Suffolk Waste Partnership - Trial Textile Collection Service

Questions and Answers Sheet

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1. What can I put in my textiles recycling bag?

- Acceptable items: all clean clothing, socks and shoes, boots, wellies, slippers, hats, scarves, gloves, bed linen, blankets, sheets, pillowcases, handbags, belts, clean underwear (incl. tights, stockings & pop socks), curtains, towels, tea towels and stuffed toys
- No thanks – dirty or oily items, duvets, quilts, sleeping bags, pillows, cushions and carpets

2. I live in a flat with communal bins – Can I still use this service?

- Yes you can still participate; please put the council textile bag into your communal recycling bins and they will be collected when we empty the bin. All other recycling should be put into the communal recycling bin loose. If you are unclear about anything or wish to obtain replacement bags please contact your local council. The number for your local council can be found under Question 23.

3. I don’t have wheelie bins; can I still use the textile collection service?

- Yes, you can still use the service; please leave the council textile bag next to (but not inside) your recycling bag on your recycling collection day, and they will be collected at the same time.

4. My recycling bin is already full every fortnight; can I get a larger or additional recycling bin so that I can accommodate the council textile bag?

- If you are struggling to fit the textile bag into your recycling bin, follow the tips below:
  - Squash your recycling before you put it in the recycling bin (wash and squash) to make more room in your recycling bin for the textile bag.
  - Split the textiles between more than one recycling collection days. If you are trying to fit a large bag of textiles into the recycling bin, why not take some out and save them for another occasion.
  - If applicable in your area, use an authorised recycling side-waste sack for some of your recycling to enable you to get the council textile bag into your recycling bin.
  - Textiles can also be placed in textiles banks at many local recycling points and many charities also accept textiles.

- If the above does not resolve your query please contact your local council. The number for your local council can be found under Question 23.

5. I thought all the recycling had to be loose within the bin? Do you now accept bagged recycling?

- It is still very important that the rest of your recycling is loose within your recycling bin. This is because the textiles collected are going to be processed in a different way to the rest of your recycling and will be re-used if possible.

6. My bin lid states ‘no bagged recycling’ – why then is the textile bag acceptable?

- The special council textile bags will keep the textiles clean and separate from the rest of the recycling and ensure they don’t get tangled up in the machinery at the recycling plant.
7. Why does the bag have to go inside the recycling bin? Can’t I just leave it next to my bin?

- Placing the council textile recycling bag inside your bin prevents it from being visible to any other textile collectors that may operate in your area. It also prevents it from becoming punctured or wet. Leaving your bag next to your bin may result in it not being collected.

8. How do I get more bags / can I have more bags?

- The crew will deliver a replacement council textile bag after they have collected your old one. If you have not received a replacement bag, please contact your local council and we will send one to you. The number for your local council can be found under Question 23.

- It may be also possible to collect replacement bags from your local council contact centre. Please contact your local council on the number shown under Question 23 and they will let you know the contact centre address.

9. You have sent me some bags but I didn’t want them as I already support my preferred charities by recycling my textiles. What do I do with my unwanted bags and how do I stop you sending me any more?

- We have delivered a starter pack containing two textile bags to every home in Suffolk. We will only deliver more to your home if you use the bags from the starter pack. If you would like to return the bags to us we can reuse them for someone else. Alternatively, if you don’t want to return the bags or use the council scheme, please feel free to use them when you place your textiles in your local textiles recycling bank or deliver textiles to your local charity shop.

10. How many textile bags can I put in my recycling bin at one time?

- We will accept a maximum of two per collection.

11. Why can’t I use this bag to recycle pillows, duvets and eiderdowns?

- The size and shape of these items mean that they can be awkward to collect and handle. Because of this our re-processing plant does not accept them. Contact your local charity shop to find out whether they will accept them, or try your local animal shelters or vets as they often have a use for them as animal bedding.

12. Why can’t I use any clear bag or bin bag?

- The council textile bags will be picked out from the rest of the recycling when it arrives at our recycling plant. The textiles have to be within a special bag so that they are easy to identify from the rest of the recycling. The textiles bags are also designed to be tough enough to stay intact whilst inside the council’s dustcart. Bin bags are unacceptable as we will be unable to see what is inside the bag.

13. Why can’t I use an existing charity bag?

- We wouldn’t want to accidentally collect any textiles that you may have intended to donate to a doorstep charity collection. We want you to continue to support charity textiles collectors so it would be wrong of us to take away any materials that weren’t meant for us. If your textiles are
tied up inside an SWP textiles bag and placed into your recycling bin, we will know you want the council to collect it.

14. My charity collection bag was missed, why can’t I put this bag into my recycling bin for collection?

- If you have put a charity bag out for collection and it has not been collected you may want to consider taking the bag to a local charity shop; or if you want to use your council textile collection please remove the items from the charity bag and re-bag them using your council textile bag. Charity bags may also not be strong enough to stay intact whilst inside the council's dustcart.

