

Fly-tipping at 'crisis levels' in Britain as councils cut down on bin collections



Fly-tipping is an increasingly common sight CREDIT: GETTY IMAGES

- **Sophie Jamieson**

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Fly-tipping has reached "crisis levels" in Britain, with the problem being blamed in part on infrequent rubbish collections, an investigation has found.

In some council regions, incidents of fly-tipping rose by more than a fifth year-on-year, according to figures obtained from freedom of information requests.

In Haringey, north London, there were nearly 40,000 reported incidents of waste being dumped illegally between November 2015 and December 2016. In Manchester, the figure was over 30,000, or 77 per day, numbers obtained by ITV News showed.

Fly-tipping is an epidemic, it's reached crisis levels and something needs to be done about it Allison Ogden-Newton, chief executive of Keep Britain Tidy

The problem has been attributed to changes to services at local tips - with many councils putting up fees and cutting opening hours, or closing them altogether - as well as changes to household dustbin collections.

There has been a trend among councils to reduce the frequency of bin collections, both to save money and to encourage recycling.

In some parts of the UK, general waste is only collected every four weeks. Allison Ogden-Newton, chief executive of Keep Britain Tidy, said: "Fly-tipping is an epidemic, it's reached crisis levels and something needs to be done about it."

"Local authorities are overwhelmed with instances of criminal fly-tipping and we need to address this urgently."

In some parts of the country the number of incidents went down, for example Birmingham, where the figure dropped by 13 per cent. However, there were still 21,000 offences recorded, or 53 per day, putting Britain's second city at number three in the list of the worst areas for fly-tipping of the 264 councils that responded to the request.

Councils say the cost of clearing up the illegally-dumped waste is diverting money away from crucial services like social care for the elderly.

Nigel Murphy, Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services at Manchester City Council, told ITV News: "It costs us just over £100 per tonne before we take into account the staffing costs for doing that [...] that's money that's not going into services like adult social care, onto children, onto neighbourhoods in general which could be better improving the environment."

"We're now having to spend it on clearing up people's rubbish."

The Government announced tougher penalties last year for offenders, with councils given powers to issue on-the-spot penalties of up to £400.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs said waste crime costs the economy millions of pounds a year in clean-up costs and poses a risk to the environment.

However, it is difficult for offenders to be caught and prosecuted. In 2016, the Woodland Trust recorded its worst year on record for fly-tipping and littering, but it took just one suspect to court.

The offender was ordered to pay £200 compensation for leaving a coffee table, mattress, bed frame and children's playhouse at Little Wold Plantation in Yorkshire.

The charity said its annual rubbish clearance costs have increased by 264 per cent since 2010, costing the charity £354,031 over the past six years.