



Waste Collection Service Standards

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2 Purpose and Scope

National research has shown that clear and concise waste service standards outlining what households can expect from the Council and in return what simple rules they must follow when presenting their waste for collection is one of the main drivers of positive behavioural change. This positive behaviour becomes routine and can help to reduce the use of single use plastics, reduce residual waste and increase recycling. These service standards set out how our household waste, recycling, and food waste collections operate, what customers can expect from us, and what we expect in return.

They apply to all residential properties within the district, and cover:

- Regular household residual waste (“refuse”), recycling, and food waste collections
- Bin and container supply
- Missed collections and service standards
- Assisted collections, supporting vulnerable residents with waste collections

Our aim is to provide a safe, reliable, and efficient service that supports recycling, reduces waste, and ensures fairness and consistency for all residents.

2 Core Service Standards

2.1 Collection Frequency

Service	Container	Collection frequency	Location
Residual waste (aka “refuse or black”)	180 Litre Black/Dark Grey body and lid Bin	Fortnightly	Most individual homes
Residual waste (aka “refuse or black”)	120 Litre* Black/Dark Grey body and lid Bin	Fortnightly	Small terraced households etc. (approval and agreement required by the Council) *Not available on initial deployment
Residual waste (aka “refuse or black”)	Large 1100 Litre Black/Dark Grey body and lid Bin	Weekly	Blocks of flats, houses of multiple occupancy (HMO)s etc. where individual bins are inappropriate
Residual waste (aka “refuse or black”)	Black refuse sacks	Weekly	Flats above shop parades and some approved homes that have no outdoor space to accommodate bins
Recycling	240 Litre Bin, Black/Dark Grey body with Green lid	Fortnightly	Most individual homes

Service	Container	Collection frequency	Location
Recycling	Large 1100 Litre Bin, labelled 'recycling'	Weekly	Blocks of flats, houses of multiple occupancy (HMO)s etc. where individual bins are inappropriate
Recycling	Clear waste sacks	Weekly	Flats above shop parades and some approved homes that have no outdoor space to accommodate bins
Food waste	23 Litre Caddy black with orange lid	Weekly	Most individual homes and flats
Food waste	120 Litre or 240 Litre Bin black with orange lid	Weekly	Large blocks of flats, large HMOs where individual caddies are inappropriate
Food waste	120 Litre or 240 Litre Bin black with orange lid	Weekly	Positioned in town centre areas and by parades to serve flats above shops and offices.
Food waste	5 Litre caddy Silver / grey	-	For householder internal use

In determining the container type for each location, the Council considers a range of factors, but it is preferred that each household uses an individual food caddy and wheeled bins wherever possible, rather than larger communal bins.

On initial deployment of wheeled bins a "normal" household will have:

- 1 x 180 litre residual bin (Residual)
- 1 x 240 litre recycling bin (Recycling)
- 1 x 23 litre food waste caddy (Food)
- 1 x 5 litre food waste caddy (Food)

*The option of a smaller refuse/black bin (120 litre) will be on application and agreement, initially a 180 litre wheeled bin will be deployed.

The use of wheeled bins is obligatory, and it is not possible to opt-out of their use.

Loose sacks will only be collected from approved locations 'exempted' from bin collections.

2.2 Collection Days and Times

- Fortnightly collections of residual waste and recycling will be undertaken on alternating weeks on the same weekday – this is known as "Alternate Weekly Collections"

- Food caddies will be collected every week on the same day as the Alternate Weekly Collection¹
- Bins and caddies must be presented by 7 a.m. on collection day.
- Containers should not be placed out earlier than the night before (after 6 p.m.) and must be returned to within the property boundary as soon as possible after collection.
- The collection of larger communal 1100 Litre residual waste and recycling bins and large food bins may not be undertaken on the same day.
- Collection days are set by the Council and may be temporarily adjusted following public holidays (typically delayed one day).
- The Council reserves the right to change the time of day of its visits without notice but will provide individual notice of any planned permanent change to the scheduled collection day.

