

Household Waste Recycling Centres – Upholstered Domestic Seating Changes

Updated FAQs – February 2023

Question: Why is upholstered seating banned from landfill sites?

Answer: Upholstered items of seating are treated with fire retardant which contains certain chemicals. The use of some of these chemicals, which were previously legitimately used, is now far more restricted.

To make sure these chemicals, called Persistent Organic Pollutants or POPs, are not released into the environment when upholstered furniture is disposed of the Government has brought in legislation to stop upholstered furniture being disposed of in landfill sites from 1 January 2023.

Upholstered seating must now be disposed by incineration.

Question: How is Cumbria County Council dealing with waste upholstered furniture containing Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)?

Answer: Waste upholstered domestic seating containing POPs which is brought to one of the Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) will be sent for incineration in line with legislative guidance.

Any waste containing POPs will be safely incinerated to generate electricity and ensuring that these chemicals are destroyed or irreversibly transformed and cannot be released into the wider environment.

Question: Why was there a change to the arrangements for disposing of seating at HWRCs and for bulky waste collections?

Answer: This was because new regulatory position statements were issued by the Environment Agency on 19 December 2022 stating how waste domestic seating should be stored and handled prior to disposal by incineration. The legislation came into effect on 1 January which didn't leave enough time for the council to make necessary arrangements with our contractors. We have now made the new arrangements, so services have recommenced.

Question: What items of furniture are affected by the new requirements to keep it separate from other waste at the HWRC?

Answer: All waste upholstered domestic seating must be kept separately on-site, where it is reasonable and feasible to do so, including

- Sofas and armchairs
- Sofa beds and futons
- Kitchen and dining room chairs
- Stools and foot stools
- Home office chairs
- Bean bags, floor and sofa cushions

Check with site staff if you are unsure.

Question: Can I take my sofa to the Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) now?

Answer: Yes, from Tuesday 7 January 2023 we can now accept waste upholstered domestic seating at Brampton, Carlisle, Kendal, Maryport, Grange, Penrith and Ulverston HWRCs. For details of sites and opening times please see our HWRC webpage at: <https://www.cumbria.gov.uk/planning-environment/waste-management/servicesincumbria/hwrcs/hwrc.asp>

Question: Are the arrangements the same as before if I bring upholstered furniture to the Household Waste Recycling Centre?

Answer: Although you can now bring waste upholstered domestic seating to some of the Household Waste Recycling Centres again, new regulations require us to handle and treat this waste differently from before:

- Please speak to site staff when you arrive onsite with this waste to check where to put it.
- Legally, we must keep waste upholstered domestic seating separate from other types of seating and other waste now, where it is reasonable and feasible to do so. So, please don't throw it into the 'general waste' container.
- Ask site staff before depositing waste upholstered domestic seating.
- It is important that waste upholstered domestic seating is kept whole where possible. Any rips in the fabric should be covered with tape or a bin bag.
- Please do not chop up your waste upholstered domestic seating. Taking upholstered seating items apart increases the risk of allowing the Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) in the seating being released into the environment.

Question: Shall I break up my seating before bringing it to the HWRC?

Answer: No, please do not break up your seating. It is important that waste upholstered domestic seating is kept whole where possible. Please cover any damaged or exposed areas with tape or sheeting.

Taking upholstered seating items apart increases the risk of allowing the Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) to be released into the environment.

Question: My nearest Household Waste Recycling Centre isn't on the list as one of the sites where you can now take waste upholstered seating to. Can I take waste upholstered domestic seating to Ambleside, Workington, Whitehaven, Kirkby Stephen, Millom, Barrow and Wigton HWRCs?

Answer: We don't have space at the following Household Waste Recycling Centres to comply with new requirements to keep waste upholstered domestic seating separate from other wastes: Ambleside, Workington, Whitehaven, Kirkby Stephen, Millom, Barrow and Wigton. This means that at the moment we cannot accept waste upholstered domestic seating at these sites.

For now, please either take your waste upholstered domestic seating to Brampton, Carlisle, Kendal, Maryport, Grange, Penrith or Ulverston HWRC where we do have space to keep waste upholstered domestic seating separate from other materials. Details of locations and opening times are available here: <https://www.cumbria.gov.uk/planning-environment/waste-management/servicesincumbria/hwracs/hwrc.asp> Alternatively for a small fee you can book a household collection from your local council and they will collect it from your home.

Question: My local Household Waste Recycling Centre is still not accepting waste upholstered domestic seating. What can I do with my upholstered seating now?

