

## Greater consistency in household recycling in England: the benefits to Local Authorities

Local authorities have made great progress in recycling in recent years. However services and performance vary across England. Through the delivery of greater consistency in recycling, there are opportunities to realise further significant benefits.

Over an 8 year transition period 2018/19 to 2025/26:

- Up to **11.6 million tonnes** of additional material recycled by 2025;
- Greater **householder engagement** and reduced confusion over what can be recycled locally leading to increased participation, higher yields and better quality recyclate; and
- The potential for financial benefit from additional income from the sale of recyclables, increased diversion from disposal and effective service design.

### The Framework for greater consistency

An expert advisory group, brought together by WRAP, has developed a [Framework for greater consistency in household recycling](#) in England. It is underpinned by this vision:

*“By 2025, packaging is designed to be recyclable, where practical and environmentally beneficial, and is labelled clearly to indicate whether it can be recycled or not. Every household in England can recycle a common set of dry recyclable materials and food waste, collected in one of three different ways.”*

The Framework is voluntary and recognises that waste and recycling is a local service that should be based on local circumstances and compliant with the Waste Regulations 2011 (as amended 2012). The Framework provides flexibility, with three core collection methods.



## Multi-stream with separate food



**Residual waste**  
(up to a maximum equivalent of 120 litres weekly)

Minimum of 120 litres collected weekly



**Plastics, metals and cartons**



**Glass and card\***



**Paper**



**Food**



**Plastics, metals, cartons, glass, card, paper and food**

## Two-stream (fibres separate) with separate food



**Residual waste**  
(up to a maximum equivalent of 120 litres weekly)

Minimum equivalent of 120 litres weekly



**Plastics, metals, cartons and glass**



or



**Paper and card**



**Food**



**Plastics, metals, cartons, glass, card and paper**




**Food**

## Co-mingled with separate food




**Residual waste**  
(up to a maximum equivalent of 120 litres weekly)


Minimum equivalent of 120 litres weekly




or



**Plastics, metals, cartons, glass, paper and card\*\***



**Food**



**Plastics, metals, cartons, glass, card and paper**



**Food**

\*Glass and card would be presented in the same box but separated into different compartments on the vehicle. In flatted properties card and paper could be collected together. Glass would be collected as a separate stream.

\*\* The advice from reprocessors is that glass and paper are collected separately to maintain material quality.



The vision applies to all householders, regardless of where they live in England. However it is likely to be taken forward in phases with an initial focus on kerbside properties with later roll out to flats, primarily focusing on dry materials.



## How could my local authority potentially benefit?

### By achieving increased recycling.

Increasing the range of materials collected will result in the diversion of materials for recycling. At a national level, this could result in an additional **11.6 million tonnes being recycled over the 8 years** with a carbon benefit of 5.1 million tonnes, over 70% of which would be food waste. The separate weekly collection of food waste is essential in order to reach higher levels of recycling.

**By reducing contamination.** Improved communications, including labelling of packaging and consideration of the design of packaging in terms of its recyclability, will help to increase capture of recyclate and reduce contamination. This in turn will help to reduce costs.

**By building partnerships.** If neighbouring authorities collect the same core set of materials in a more consistent way, opportunities for cross boundary working

increase. Experience from existing partnerships suggests that this can deliver **savings in the region of 10-15%.**

### By building a better recycling community.

WRAP's research shows that in general people want to do the 'right' thing, and that confusion is a contributing factor to them putting non-target material in their recycling container. Our evidence also shows that many householders would like to recycle a greater range of materials. Householders who have access to the most comprehensive recycling services are significantly more likely to be the most effective recyclers.

**By benefitting financially.** New analysis from WRAP demonstrates the **opportunity for financial benefits** across England. The most significant opportunity, albeit challenging, would be for all local authorities to collect a core set of materials, including food waste, through multi-stream collection to kerbside and flatted properties. **Up to 73% of authorities have the potential to benefit financially.**





## Achieving greater consistency across England

As outlined in the *Framework*, greater consistency is a long-term goal and is **a shared responsibility; it is not for local government alone**. Achieving the Vision can only happen with action across the supply chain. Already, industry-led groups have been established to:

- Help improve the recyclability and sorting of packaging;
- Identify more innovative ways of communicating with householders to maximise recycling; and
- Consider the implications for recycling infrastructure – what is going to be needed, and where.

WRAP is working with industry to establish clear guidelines on specific items that can and can't be presented for recycling and how to present them e.g. lids on/lids off and rinsed.

In addition, Defra is undertaking a review of policy and regulations that might affect the delivery of greater consistency.

### Take action

Achieving the vision is a long-term objective and will only be cost effective if implemented gradually as services and contracts are reviewed and re-tendered. Local authorities are being asked to consider the potential benefits of the Framework in their local area at these times. An initial starting point would be using the Kerbside Costing Tool to estimate and compare your current costs and performance with the Framework, amongst other possibilities. Find it on the [WRAP LA Portal](#).

*"We've found the kerbside costing tool to be an excellent way of comparing different kerbside options, the actual process of completing it takes only a few minutes, and provides results which would have taken weeks to compile if we were trying to develop the comparison data ourselves."* Paul Wright, Suffolk County Council.

## Find out more and contact us!

[A Framework for greater consistency in household recycling collections](#). An overview of the vision and collection systems.

### [Supporting evidence and analysis](#).

Analysis of the benefits of adopting greater consistency.

[Case studies](#). Find out more about the authorities already making significant cost savings and increased recycling rates through achieving consistency.

[Local authority support](#). WRAP guides, tools and support to help improve household recycling collections.

[Recycle Now communications](#). Find all the latest Recycle Now communications materials. All Recycle Now materials are rigorously consumer tested so you can be sure they are the best available.

[Contact us](#) to discuss how your local authority might get involved further.



While we have tried to make sure this document is accurate, we cannot accept responsibility or be held legally responsible for any loss or damage arising out of or in connection with this information being inaccurate, incomplete or misleading. This material is copyrighted. You can copy it free of charge as long as the material is accurate and not used in a misleading context. You must identify the source of the material and acknowledge our copyright. You must not use material to endorse or suggest we have endorsed a commercial product or service.

[www.wrap.org.uk/consistentrecycling](http://www.wrap.org.uk/consistentrecycling)