2.3 Presentation Point

- Containers must be placed in a visible location at the edge of the property nearest the public highway, where the collection vehicle normally stops.
- Crews will not normally enter driveways, gardens, alleys, or private roads beyond a few meters of the boundary unless the household has been approved for the [assisted collection](#) service.
- In communal areas (flats and apartments), bins must be located in a designated bin store or agreed collection point that allows safe access for crews and vehicles.

2.4 Return Point

- Crews will return emptied bins to the point of collection, ensuring they are upright with lids closed.
- Crews are not responsible for returning bins to storage areas within individual properties.

2.5 Non-Collection Criteria

Your bin may not be emptied if:

- It contains the wrong waste type in the wrong container (e.g. non-recyclables in the recycling bin, recyclables or food waste in the residual waste bin, garden waste in the residual bin etc.).
- It is contaminated with unacceptable or hazardous waste (e.g. DIY waste, rubble, soil, batteries and electrical items, hazardous chemicals)
- The bin is too heavy to safely tip.
- The lid is not fully closed, or waste is stacked above the rim or on top of the lid.

¹ Where a home has a separate food caddy collection, but other wastes are in large communal bins, the food collection day will be the same day as the nearest neighbors' with alternate weekly collections

- It is not presented by the required time or at the correct location.
- Access is blocked (e.g. parked cars, locked gates).
- The waste is in unauthorised containers or loose sacks or around the bin.

If a bin is not emptied for one of these reasons, crews will normally leave a tag or record explaining why.

3 Resident Responsibilities

To keep collections safe and fair for everyone, residents are responsible for the following:

3.1 Use the Correct Containers

- Only use the official bins, boxes, or caddies supplied or approved by the Council.
- Do not present waste outside of bins i.e. in black bags, cardboard boxes, or unapproved containers.
- Each bin is assigned to the property and must stay with it if even if the residents move home.

3.2 Present Bins Correctly

- Present bins and caddies at your boundary by 7 a.m. on collection day.
- Lids must be fully closed
- No items placed beside bins, or “side waste”, apart from occasional neatly presented extra cardboard with the recycling.
- Bring bins back in as soon as possible after collection.

3.3 Keep Materials Clean and Correct

- Follow the guidance on our [website](#) or in regular printed material such as leaflets and our “InShape” residents’ magazine that explain what waste goes in which bin.
- Keep recycling dry, clean, and loose – do not bag it.
- Food waste must be loose inside the food caddy or in compostable liners (no plastic bags).
- Contaminated or incorrect waste in the wrong container may lead to non-collection. Repeated instances may lead to enforcement action.
- Residual waste can be presented in sacks as long as these are presented contained within the bin provided.

3.4 Maintain Access and Safety

- Keep gates unlocked and access clear on collection day.
- Secure pets to avoid crew delays or safety risks.

- Crews are not permitted to move obstacles or unlock gates without prior agreement.
- Keep waste storage areas tidy and free from trip hazards.

3.5 Property Changes and New Occupants

- New or replacement bins must be requested via the Council website or customer services.
- When moving in, please check which bins belong to your property.
- When moving out, bins must remain at the address for the next occupier.
- **Residents are encouraged to number their bins and caddies clearly to assist crews in their return after emptying**

3.6 Behaviour and Respect

- Our crews have the right to work safely and free from abuse.
- Aggressive or inappropriate behaviour towards staff will not be tolerated and may lead to formal action and/or withdrawal of service.
- Our vehicles are fitted with CCTV recording a 360-degree view around the immediate vicinity of the vehicle for the prevention of crime including fraud, and the management of health and safety.
- Mechanical bin lifts on our collection vehicles are inherently dangerous and must not be approached by members of the public, as this endangers themselves and our employees.

4 Operational Parameters (Our Commitments)

These rules explain what residents can expect from our crews and the limits within which we work.

