

Mid Kent annual report

March 2024 to March 2025 (contract year 1)









### **Foreword**

This report marks the end of the first year of our eight-year contract with the Mid Kent Waste Partnership, serving the communities of Ashford, Maidstone, and Swale. It reflects on the journey so far, celebrates key achievements, and sets out our vision for continued improvement and progress.

Mobilising a contract of this scale, which spans three boroughs, serves over 200,000 households, and involved more than 80,000 bin collection day changes, was always going to be a significant undertaking. The early stages of the mobilisation were shaped by a complex mix of challenges, some anticipated and others less easily foreseen. We had prepared for key operational shifts, which we expected would take time to bed in, such as the rollout of new collection routes, the introduction of a fleet of 83 vehicles, and the integration of in-cab technology. However, additional pressures such as sickness and the late delivery of our new vehicles, compounded the initial disruption, particularly in Maidstone and Swale.

In these two boroughs, issues extended beyond the disruption typically expected during mobilisation, and we sincerely apologise for any disruption that residents experienced during the transition. Nevertheless, throughout we remained firmly committed to achieving the contract's service standards and continued to refine routes, schedules, and systems until we were confident we had the right solutions in place. We have put in place new systems to ensure a more robust and reliable service going forward. Thanks to the dedication, resilience and commitment of our teams, we have successfully transitioned and are delivering the agreed service levels across the Partnership.

Our street cleansing service has also made significant strides. The 2024 leafing season, which involved clearing large volumes of fallen leaves from roads as trees shed during autumn, was completed on time and to a high standard. The operation was marked by exemplary communication and coordination between client and contractor throughout.

At the centre of this progress is our people. More than 77 percent of our workforce live locally, and we have supported them from day one. Ahead of service commencement in March 2024, around 265 employees took part in comprehensive induction weekends focused on safe working practices, vehicle operation and the use of new digital tools. Our commitment to health and safety remains paramount, with plans in place for all front-line supervisory staff across the Partnership to achieve IOSH certification. We continue to invest in training, innovation, and sustainable practices to achieve excellence in service delivery.

Looking ahead, we remain focused on making an even greater impact. This includes launching waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) repair roadshows, engaging with schools on recycling, and welcoming new apprentices into our growing team. This one-year milestone is a testament to the hard work and dedication of every team member. We are proud of what has been achieved and look forward to building on this strong foundation in the year to come.

#### John Scanlon

CEO, SUEZ recycling and recovery UK

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### Introduction

Welcome to our annual report for the Mid Kent Waste Partnership and SUEZ waste, recycling and environmental services contract.

This report is designed to give community members and stakeholders a view of how the Mid Kent Waste Partnership and SUEZ are working together to make a difference for the residents of Ashford, Maidstone and Swale.

### **Highlights**

In the following sections, we review key highlights and milestones from the first contract year (March 24-March 25) to show how our collaboration is contributing to the Mid Kent Waste Partnership's environmental ambitions.

#### **New services commenced 24 March 2024**

### 200,000+ households

Household collections, street cleansing and maintenance

### **68 collection teams**

86 drivers and 145 loaders

### 77% of staff live locally

Roll out of IOSH training for all front-line supervisors – paramount to ensuring the health and safety of our workforce

# From July 2024, consistent 100% on the day collections for Ashford

99% average completion across the Partnership from October 2024

37,132 tonnes of recycling
22,052 tonnes
of garden waste
84,691 tonnes of refuse
5,170 tonnes
of street sweepings



2,291,948m of road cleansed
2,611 street bins emptied
11,931 bulky waste collections
15,257 clinical waste collections

New fleet of 83 RCVs + 26 vehicles for street cleansing

Approximately 15% of the street cleansing fleet is now electric

Comprehensive training for around 265 members of staff

over two weekends on safe working procedures and how to operate the new vehicles and in-cab technology Volunteering at the Repton Connect Community Centre and with Demelza

Sustainability and biodiversity initiatives at each of our depots

Welcoming two new apprentices as part of our ongoing commitment to creating local employment opportunities and nurturing talent

### Operational review

SUEZ commenced the Collection and Street Cleansing Contract on 24 March 2024. As part of the transition, we facilitated a smooth TUPE transfer of staff from the previous contractor, establishing our presence and beginning operations under the SUEZ brand.

