

Excess Waste

The Issue

Excess waste is anything householders present for collection that is not placed in the provided containers.

It can be either on top, or at the side of, a bin. For sack collections, it can mean any additional sacks presented above the maximum allowance set by the waste collection authority.

Excess waste:

- Takes additional time and staff resources to collect
- Risks spills onto the highway
- Limits accessibility for prams and wheelchairs
- Risks both collector and public health
- Can affect the delivery of collection rounds and, as a result, public satisfaction in the service

Containment capacity should take into account collection schedules and the amount of waste typical households generate.

If householders need extra recycling capacity, clear instructions on how to apply for it should be available (see guidance on [Additional Containers](#) for more information).

Because containment capacity, frequency and range of services vary across the country, it is not feasible to set out one specific policy for dealing with excess waste. Where missed collections occur, there is a need to address the service promptly to avoid build-up of excess waste.

Good Practice

Communication is key

Where bins are not provided, information about the number of sacks allowed to be presented should be regularly made clear to residents.

Councils should communicate and manage householder expectations on the time frames for clearing up litter and/ or fly-tipping on the highway that is associated with excess waste. You may wish to consider what steps you will take to establish who has left the excess waste where this is not obvious (i.e. not next to bin, nor in the immediate curtilage of an individual dwelling). There will be a balance between the cost of clearing up and not encouraging further dumping by leaving litter/ fly-tipping uncollected.

Residents should be informed about local household waste and recycling centres and/or bring banks as alternative outlets for excess waste and recycling as appropriate.

Households should also be directed, where appropriate, to the bulky waste collection service (see [Bulky Waste Guidance](#) for more information).

Overfilled bins and additional sacks

As stated above, it is not feasible to set out one specific nationwide policy for dealing with excess waste. There are several options for steps that councils can take and good practice could involve an escalating approach, such as that set out below. Effective processes rely on accurate incident recording to identify properties where issues with excess waste occur, so that support to residents can be targeted effectively. Therefore, **each** step must start with collection crews logging the incident on their in-cab recording system.

The following is one option for an escalated approach seeking to help households address the issue in the first instance before taking stronger action where appropriate:

1. **First incident.** Crews would collect the waste (where safe to do so) but issue tags/ stickers advising residents that in future excess waste will not be collected. The communication should focus on education and good waste/ recycling behaviours.
2. **Second incident.** Crews should leave tags or stickers to explain why the waste has not been collected. The tags must provide information, support and options for how materials left behind can be appropriately and promptly disposed of, to avoid build-up of excess waste. Crews would leave the waste uncollected. Where possible, local authorities should follow up to actively offer advice on good waste/ recycling behaviours.
3. **Third or subsequent incident.** Crews should follow the process set out in step 2. Local authorities may wish to consider whether to take enforcement action. LAs may wish to use the powers available to them which are detailed within Section 46 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Where waste has been placed in a wheeled bin, but the lid cannot be easily closed by hand (within reason), this should be considered an overfilled bin and not be collected, with steps such as the above being followed. This will help to avoid health and safety risks to crews where excess materials fall out of a bin.

Local authorities (LAs) should liaise with their collection contractors (if appropriate) and crews to ensure that this becomes standard practice.

Monitoring

Photographic evidence of excess waste should be captured for all incidents, particularly if the council operatives decide not to collect excess waste or do take enforcement action.

Targeted follow-up activities should be carried out if the problem reoccurs (e.g., door knocking, progressing to capturing photographic evidence).

Check with neighbours if ownership is not immediately obvious.

Landlord compliance

LAs could require landlords to register their properties and include waste disposal obligations in the licensing conditions. This includes imposing penalties for overflowing bins, fly-tipping, or improper waste disposal.

It may also be possible to instruct landlords and short-term rental owners to provide adequate bin storage and clear waste disposal instructions, as well as ensuring compliance with collection schedules.

Holiday capacity

Residents often produce more waste during festivals such as Christmas, Passover and Eid.

Any policy should be capable of managing these peaks through targeted resident engagement and careful allocation of resources. Some examples from [Watford Tower Hamlets](#), and [Barnet](#) may be useful.

Houses in multiple occupation (HMOs)

Consider increasing waste collection frequency for HMOs, providing larger or additional bins, and improving recycling facilities.

Resident education campaigns, clear communication, and incentives can improve recycling rates.

Smart bins, using bin-fill monitoring sensors, are another way to deliver both efficient collections and prevent overflowing containers.

Fly-tipping

Excess waste from flats and HMOs can be managed by close monitoring of capacities and proximity to main roads where fly-tipping could occur.

The use of CCTV or monitoring in hotspot areas can help to deter illegal dumping in communal living environments.

Quick response teams dedicated to removing fly-tipped waste quickly are recommended.

Key Recommendations

Agree a clear policy that sets out:

- A service the public can expect to be delivered
- A process that council officers can follow if faced with excess waste issues

LAs should prioritise practical advice to households on how to reduce waste in the first place. Monitoring the types of issues with excess waste and impact of steps to reduce incidents can be an effective way to improve behaviour change interventions.

Crews should receive regular training on the manual handling of excess waste and recycling that may not be in standard containers.

Not all households are the same size, so flexibility is advised. Tailored container provision with a clear policy helps reduce excess waste problems.

LAs should make it clear that residents can report waste issues using apps, phonelines, websites or a mix of all three.