4.1 Standard of Service

- We aim to undertake all collections on the scheduled day except in exceptional circumstances (e.g. vehicle breakdown, severe weather, road closure).
- Following such exceptional circumstances, we will attempt to undertake the collection as soon as possible.
- Crews will empty containers fully and will make reasonable effort to return them neatly to the collection point.
- Any spillage caused during emptying will be cleared by the crew before they move on.
- We will record non-collections electronically, including reasons, so that any reports can be checked quickly.
- Where appropriate, crews may leave specific service information on a container for feedback to residents regarding advice or contraventions in the form of stickers, flyers or bin hangers.

4.2 Pulling and Carrying Limits

- Crews will not normally pull or carry bins or containers over long distances or uneven ground.
- The maximum pull distance from the nearest vehicle access point is 15 meters for two wheeled bins and 10 metres for four wheeled bins on level, unobstructed ground.
- These distances may be extended at the discretion of the Council.
- Crews will not climb stairs, negotiate steep slopes, or pull bins through buildings, narrow passages, or private gardens.
- Where access exceeds these limits, residents must present bins at the nearest safe point by the public highway, or private road if applicable.

4.3 Loose Sacks and Communal bins

- Crews will not collect sacks from doorsteps, corridors, or flat entrances to transfer into communal bins.
- Residents in flats or multi-occupancy buildings must take their waste to the communal bin.
- If there is an approved exemption, residents must present sacks at the agreed collection point, on the collection day only.
- If the collection point of the waste cannot be safely accessed by crews, or the container safely moved from there to the vehicle and back, landlords² are responsible for providing a compliant alternative.
- Crews will return containers to their collection point and close and secure doors and gates following each collection.

4.4 Adverse Weather and Access

- During heatwaves and very high summer temperatures collections may commence earlier, from as early as 05:00am.
- It is not possible to contact households to advise them individually of this change, and we encourage residents to check service bulletins on the Council website during heatwaves.
- During snow, ice, or flooding, collections may be suspended or delayed if unsafe for crews or vehicles.
- Missed streets will normally be revisited within two working days once safe access resumes.
- In prolonged severe weather disrupting collection, residents should leave bins out until collected, unless advised otherwise.

² 'Landlords' is interchangeable with managing agents, tenants associations etc.

4.5 Container Delivery and Replacement

- We will deliver new or replacement bins within 10 working days of a validated request.
- Damaged bins will be repaired or replaced free of charge if the damage was caused during collection.
- Occasionally two wheeled bins fall into the rear of the collection vehicle and cannot be safely recovered. If this occurs, we will automatically order a free replacement bin to be delivered within 10 working days.
- Where a bin is lost, stolen, or damaged through misuse or abuse, a delivery charge for a replacement may apply.
- Large four wheeled bins will be provided at a cost to the landlord or managing agent.

4.6 Sack Provision

- The Council will not provide black refuse sacks or clear recycling sacks to households, including those that are exempted from wheeled bin collections
- The Council will not provide compostable caddy liners or bags for food waste collections.

4.7 Large or Small Bin Requests

- Requests for more waste capacity or smaller bins will be considered where:
 - There are five or more permanent residents in the household,
 - There are medical needs generating additional waste; or
 - There is one or more infant in nappies
 - The household is recycling as much as it can
 - Space constraints require a smaller bin
- Evidence may be required to support requests. Approval and inspection are at the Council's discretion.
- Additional capacity for food waste and recyclable materials will normally be encouraged before extra residual waste capacity is granted.
- Smaller bins will not be provided for small households generating low amounts of waste unless there is specific space constraint or their provision mitigates need for an assisted collection.

4.8 Crews' Right to Decline Unsafe Collections

- Crews may refuse to collect from any location where access, health, or safety risks are identified (e.g. aggressive dogs, blocked access, unsafe ground).
- The issue will be reported and attempted to be resolved before the next scheduled collection.

4.9 Rats, vermin and unsafe bin stores

- Collections may be suspended where rodents or other vermin are present, or where evidence of infestation makes it unsafe for crews.
- The Council may report infestations to its Environmental Health team and will notify the responsible landlord, managing agent or occupier to arrange treatment.
- Collections will resume once the area has been treated and is confirmed safe for access.
- Responsibility for keeping bin areas clean, accessible and free from pests rests with the property owner or managing agent.