#### Waste collection service

From day one, our teams were deployed with a fleet of 83 vehicles, servicing 203,780 properties each week across the three boroughs that make up the Mid Kent Partnership. Our early focus was on embedding operational stability, and initiating a cultural shift towards continuous improvement, aligned with the "SUEZ way." This included the introduction of new technologies, upgraded facilities, and a strong emphasis on safety and service quality.

We implemented key innovations such as in-cab technology, food waste pods and electric bin lifts, modernising how our crews operate and improving both efficiency and environmental performance in line with the Partnership's sustainability objectives. New routes were also introduced to streamline service delivery and better respond to the needs of each borough.

While this transformation was underway, a range of challenges emerged. Some were expected as part of a mobilisation of this scale, such as the time needed to adjust to new routes, vehicles and technologies. However, other factors were less predictable and more difficult to manage. Recruitment pressures, higher-than-anticipated staff turnover and sickness – particularly acute in Maidstone and Swale – added complexity to our operational efforts. These added pressures had a direct impact on initial service performance, including instances of missed collections during the early months.

Despite this, service performance steadily improved. Ashford, less affected by these additional factors, reached 100 percent completion rates by July 2024. The wider Partnership followed, consistently achieving 99 percent or higher from October onwards.

Physical infrastructure improvements were also critical in supporting our operational resilience and service quality. A new depot and enhanced workshop was established in Swale. Meanwhile, brand new facilities were created in Ashford. These upgrades created safer, cleaner and more efficient working environments, reinforcing our long-term commitment to delivering better services.

Health and safety was a key area of focus from the outset. As explored in more detail in the People section of this report, we carried out regular on-site supervisory checks, enhanced induction processes for both crews and back office staff, and embedded daily 'Safety in Mind' conversations into operational routines to promote a safety-first culture across the workforce.

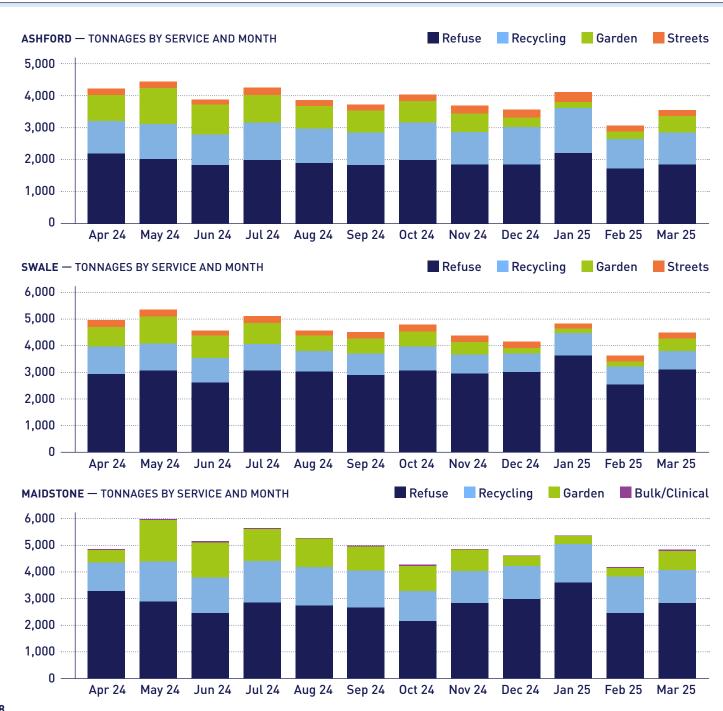
During the festive holiday period, we ensured uninterrupted service through proactive planning. Early agreement of working arrangements with crews and Partnership officers, combined with improved holiday allocation, enabled us to meet increased seasonal demand without disruption. This collaborative approach reflected the effectiveness of our planning and the dedication of our teams.

As demonstrated in the following graphs, in 2025 the service has continued to improve, with the focus shifting to maintaining operational excellence on behalf of the Partnership in contract year 2.

