

Last updated June 2009

Waste National Indicators

Frequently Asked Questions

This document lists Defra's response to the most frequently asked questions concerning the interpretation of waste National Indicators (NI) – as published on 29 February 2008.

The information in this document is not exhaustive and should be read in conjunction with guidance published by the Communities and Local Government: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/nationalindicatorsupdate>

This document will be updated periodically.

Section 1	Clarification on the definition of household waste and waste sent for recycling
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SECTION 1: CLARIFICATION ON THE DEFINITION OF HOUSEHOLD WASTE AND WASTE SENT FOR RECYCLING

1. What is beach cleansing?

Beach cleansing refers to the specific activity of cleaning up a beach (e.g. by raking). The products of this activity are excluded from NI calculations. The collection of waste from litter bins on or near the beach or from areas near the beach is classified as household waste for the purposes of calculating the NIs.

2. What constitutes bulky waste?

The tonnage of bulky waste collected from households must be included for the purposes of calculating the NIs and includes:

- Any article of waste which exceeds 25 kilograms in weight.
- Any article of waste which does not fit, or cannot be fitted into:
 - a. a receptacle for household waste provided in accordance with section 46 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990; or
 - b. where no such receptacle is provided, a cylindrical container 750 millimetres in diameter and 1 metre in length.

3. What is house clearance waste?

House clearance waste is classified as household waste, as stated under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 section 75, "household waste means waste from - (a) domestic property, that is to say, a building or self-contained part of a building which is used wholly for the purposes of living accommodation." This waste must be included for the purposes of calculating NIs.

4. Do street cleansing materials and gully waste count as household waste?

Household waste includes all waste listed under schedules 1 and 2 of the Controlled Waste Regulations. This includes Litter and refuse collected under section 89(1)(f) and waste arising from the discharge by a WCA/WDA of its duty under section 89(2) - this typically comprises street cleaning waste, park litter and gully sweepings Note that Household waste does not include gully emptyings collected by the authority under the Highways Act.

5. What is the classification of waste from educational establishments?

Waste collected from schools is classified as household waste. Household waste is defined in section 75(5)(d) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 as, subject to section 75(8), including waste from "*premises forming part of a university or school or other educational establishment*".

6. Does fly-tipped waste count as household waste?

Household waste includes clearance of any waste put out in contravention to section 46 of the EPA 1990 (e.g. 'side waste') but does not include clearance of waste deposited in contravention to Section 33 of the EPA 1990 (fly-tipped waste).

7. What does 'sent for recycling' mean?

The term 'sent for recycling' means waste delivered to, and accepted by, a company, individual or organisation which will reprocess, or deliver to a reprocessor, waste that is an acceptable form for inclusion in a recycling process. Authorities will be responsible for reporting on the amounts of waste sent for recycling which meets these criteria.

'Sent for recycling' means that any waste collected for recycling but subsequently rejected for disposal should be excluded. Rejects can occur at collection, during sorting (e.g. at Material Recycling Facilities) or at the gate of the reprocessor. Similarly, recyclate extracted from the residual waste stream by sorting or other treatment and accepted by the reprocessor as suitable for recycling can be included in NI 192.

8. If an authority does not separate household and commercial

waste for recycling, how should an accurate figure be calculated for waste sent?

Where an authority does not separate waste they collect into household and commercial, figures must be based on a documented survey/study to ascertain the proportionate content of the waste. It is advisable to agree the sampling methodology with an external auditor in advance to ensure agreement on the adequacy of sampling.

9. Some London and Metropolitan waste collection authorities are responsible for running Civic Amenity Sites, should they include the tonnage of household waste collected from Civic Amenity sites?

London Boroughs and Metropolitan Districts which are not disposal authorities but which provide civic amenity sites under the Refuse Disposal (Amenity) Act must count the waste collected from their Civic Amenity sites in the calculations of their indicators.

