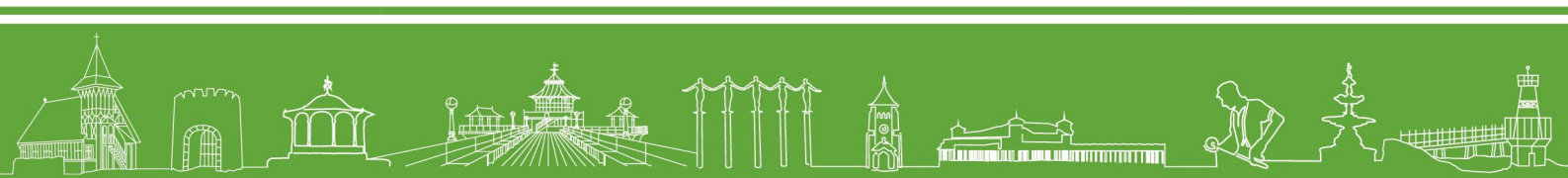


## Three weekly collections: Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

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### Why are you changing the frequency of black bin collections?

This year we will need to spend about £5 million disposing of black bin rubbish. Black bin waste costs £130 per tonne, while our separated kerbside recycling collections result in a high quality of recycling material which we can sell and generate an income of around £30 per tonne. Changing the waste collection frequency from fortnightly to every three weeks for most households in North Somerset will generate savings that have been estimated at £1.1m

We know from waste analysis that 45% of the average black bin in North Somerset is made up of items which could have been recycled instead. In particular 27% is food waste. These items could have generated an income to help pay for vital local services.

By reducing the frequency of waste collections we'll be able to reduce the amount of non-recyclable waste. This will cut emissions from our collection vehicles and reduce the carbon impact of the service, helping to protect the environment.

### Have any other councils already introduced three or four-weekly collections?

Yes, an increasing number of councils in England, Scotland and Wales have three-weekly collections for general waste, with some in Wales and Scotland having four-weekly collections. In the South-West, Somerset, East Devon and Mid Devon have successfully implemented a three-weekly waste collection service.

### What do you hope to achieve by reducing the frequency of collections?

We want to reduce waste and increase recycling in line with our [Recycling and Waste strategy](#). Targets from the recycling and waste strategy include:

- A reduction in non-recyclable waste of 15% below the level of 2019-20 by 2030.
- A recycling rate of 70% by 2030.

By reducing the frequency of waste collections, we hope to reduce the amount of non-recyclable waste. This will cut emissions from our collection vehicles and reduce the carbon impact of the service, Modelling work carried out for North Somerset indicates a saving of 1,604 tCO<sub>2</sub>-eq for a 3-weekly waste collection service and helping to protect the environment.

It will also help us meet government requirements to recycle 65% of household waste by 2035.

### When will the changes to collection frequency happen?

Changes to collections will be introduced in phases in 2025.

### Will there be changes to recycling?

We will continue to offer a weekly kerbside recycling collection including a weekly food waste collection. Additional recycling boxes are available to order free of charge. Over 3,000 respondents to the recent waste consultation indicated this would encourage them to recycle more.

We know that soft plastics such as film lids and crisp packets make up around 10% of the average black bin and we are planning to introduce a collection of soft plastics for recycling alongside the change to your black bin collections. From the recent consultation there was huge support (80.7%) for this increase in the recycling service.

6,000 properties across North Somerset will take part in a trial later this year, using an additional bag for recycling plastics and cans. The bag will provide extra capacity for recycling which should be more flexible and easier to store than another box. Each material will then be collected separately which will speed up collections and help to make the service more reliable. The trial will see whether an extra container will help reduce non-recyclable black bin waste and whether it makes it easier for residents to separate recycling by material.

### Are we going to be able to recycle soft plastics?

When asked in the recent waste consultation, there was huge support (80.7%) for a soft plastics recycling collection. There is a government requirement to introduce this by 2027, but we're planning to do this earlier than required.

Existing authorities who offer three weekly waste collections do not collect soft plastics so we know that three weekly collections will work without the additional material being

## Three weekly waste collections: FAQs

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collected however we are planning to introduce a kerbside collection of soft plastics for recycling alongside the change to your black bin collections.

### **Why can't we have one big wheelie bin for recycling?**

Our separated kerbside recycling collections result in a high quality of recycling material which we can sell and generate an income of around £30 per tonne. Some local authorities do have one wheelie bin for all their recycling, what's known as a co-mingled collection. It's very easy with a wheelie bin to put the wrong thing in or even to hide incorrect items at the bottom, resulting in contamination. This means the quality of the recycling from this collection method is much lower than a separated scheme. It results in those councils getting less money back for their recycling or even paying for it to be recycled instead of generating an income to help pay for other vital council services.

