Simpler household recycling rules come into force across England

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Simpler Recycling to end years of confusion and deliver consistent collections

Households across England are set to benefit from clear new rules on sorting their recycling and waste – which come into force today (Tuesday 31 March 2026) – ending years of confusion over what goes in which bin and enabling consistent, streamlined collections.

The government's Simpler Recycling scheme will boost recycling rates and cut the amount of waste sent to landfill or incineration.

Waste collectors must by default collect the following types of waste separately from households:

- food and garden waste
- paper and card
- all other dry recyclable materials (glass, metal and plastic, including cartons)
- residual waste (non-recyclable waste that is sent for energy recovery or to landfill)

Households will now have a maximum of just four straightforward collections: food and garden waste, paper and card, dry recyclables like glass and plastic, and general rubbish.

Paper and card can be collected with other dry recyclable materials in certain circumstances, allowing local authorities flexibility to deliver services that work best for their communities.

This is a sensible, pragmatic approach to the collection of materials for households. Simplifying sorting and collections will mean more high-quality recycled material can be processed domestically and used by manufacturers to make new products, supporting the shift to a more circular economy.

Simpler Recycling will reduce carbon emissions, cut environmental and societal impacts from waste disposal, and support the growth of the UK's reprocessing industry. Alongside the current Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging and upcoming Deposit Return Scheme which launches in October 2027, it will help make a significant step towards meeting the ambition to recycle 65% of municipal waste by 2035, and deliver greenhouse gas emissions savings equivalent to £11.8 billion.

Circular Economy Minister Mary Creagh said:

> We are ending the bin collections postcode lottery and making it easier for people to recycle wherever they live.
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> Simplifying these rules will cut out carbon, clean up our streets, and help bring pride back into our communities.
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> We will continue to work hand-in-hand with local areas to deliver these changes and ensure there's more recycled content in the products we buy.

Simpler Recycling in England is integral to the government's commitment to move to a circular

economy – keeping resources in use for longer, cutting waste, accelerating the path to net zero and supporting growth through investment in critical infrastructure and green jobs.

To support some local authorities with area-specific delivery challenges, the government is providing additional support, such as agreed transitional arrangements allowing a later implementation date.

More than £78 billion has been made available to councils in England this year, which includes funding for councils to roll out weekly food waste collections for all households. This is alongside £340 million to support councils as they prepare for the new collections.

Pascal Hauret, Veolia UK Managing Director, Municipal said:

> This is a great step forward in ensuring more of what we use is collected, recycled and ends up back on our shelves.
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> Veolia will be helping to roll out this generational change to more than 16 million residents across England and we expect to collect over 40,000 additional tonnes of plastics alone.
>
> We know the public wants to recycle and recycle right; so as the volume of materials we collect increases, we also need to invest in the critical national recycling infrastructure that will ensure more of our products are made from recycled content.

Carla Brian, Biffa’s Director of Public Affairs & Partnerships, said:

> Simpler Recycling will give households clear, consistent guidance on what can be recycled wherever they live, making it much easier for people to know which bin to use - removing confusion, reducing contamination and driving higher recycling rates.
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> This single system across England will play a key role in delivering a circular economy, helping to keep materials in use for longer, cutting waste, accelerating the journey to net zero, and driving investment in vital infrastructure and green jobs.
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> As part of preparing for these changes, we’ve already created 250 new frontline jobs to support our local authority partners, demonstrating the real economic benefits this transition brings to communities.
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> We look forward to continuing our work with government and our customers to ensure Simpler Recycling is implemented in a practical and efficient way that delivers long-term value for the environment and the public.

Claire Shrewsbury, Director Insights and Innovation at climate action NGO WRAP said:

> Simpler Recycling is the biggest shakeup in recycling policy in England in twenty years. Now, wherever you are you’ll have the same service at home, at work, and when out and about.

We’re a nation of recyclers, but most households put two or more items in the rubbish each week that could be recycled - because of confusion. Making recycling simpler will help end this and if we all recycled one more trigger spray each week, we’d save enough energy to power every home in Birmingham for a year.

Food waste is where we’ll see the big win. It’s difficult to prevent all food waste and so recycling one kitchen caddy of unavoidable food waste could power your fridge for 18 hours, and a whole truck would keep that fridge cool for five years. Recycling is good for the environment and the economy, and Simpler Recycling will make things easier for all of us as well.

https://www.gov.uk/government/news/simpler-household-recycling-rules-come-into-force-across-England