10. If waste is collected in one NI (i.e. financial) year and recycled in the next because there is a delay due to the need for further processing, e.g. of fridges and freezers, in which year would the recycled tonnage be counted?

The tonnage of household waste collected should be included in the NI calculations in the year the material was collected. The tonnage of household waste recycled should be included in the NI calculations at the point which the material is sent for recycling, even if this is in a different year to when it was collected.

11. Why are there not separate indicators on household waste recycling and composting? Why is there no longer an indicator on total household waste? Why is there no longer an indicator on how many materials are collected by authorities at the kerbside?

The decision to reduce the overall number of indicators to less than 200 meant that Departments needed to prioritise their choice of indicators. Overall, Defra secured 13 indicators in the new national indicator set with three on waste. The decision to combine the recycling and composting indicator, and drop the total household waste indicator and the number of materials collected is a reflection of this.

Government will ensure that annual Municipal Waste data continues to breakdown performance against recycling and composting, number of materials collected and total household waste using data from WasteDataFlow. Collecting data through WasteDataFlow will ensure no loss of data on any key indicator.

12. Is there any recommended projection data for the number of

households available that should be used to set targets, or do local authorities use their own strategy projections?

There are no recommended projection data. Local authorities have the best local knowledge around developments in their area that may affect the number of dwelling stock and therefore it is recommended that they use their own data for forecasting purposes only.

SECTION 2: WHAT LOCAL AUTHORITIES CAN COUNT TOWARDS HOUSEHOLD WASTE SENT FOR REUSE, RECYCLING OR COMPOSTING

13. Can waste tyres that are sent for recycling count towards waste sent for recycling?

Tyres should only be counted if they are 'household waste', i.e. they are collected from a house or Civic Amenity Sites or taken directly from the vehicle. If in doubt, they should not be included.

14. Can incinerator residues that are sent for recycling count towards waste sent for recycling?

No. Incinerator residues and its components such as glass and metals are excluded for the purposes of calculating waste sent for recycling. Government's aim is to encourage a movement up the waste hierarchy with a view to achieving a more sustainable approach to waste management, including encouraging the segregation and collection of the various components of household waste for recovery. The recovery of materials from incinerator residues is not consistent with these aims.

15. Can waste wood delivered to civic amenity sites and sent for recycling count towards waste sent for recycling?

Household waste wood delivered to civic amenity sites and sent for recycling can be included in the calculation of waste sent for recycling.

16. Can fridges sent for recycling count towards waste sent for recycling?

Tonnages of fridges can count towards waste sent for recycling. The actual tonnage to be calculated is defined by the proportion that is sent for recycling (i.e. sent for reprocessing).

17. Can glass collected at bring banks or kerbside, which is then used as an aggregate material, count towards waste sent for recycling?

Glass collected at bring banks or kerbside, which is then used as an aggregate material can be considered to have been sent for recycling, and

can count towards recycling.

18. Can material deriving from Mechanical and Biological Treatment count towards waste sent for composting?

Only the production of compost which meets the definition of compost stated in the technical guidance i.e. *“a product that has been sanitised and stabilised, is high in humic substances and can be used as a soil improver, as an ingredient in growing media, or blended to produce a top soil that will meet British Standard BS 3882, incorporating amendment No.1”*, in addition to material that is subject to anaerobic digestion, can count towards waste sent for composting.

With the standard of current technology it is unlikely that the product of a Mechanical and Biological Treatment process will meet this definition. Where it does not meet the definition, it will not be eligible for inclusion as waste sent for composting. However, Mechanical and Biological Treatment processes do have a useful role to play in reducing the amount of biodegradable waste that is sent to landfill.

19. Can waste that has been collected for recycling but is then sent to another process or to be disposed, count towards waste sent for recycling?

Waste that has been collected for recycling but is then sent to another process or disposed of but then is diverted to another process or disposed of, must be excluded from the calculations of waste sent for recycling and composting.

