

# Management of Abandoned Waste Containers Protocol

## 1. Main Purpose

This protocol sets out the council's approach for managing abandoned domestic waste containers left in public streets, adopted entries, and public communal collection points. The objective of the protocol is to respond to residents' needs and prevent obstructions, improve street cleanliness, and ensure a consistent approach to managing the issue is taking across the city.

## 2. Background

Black bins remain the legal property of residents and cannot be removed without their consent. All recycling bins and containers provided by the council remain the property of the council and as such, are easy to remove/uplift as property of the council.

Currently, Waste Management issues "Bring Your Bin Home" (BYBH) letters to areas where containers are left obstructing public pavements, public entry heads or the street. This function previously sat with Enforcement but was transferred to the Resource Advisor team in 2021.

The issue of abandoned bins is specific to urban areas and is often associated with entries and communal collection points which can sometimes involve non-domestic premises. While the standard BYBH approach is effective in some areas, persistent hot spots show repeated non-compliance and complaints from residents in areas where abandoned containers are a problem.

A strengthened and more robust response is required to address persistent issues, ensure compliance, and support long term behavioral change and improvements to the environment in those areas. The protocol is required to establish that a general waste container is "abandoned" to address the impacts of the abandoned bin.

### 3. Three-Level Response Framework

On receipt of a request for service via the customer hub the following will occur:

#### Level 1 Response – Standard Approach (Waste Management)

- Continue issuing BYBH letters in areas where non-compliance occurs infrequently. (Sample letter attached as appendix One)
- Includes all relevant collection information specific to that property/area.
- No additional enforcement actions unless repeat issues are identified.
- Continue to document where these reminders are being issued to inform stages 2 and 3 where applicable.

#### Level 2 Response – Persistent Non-Compliance (Waste Management/OSS)

- BYBH letter issued as normal by Resource Team – communicating that bins not brought in will be removed. (See appendix Two)
- Dated warning stickers are applied to offending bins at the same time by Resource Advisors.
- The sticker instructs the bin owner to return the container to within their property lines within 7 calendar days from the date the sticker/letter is issued.
- Bins still left in the street/entry after 7 days will be considered abandoned and removed by OSS, including general waste bins.

#### Level 3 Response – High-Complexity mixed use areas (Waste Management & Enforcement)

- Applies to locations where entries serve both commercial and domestic properties (e.g., lower Lisburn Road, Malone Road, Stranmillis Village).
- Domestic properties receive Level 2 actions.
- Enforcement issues Article 22 notices to non-compliant commercial premises as appropriate by enforcement officers.

### 4. Removal and Processing of Abandoned Containers

- Offending bins not on property boundaries after 7 days will be removed by OSS.
- Suitable containers will be transported to Duncrue and stored for up to 6 weeks (storage area to be identified).
- During the holding period, bins will be emptied, inspected and cleansed by the contractor. Quality bins will be re-used; damaged or unsuitable containers will be recycled.
- Salvageable general waste bins can be reconditioned (markings removed) and can be sold as “pre-loved” containers at a cost-neutral price of £10 (outlet/mechanism to be determined). Should this approach around re-use not be feasible, alternatives can be explored (e.g. bulk sale/disposal to other waste providers/LAs).
- The pre-loved price covers delivery and supports affordability for residents, particularly those in areas of multiple deprivation.
- Food waste and recycling containers remain fully subsidized by the council.

## 5. Expected Outcomes

- Reduction of bins left permanently in entries and streets and associated service requests to resolve them.
- Clear staged mechanisms to deter non-compliance.
- Cleaner and safer neighborhoods. Bins are often linked to ASB, especially in densely populated areas.
- Support circular economy principles through reuse of containers.
- Lower financial barriers for residents needing replacement bins – mechanism for issue required.
- Consideration should be given to the impact of the ASB bin replacement process i.e. that this mechanism is not used by residents whose bin has been uplifted due to being considered abandoned. The reporting of ASB will be in “in person” and via telephone/direct contact.

## 6. Resource Requirements

- Dedicated storage capacity at Duncrue for abandoned reuseable bins.
- Staff time across Waste Management, Enforcement, OSS, and Customer Hub.
- FAQs and support for hub and operations.
- Stickers for bins/leaflet for householders.

## 7. Stakeholders

Leads: Waste Management, OSS

Supporting: Customer Hub, Enforcement, Contractor.

### Three-Level Response Flowchart