### **What happened with the 'Quatro' recycling trial you did last year?**

The trial was a great opportunity to look at an alternative system for recycling and much of the feedback was positive. After a full evaluation the decision was taken that Quatro was not a solution which would work for North Somerset for several reasons but mainly due to the very high cost to introduce it.

### **I have a large family how will we manage?**

Following our recent waste consultation we know that some residents have concerns about being able to fit all their waste in their bin. The consultation also showed that for some they are not currently recycling everything possible. If you are recycling as much as possible then we believe a three-weekly collection would provide plenty of space for most households. Recycling will remain weekly and includes a weekly collection of food waste which still makes up 27% of the average black bin.

Advice and support will be available from a team of waste minimisation officers. They will be able to provide tailored support and advice; as well as assessing households and providing additional bin capacity such as larger bins for households who qualify.

We will also be providing more information on what and how to recycle and more information on what happens to recycling which were both requested from the consultation.

### **How can I get the alternative collection arrangements?**

The changes will be introduced in phases next year. We're now working on how to make these changes and the best way to support households that may struggle with three weekly black bin collections - for example due to medical needs or children in nappies. We'll share that information once it's been finalised and before the changes are made.

### **I already recycle everything possible, but my bin is full. How would you help me manage?**

We have a team of experienced waste minimisation officers who can offer information and support to households needing to reduce their waste. We know from waste analysis

that 45% of the average black bin in North Somerset is made up of items which could have been recycled.

The consultation asked people about how much you currently recycle and the results showed that currently 10.5% of respondents do not recycle batteries, 1.8% do not recycle cartons and tetrapaks, 4.7% do not recycle textiles and shoes, 9.6% said they did not recycle food waste and 6.7% did not recycle electricals so there may be more items you can recycle than you think.

Weekly recycling collections will continue, and additional recycling boxes are available free of charge to allow for maximum recycling. If you are recycling as much as possible most households will manage.

Households may be eligible for a larger black bin following an assessment which includes a waste diary and a waste minimisation visit.

### **How would those with medical conditions which produce additional non-recyclable waste such as gloves, aprons, wipes and incontinence pads or wound dressings manage?**

Medical waste was a concern raised by some in the consultation. We can support households which produce non-clinical waste as a result of a medical condition by providing additional waste capacity such as a larger bin where appropriate. We also offer a clinical waste collection service for those which qualify for this service requested through their GP.

### **How will you support those with disabilities such as visual impairments or dementia?**

We know a less frequent waste collection may not work for some households. We can assess households with disabilities on an individual basis and solutions for promoting waste reduction and recycling will be supported first, however we can also support by providing additional waste capacity such as a larger bin where appropriate.

### **I have children in disposable nappies, how will we cope?**

The results of the consultation showed there was a concern with households with children using disposable nappies having a fuller bin. For these residents we promote reusable nappies and for some families this is a great way to reduce their waste.

We can also support households with young children in nappies by providing additional waste capacity such as a larger bin where appropriate.

### **I have pets, how will I manage with a collection every three weeks?**

As 45% of the average black bin in North Somerset is made up of items which could have been recycled, by recycling everything possible there should be space within the black bin for pet waste which is non-recyclable. Pet bedding from vegetarians such as rabbits can be mixed in with garden waste and composted.

Authorities who already operate three weekly collections have found capacity in the bin for those with pets not to be an issue. They do advise pet waste can be doubled bagged to prevent smells.

### **Will you provide larger bins to everyone?**

No, households will keep the bin they currently have to reduce waste. By reducing waste, we can save money and also help to protect our environment. Some households with special circumstances can apply for a larger bin by completing a larger bin application and assessment.

### **Will there be changes to assisted collection service?**

No. There would be no changes to the assisted collection service, this will continue to operate as normal.

### **How do I recycle food waste?**

If you live in a house, you should already have access to a food waste collection service, if you don't currently use it because you don't have a bin, you can [request](#) a kerbside and kitchen caddy and start recycling food waste straight away.

If you live in a flat, we are gradually introducing a food waste collection service to as many properties as is feasible based on layout of bin stores and space. We know a food waste collection is not possible for some households currently and where it is not provided, these properties will remain with their current frequency.

### **How will we cope with extra waste at Christmas?**

The consultation showed that many residents are concerned about having extra waste at Christmas. We will continue to promote and encourage sustainable and reusable alternatives to items which add to the Christmas waste. We will also develop a policy to collect additional waste during a set period around Christmas.

### **Will you stop missed collections from happening?**

North Somerset has grown considerably since the last review of our collection routes. We are undertaking a re-route for three weekly collections which will improve efficiency of our collection route. This will also help to improve the reliability of the service.

