



Haringey Council

Briefing note

Dealing with Contamination of Kerbside Recycling Bins

November 2013

Purpose of the briefing

To set out the arrangements for dealing with contamination of kerbside dry recycling bins.

Background

When non-recyclable waste has been placed in recycling bins it is not possible to collect it as part of the recycling collection service. This is because when the recycling collection round has been completed for the day and the load is tipped at the Materials Recycling Facility (MRF), there is a risk that the whole recycling load could be rejected and have to be consigned to the refuse stream for disposal. Whilst it is important that loads delivered to the MRF contain good quality recycling, it is also important to ensure that there are arrangements in place to help those households with contaminated recycling bins return to good recycling practices. For this purpose we have adopted a Contamination Policy.

Contamination Policy

The Contamination Policy has been in place since 1st July 2013 and is as follows:

First contamination event

- Bin identified to be contaminated has bin tag attached and is left uncollected.
- Collection crew logs contamination report using the in-cab device.
- Visit by Veolia Outreach Officer made to educate and advise the resident about correct use of waste bins. Where contact is not possible a letter and leaflet is left at the address. The letter explains that if the contamination continues the recycling bin won't be collected in future.
- The contaminated recycling bin is emptied by a separate crew, generally within 48 hours of the scheduled collection.

Second contamination event (in rolling three month period)

- Bin identified to be contaminated has bin tag attached and is left uncollected.
- Collection crew logs contamination report using the in-cab device.
- For second occurrence in a rolling three month period the bin will not be collected. The onus is on the resident to clear the contamination from their dry recycling bin in order for the bin to be collected on their next scheduled collection.
- Outreach Officer will visit if the property was not visited in the first week or if contact was not made.

Third contamination event (in rolling three month period)

- Bin identified to be contaminated has bin tag attached and is left uncollected.
- Collection crew logs contamination report using the in-cab device.
- Those details of those properties that have contaminated their bin three times in a rolling three month period will be passed on to the Neighbourhood Action Team for investigation and possible enforcement action.

Note that if contamination ceases after the first or second contamination event the process ceases provided there are no further contamination events in a rolling three month period. Table 1 below is a summary of the contamination process.

Table 1 – Summary of Contamination Process

Week	Issue	Action
1	1st Contamination	Bin tag and bin cleared, letter and Outreach Officer visit
2	2nd Contamination	Bin tag (and Outreach Officer visit if contact was not made at the point of the first contamination visit) bin not cleared
3	3rd Contamination	Bin tag, bin not cleared, report generated and information passed to NAT team for investigation and enforcement action

Communications and Engagement

Initial Engagement (March to June 2013)

Prior to the commencement of the Contamination Policy on 1st July 2013 the Veolia Outreach Team with support from the Neighbourhood Action Team undertook visits to households with contaminated recycling bins commencing 4th March 2013. Where possible the visit was conducted the working day following the scheduled collection day. The message to the resident was all about reiterating what materials can be recycled and the importance of correctly segregating their waste. In addition, container orders were taken, HMOs were identified and where possible the type of contamination was identified. Where nobody was at home at the time of the visit a letter was posted to explain that someone called to talk about contamination and to explain how to use the service correctly.

1st July 2013 onwards- Contamination Policy

During the initial engagement period contamination reports were running at around 500 to 600 per week, or about 0.7%. In the weeks immediately after the Contamination Policy went live on 1st July 2013 the number of contamination reports doubled to around 1,000 per week. In recent weeks the number of contamination reports has returned to a figure around 500 per week.

Veolia has examined the reports during the period late July to late October 13 and provided the following details:

- There have been 9,200 contamination reports for 7,450 properties. These reports can be split into first, second, third, fourth and fifth occurrence as follows.
 - 1st occurrence 6212 (83%)
 - 2nd occurrence 912 (12%)
 - 3rd occurrence 226 (3%)
 - 4th occurrence 56 (1%)
 - 5th occurrence or more 52 (1%)

The main issue arising from this information is that there is not a significant hard-core of households constantly contaminating their recycling bins, rather there is high proportion of first occurrences who after having the contaminated bin emptied for them do not re-offend.

Enforcement

The most recent list of repeat contaminations over the last 90 days shows that there are just under a hundred properties with three or more occurrences. The Neighbourhood Action Team is currently preparing to issue Environmental Protection Act, Section 46 Notices to the occupiers of single occupancy households. These notices set out what the occupier is required to do to ensure that the recycling bin is only used for dry recycling materials and so is not contaminated. Failure to comply with the notice by continued contamination of recycling bins could lead to the issue of Fixed Penalty Notice fines. Where a property is a HMO it will require a different enforcement approach aimed at forcing the landlord to take action to change the behaviour of the tenants of the property. This would most likely be through the use of Town and Country Planning Act Section 215 Notice which is a more onerous and lengthy enforcement process.

Other communications

- Information leaflet

An information leaflet focusing on contamination has been produced. This is used by officers when visiting properties to engage with residents regarding contamination. Where there is no response the officer can post a leaflet through the door, to provide additional information to the letter, please see attached.

- Website

Content has been produced for the website, which provides details for residents on the contamination campaign and policy.

Prepared by Michael McNicholas, Neighbourhood Action Team Manager, November 2013