



Annex B - Collection of Plastic Bags and Wrapping: options for containerisation

- Simpler Recycling requires us to collect an extended range of plastics by end of March 2027
- This includes a complex mix of materials. WRAP therefore used focus groups to name this material in a way that would be recognised by most people.
- This name is: **Plastic Bags and Wrapping** (initially plastic bags and soft plastic wrapping, but appears to have been recently shortened)
- Trials have been conducted under the FlexCollect project (back when we were calling the material group – Flexible Plastics)
- Cheltenham Borough Council and South Gloucestershire Council have been involved in these trials
- North Somerset Council is the first in England to roll services out council wide, and describe plastic bags and (soft plastic) wrapping as:

- plastic bags and soft plastic wrapping, in a bag (or multiple bags if needed) no bigger than a carrier bag with the top tied
 - plastic carrier bags
 - bread bags
 - frozen food bags
 - delivery bags
 - cereal liners
 - toilet roll wrapping
 - multi-pack wrapping
 - salad, pasta, and rice bags
 - cheese, fish and meat wrapping
 - crisps, sweet bags, biscuit and chocolate wrapping
 - baby, pet food, detergent and cleaning pouches
 - flexible plastic packaging lids
 - fruit nets
 - bubble wrap and cling film

North Somerset Council

North Somerset requires residents to self-supply bags for the plastic bags and wrapping service. Residents use carrier bags, small bin liners, or bread bags. These are presented tied and are placed in a recycling box alongside glass bottles and jars.

FlexCollect Project

This report and the following extracts have been used to inform this review:



Figure two • Weight per household per category (normalised per week) and bags per household per cycle (not normalised for collection frequency)

Parameter	Weight per household (g)	Bags per household
Co-mingled	44	0.27
Twin stream	42	0.29
Source segregated	78	0.35
Weekly collections	86	0.32
Fortnightly collections	46	0.3

Recommended communications:

- **Introduction flyer** to let householders know the kerbside trial is coming and that the trial will expand over time in their area. The flyer also provided a list of specific items of what can and can't be recycled and why the trial is being launched. This leaflet was sent four weeks prior to service launch.
- **Instruction leaflet** providing the same list of specific items of what can and can't be recycled, how to order more bags and frequently asked questions (FAQ) about the service. This leaflet was delivered with the collection bags. This flyer was sent two weeks prior to service launch.
- **Dedicated web pages** for each pilot local authority with specific items listed of what can and can't be recycled, more details about the service, how to order more bags, top tips on how to store and collect the material in the home and FAQ.
- **Nudge techniques** like contamination stickers to inform householders of wrong items in their collection bags. Other nudges included a follow up flyer thanking householders for using the new service and reminding those that haven't participated to start using the service. The follow up flyer was typically sent 4-6 weeks after the service launched.
- **Photography** to clearly explain items that can/and cannot be accepted and how to tie bags securely and present on the kerbside.
- **Information shared** with local authority call centre staff and recycling collection crews.
- **FAQs** – for use in the instruction leaflet, web pages and call centre staff training.

Collection bags

Nine of the ten pilots used collection bags to collect flexible plastic packaging. Printed with clear messaging, the bags served as a prompt to residents, highlighting key details of the service, including accepted materials, where to get more bags, and the need to tie bags securely.

Bags are typically priced per 1,000 bags, and for the size used across the FlexCollect trials, costs varied between:

- ⊕ 18-20 micron bags: £22-£40 per 1,000
- ⊕ 40-micron bags: £50-£80 per 1,000
- ⊕ 50-micron bags: £54-£90 per 1,000

South Gloucestershire (Phase 2 – own bags)

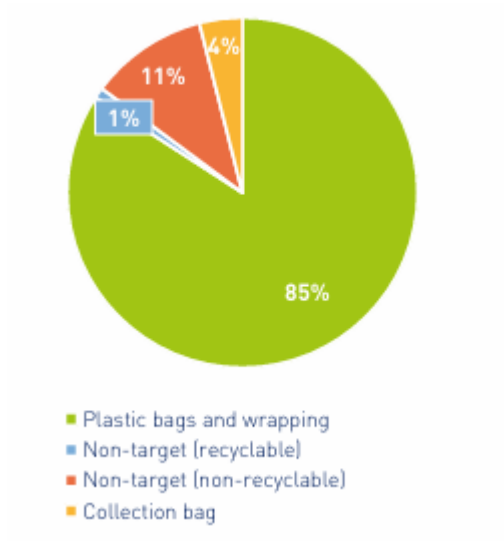
The second phase of the South Gloucestershire trial took a different approach, trialling the use of residents own bags (i.e. carrier bags and bread bags, etc).

While participants generally adapted well, a notable finding was that 76% of non-participating residents said they would be more likely to recycle these items if the council provided bags. Despite this, the trial achieved reasonable levels of participation, suggesting that good communications and service continuity can help compensate for the absence of a dedicated bag. However, feedback indicates that providing a bag still plays a valuable role in encouraging and sustaining behaviour change.

Collection bag delivery

The cost of the initial delivery of bags to all households depended on whether the service was resourced in-house or through an external supplier. In two project areas, external suppliers were used to deliver bags and flyers to households, with an average cost of £1.15 per household. The cost for a local authority with 75,000 households would be £86,250 using this method. It's worth noting however that the largest instance of this within the FlexCollect project was a delivery to 27,000 properties. Economies of scale may apply to larger numbers and reduce the ultimate cost.

Figure 38 • Cheltenham Borough Council



Summary of Options

CONTAINMENT	CDC Supply Sacks	Residents Self Supply Sacks (assumes 35% participation)
Cost to Council/ Taxpayers	£120k	Own/ pre-purchased carrier bags: £0 Self-funded liners: £65,520
Potential Wastage	£78k (assumes 35% participation)	£0
Supply Chain	Requirement to source a bulk order of sacks, likely from global sources, at a time of peak demand, and potential disruption to global supply chains (Iran War)	Sourced from residents own stock (pre-purchased carrier bags or bread bags) or bought from wide range of options available at supermarkets
Alignment with Other Materials	CDC do not provide single use sacks for recycling for other materials	Residents provide sacks/ liners for recycling, textiles, WEEE and batteries
Ability to Change Decision Later	If we start by issuing sacks it is more difficult to turn off later	If we start with not issuing sacks, it is easier to start to issue them later if we want to
Yield of Material	FlexCollect indicates increased participation and capture of materials	FlexCollect indicates reduced participation and capture of materials
Potential for Contamination	FlexCollect indicates that there is less contamination with council issued sacks. This can be mitigated with a comms campaign	Indicated that contamination may be higher where residents self-supply sacks