

High Recycling Rejection Rates in West Yorkshire Raise Concerns Over Waste Management

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More than one in six recycling collections in parts of West Yorkshire are being rejected, with Kirklees and Bradford recording some of the highest rejection rates across Yorkshire and the Humber. Data compiled by BusinessWaste.co.uk reveals that ineffective sorting and

contamination are key contributors to the problem, prompting calls for improved public education and stricter enforcement.

Analysis of figures from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) shows Kirklees Council had a recycling rejection rate of 16.87 per cent, the second highest in the region. Of the 40,356 tonnes of waste submitted for recycling, 6,807 tonnes were ultimately rejected. These rejected materials are typically redirected to landfills or processed through Energy-from-Waste (EfW) facilities. Nationally, Kirklees ranked 28th for the highest rejection rate across England and Northern Ireland.

Topping the regional chart is Bradford City Council, where 20.9 per cent of recyclable waste is turned away, the highest in Yorkshire and the Humber. Out of 74,512 tonnes collected in Bradford, over 15,500 tonnes were rejected. This places Bradford 10th in the broader national rankings. Meanwhile, York City Council reported a lower rejection rate of 10.26 per cent, though this still represents more than one in ten items deemed unrecyclable.

At the other end of the scale, Sheffield boasts the lowest rejection rate in the region at just 0.18 per cent. Barnsley follows with 0.46 per cent, while North East Lincolnshire sits third-lowest with 0.63 per cent, indicating some councils are achieving better outcomes through either clearer guidance, better infrastructure, or more consistent enforcement.

Responding to the figures, Councillor Amanda Pinnock, Cabinet Member for Communities and Environment at Kirklees Council, acknowledged the issue and highlighted ongoing initiatives aimed at improving recycling quality. “We fully recognise the importance of reducing recycling rejection rates and are actively working to improve the quality of recycling collected across Kirklees,” she said. “In some cases, materials cannot be recycled due to contamination. Public participation and accurate sorting of waste play a vital role in helping us reach our targets.”

She pointed to recent efforts, including the introduction of new Household DIY Waste disposal facilities at Emerald Street in Huddersfield and Weaving Lane in Dewsbury, as part of the council’s strategy. Residents are also being encouraged to follow official recycling guidance to ensure waste is clean, dry, and suitable for processing. Advice is available through the council’s official recycling portal.

BusinessWaste.co.uk waste management expert Graham Matthews commented on the need for greater household awareness, but also called on local authorities to play a more proactive role. “There is a certain onus on households to ensure they are recycling correctly to reduce contamination,” he said. “However, we’d encourage local councils to dedicate resources to educating the public... and also consider more frequent enforcement against repeat offenders.”

The figures underline a pressing need for consistent, clearly communicated recycling standards across local authorities. As councils face increasing environmental obligations, effective collaboration between residents and waste management teams will be essential to avoid recyclable waste ending up in landfills or incineration.