

Context for decisions

On 31st October, the Government announced “new national restrictions” to take effect from 5th November for a 4 week period. Due to a high local Covid19 infection rate, Leeds was preparing to move to the “very high” local Covid Alert Level (or “tier 3”) the same week, which was subsequently suspended following the national announcement. The new restrictions were summarised as: stay at home (except for specific purposes), avoid meeting people you do not live with (except for specific purposes) and close certain businesses and venues. Importantly, in addition to this the Government made clear that anyone who falls in the category of being Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) must not attend work.

Alongside this, there continue to be clear rules for the public to follow in terms of social distancing and self-isolation. The Council takes its role as a lead organisation for the city very seriously. Part of that role is to support and uphold the requirements and guidance set out by Government and to lead in setting an example to others.

Covid19 continues to have a huge impact on staffing levels and therefore resources available to deliver services. Staff welfare and safety is paramount, and the protection of work/crew bubbles is a key part of ensuring we are a Covid secure workplace. There are a number of reasons staff must stay away from operational duties:

- Tested as Covid19 positive
- Self-isolating due to Covid19 symptoms
- Self-isolation due to household Covid19 symptoms/positive test
- Unable to attend work as Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV)
- Isolating as a member of their crew-bubble is Covid19 symptomatic/positive

Week commencing 9th November there was about 15% of the Environmental Services workforce absent due to a combination of the reasons above (17% in Refuse, 20% across Household Waste and Recycling Centres and 10% in Cleaner Neighbourhoods).

The following sections seek to provide information that will allow Elected Members and staff to respond to issues raised by the public in relation to the various services provided during the period of new national restrictions.

FAQ 1: BLACK AND GREEN BINS – WILL YOU KEEP EMPTYING THEM ON TIME?

Yes. This will remain our top service priority as it has throughout the pandemic. We anticipate a further rise in the amount of waste presented by households during the period of new restrictions and will plan for that. Since March our crews have collected and emptied over 15,500 tonnes more waste from the black and green bins than usual.

We may have problems some days caused by having to stand a crew(s) down first thing or during the day, due to a member of that crew becoming symptomatic or testing positive. In these cases we would still expect to recover the missed scheduled collection within the service commitment of 48 hours and residents should continue to leave their bins out for that duration if they can see their street has been missed.

Please help us spread the message that now is as good a time as ever to get using the GREEN BIN more. With more people working from home and unable to go out to eat or socialise, now is the #timetorecycle. We agree it can be confusing and requires a degree of effort – but many people

have more time on their hands to learn – so let's use that time to change our habits. Focus on making sure if nothing else you put in your online shopping cardboard packaging, your tetrapacs, pots, tubs and trays, your empty plastic milk bottles and food tins. More info on what goes in the green bin at <https://www.leeds.gov.uk/residents/bins-and-recycling/your-bins/green-recycling-bin> and a great video on what happens to the green bin waste we collect at <https://youtu.be/ldOuYXJJDmM>

FAQ 2: BROWN BINS – WHEN WILL YOU STOP EMPTYING THEM THIS YEAR?

We plan to continue brown bin collections for the remainder of November as normal. Obviously that is subject to the availability of staff and if we have to prioritise collections, it will be black and green bins that are done first. But at the moment we feel confident that we can see the remainder of November out, with perhaps some brown bins missed on their scheduled day but collected within a couple of days.

Since collections resumed in May, we have collected 30% more from brown bins than the 3 year average for the same period – that's 6,500 tonnes more. A phenomenal effort by the garden waste collection crews

As usual, **the last brown bin collection rounds for the year will start week commencing 16th November and finish on 28th November.** So we don't start the collections again in spring 2021 with heavy, rotted waste in the brown bins – any help in reminding residents that this is the last collection until next spring would be appreciated; also making sure they know they can still take everything they would have put in a brown bin to any HWRC for free, and that these sites are all open as usual (but with a pre-booked slot).

It's also a good time to remind people there are a number of options open to residents to reduce their reliance on their brown bin, especially over winter when it's not collected anyway. Home composting is an obvious option as well as creating piles of leaves/cuttings for insects, hedgehogs etc. Lots of tips and advice have been provided at the [Zero Waste Leeds website](#), [Facebook page](#) and [Twitter account](#). We have also agreed a 35% discount for Leeds residents with local company [Great Green Systems](#) for food and garden waste composting bins.

