CONSILIUM
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WASTE CRIME AWARENESS WEEK

05 – 11 OCTOBER 2026

TOP TIPS FOR MANAGING CONFLICT WHEN DEALING WITH WASTE CRIME



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Waste-related issues can often trigger strong emotions. Whether dealing with fly tipping, waste accumulations, contaminated bin stores, abandoned items or neighbour disputes, practitioners may find themselves managing not just managing the waste problem, but the conflict that surrounds it.

Focus on the behaviour, not the person

People are more likely to become defensive if they feel criticised or blamed. Separating the behaviour from the individual helps maintain a constructive conversation.

Start with curiosity, not assumptions

Avoid jumping to conclusions about why the situation has occurred. Ask questions such as:

- “Can you help me understand what has happened here?”
- “Is there anything that is making it difficult to dispose of the waste appropriately?”
- “What challenges are you facing?”

There may be factors you are unaware of such as vulnerability, health issues, misunderstandings or practical barriers.

Choose the right time and place

Difficult conversations often go badly when they take place:

- In public.
- In front of neighbours.
- When emotions are already high.
- During stressful situations.

Where possible, have conversations in a calm and private setting where people feel comfortable discussing the issue.

Listen more than you speak

People are often more willing to cooperate when they feel heard. Use active listening:

- Maintain eye contact.
- Avoid interrupting.
- Acknowledge concerns.
- Summarise what you have heard.

For example: “It sounds like you’re frustrated because the bins have been overflowing and you weren’t sure what else to do.”

Stay calm and professional

When someone becomes angry, frustrated or defensive they often expect a similar response. Don't provide one. Remain calm, respectful, consistent and professional.

Remember you cannot control their behaviour, but you can control your response.

Explain the impact

Many people respond better when they understand the consequences of their actions. Consider explaining how waste issues can affect:

- Neighbours.
- Vulnerable residents.
- Community safety.
- Local environments.
- Housing services.
- Public resources.

Helping people see the wider impact can encourage voluntary compliance

Avoid arguments about blame

Conversations can quickly become unproductive when everyone focuses on who is responsible. Instead of focusing on the past, focus on the future. Think about:

- What can we do to resolve this now?
- How can we stop this happening again?

Problem-solving is often more productive than blame allocation.

Be clear about expectations

Residents should understand:

- What needs to happen.
- Why it needs to happen.
- When it needs to be done by.
- What support is available.
- What may happen if the issue remains unresolved.

Clarity reduces misunderstanding and provides a fair basis for further action if required.

Offer solutions wherever possible

People are more likely to engage if they are presented with practical options. For example:

- Bulky waste collection services.
- Alternative disposal options.
- Support services.
- Recycling information.
- Assistance with moving items.

Where a solution is available, make it easy for people to access it.

Recognise vulnerability

Not every waste-related issue is deliberate. Be alert to:

- Mental health concerns.
- Hoarding behaviours.
- Physical disabilities.
- Cognitive impairments.
- Financial hardship.
- Language barriers.

Where appropriate, support and safeguarding interventions may be more effective than enforcement alone.

Be accurate, proportionate and professional

Avoid statements such as “If this isn’t dealt with, you’ll be taken to court.” Instead use “If the issue isn’t resolved, we may need to consider formal enforcement options.”

Know when to escalate

Conflict resolution does not mean avoiding enforcement. Sometimes residents:

- Refuse to engage.
- Continue offending.
- Ignore reasonable requests.
- Create significant risks to others.

In these circumstance, formal action may be necessary. The key points are ensuring that enforcement is fair, proportionate and well-evidenced.

Record conversations

Keep accurate records of:

- Concerns raised.
- Advice provided.
- Agreements reached.
- Deadlines.
- Actions taken.

Good records protect both practitioners and residents and support future decision-making.

Focus on long-term change

The objective is not simply to clear one pile of waste. Successful conflict resolution should help:

- Improve relationships.
- Encourage compliance.
- Increase understanding.
- Prevent repeat incidents.
- Build stronger communities.

The best outcome is often one where the issue is resolved without the need for formal enforcement.

Remember: People don't often respond to authority, but they often respond to respect

One of the most powerful conflict resolution tools is treating people with dignity and respect, even when discussing difficult issues. You can be firm, professional and clear about expectations whilst still being respectful, empathetic and solution-focussed.

This approach often achieves far better outcomes than confrontation, particularly when dealing with waste-related issues.

Seek to understand and then seek to influence

People are far more likely to change their behaviour when they feel listened to, respected and involved in finding a solution. In many cases, a well-managed conversation can prevent a waste issue from becoming a complaint, an anti-social behaviour case, or an enforcement matter.

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#WasteCrimeAwarenessWeek
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#KnowTheRiskStopTheHarm



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