

Guidance for GP practice/primary care on ‘Simpler recycling’ reforms in England.

Why?

“The UK government has introduced new legislation to ensure consistent recycling practices across England.”

By 31 March 2025, all businesses and non-domestic premises in England, including GP practices, will be required to arrange for the collection of core recyclable waste streams: glass, metal, plastic, paper and card, and food waste. Garden waste is excluded from this requirement.

The Simple Recycling Policy establishes a universal standard, simplifying recycling across England. It ensures that recyclable materials are consistently collected eliminating the need to check local rules. This approach will end the ‘postcode lottery’ in recycling services, reducing confusion and making it easier for organisations and individuals to recycle effectively.

Table of Contents

<i>Guidance for GP practice/primary care on ‘Simpler recycling’ reforms in England. .</i>	1
Why?	1
The Importance of the New Legislation.	2
Key Changes.....	2
Implications	2
Timeline	3
Internal communications.....	3
Sustainable QI project	4
Appendix 1	5
Appendix 2 - Resources.....	6

The Importance of the New Legislation.

This amendment to the Environment Act 2021 is a vital step toward improving environmental sustainability and aligns organisations with national goals for waste reduction and resource efficiency.

- Standardising recycling practices minimises contamination across waste streams, improving the quality of recyclable materials and reducing landfill usage.
- Reforming the licensing system for waste carriers, brokers, and dealers, along with the introduction of mandatory digital waste tracking, aims to centralise reporting and reduce illegal waste activities.
- The updated legislation also supports the NHS's commitment to Net Zero by ensuring better recovery and reuse of materials, lessening the need for raw resources.

Key Changes

From 31st March 2025, the new default requirement for Simpler Recycling will be:

- Residual (non-recyclable) waste
- Food waste
- Paper and card
- All other dry recyclable materials (plastic, glass, metal) can be co-collected

See Appendix 1 for more details.

Implications

The new recycling regulations impact both household and business waste management practices and require NHS trusts to adapt their waste protocols accordingly.

Organisations will need to collect a standard set of recyclable materials, including paper, cardboard, glass, metal, plastic, and food waste.

Waste containers must have clear, visible labels indicating which materials should be placed in each bin, to support accurate sorting and reduce contamination.

Healthcare organisations producing food waste must keep it separate from other waste. This includes partially used or returned food items, which must be separated to improve recovery rates and align with sustainable disposal methods.

Organisations may need to report the quantity and type of waste generated, including recycling rates, to support transparency and regulatory compliance

Timeline



31 March 2025

Businesses and relevant non-domestic premises in England will need to arrange for the collection of the core recyclable waste streams, with the exception of garden waste (glass, metal, plastic, paper and card, and food waste)



31st March 2026

Local authorities will be required to collect the core recyclable waste streams from all households in England. This includes introducing weekly food waste collections for most homes.



31st March 2027

Kerbside plastic film collections from businesses and relevant non-domestic premises, and households will be introduced.

Internal communications

Helping staff understand the changes is vital to success. The following can be adapted for staff in the practice

Subject: Important Update: New Recycling and Waste Management Changes

As part of our commitment to sustainability and compliance with government guidelines, we are making changes to our recycling and waste management practices. These changes aim to simplify recycling, improve waste segregation, and support our organisation in contributing to a greener future.

What's Changing?

From [date], we will

- Have consistent recycling across the whole practice
- Include clear signage and instructions
- Improved segregation for glass, plastic, metal and paper/card
- New food waste bins with weekly collection

What do I need to do?

- Familiarise yourself with the new system
- Dispose of waste correctly
- Share these changes with others – staff, colleagues and visitors

Why does this matter?

- We want to recycle more and waste less
- We want to reduce our environmental impact
- We want to conform to government legislation and national sustainability targets
- We want a cleaner working environment for all

Sustainable QI project

Our practice ('we') has reviewed our waste policy in line with legislation

- *We have evaluated our existing waste and recycling systems to identify areas for improvement.*
- *We have ensured appropriate bins are available in key locations, such as food areas, visitor spaces, and other non-clinical waste disposal points, to support simpler and more effective recycling.*

We have suitable facilities (waste containers) with clear visible labels for each waste disposal stream (See Appendix 2).

We have worked to engage our practice staff

- *We have raised staff awareness of the new requirements.*
- *We have displayed clear signage, provided quick training sessions, and encouraged questions to ensure understanding.*
- *We have easy-to-read posters with instructions on proper waste disposal placed in prominent areas.*

We have put in place a system for food waste collection.

We are monitoring the effectiveness of their policy to ensure correct segregation of the waste.

We have worked with our waste service provider to ensure we can meet the new standards and assist with any adjustments needed for efficient waste segregation and collection.

This guide was adapted for primary care and was based on 'Simpler Recycling' guide from East of England Collaborative Procurement Hub written by Mandy Emery (mandy.emery@eoecph.nhs.uk)

Appendix 1

Starting from March 31, 2025, all businesses in England (excluding micro-businesses with fewer than 10 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees) must ensure the following materials are presented for recycling

- All types, with exceptions for items such as paper and card containing glitter or foil, laminated paper, stickers, padded envelopes, books, and wallpaper.
- Specific plastic items, including PET, PP, and HDPE containers (e.g., pots, trays, bottles) and certain plastic film packaging and bags made of specific materials (mono-PE, mono-PP, or mixed polyolefins)
- Includes all glass packaging, such as bottles and jars.
- Items like steel and aluminium tins, cans, aerosols, foil, food trays, and jar lids, along with aluminium tubes.
- Covers all food suitable for human or pet consumption, along with biodegradable food preparation materials, such as inedible parts (e.g., bones, eggshells, fruit skins, teabags, and coffee grounds).

Paper and card should be collected separately from other dry recyclables to reduce cross-contamination from other items.

Plastic, metal and glass can be co-collected.

Appendix 2 - Resources

Examples shown with link to full document



Waste management labels

https://www.property.nhs.uk/media/ysxbt5i0/waste-management-labels-2023_v1-1.pdf



Waste segregation posters

<https://www.property.nhs.uk/media/2689/waste-segregation-posters.pdf>

Infectious Clinical Waste			
Orange bag 	Waste that has been produced from the treatment of infectious patients, those suspected of having an infection and are contaminated with body fluids.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Personal protective equipment (gloves, masks, aprons) (contaminated or potentially contaminated with Infectious bodily fluids) ✓ Wipes, dressings, plasters, bandages (contaminated or potentially contaminated with Infectious bodily fluids) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Chemical/medical waste ✗ General waste ✗ Packaging waste ✗ Paper towels ✗ Non-Infectious waste ✗ Sharps waste ✗ No free-flowing liquids
Offensive Waste			
Tiger bag 	Waste that has been produced from the treatment of non-infectious patients and are contaminated with body fluids.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Soiled sanitary towels and tampons – from public and work based female toilets ✓ Nappies – from baby changing areas and nurseries ✓ Personal protective equipment (gloves, masks, aprons) – non-infectious ✓ Wipes, dressings, plasters, bandages – non-infectious 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Infectious clinical waste ✗ Sharps waste ✗ Medicines or medicine contaminated items (i.e. empty medicine packaging, IV bags, lines and tubing that have had medicines added) ✗ No free-flowing liquids

Correct waste segregation

https://www.property.nhs.uk/media/3914/correct-waste-segregation_recycling-and-general_v2.pdf

CORRECT WASTE SEGREGATION

NHS
Property Services

Dry Mixed Recycling

