
- Food trays / plastic punnets
- Yoghurt pots (without the lid)
- Empty shampoo and cleaning product bottles

However, all plastics are not made equal, and despite the comprehensive labelling of plastic types this is where many people get confused because of the vary abilities of local authorities and processors to recycle them. The following items normally cannot be recycled and should be disposed of in your black wheelie bin and not your red recycling bin:

- Plastic carrier bags
- Plastic wrapping and packaging
- Hard plastics such as flowerpots and coat hangers
- Polystyrene
- Black plastic trays

Brown Recycling Bins

Across the country, brown recycling bins are often provided for mixed recyclables such as:

- Plastic bottles
- Food tins
- Drinks cans
- Aerosols
- Tin foil (including trays)
- Glass bottles and jars

If you are fortunate to have been provided with a brown recycling bin by your local authority, then you are probably wondering what all the confusion is about.

Green General Waste / Recycling Bins

Green recycling bins are not to be mistaken for green garden waste wheelie bins. Commercially these are generally used for general waste.

Domestically they can also be used for general non-recyclable waste but also sometimes to collect glass recyclables such as glass bottles and jars, although many councils use green or blue topped recycling bins for dry recyclables too.

If you have a green food waste recycling container, then you should use it for all general household food waste such as:

- Fruit and vegetable peelings
- Cooked food leftovers
- Meat bones
- Fish bones
- Eggshells
- Teabags
- Coffee grounds

The benefits of recycling food waste are well-documented, and by diverting organic materials from the landfill, and converting it into energy and fertilizer, we can reduce our CO2 footprint.

Yellow Bins

In commercial environments, such as the built environment including construction, these are used for spill control, keeping spill kits ready for use to control spills and deal with incidents.

Domestically, yellow recycling bins are often used to collect textiles such as clothes, bed linens, and towels. You most likely won't have one of these at home, but you will find them at your local recycling bank. Textile recycling bins are sometimes orange in colour, but they are usually clearly marked and easy to identify due to their unique apertures.

Grey Recycling Bins

When it comes to Grey Recycling Bins, well, it really is a (pun intended) grey area. Some councils identify them for general household waste instead of black wheelie bins, while others use them for 'dry' recyclables such

as paper and food cans or mixed recyclable waste. Check with your local authority.

Purple Recycling Bins

Purple recycling bins are popping up all over the country, but as they are still new in the world of recycling, it seems no-one can decide what to do with them. In Liverpool, for example, you'll use your purple recycling bin for general household waste, food waste, and pet food, while up in Ayrshire, purple recycling bins are reserved for recyclables such as glass, plastics, cans, and cartons.



Confused? You are not alone, but you can easily access information about this online using the links provided in this document or

For further insight and advice:

Go to www.onsite-support.co.uk/

Call Tel: 01293 744 710

Email: hello@onsite-support.co.uk

Cost of Disposal

Whether sent to landfill or reprocessed there is a cost for end of life treatment of PPE. It might not be the first thing that springs to mind when considering your business overheads, but you might be surprised by how much it actually costs to get rid of waste.

Landfill

A Landfill Tax applies to all waste disposed of by way of landfill. The tax is charged by weight. Landfills rates are increasing to encourage a more responsible approach with the Government continually increasing the rate. For example the cost of landfill continue to rise by around 20% per annum in the UK and by similar rates in the EU.

Businesses also pay "gate fees" to local authorities to dispose of waste.

HM Revenue & Customs suggest that the high cost of burying commercial waste is encouraging many businesses to recycle more.

Recycling and Reprocessing

Rates charged for recycling and reprocessing waste should cover the cost of sorting it into the correct grade and then converting the waste into SPF, WPF, PIR or if serviceable reused. There's a further cost to deliver it to the end user all of which comes from the charges this type of PPE recycling carry.

Thinking beyond just Recycling

Best practice

Here are some of the best practices that have been adopted to as practical examples of quick wins and long-term gains to have a positive impact on your organisation and the planet

- Buy longer lasting items
- Procure items that are evidenced as carbon made from renewable or recycled content

- Select items with reduced environmentally friendly packaging
- Reduce avoidable waste through premature disposal
- Recycle Responsibly that repurposes and fully reports end of life use of the materials
- Think about whole life impact



Other Considerations

In addition to environmental considerations, there is now an even greater emphasis on organisations to embed both environmental and ethical practices within their processes and trading arrangements.

Through the introduction of legislation such as The Landfill Directive adopted by the European Community (EC) in 1999 and the Modern Slavery Act, investors, clients and contractors are including responsible sourcing and disposal criteria in their selection process and tender documents.

Conclusion

So it's important to reduce the impact of materials used, and address issues including:

- Lifecycle impact consideration
- Exploring the advantages of recycled or secondary materials

It is unlikely that you or your customers are generating a waste stream that the reprocessing industry haven't seen before. In this industry scale matters as in order to generate a marketable waste responsible recyclers can process waste from many different users that are attractive to consumers of recycled materials.