

# Reusable recycling bags – questions and answers

Updated 20 September 2024

## Why are you introducing reusable recycling bags?

We are phasing out clear recycling sacks and introducing 'Reusable Recycling Bags' to most households to help the environment and offer better value for money.

Introducing these bags will save us driving thousands of miles every year to deliver clear sacks to households. It also cuts down on single use plastics. The change will save over £200,000 a year, helping to protect our frontline services.

Around 130 councils already use reusable bags and they have led to increased recycling rates.

## When will you deliver my reusable recycling bag?

We will start deliveries from Monday 23 September until the end of 2024.

## Will my collection day change?

No, it will remain the same. You should continue to put your recycling and waste out for collection on your usual day by 7am.

## I've not had my reusable recycling bag yet. What should I do?

If you've not had your bag by the end of the 2024, please visit our website [www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/refuse](http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/refuse) or call us on 01732 227000 to request a bag and we will arrange for a bag to be delivered to your home.

## We create a lot of recycling and one bag may not be enough. Can I get an additional bag?

Your bag holds up to 190 litres of recycling, equal to three full clear sacks. As we collect recycling every week, one bag should be sufficient, even for larger households. But, if after you've tried it, you believe you need an additional reusable bag, please let us know.

You will be able to make a request on our website [www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/refuse](http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/refuse) or by calling us on 01732 227000.

Once your request has been approved, you will be asked to collect your bag from [our Council offices in Sevenoaks](#), [Sevenoaks Town Council](#), [Swanley Town Council](#) or [Westerham Town Council](#).

### **I may struggle to lift my reusable recycling sack. Can the Council help me?**

If no-one else can help, assisted collections are available for residents who are frail, elderly or with disabilities who cannot lift or carry their recycling bags and general waste sacks.

You can [register for help](#) on our website or by calling us on 01732 227000.

### **I have a 'one off' large increase of recyclable waste. What can I do with it?**

Please put your recycling in a clear sack. It does not need to be one of our clear sacks, but must be clear so we can check the bag does not contain materials that cannot be recycled. Recycling put in any other sack will be treated as waste.

### **I've lost my reusable recycling bag. Can I get another one?**

You will be able to request a replacement bag on our website from January 2025 or when we have completed all deliveries of the new bags at [www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/recycle](http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/recycle) or by calling us on 01732 227000.

Once your request has been approved, you will be asked to collect your bag from [our Council offices in Sevenoaks](#), [Sevenoaks Town Council](#), [Swanley Town Council](#) or [Westerham Town Council](#).

### **Why are some flats with communal recycling facilities no longer being supplied with clear sacks?**

We are phasing out clear sacks to help the environment by reducing our use of single use plastics and to offer better value for money.

Going forward, we will no longer supply flats that use communal recycling with clear sacks.

Please put your loose recycling items directly in to your communal recycling bins. You do not need to bag up your recycling.

### **Why are flats with communal recycling facilities not being supplied with a reusable recycling bag?**

Unfortunately it's not practical for our crews to return reusable bags to their owners in flats. However you can request a reusable recycling sack if you would like to store your recycling.

### **I live in a flat and use communal recycling bins. How should I store my recycling items?**

You could store your items in a reusable shopping bag or in a box that you can pick up and carry to your communal recycling bins.

**I live in a flat and use communal recycling bins. Can I still use clear sacks for my recycling?**

Yes, but you do not have to. You can put your items directly into the communal recycling bin.

You can purchase our [clear sacks available from local outlets](#) or you can use any clear sack. Put the clear sacks directly into the communal recycling bins. Please do not put your recycling in any other sack or bag as it will be treated as waste that may contaminate the recycling.

**Why are some households, including many properties in the centre of New Ash Green, continuing to use clear sacks?**

Some households are located away from the road and take their waste and recycling to a central collection point.

In these locations, it is not practical for our crews to return the reusable bags to their owners, so we will continue to use clear sacks for recycling for the time being.

**We currently put our clear sacks in a pile with our neighbours. How will I know which is my recycling bag?**

We recommend that you leave your bag outside your home on your collection day. If this is not possible, and you leave your bag in a communal drop-off point, you can identify your bag as it includes a panel where you can write your house name or number.

**Will you still continue to deliver clear bags?**

Once you have received your reusable recycling bag, you will not receive any more clear sacks unless we have written to say otherwise.

**You have not emptied my reusable recycling bag because it included the wrong materials. What should I do?**

Please remove the contaminated materials and put the bag out again on your next collection day.

**Can I use my clear sacks once I have my reusable recycling bag?**

Yes, you can continue to use clear sacks until you run out of stock. Please place your clear sacks out as usual on your collection day.

**What will stop my bag from blowing away after collection?**

Each bag has a one kilo recycled plastic weight in the bottom. Councils that use reusable recycling bags have told us this is not a problem.

### **How will I know which is my bag?**

There's a panel on your bag where you can write your house number or name using a permanent marker.

### **My bag is dirty, what can I do?**

You can clean your bag with a cloth and water or it can be hosed down.

The bag is for dry recycling including: paper, cardboard, metal cans, foil and tins, cartons and plastic bottles, pots and trays.

We recommend cans, tins and trays are given a quick rinse before they go in your bag.

### **Can my reusable recycling bag be sealed to stop items from coming out?**

Your bag can be sealed using the Velcro strips helping to make it animal proof and water resistant.

### **How big is the new recycling bag?**

When full, it is approximately 600mm (2 feet) wide by 600mm (2 feet) deep and 900mm (3 feet) high. It folds up for easy storage.

### **I don't have a lot of room, where will I store my reusable recycling bag?**

The bag folds up and is water resistant so you can store it inside or outside. It may be possible to store it in the same place you currently store your clear sacks.

### **Will you collect glass in the reusable recycling bag?**

No, but you can continue to use one of the 40 recycling sites across the District. View the [location of your nearest recycling site](#).

### **Will the rounds take longer as the crews have to return the bags?**

From benchmarking with other councils that use reusable recycling bags, there are only marginal differences.

### **I live on a collection round where the waste is currently mixed – will you still recycle the items I put in my reusable recycling bag?**

Yes, even though the waste is mixed together on the vehicle, it will be separated at the waste transfer station. Materials that can be recycled will be sent to the processor with all the other recycling we collect.

**How will you cope at Christmas when more recycling is put out?**

We will deploy additional resources. Bank holiday waste collections will operate as they do now with some collection days likely to change. But no household should miss a collection day.

**Will I need to put my recycling in a clear bag, which is then placed in my reusable recycling bag?**

No. Please put your recycling straight into your reusable recycling bag.

**Can I store my reusable recycling bag in a wheelie bin?**

Your new recycling bag is water resistant and can be stored outside. However, if you want to store your recycling bag in a wheelie bin, the bag must be removed from the bin and put out by the kerb on your collection day. We will not remove recycling bags from a bin.

**Why can't you provide me with a wheelie bin for my waste and recycling?**

The significant cost of providing wheelie bins and adapting vehicles to tip them would mean we'd need to move to alternative weekly collections – this means collecting your waste one week and recycling the next week.

We are currently reviewing our waste collection options and a survey will take place early in 2025 to see if residents are keen we expand and improve our waste collection services, including the introduction of wheelie bins.

**I want to write in with my comments or concerns?**

Please complete our [feedback form on our website](#).