

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

Three weekly collections: .....	1
Frequently asked questions (FAQs) .....	1
What is changing? .....	2
When are changes happening? .....	2
Why introduce a new bag for recycling? .....	3
Why are black bin collections going to three weekly? .....	3
Have any other councils already introduced three weekly collections? .....	3
What do you hope to achieve by reducing the frequency of collections? .....	4
How will you be collecting soft plastics for recycling? .....	4
I have a large family how will we manage? .....	4
I already recycle everything possible, but my bin is full. How would you help me manage? .....	5
How will those with medical conditions which produce additional non-recyclable waste such as gloves, aprons, wipes and incontinence pads or wound dressings manage? .....	5
How will you support those with disabilities such as visual impairments or dementia? .....	5
I have children in disposable nappies, how will we cope? .....	5
I have pets, how will I manage with a collection every three weeks? .....	6
Will there be changes to assisted collection service? .....	6
How do I recycle food waste? .....	6
Why can't we have one big wheelie bin for recycling? .....	6
How will we cope with extra waste at Christmas? .....	6
Will you stop missed collections from happening? .....	7
Will there be an increase in fly tipping? .....	7
Won't a three weekly collection encourage rats, flies and bad smells? .....	7
Will there be a reduction in my council tax? .....	7



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I live in a flat without a food waste collection, will our bins be collected every three weeks? .....	8
There is not enough space for recycling in our communal bins .....	8
Does this include flats which currently still have a weekly collection for waste? .....	8
Will we be able to recycle more materials such as black plastic and blister packets? .....	8
I will struggle to move my bins and boxes if they get fuller.....	8
Supermarkets and manufacturers should be more responsible for the packaging they produce. ....	8
Won't there just be a rise in people taking their waste to a recycling centre? .....	9

### What is changing?

For most households, a new recycling bag will be introduced, a wider range of recycling materials will be collected every week, and black bin collections will switch from fortnightly to three-weekly.

A brand new North Somerset Council app will also launch to make recycling even easier.

Most people's collection day will change to improve the efficiency of collections, reduce carbon emissions, and improve reliability of the service.

We will continue to offer a weekly kerbside recycling collection including a weekly food waste collection with new, more reliable vehicles.

The new collection vehicles will have a dedicated space to collect plastic bags and soft plastic wrapping such as crisp packets, film lids, pet food pouches and vegetable wrapping. So alongside three weekly black bin collections, most households will also be able to recycle soft plastics at kerbside, which currently make up 10 per cent of black bin contents.

### When are changes happening?

Changes will be introduced later in 2025 with a new 90 litre reusable red bag for recycling household plastic and metal packaging will start being delivered to households from the end of March and can be used straight away before anything else changes.

## Three weekly waste collections: FAQs

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Plastic bags and wrapping can be put out for collection when the switch to three-weekly black bin collections happens later this year. Everyone will be notified before these changes begin.

### Why introduce a new bag for recycling?

Last year in our waste consultation residents told us that you would like more space for recycling and to make it simpler to sort your recycling.

As a result, 6,000 properties across North Somerset took part in a trial using an additional red bag for recycling plastics and cans. The trial bag provided an extra 70L of capacity for recycling.

The trial which ran between November 2024 and February 2025, demonstrated that it improves the quality of the recycling and makes sorting easier by not having multiple materials in one box.

Feedback from the trial requested the bags to be bigger so the ones we are introducing are 90L. They also have a heavier weighted bottom to prevent them from being blown away and space to write in your house number or name.

The new red bag is for plastics and cans, leaving your existing recycling boxes with one for paper and card and the other for glass. Better sorted recycling is higher quality and is worth more money, which helps cover the cost of collections.

### Why are black bin collections going to three weekly?

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 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-

## Three weekly waste collections: FAQs

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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.

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

We are running a small pilot project for the kerbside collection of soft plastics such as plastic bags and wrapping, during March 2025.

The pilot is asking residents to place soft plastic bags and wrapping into one of the bags they wish to recycle rather than providing a special plastic sack for this as some other trials in other areas have been testing.

We will know more following the pilot scheme and residents will be provided with information before the service is introduced.

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

If you are recycling as much as possible then a three-weekly collection will provide enough space for most households. Waste analysis shows that nearly 45% of the black bin is still made up of recycling so to help with this, we're making recycling easier. We are introducing a new red bag to provide space for more recycling and the introduction of a kerbside collection of plastic bags and wrapping, which currently make up 10% of the black bin. Recycling is weekly and includes a weekly collection of food waste which still makes up 27% of the average black bin.

Tailored advice and support is available from a team of waste minimisation officers. An application form for additional waste capacity is available on the website and waste minimisation officers will also support households by providing additional bin capacity such as a larger bin, where appropriate.

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### **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 are continuing and this is the main way to get rid of your household items. We are providing a new red bag which is 90L of additional recycling capacity. If you are recycling as much as possible most households will manage. Additional recycling capacity is available free of charge to allow for maximum recycling.

Households may be eligible for additional waste capacity based on an application and assessment by a waste minimisation officer.

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

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 assess households with disabilities on an individual basis and solutions for promoting waste reduction and recycling are 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?**

We promote reusable nappies and for some families this is a great way to reduce their waste. More information on reusable nappies can be found [here](#).

We also support households with young children in nappies by providing additional waste capacity such as providing a collection for additional sacks of waste alongside the usual bin or a larger bin where appropriate. This can be requested through the website.

### **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. Pet waste can be doubled bagged to prevent smells.

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

No. There are 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.

### **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.

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

We will continue to promote and encourage sustainable and reusable alternatives to items which add to the Christmas waste. A catch-up collection service will operate over the festive period and recycling centres will be open except for Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day. You will be able to put out extra recycling for collection. More information nearer Christmas will be available to help households manage extra general waste.

### Will you stop missed collections from happening?

North Somerset has grown considerably since the last review of our collection routes. Collection days are changing as part of a re-route of the vehicles. This will also help to improve the reliability of the service and reduce carbon emissions.

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.

Last year's waste consultation highlighted concerns with certain materials such as clothing and small electricals being regularly missed. This is often because the compartment on the vehicle is full. New vehicles are being introduced as part of the new service with larger compartments for collecting batteries, clothes, small electrical items and vapes, to improve the reliability of these collections.

### 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 are updating 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 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.

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**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.

A lack of space for bins is the main reason why most communal properties will remain with their current collection frequency.

**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. Properties with communal collections and many town centre properties will keep their current frequency, though it is likely the collection day will change.

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

We are not able to increase recycling to include blister packets at this time. There are now schemes supported by commercial companies available.

Black plastic is now being phased out, please do try to avoid purchasing it wherever possible as we cannot recycle it.

We will continue to monitor options to increase materials collected for recycling.

**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. Feedback from trial residents for red bags advised us that these are easier to move than boxes. 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 is being introduced. Producers of packaging are not only required to report on the packaging they are using but there will



## Three weekly waste collections: FAQs

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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.