

APPENDIX C – Nappies and Absorbent Hygiene Products

Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) currently offers additional refuse capacity on request for nappies and for adult absorbent hygiene products (AHP). It is proposed to continue the same arrangements with Recycle More, with stickers provided to allow an additional sack to be put out with refuse and a larger refuse bin option too.

This appendix provides further information on nappies and AHP waste, including current services, proposed arrangements with Recycle More and other additional options Members may wish to consider with their costs.

1. Nappies and AHP Waste in Somerset

- 1.1.** It is estimated there are 12,920 babies in nappies in Somerset, with up to 5-10% of these using real nappies. Waste composition analysis indicates Somerset's refuse and clinical waste contains about 3,400 tonnes of baby disposable nappies and about 665 tonnes of adult absorbent hygiene products (AHP).

2. Current services

- 2.1.** Most Somerset households with nappy and AHP waste put this out with other refuse in standard 180-litre bins collected fortnightly. If residents have problems with their collections, they are advised to contact customer services teams for assistance. On request, SWP provides excess waste stickers to allow families to put out an additional sack each collection for each child in nappies. These arrangements work well and, over a year, stickers for extra nappy waste are sent to 800-900 households, which is under 10% of households with children in nappies.
- 2.2.** Some households with adult AHP waste put this out for weekly pick up on the clinical waste service. A review is planned as, in most cases, this hygiene waste could be put out with refuse. Clinical waste collections have higher costs and should be used for healthcare waste, including needles.
- 2.3.** SWP promotes the use of real nappies, which allow savings in nappy costs of £200-500 per child for parents and waste disposal savings of £60-110 per child over 2 years. Currently, these are promoted through communications, including a leaflet and information on SWP's website, and by working with community groups and suppliers, including Somerset and West Somerset Cloth Nappy Library, Natural Baby Accessories and Frome Happy Nappy Library.

3. Recycle More trial

- 3.1.** The Recycle More trial with 3-weekly refuse collections ran from September to early December 2014 and covered 1,231 households with a range of housing types and family groups in Wiveliscombe, near Taunton.
- 3.2.** There were a small number of enquiries about nappy collections with a 3-weekly

refuse service and the usual additional refuse capacity was provided on request. Households were also advised that nappy and sanitary waste should be double-wrapped for storage and collection.

- 3.3. Nappies or AHP were not a significant concern mentioned by respondents to the end of trial survey, but were mentioned by a few people, including during the trial.

4. Lessons from other local authorities

- 4.1. There are at least fourteen Councils with 3-weekly refuse collections and more planning to make this service change, include one changing to a 4-weekly service and two with trials for this collection frequency.
- 4.2. In all areas with a 3-weekly refuse service, nappies and AHP are accepted in refuse bins and most of the Councils allow extra capacity on request, as proposed for Somerset. Most provide 240 litre refuse bins as standard, one provides 140 litre bins and one, Powys, provides 180 litre bins as in Somerset. Only 5 of the 14 Councils offer additional separate collection service for nappies.
- 4.3. Powys have provided their 3-weekly service since November 2015 and it is reported that their residents are coping well with the arrangements, with just a small number raising issues about nappies or AHP collection.
- 4.4. A charge can be made to collect nappies and AHP, but none of those with 3 or 4 weekly refuse collections do so. There are two Councils (St Albans and Three Rivers) who levy a small charge for nappy collections alongside a fortnightly refuse service.
- 4.5. Some authorities offer vouchers or cashback of £30-50 to help parents buy an initial supply of real nappies. Trial and starter packs are also offered and a few employ real nappy advisors. However, take-up is relatively low. For example, in Gloucestershire about 200 vouchers giving £30 off the cost of real nappies are redeemed each year.

5. Recycle More proposals for Somerset

- 5.1. Residents will be advised in communication materials to double bag nappies or other potentially smelly waste in their refuse. They will also be advised to contact Customer Services teams if they have difficulties with Recycle More collections.
- 5.2. Households needing extra refuse capacity for nappies or AHP will be offered stickers to put out an additional sack for each child in nappies or the opportunity to swap a standard 180-litre bin for a 240-litre. Where extra bin capacity is provided, this would be subject to review and, when no longer needed, the refuse bin swapped back to the standard size. If additional assistance is needed in exceptional cases, this would also be considered.
- 5.3. Costs for these arrangements have been included within budgets presented for Recycle More and should be sufficient for the collection of nappies and AHP waste.

6. Other additional options

6.1. There are a number of other service options that could also be considered, which would incur additional costs, as follows.

a) Free fortnightly collections of nappies and AHP

This would allow nappies and AHP to be collected at the same frequency as currently, with special bags provided for separate nappy collections. Experience from other areas varies quite widely, but it should be expected that 3,000-7,000 households may sign-up. Kier have given a cost of £386,484 to provide this service per annum and there would be administration costs of up to £35,000 in addition. Administration and round planning would be complex because of on-going changes in customers using the service.

b) Charged for weekly collection of nappies and AHP

A weekly nappy and AHP collection service could be offered for a charge, which should be simpler to administer than a free service. It would have a lower level of uptake and therefore special bags provided could be picked up on the clinical waste service. The cost, for collections by Kier and administration by SWP, would be £190-200 per customer per annum, although not all these costs would need to be passed on. It is expected that a maximum of 300-1,000 households may apply and to reduce the annual charge to £50 would cost £42-150,000 per annum.

c) Additional promotion of real nappies

Based on Gloucestershire costs, a scheme to fund real nappy vouchers and a nappy advisor would cost up to £30,000 per annum, including to cover the purchase of trial kits. A voucher scheme alone would cost £10,000 per annum. Experience elsewhere suggests take-up would be low but it may be seen as a positive incentive available to all, with savings (through reduced disposal costs) arising for Somerset County Council.