

Dry recycling

Background

Sections 45A(5), 45AZA(5) and 45AZB(5) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990¹ requires separate collection of four streams of dry recycling: paper/ card, metals, glass and plastic. However, as set out in the [Separation of Waste \(England\) Regulations 2025](#), an exemption exists to these requirements whereby plastics, metals and glass can be co-collected; where paper/ card is presented as a separate stream.

If Local Authorities (LAs) wish to co-collect paper and card with other dry recyclables then they will need to prepare a written assessment to demonstrate that it is not technically or economically practicable or there is no significant environmental benefit to collecting paper and card separately. The government has published [guidance](#) for waste collectors and a template that can be used for this assessment.

The requirements are for all Local Authorities (LAs) to provide a common set of recyclable materials. There is no requirement on frequency of collection to be provided, nor details of the containment types to be issued. More information can be found in the government's [Simpler Recycling guidance](#).

Guidance based on good practice

The following guidance should be considered for all properties and locations for kerbside collections.

- Follow the [WRAP iconography](#) and colour scheme [guidelines](#) in communications materials, e.g. service leaflets and bin stickers.
- Provide information on recycling (such as materials that can and cannot be recycled) that is easily accessible to all households across a range of digital and non-digital formats. Pro-active updates should be issued at least once per annum. Examples including seasonal media releases, end destination reporting, recycling rates/tonnages recycled, and social media posts .
- Supply at least two separate containers to each property for the following:
 - Paper and card; and
 - All other dry recyclable materials (plastic, metal and glass).
- Provide guidance for developers or develop planning policy which details minimum container storage requirements for new [housing](#) and [developments](#). Examples produced by LAs include: [Cambridge City Council](#), [Medway Council](#), and the [London Borough of Sutton](#).
- Communication on dry recycling collections provide an opportunity to promote good practice to households on waste prevention and reduction opportunities.
- Based on information in [WRAP's LA Portal](#), the most popular container colour for separately presented fibres is blue. This blue colour trend applies for all container types including wheeled bins (or the bin lid), boxes and sacks. It also accords with the Material Stream Icon used by WRAP shown here.



¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/43/section/45AZA>

At the point of collection, the contents of each container may be sorted into constituent materials (i.e. multi-stream collections); or the contents of each container are placed into separate compartments of a single vehicle or into separate vehicles for sorting at a site (i.e. transfer station or Materials Recovery Facility – MRF).

Residents are more likely to recycle more where weekly equivalent capacity provided to each standard (kerbside-type) property exceeds the following²:

- Paper and card: a minimum of the equivalent of 60 litres per week
- Metal, plastic and cartons: a minimum of the equivalent of 60 litres per week
- Glass: a minimum of the equivalent of 15 litres per week

Dry recycling may be collected less frequently than weekly but to maximise participation levels, encourage good capture rates of materials and to minimise contamination, LAs should opt for no less frequently than fortnightly, i.e. at least 26 regular dry recycling collections should be made per annum from each standard household, for each recycling container.

WRAP has developed guidance on [ways to tackle contamination](#), for LAs facing regular problems with the quality of the materials collected. Local authorities should also refer to the good practice guidance document on [Contamination](#).

Further information regarding collections from estate properties can be found in the good practice guidance document on [Communal Recycling](#).

Containers

For health and safety reasons, glass should be collected in a rigid container. Ongoing monitoring and risk assessment should ensure that manual handling guidelines are adhered to and that occupational noise exposure (from emptying containers into vehicles) is less than levels set out in the [Control of Noise at Work Regulations](#). Further information on occupational noise exposure experienced by collection crews can be found in this [WRAP report](#).

For quality reasons, fibres (paper and card) should be presented by householders in a way that limits moisture damage from rain or from (food or liquid) products remaining in packaging, to maximise the value of this material stream.

² These weekly equivalent capacities are based on typical household recycling output (derived from national waste composition studies and recycling rates) and the frequency of collections.