

An update on the Better Recycling service following another week of operational activity and engagement with the team at ESSL.

The collection rates for this week are as follows:

	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Weekly total
Totals	14-Jul-26	15-Jul-26	16-Jul-26	17-Jul-26	
Residual	64.2%	80.4%	90.8%	91.9%	
Paper/Card	84.7%	97.7%	97.6%	93.9%	
Mixed Recycling	75.6%	93.9%	98.3%	92.1%	
Food	54.7%	63.3%	84.0%	90.2%	
Garden	75.0%	97.2%	94.3%	90.9%	
ALL ROUNDS	66.0%	79.5%	90.4%	91.4%	83.1%
Total Planned	56,309	60,839	75,729	77,216	270,093
Collected	37,154	48,370	68,448	70,585	224,557
Not collected	19,155	12,469	7,281	6,631	45,536

This isn't the improvement on last week that we wanted to see, and you'll see that Tuesday was a particularly bad day. This was driven, in part, by issues with routing and use of the in-cab system drivers use to follow rounds. We've spotted this and are resolving it. By the end of the week – we've seen a marked improvement, and we would hope to sustain this.

While urban route performance has improved in a number of areas since the introduction of the new service, there remain unacceptable levels of missed collections and delays in some locations, particularly in rural areas and at properties where access is more challenging. We recognise the frustration this is causing residents and Members, and the traffic that is being driven to you as a result.

Actions we have taken this week:

Rural collections continue to be a particular focus. We are aware that a number of missed and delayed collections have been concentrated on rural routes, including properties located on farm tracks, narrow lanes and other hard-to-reach locations. Whilst crews have worked hard to recover outstanding collections, these issues have persisted for some residents; these rounds and routes in particular hard to reach routes, are being reviewed as a matter of urgency.

Catch up and weekend collections

ESSL are putting out large numbers of **Saturday and Monday** rounds. Monday is usually a non-collection day – but on Monday of next week, there will be 11 crews working, and 4 on Saturday, targeting those areas where main bins were not collected this week.

As a result, a significant amount of work is now underway to review the operation of **rural collection routes**. This includes examining route design, collection sequencing, travel times, vehicle allocation and the practical challenges being experienced by crews on the ground. The aim is to ensure that routes are realistic, deliverable, and capable of providing a consistent service to all residents, regardless of location. I will update you on the estimated timescale to complete this - and when residents will see an impact. In the meantime, ESSL have been focusing on getting to these properties and carrying out a general collection of all material.

We are also taking several practical steps to strengthen operational resilience over the coming weeks.

These include:

- **Additional driver capacity** being introduced from next week to support collection crews and improve service reliability.
- New arrangements with our **agency provider** designed to improve workforce resilience and ensure greater availability of trained staff when required.
- Continued recruitment and deployment of additional resources to support service recovery.
- Ensuring that we have **sufficient fleet** by extending lease arrangements
- Daily monitoring of service performance and route completion rates to identify issues more quickly and intervene earlier.

This weekend's arrangements include:

- **Four recovery crews operating on Saturday** to undertake catch-up collections where required.
- **Eleven crews operating on Monday** to target outstanding work and support the return to scheduled collections.

These additional resources are intended to ensure that residents experience fewer prolonged delays when rounds cannot be completed on their scheduled day.

Messages to residents:

The message to residents remains:

Main wheeled bin collections: If your bin is not collected on it's scheduled day, leave it out, and we will endeavour to collect it within 2-3 days – or at the weekend.

Food collections: If your food bin is not collected, please bring it back to it's storage place, and represent next week.

Separately, a formal **recovery plan** is currently being drafted with ESSL. This will bring together the range of operational, workforce, route-planning and system improvement actions that are underway and provide a structured framework for driving further improvements in service performance over the coming weeks.

Whilst there are encouraging signs in some areas, it is important to be clear that there is still considerable work to do. There will be further announcements next week as we work through this recovery plan and the actions that ESC and ESSL will take to deliver it.

Thank you for your continued patience and for the issues that you continue to raise on behalf of residents. The information you provide remains important in helping us identify recurring problems and target resources where they are most needed.”

My personal view is that the delivery of new bins was one of the key areas which failed. There is to be a complete inquiry into the problems after the summer by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the council which should identify areas that went wrong. Hopefully by then the position would have been rectified and waste collections returned to normal.