

Household Collection of Textiles

1. Do you consider your current options for textile recycling to be efficient?

No

2. Do you consider your current options for textile recycling to be accessible?

Yes

3. If you do not consider your current options for textile recycling to be efficient and/or accessible, what improvements would you recommend?

Please provide your answer here.

50% of our households live in flats, and there is limited scope to site textile banks as an alternative to kerbside collections. Moreover, the local climate is a barrier to the successful kerbside collection of textiles.

4. Do you believe household collection of textiles would provide benefits to householders?

Don't Know

5. What potential benefits do you consider household collection of textiles would provide to householders?

Please provide your answer here.

Textiles are already widely recycled, just not by local authority kerbside collections. In Edinburgh, textiles make up just 5% of the household non-recyclable waste stream (from Zero Waste Scotland's waste composition analysis which we were a participant in).

We are supportive in principle of moves to increase participation in recycling of textiles because we clearly recognise that the environmental impact of textiles is disproportionate to their weight, albeit the majority of this takes place prior to their disposal, and the figure above might suggest that a significant proportion is being collected separately already through the existing routes:

- Charity shops;
- Charity collection points at shops, recycling points and household waste recycling centres;
- Retail takeback schemes in store;
- Charity kerbside collections;
- Cash for clothes collections.

Where there is a gap is in lower quality, possibly non-reusable clothes. Some of these collections also accept them but the options are fewer, and there is potentially less awareness among the public that these can be recycled, if clean.

However, we believe the Scottish Government needs to take a much more holistic approach for the following reasons:

- The textile recycling industry is heavily dependent on exports of materials for reuse to developing nations. This has both benefits and risks to the recipient nations, and with the growth in lower value clothing with lower reuse potential there is a need for significantly greater focus on developing both reuse and recycling markets closer to home, and greater innovation to stimulate greater incorporation of fibres into new clothing, rather than being downcycled into cleaning wipes, stuffings, etc;
- In parallel we've recently been in a period of market weakness which has seen some parts of the textile reuse and recycling chain experience significant financial pressures and this needs to be addressed if an expansion in the materials being collected is to be delivered;
- The charity sector is heavily dependent on the donation of clothing, particularly high-quality clothing which they can sell through their shops, as well as the lower value materials which they can sell onto merchants. If much of this material is diverted to local authority collections, this will result in significant financial challenges for that sector.
- Contrary to the consultation's assertion, as a local authority we do offer kerbside collections of textiles, but the financial pressures imposed on all Scottish local authorities are making it increasingly difficult for us to continue to do so. We've taken a decision not to actively promote it, and instead to make people aware of the alternatives open to them, as set out above.
- However, our experience of operating this service gives us some insight. Clothing is not something which people tend to dispose of on an ongoing basis (unlike plastics, paper, etc) which might be one reason that people don't think to recycle it. Our experience is that participation has never been very high.
- The Scottish weather means that kerbside collection of textiles is not ideal as they are vulnerable to getting wet. In addition, we don't think that providing an additional kerbside bin just for textiles would fully address this (although it would help) and -again- because textiles tend not to be disposed of on such a regular basis, this might not be justifiable.
- We have 50% of our residents living in flats. Their waste and recycling is collected in communal bins, and 50% of those are sited on street with the remainder in car parks, bin stores, etc. There is no (or at least very limited) scope to add textile banks on street, and the same would be true for most bin stores,

bin hubs in car parks, within flats, etc. The Council has no authority to site textile bins in private premises such as these, so an alternative is required for those households.

Overall, we believe it is misguided to look at this as purely a kerbside recycling issue.

6. Do you believe household collection of textiles should be a service supplied by local authorities? Extra note: A mandatory service would be a statutory requirement for all local authorities in Scotland to collect textiles separately as part of their waste collection services at household kerbsides. This may require a separate household recycling bin.

Disagree

Please provide your answer here.

For the reasons above we would certainly support measures to increase the recycling of textiles, but we don't agree that the Scottish Government should look at this solely through the lens of local authority kerbside collections. Doing so risks collecting large amounts of potentially unusable material and undermining the existing third sector reuse and recycling network,

Ultimately what is required is a properly designed extended producer responsibility scheme which is accessible to all, which supports the third sector, and which prioritises reuse, while stimulating investment in the infrastructure needed to reprocess the remaining clothing and textiles into high value new fibres as far as possible.

Until this can be delivered, the Scottish Government could potentially work more productively with the Third Sector and textile merchants rather than local authorities, to deliver a nationwide textile collection system which builds on the existing networks rather than undermining them.

A significant issue for us in Edinburgh is the extremely high percentage of households who live in flats, and the limited scope to use recycling points or on premises recycling banks. In practice, for many of these households, charity shops and to an extent retail takeback do offer a partial solution.

If any nationwide collection system was to offer a bookable option which collected from the door at a time convenient to the customer this would overcome this issue, as well as the issues around clothing presented at the kerbside getting spoiled. This would potentially be a better option for all households than a kerbside collection at set intervals because of the weather issue.

7. If collections of textiles from households are not a service supplied by local authorities, do you think there should be a requirement for all local authorities to

offer textile recycling through Household Waste Recycling Centres or other bring facilities?

No

Please provide your answer here.

We're not actually opposed to this but feel it might not be necessary because most local authorities already have this in place, usually in partnership with the third sector or textile merchants. There are also independent services in place contracted between charities and supermarkets or places of worship, etc. Both systems are in place in our area.

Siting recycling banks is extremely challenging in our area due to the density of the city, the competing pressures on the streetscape and the reluctance of private landowners to give up parking space, among other reasons.