We know it's frustrating when a collection does get missed whatever the reason. If you do experience a missed collection you can report this and a crew should return within two working days. [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/missedcollection](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/missedcollection) The number of missed collections is carefully monitored and is a key performance indicator reported monthly.

The recent waste consultation highlighted concerns with certain materials such as textiles and small electricals being regularly missed. This is often because the compartment on the vehicle is full. Our current fleet of recycling vehicles are due for replacement and the new vehicles are being designed to make these compartments bigger to allow more capacity.



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### **Will there be an increase in fly tipping?**

Items most commonly fly-tipped are bulky items or trade waste, neither of which are collected as part of our kerbside collection service. We are confident that with information to encourage recycling, and support in place for larger households and others who need it, residents will continue to dispose of their waste responsibly.

To support the change in service we will be reviewing our enforcement policies and providing more advice for householders on what to do with bulky and excess waste. Whilst other councils who have introduced three weekly collections have not seen a rise; fly tipping is illegal, and we will follow up reports and inspect dumped waste for evidence to prosecute offenders who do fly tip.

### **Won't a three weekly collection encourage rats, flies and bad smells?**

There is no evidence to suggest that residents will see an increase in vermin or other pests, especially as food waste should be collected every week in a separate food caddy. We will provide support for households that need it, such as those living in larger households, those with multiple children using nappies or people with other special waste needs.

### **Will there be a reduction in my council tax?**

No, like all councils across the country, North Somerset is facing unprecedented demand for services at a time of rising costs and the absence of significant additional funding from central government.

Costs are rising, especially in adult's and children's social care, and we struggle to keep pace with demand. Just £7 out of every £100 of your council tax goes to collection and getting rid of waste and recycling. By reducing waste, we can save money and help to protect our environment.

### **I live in a flat without a food waste collection, will our bins be collected every three weeks?**

If you live in a flat, we are gradually introducing a food waste collection service to as many properties as is feasible based on layout of bin stores and space. We know a food waste collection is not possible for some households currently and where it is not provided, these properties will remain with their current frequency.

### **There is not enough space for recycling in our communal bins**

You can contact our recycling and waste team directly to request a capacity assessment from a waste minimisation officer who can provide advice and arrange for more bins where possible.

We know that a lack of space for bins would be one of the reasons not to change the collection frequency for some communal properties.

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**Does this include flats which currently still have a weekly collection for waste?**

We know a less frequent waste collection will not work for some properties. All flats and communal collections are being reviewed. Properties not suitable for a less frequent waste collection will remain with their current frequency.

**Will we be able to recycle more materials such as black plastic and blister packets?**

At this stage we are only looking to introduce a collection of soft plastics however we will continue to explore options and look for solutions to recycle even more.

**How will you be collecting soft plastics for recycling?**

We have not yet finalised how soft plastics will be collected. We are looking at trials which have been taking place in different locations across the country and will be learning from this. We appreciate the concerns raised from the consultation about soft plastic being very lightweight and there is a need to prevent it from becoming litter on collection day and this will be key part of the service design.

**I will struggle to move my bins and boxes if they get fuller**

Additional recycling boxes can be ordered online so you can split your recycling into more boxes if this makes it easier to move them out for collection. Black bins are wheeled and if you ensure you recycle food waste, this will reduce the weight of the bin, as food waste is heavy. Some residents may be eligible for an assisted waste collection and you can complete an application for this if required.

**Supermarkets and manufacturers should be more responsible for the packaging they produce.**

Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging will be implemented in 2025. Producers of packaging are not only required to report on the packaging they are using but there will be a tax on this packaging, so there is an incentive similar to the carrier bag charge to reduce it.

**Won't there just be a rise in people taking their waste to a recycling centre?**

Information from other local authorities has shown us that whilst there is an initial rise this does drop back down to previous visit numbers. To help manage this we are looking at whether a booking system for recycling centres would help reduce wait times and improve efficiency of the sites.

**Isn't this going against the government who said councils should collect bins every two weeks?**

The previous UK Government, prior to the July general election, indicated they wanted to introduce guidance to this effect and as part of their 'Simpler recycling' policy. However, the change in policy was not implemented and it will now be the new Government to decide.



## Three weekly waste collections: FAQs

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Simpler Recycling requires councils to collect and recycle paper, card, plastic, cans, glass containers and food waste from households. With the exception of food waste from flats and some communal properties, North Somerset has provided this service since 2010, but our recycling rates (like many other local authorities) have stagnated. Residents want us to reduce waste and increase recycling in line with our [Recycling and Waste strategy](#) which was consulted on in 2020, so this is the next step in delivering the strategy objectives.