Answer: There are a number of options to dispose of your unwanted seating. You can:

- Arrange a collection through the reuse network or a retailer take-back service
- Arrange a collection from your own council for a small fee
- Advertise the seating for sale or for free on a reuse website if it is in good condition (not damaged beyond a minor repair and has a fire safety label attached).
- Take your seating to another HWRC in Cumbria. We can accept waste upholstered seating at Brampton, Carlisle, Kendal, Maryport, Grange, Penrith and Ulverston HWRCs where we do have space to keep waste upholstered domestic seating separate from other materials. Details of locations and opening times are available here: <https://www.cumbria.gov.uk/planning-environment/waste-management/servicesincumbria/hwracs/hwrc.asp>
- Alternatively, you can hold onto your seating until we may have made alternative arrangements in your area, although we cannot guarantee when this will be.

Question: Will my local council be able to collect my old sofa?

Answer: Yes. Following a temporary suspension of collection services for some types of bulky waste due to the rapid introduction of new regulations, all district councils in Cumbria are also now able to provide a collection service for waste upholstered seating, for a small fee. Please check their websites for more details.

Question: Can I donate my old sofa or seating to a charity or sell it online?

Answer: Yes, reusing old seating is still allowed as long as the seating is not damaged beyond a minor repair and has a fire safety label attached. Fire safety labels on sofas and armchairs must state compliance with The Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations 1988 (amended 1989 and 1992). Check with local charities first. A map on our Recycle for Cumbria website has details of local charity reuse shops available at: <http://www.recycleforcumbria.org/athome/reusemap.asp> Other reuse outlets include websites such as Gumtree, eBay and Freegle. For additional information visit our furniture reuse page at: <http://www.recycleforcumbria.org/attheshops/Unwantedfurniture.asp>

Question: Can I ask a private company to collect my unwanted bulky furniture?

Answer: Yes. However, if you are offered a collection by a private company, you have a duty of care to ensure the waste is handled and disposed of in line with the legal requirements, so:

- Check their waste carriers' registration*
- Ask what will happen to your waste
- Get paperwork for waste that is removed
- Note the company's details

Watch out for:

- No registration or paperwork
- Cash payments
- An operator being vague about how they will dispose of the seating
- If the service seems unexpectedly cheap

* You can check permits and waste carrier registrations on the public register:

<https://environment.data.gov.uk/public-register/view/search-waste-carriers-brokers>.

Question: Is it OK to take my waste upholstered seating apart and put it in my waste bin for collection?

Answer: No. Your local council will not be able to pick up your waste if you put waste upholstered domestic seating in your bin. The law requires that any waste upholstered domestic seating is kept separate from all other waste where it is reasonable and feasible to do so.

So, please do not dispose of your unwanted upholstered domestic seating in your recycling or residual waste bin. Your waste upholstered domestic seating should be taken to a Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) or separately collected.

Question: What furniture contains Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)?

Answer: The majority of soft furnishings in your home will have fire retardants applied to them in order to meet Fire Safety standards. It is possible that some of these items will have fire retardants that contain POPs, but not at levels that can cause concern to the environment.

Any soft furnishing item that is less than three years old (i.e. bought new after 2019) should not contain fire retardants using the current list of POPs. However, the legislation requires that such items are all segregated at the point of disposal. This is to ensure that all items which potentially contain POPs are fully and safely destroyed. This is why you will be asked to place your item in a different location for disposal when you visit an HWRC.

The household items covered by the legislation are only waste upholstered domestic seating items as they were found to contain the highest levels of POPs. These include:

- Sofas and armchairs
- Sofa beds and futons
- Kitchen and dining room chairs
- Stools and foot stools
- Home office chairs
- Bean bags, floor and sofa cushions

There is no need to separate any other furnishing from your home when disposing of them.

Question: Is my new sofa (bought after 2019) still flame retardant?

Answer: All domestic seating that is produced must pass stringent UK flammability tests that comply with the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988.

Any items purchased after 2019 will still meet the requirements of the Fire Safety regulations, but the chemicals used in the process are not classified as Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs).

Question: Is it only Cumbria that is affected by this change?

Answer: No, the new regulatory position applies to all areas of England and Wales, and other authorities have taken the same course of action as us to comply with the law.

Question: As you stopped accepting waste upholstered domestic seating this month will I get a reduction in my Council Tax?

Answer: No, the service wasn't taken away, it was just temporarily suspended while the necessary arrangements were put in place to ensure we are compliant with the new legislation.

Question: Is my upholstered domestic seating dangerous?

Answer: The risk of exposure of the public to POPs from any upholstered domestic seating in the home is low. The potential for pollution and harm increases at the waste management phase when items may be broken up or damaged before disposal and this is why there are new procedures for how to manage this waste.

Any potential risk to health from exposure to chemicals in the home can be greatly reduced through good housekeeping; such as regular vacuum cleaning, washing hands before meals and ensuring any damage to upholstery is repaired as soon as possible.