Waste that is composted to a quality standard for use as a subsequent product according to the technical guidance, but is then diverted to landfill or incineration must be excluded from waste sent for composting.

20. Can any waste that is used for daily landfill cover, temporary roads on landfill sites or for landfill restoration count towards waste sent for reuse/recycling/composting?

Waste used for daily landfill cover must be excluded from waste sent for reuse/recycling/composting. This is disposal and must be counted in NI 193. Waste used in landfill restoration can count towards waste sent for recycling/composting if it is used for “recovery”, and provided that use complies with the conditions of a land-use planning consent and with an exemption or with the conditions of an extant license or permit. “Recovery” is defined* as “waste which serves a useful purpose in replacing other materials which would have had to be used for that purpose, thereby conserving natural resources”.

(* by the European Court of Justice in the *Abfall* case (C-6/00))

21. Can waste that is sent for recycling outside the UK count towards waste sent for recycling?

Provided waste is exported in compliance with the relevant legislation on the transfrontier shipment of waste, namely the EC Waste Shipments Regulation No 259/93 (as amended), Council Regulation No. 1420/1999 (as amended) and Commission Regulation No. 1547/1999 (as amended) it may be counted towards sent for recycling. Further advice on the relevant controls is available from the Environment Agency – telephone 08708 506 506 and ask for their TFS National Service.

If any material is found to have been exported illegally and/or returned to the UK for further treatment, then this material is not counted as recycling in NIs.

It is the responsibility of producers of waste, including local authorities and their waste management contractors, to ensure that their waste is properly dealt with through all the steps in the recycling chain, including at the final destination of the waste. Waste being exported should be recovered or recycled under environmentally sound conditions, and exporters should reassure themselves that this is taking place. All waste collection and disposal authorities in England and Wales should assure themselves that any waste collected from households is managed in accordance with national, European and international obligations.

The Environment Agency is responsible, as competent authority for England and Wales, for the application of the controls on waste shipments and for taking enforcement action where breaches occur. The Agency have issued guidance to Material Recycling Facilities on standards for separation of co-mingled recyclables, such as those which are generated from kerbside recycling schemes, where they are destined for export.

Section 34 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 places a duty of care on local authorities to ensure the waste under their control is documented and shown to be delivered to known approved waste management facilities and approved person for transport.

22. Does waste composted at home count towards waste sent for composting?

Waste composted at home does not count towards waste sent for composting. The focus of the new waste indicators is on less waste in the first place and less waste to landfill. Home composting activity contributes to both and will have a positive impact on performance in particular on NI 191. In addition, feedback from LAs through the Operational Review of the Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme and from the Environment Agency indicates that the proposed accounting methodology for home composting is not yet practical or simple enough for use by LAs to report diversion of biodegradable municipal waste from landfill by supported home compost schemes.

Consequently we feel that there's presently not a strong case to include home composting in the indicator set for the next CSR period. Government would encourage any local area to measure their performance on this as a local indicator in their Local Area Agreements.

We are still considering home composting in the LATS as part of the Operational Review but will need to address the practicality of accounting for impacts of supported home composting schemes on diversion of biodegradable municipal waste from landfill, as well as ensuring compliance with the requirements of the landfill directive.

23. Should asbestos waste be reported as household waste?

Yes. Asbestos waste arising from domestic properties or any of the premises itemised in schedules 1 or 2 of the Controlled Waste Regulations 1992 (CWR) is household waste. Asbestos is covered by paragraph 12 of schedule 2 of the CWR and is therefore a type of household waste for which the authority can charge for collection. Waste collection authorities have a duty to collect this material if asked to do so by the holder. Furthermore, there must be at least one facility in the area licensed to receive this material if delivered by a resident in the area under section 51(1)(b) of the EPA or section 1 of the Refuse Disposal Amenity Act 1978 (RDA).

