



Simpler Recycling Communications Toolkit

Workplace Recycling – FAQs

These FAQs will assist waste collectors and local authorities in answering questions for their customers.

What is changing?

Recycling law is changing in England. All workplaces (businesses and relevant non-domestic premises) will need to recycle the same core set of materials.

Why are you making these changes?

We want to move to a future where we keep our resources in use for longer, and reduce waste to landfill. Increased recycling and separately collecting food waste will help to reduce carbon emissions associated with waste and will support our path to net zero.

Does this affect me?

The new requirements apply to organisations that are:

- (a) acting in the course of a business (whether or not for profit)
- (b) exercising a public function

The new requirements also affect the following relevant non-domestic premises:

- residential homes
- educational establishments (such as schools, colleges, and universities)
- hospitals or nursing homes
- places of worship
- penal institutes (such as prisons)
- a charity shop selling donated goods originating from a domestic property
- a residential hostel which provides accommodation only to persons with no other permanent address or who are unable to live at their permanent address
- premises used wholly or mainly for public meetings

What do I need to do?

You will need to ensure that your waste collection service arranges for recyclable materials to be collected separately from your general waste and present your waste in accordance with Simpler Recycling requirements. The recyclable waste streams are plastic, metal, glass, paper and card, and food waste, and you can find more detail on what materials should be recycled in the [Environment Act 2021](#). You will need to ensure

that you are using the system for keeping those materials separate as advised by your waste collection service, whilst also not mixing recyclable waste with general waste.

When do I need to do it?

By 31 March 2025, if you have ten or more full-time equivalent employees.

By 31 March 2027, if you have fewer than ten full-time equivalent employees.

By 31 March 2027 you will also need to arrange for the collection of flexible plastics.

Do volunteers working at a premises count as Full Time Equivalent employees?

Volunteers are not included in determining the Full Time Equivalent employee count for an organisation. This includes organisations that have volunteers across multiple premises.

Does the number of employees relate to per premise or the business as whole?

Employment is measured per enterprise rather than per unit, therefore multi-branch enterprises that employ over 10 FTE across multiple units are not within scope of this exemption and would need to implement these changes by 31 March 2025.

My workplace has a combination of full and part-time staff. How do I know whether I fit in the micro-firm definition?

A business is a micro-firm if the number of full-time equivalent employees is less than ten. You can determine whether an organisation qualifies as a micro-firm by adding together the number of full-time staff and a fraction based on pro-rata hours part-time members of staff have worked in the qualifying 12 week period. A worked example is included below:

Your business employs 6 full-time members of staff who each work 37 hours per week and 6 part-time members of staff who each work 18 hours a week, one of whom has only worked for the business for 2 weeks.

For each of the 4 part-time employees who have worked at the business for the full 12 week period, you would take the total number of hours worked (216) and divide it by 12 (18), then divide that by 37 (0.48).

For the employee who has worked for only 2 weeks, the total hours worked (36) would be divided by 2, to also get 0.48.

Each part-time employee's full-time equivalent hours are 0.48, meaning the total number of full-time equivalent employees is $(0.48 \times 5 = 2.4) + 6 = 8.4$. This business would therefore qualify as a micro-firm.

What will happen if I do not recycle correctly?

The Environment Agency will be able to issue a compliance notice against anyone that is a party to arrangements for collection made under section 45AZA or section 45AZB (industrial or commercial waste) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, that is not compliant with the requirements.

Compliance notices can be issued against anyone who is not presenting the waste separately in accordance with the arrangements agreed with the waste collector. This will often be the waste producers (e.g. a business) but may also be, for example, landlords or facilities management companies presenting waste on behalf of the waste producer.

It is an offence to fail to comply with a compliance notice and you may be liable on conviction to pay a fine.

The Environment Agency is committed to supporting businesses - both waste producers and collectors in understanding their duties, to that end they will be delivering a range of engagement activities, guidance, and resources up to and beyond the commencement of the legislation, supporting monitoring of business readiness activities, awareness and understanding through stakeholder industry and trade forums. They will take a pragmatic approach to implementation where appropriate, working with stakeholders to support them in overcoming any difficulties they might face in relation to compliance within the legislative timeframes.

I do not produce much food waste – do I still need a separate collection?

All workplaces producing food waste (including teabags etc) will need to arrange for separate collection in accordance with the new Simpler Recycling requirements. This is regardless of the volume, and applies to all workplaces, not just those that serve food or have catering facilities.

Workplaces have flexibility to decide on the frequency of collections to align with the volume of waste they produce, so it is possible to arrange for infrequent collections if this suits the needs of the workplace best. Workplaces could also consider sharing facilities with neighbouring premises where quantities are small, with the agreement of the neighbouring premises and the waste collector.

Do I need to provide recycling and food waste bins front of store for customers?

Workplaces will be required to present their waste for collection in accordance with the new requirements, however businesses won't be obligated to provide a bin for their customers. If businesses choose to provide bins, they will be required to separate out the waste collected where it is deemed to be relevant waste (waste which is similar in nature and composition to household waste) and present it according to their waste collection arrangement.

I'm a charity run by staff and volunteers. Do the new requirements apply to my organisation?

Yes. Simpler Recycling requirements will apply to all premises which produce commercial waste that is household-like (similar in nature and composition to household waste). This includes charities, and all relevant non-domestic premises, including those registered as charities.

We use a compost system for food waste. Is this still allowed?

You will be able to continue to compost your food waste. However, if you produce any additional food waste that you do not compost yourself then you must arrange for this to be collected separately for recycling.

Businesses should take note of separate guidance on the composting of food waste at commercial premises, which can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

Is there any funding available for businesses to implement these changes?

No, it is expected that businesses will continue to pay for their own waste management services. However, we will be providing advice and guidance for workplaces as they transition to compliance with the new recycling requirements.