FAQ 3: AM I ALLOWED TO USE A HOUSEHOLD WASTE AND RECYCLING SITE?

Yes, all sites are open. The Government's updated Covid regulations make clear a trip to a local Household Waste and Recycling Centre (HWRC) is a legitimate reason to travel during the period of increased restrictions.

Working with the Council's Health and Safety team and Trade Unions, we are doing all we can to keep all 8 sites open and in a Covid safe environment across the city and to continue operating as they have been since re-opening in May/June. In total over 300,000 booked visits have been made to the HWRCs since they reopened in May.

We are accepting all waste streams/items at all sites, the exception being the small site at Otley (Ellar Ghyll) where we cannot currently accept paper, glass, textiles or inert waste (rubble and plasterboard).

Visits can only be made by booking a slot online via <https://www.leeds.gov.uk/residents/bins-and-recycling/recycling-sites>. The normal winter opening hours (8am-4pm, 7 days a week) came into operation at all sites from 26th October.

For information, the sites that typically have the most available slots left to book are Wetherby, Otley, Kirkstall and Yeadon.

The current rules are that you must:

- use the car you booked with
- bring proof of booking if you visit on a bicycle with trailer
- be a Leeds resident
- use the vehicle permit scheme if you use a large vehicle, van or trailer
- ensure only one adult leaves the car to unload the vehicle. However, with permission an additional person can help with a heavy item
- ensure children remain in the car at all times with seatbelts fastened
- keep your car windows closed
- stay 2 metres apart from other people
- not leave your car until parked in a bay
- there is a limit of two bookings per week per household
- our staff are not able to help you dispose of your waste.

Trade/commercial waste – the Kirkstall and Seacroft sites are open for trade/commercial waste, no booking is required but payment is by card or account only. See website for opening times of the weighbridge at each site.

Re-use - as the charity shops are all required to close at the moment we are unable to take/store any further donated items for those charities at our sites. We advise residents to, where ever able and safe to, store such items until charities are able to reopen again.

For information, these are the results of a customer satisfaction survey conducted in mid-July (2,500 respondents from across all 8 sites):

Question	Agree
I found it easy to complete the booking online	98.6%
The terms of the booking were clear	99.0%
The signage was clear and helpful	98.8%
I felt my safety was treated as a priority	98.7%
Other customers and staff respected social distancing	97.6%
I was able to unload my items safely	98.7%
Staff were courteous and polite	99.0%
I was able to dispose of my items quickly and efficiently	98.4%
I was able to dispose of everything I brought	97.7%
I will probably book another visit within the next 2 weeks	74.3%
I would recommend making a booking to other Leeds residents	98.1%
Whilst there is a requirement for social distancing, the sites should remain booking only	84.7%

FAQ 4: AM I ABLE TO BOOK A HOUSEHOLD BULKY ITEM COLLECTION?

Yes, this service is still available to book, but currently with a reduced number of slots citywide.

However, this service may be suspended should the impact of Covid19 on staffing numbers require us to prioritise the resources available on other services.

These limited slots are obviously getting booked up quickly and residents need to keep checking the booking site should they need to.

We ask that people:

- Only use this service where they genuinely cannot attend a HWRC to dispose of their items;
- They cannot wait any longer to store the items;
- The items are put outside at least 3 days (72 hours) before collection is due.

Please note that this service will be closed as normal over the Christmas/New Year period.

FAQ 5: ARE YOU EMPTYING LITTER BINS?

Yes we are emptying full litter bins. However, we will be prioritising our reduced staffing resources on emptying litter bins around parks and places that have more frequent dog walking etc.

We would still ask people to help by taking their rubbish home with them where possible, using their green bin to put recyclable items in.

Councillors - please make your local Cleaner Neighbourhood Team contact aware of any particular location/bin that seems to be problematic and needs more frequent emptying.

FAQ 6: ARE YOU LITTER PICKING AND SWEEPING STREETS AGAIN YET?

Yes. However, litter picking will be limited and targeted, as other environmental services remain a priority and whilst staffing absence levels due to Covid19 remain relatively high.

The priority for the rest of 2020 for mechanical and manual sweeping will be to focus on the removal of leaf-fall where that is presenting a risk to pedestrians/cyclists and at known flooding “wetspots”.