24. How can reuse items that are not weighed count towards waste sent for reuse?

Where weighted tonnages of reused items are not available, the Furniture Reuse Network's set of average weights should be used <http://www.frn.org.uk/statistics.asp>

25. How many times can a reused item count towards waste sent for reuse in one year?

In theory, there is no limit on how many times an item sent for reuse can count towards sent for reuse. In practice, the same item will re-enter the household waste stream only a limited amount of times – if at all – during one year.

26. Do reused items collected by charity shops count towards waste sent for reuse?

Waste items in the possession of a WCA/WDA and reused/ sent for reuse count towards sent for reuse. Waste items separated from the household waste stream by third parties on behalf of the WCA/WDA (and/or for which reuse credits are paid) and reused/ sent for reuse count for reuse.

Any reuse that is not done on behalf of the WCA/WDA should be excluded. If an authority does not consider that waste items sent for reuse is done so on their behalf, this waste does not count towards waste sent for reuse.

SECTION 3: HOW WILL THE NIS BE CALCULATED?

27. How should authorities provide the NI data?

All of the waste NIs will be calculated by WasteDataFlow. Local authorities should continue to complete their WasteDataFlow returns, and the system will calculate the NIs on a quarterly and annual basis according to the methodology set out by the WasteDataFlow team. The national dataset will then be downloaded by Defra and sent to CLG and the Audit Commission as required.

28. How was the WasteDataFlow calculation decided?

Defra's waste statistics team in conjunction with Defra waste policy and the WasteDataFlow (WDF) team at Enviro put together an initial methodology for the calculation. This was derived from the new national performance indicator guidance document produced by CLG and provides a technical translation of this guidance into WasteDataFlow questions and terminology. Comments and feedback from WDF users in local authorities were sought through the WDF User Group (England). This was taken into account in the calculation methodology.

Detail of the calculation method in terms of WDF questions and additional guidance can be found on the WDF website at <http://www.wastedataflow.co.uk/htm/datasets.aspx#Downloads>

29. How will the NIs be audited?

The Audit Commission continues to apply a risk-based approach to the audit of the Performance Indicators (i.e. not every indicator for every authority is audited).

The Audit Commission applies the audit to WDF returns.

The new performance framework aims to enable Government and inspectorates to base their activity on the most up-to-date data. This means that, while post-hoc checking of data quality through audit may still be needed, on a proportionate basis, this will not be sufficient. The quality of data needs to be improved at the point of collection and reporting, to ensure it is fit for purpose.

Local authorities and their partners are responsible for having in place effective arrangements for managing data quality. The Audit Commission's appointed auditors will review data quality as part of their annual use of resources judgement, which will inform the Comprehensive Area Assessment. The data quality work will involve an assessment of audited bodies' arrangements for data quality, supported by spot checks of relevant data. The Audit Commission has published advice on improving data quality arrangements <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/nationalstudies/pages/default.aspx>

30. How will the NI data be published?

The Audit Commission will report on performance against all 198 indicators and publish their values as part of the Comprehensive Area Assessment.

Separately, Defra will continue to publish waste data for each local authority as part of the annual statistical released on Municipal Waste.

31. Are Waste Collection Authorities required to report against NI193, and will the data be available through the WCA's WasteDataFlow returns?

WCAs are not required to report against NI193 as only WDA/UAs have a duty to dispose of waste to landfill.

Section 4: Useful contacts and Documents

Audit Commission Performance Indicator Team –
<http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/aboutus/contactus/Pages/lgcontact.aspx>
The Environment Agency - 08708 506 506

Waste Strategy Division, Defra – 020 7 238 1679 (Lucy Toman)

Useful Links

The information in this document is not exhaustive and should be read in conjunction with:

Department for Communities and Local Government guidance on NIs:
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/nationalindicatorupdate>

Information on the Audit Commission's website:
<http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/localgov/pages/default.aspx>
Guidance on how the indicators will be calculated through WasteDataFlow is available at <http://www.wastedataflow.co.uk/hm/datasets.aspx#Downloads>