5 Missed Collections

5.1 Definition

A “*missed collection*” is when a bin that was presented correctly and on time is not emptied on the scheduled day through no fault of the resident.

5.2 Reporting

- Missed collections must be reported within one working day of the scheduled collection day via the Council website or customer contact centre.
- Reports received later will not be revisited until the next scheduled collection.

5.3 Verification and Rectification

- Reports are checked against crew records and vehicle tracking.
- If verified as missed, the bin will be emptied the following working day.
- If the bin was not presented correctly or was contaminated: i.e. it was missed as the result of resident action or inaction, then no further collection will take place until the next normal scheduled day.
- Occasionally a resident may observe the collection and wish to report a missed collection before the Council’s digital systems have updated. In such cases residents may be asked to delay reporting for several hours.

5.4 Access and Obstructions

If access is blocked (for example by poorly parked cars blocking access to street), crews will note this and attempt to return once that day if practical. They will revisit again the following working day. If still inaccessible, the bin will need to wait until the next collection.

Our crews may leave an information leaflet on any parked vehicle that blocks our access, to discourage future blockages. It will be noted that if our collection vehicle cannot access then a fire engine may also be unable to access in an emergency.

6 Assisted Collections

6.1 Purpose

Assisted collections are provided for residents who are unable to move their bins due to age, illness, or disability, such as elderly and frail residents, residents with a disability, and who have no one else at the property able to help.

6.2 How to Apply

- Applications can be made online or by contacting customer solutions.
- We may request supporting information or make a visit to confirm eligibility.
- Reviews are carried out every two years or if circumstances change.

6.3 What Crews Will Do

- Crews will collect and return bins or caddies from an agreed reasonable location within the property boundary.
- The access route must remain safe, accessible, and unlocked on collection day.
- If access becomes unsafe or blocked, the collection may be suspended until resolved
- Crews are unable to collect from inside the property.

6.4 Temporary Assistance

Temporary assisted collections can be arranged (for example, following surgery, injury or during pregnancy etc.) and will end after a fixed period.

Temporary assisted collections will not be arranged for other reasons, such as resident absence on collection day due to work or holiday obligations.

7 Bulky Waste and Additional Services

7.1 Bulky Collection

- Bulky waste collections are an optional, chargeable service for large household items such as furniture, carpets, or appliances.
- Collections must be booked and paid for in advance through the Council's website or customer contact centre.
- The Terms and Conditions for this paid for service are provided separately on the Council's website

7.2 Alternative Disposal

- Re-use and donation are encouraged where possible (Anglo recycling, charity shops, furniture re-use schemes, community recycling centres).
- Details of local re-use options are available on the Council website.

8 Communal Properties and Flats

8.1 Responsibilities of Residents and Landlords

- Waste and recycling from flats and communal blocks must be placed in the communal bins provided.
- Residents must not leave sacks or items on the ground, in corridors, or by entrances.
- Managing agents or landlords are responsible for keeping bin storage areas clean, accessible, and safe at all times.
- If access is restricted (locked gates, blocked stores, parked vehicles), crews may not be able to collect until resolved.
- If a communal bin is contaminated by contraband waste (DIY waste, rubble etc.) or the wrong waste type (residual waste in the recycling etc.) the bin will be rejected will not be collected until the landlord has made provision for it to be emptied
- The Council may empty contaminated recycling through its residual waste service if requested and reserves the right to charge landlords a fee for this additional service
- If a communal bin is blocked by side waste or fly tipped items the crew may not gain access to the bin and the landlord will be responsible for clearing the material before the next scheduled collection
- If a communal bin is overflowing or has loose waste or sacks stacked on top of the lid the crew may not safely move and empty it and the landlord will be responsible for clearing the material before the next scheduled collection.
- Where restricted access to any property is to be gained by key or RFID fob device, the landlord or managing agent must provide three units to the Council who will keep each asset secure.
- Where restricted access is to be gained by PIN code, these must be provided to the Council in confidence.