15. Isn’t this scheme just diverting textiles away from charities?

- It is not our aim to collect any textiles that people would normally have donated to charity. We recently did an analysis on the contents of rubbish bins across Suffolk to see what people were sending to landfill. We noticed that a lot of people were still throwing textiles into their rubbish bins. When we asked why, people said that they were the sort of items they thought were not good enough to give to charity. It is these textiles that we are asking people to recycle using our council textile recycling bags. We are looking for things you may not normally think of taking to the charity shop – things like an odd sock, old clean underwear, that old T-shirt with a hole in it, or a jumper with worn out elbows etc. You can use the bag for any clothing and textiles as well, but please don’t forget to support your normal charities and local textile banks too.

16. What happens to the textiles you have collected from me?

- The dustcart takes the collected bagged textiles and the loose recycling to our Recycling Plant. The council textile bags are separated from the other loose recycling and are sent to a textile processing company. They then grade the textiles depending on quality into re-usable clothing to be worn again by other people around the world, or further processed into materials used in the manufacturing industry. Your old odd sock, holey tea towel or torn garment could form part of a car seat, be shredded or flocked to become stuffing, or become a cleaning cloth. That’s much more useful than ending up in a landfill site!

17. What do you do with holey or worn out items?

- Items that are not good enough quality to be re-used will be reprocessed into materials used in the manufacturing industry. Your old odd sock, holey tea towel or torn garment could form part of a car seat, be shredded to become stuffing, or become a cleaning cloth.

18. What happens to the bag itself when the textiles get to the recycling centre? Does this create more waste?

- The council textile bag is made from a type of plastic that can be recycled (unlike some bin bags or other plastic bags). After the clothes have been removed by the textiles re-processor, the used bags will be collected and sent away to be recycled.

19. I’m struggling to tie up the bag – does it have to be tied and can I use string or a cable tie?

- It is very important that the top of the bag is tied in a knot before you put it into your recycling bin. This is to make sure that the textiles do not fall out of the bag or get wet or dirty. Unfortunately the bags cannot be tied up with string or cable ties because these can
contaminate the plastic sack itself when they are recycled. If your bag is too full to tie, please take some textiles out and save them for next time.

- If you have a physical reason that makes it difficult to tie the bags please contact your local council to discuss this issue further. The number for your local council can be found under Question 23.

20. I only have one odd sock that I want to get rid of by using the council textile bag – do you do any smaller bags? (Why does the bag have to be so big?)

- The bags only come in one size. This is because they have to be easy for us to spot in amongst the loose recycling when they arrive at the recycling plant. Alternatively, save your odd bits and bobs until you have enough textiles to recycle.

21. Where do the textiles go after they have been collected?

- The textiles are sent to a UK based textile processor once they have been sorted at our local recycling centre.

- Also see Q16

22. At the moment you only accept a maximum of two bags per collection and only deliver one replacement bag. Are you likely to accept more bags in the future?

- If you are having a large clear out you may find it more convenient to donate to a charity shop or use the charity bags. In the future if the scheme is successful we may be able to accept more bags per collection. For the meantime the limit per collection is 2 authorised textile bags.

23. I wish to discuss the scheme further/I haven’t received a replacement bag. Who should I contact?

- Please contact your local council to discuss this issue further. The number for your local council can be found below:

  St Edmundsbury Borough Council: - 01284 757320.
  Forest Heath District Council: - 01638 719284
  Suffolk Coastal District Council: - 01394 444000
  Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Council: - 0845 6066045
  Waveney District Council: - 01502 527100
  Ipswich Borough Council: - 01473 433090

24. I don’t have room in my recycling bin for the textile bag so I left it next to my bin and you didn’t collect it. What happens now?

- Council textile bags need to be presented inside your recycling bin on top of your other recyclables for collection to protect the contents from getting damp and prevent it from being visible to other textile collectors. If you leave your bag next to the bin it is possible that it won’t be collected. If this is the case please take it back indoors and present it inside your recycling bin on your next recycling collection. Alternatively the textiles can be taken to one of the Council Household Waste Recycling Centre free of charge or to a local textile bank. Alternatively you may wish to donate them to a local charity.
25. They didn’t empty my recycling bin or take the textile bag. I have got a sticker on my bin telling me I had some incorrect items in my recycling bin. What do I do now?

- If you have a contaminated recycling bin, the whole bin will be left even if the textiles in the council textile bag look acceptable for collection. This is because the crews are instructed not to pick the textile bags out separately. If this happens please remove the incorrect items from the recycling bin and place them in your refuse bin. Once this is done, please re-present the bin on your next recycling collection. If you have excess recycling you can take it to one of the Household Waste Recycling Centres free of charge.

26. I don’t live in Suffolk but I have received your textile starter pack. Can I participate?

- The scheme is open to Suffolk residents only. If you live in Norfolk, Cambridgeshire or Essex, the scheme is unfortunately not available at your home. Please contact your local authority to see whether you can recycle textiles elsewhere in your district/borough.

- We have tried to avoid sending these packs to non Suffolk residents wherever possible but deliveries were based on Suffolk postcodes rather than individual Suffolk addresses. Unfortunately, some postcodes cross county boundaries and a few non Suffolk residents will have received a pack. We apologise for any inconvenience caused.

- We did investigate the option to individually address all our deliveries. This option would have ensured only Suffolk homes received the textiles information but would have also increased the cost of delivery by approximately £40,000. The Suffolk Waste Partnership did not feel this option provided best value for the Suffolk tax payer. Once again, we apologise for any inconvenience caused.

For further information about the service, please contact your local council waste and recycling team on the phone numbers shown in question 23.