8.2 Bin Stores and Access

- Bin stores should:
 - Be on level ground within 10 metres of vehicle access
 - Have doors or gates at least 1.2 metre wide, opening outwards
 - Ideally have doors than can be secured in open position during collection
 - Provide adequate lighting and ventilation
 - Be kept free from loose rubbish and trip hazards
- Crews are not permitted to climb stairs or steep ramps or collect or move uncontained waste to gain access.
- Where design prevents safe access, the managing agent must agree an alternative collection point for the containers to be presented.

8.3 Collection Points

- Crews will only empty approved communal bins presented at the agreed bin store or collection point.
- Loose sacks, boxes, or items left beside bins will not be taken.
- By approved exception, loose sacks will be collected only where it is not possible for communal bins to be safely accommodated on a property site.'

8.4 Bulky Waste in Communal Areas

- Bulky items and loose waste left in communal bin stores are the responsibility of the managing agent or landlord.
- The Council may remove them at cost to the landlord on request or if not cleared within a reasonable timeframe.

8.5 New Developments and Property Changes

8.6 Developer Responsibilities

- Developers must provide adequate storage space and vehicle access for all waste and recycling containers in line with the Council's Waste and Recycling Planning Guidance for Developers.
- Container areas must be accessible, well-lit, and surfaced for safe crew movement.
- Where developments are occupied before completion of the permanent bin storage area, the developer must provide safe and agreed accessible temporary collection arrangements.

8.7 Initial Container Supply

- Once the property is ready for occupation, the first set of standard bins or caddies will be supplied by the Council following payment by the developer.
- Delivery requests should be made via the Council's website at least 10 working days before move-in, where possible.
- Containers remain the property of the Council and must stay with the address if ownership or tenancy changes.

8.8 Property Changes

- When a household is extended, subdivided, or converted to flats, residents or landlords must notify the Council so the appropriate number and size of containers can be supplied.
- The Council may refuse to collect waste presented in non-approved or insufficient containers.

8.9 Access for Collection Vehicles

- Developers and landlords must ensure roadways meet minimum vehicle turning and loading standards provided in the Waste and Recycling Planning Guidance for Developers.
- Crews will not enter private developments or underground car parks without prior agreement and formal risk assessment.

9 Enforcement and Compliance

9.1 Legal Framework

These policies are supported by relevant legislation, including the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011, and local by-laws or notices issued under these Acts.

9.2 Approach to Enforcement

Sevenoaks District Council has various duties under these Acts and may take enforcement action in accordance with its Enforcement Policy.

The Council will always try to resolve issues through education and advice before taking enforcement action.

Persistent or serious non-compliance may result in:

- Written warnings or contamination tags
- Formal notice requiring compliance
- Withdrawal of service; or
- Fixed Penalty Notices or prosecution where legislation requires.

9.3 Examples of Non-Compliance

- Repeated contamination of recycling or food waste bins
- Persistent overfilling or side waste
- Presentation on wrong day or in unauthorised location
- Aggressive or abusive behaviour toward staff
- Dumping of waste in or beside communal stores
- Presenting loose sacks where bins should be used

10 Complaints, Feedback, and Continuous Improvement

10.1 Reporting Issues

- Service issues can be reported easily via the Council's website or via the customer-service 'phone line.

- We encourage residents to use the website channel in the first instance for general service requests, reporting missed bins, damaged containers, or related concerns about service standards.

10.2 Complaints

- Complaints will be handled in line with the Council's Complaints Procedure.
- We will acknowledge all formal complaints within five working days and aim to provide a full response within 15 working days.

10.3 Feedback and Suggestions

- Residents and staff are encouraged to share ideas for improving the service.
- Feedback helps identify recurring problems and improves reliability, safety, and environmental performance.

10.4 Continuous Improvement

- The waste service regularly reviews performance data such as missed collections, recycling rates, and customer feedback.
- Findings are used to improve crew training, communication materials, and collection routes.

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