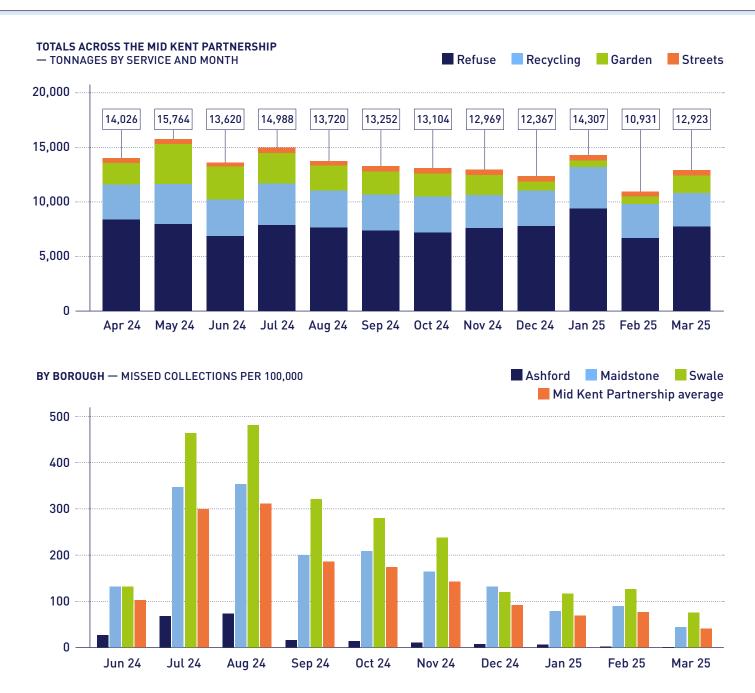












<sup>\*</sup>Data starts from June 2024 due to the missed collections amnesty in the first 3 months of the contract.

### Street cleansing service

Throughout the mobilisation period, our street cleansing service in Ashford and Swale has focused on building a consistent and responsive operation, supported by a dedicated team of 34 crews. From the outset, the team worked to embed high standards, aligning resources across the two boroughs to ensure cleaner streets and public spaces.

One of the early operational improvements was the introduction of electric vehicles into the fleet. further supporting the Partnership's sustainability goals while maintaining the flexibility needed for daily cleansing rounds. In parallel, we started integrating our street cleansing operations into CORE, allowing for improved scheduling, visibility and performance monitoring across the service.

Year 1 highlights included strong performance during the autumn leafing season, with extensive leaf clearance completed on time across both boroughs and no rectifications issued. This was a clear testament to the effective communication. between our crews and the Partnership teams. We also ended the calendar year on a high note, with no disruption over the Christmas period, demonstrating the strength of our planning and the dedication of our teams.





Looking ahead, key priorities for contract year 2 include the full integration of street cleansing rounds into CORE to enable real-time data and reporting capabilities. We are also focused on implementing summer working plans to optimise resources during warmer months, achieving 100% deployment of crews and ensuring service continuity through better holiday planning and early coordination with both our crews and the Partnership officer teams.

Our approach continues to centre on operational reliability, proactive management and close collaboration with local authorities to deliver a consistently clean and safe environment for communities across Ashford and Swale.

- 26 full fortnightly cycles completed for residential areas
- 2,291,948 m of road cleansed
- 2,611 litter bins emptied
- 46 grafitti items cleansed
- 2,866 fly tipped waste removed
- 65 hazardous materials removed

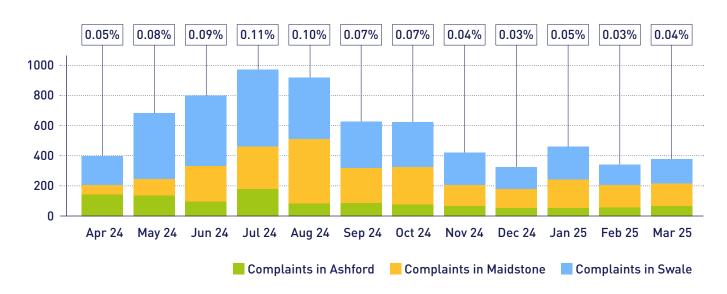


#### **Customer care**

Since service commencement, the majority of feedback has focused on missed waste collections. As expected with a mobilisation of this scale, the first few months presented challenges as crews adapted to new routes, vehicles and technologies. Complaint levels peaked at 0.11% of properties serviced in July 2024. However, as the service has stabilised, complaint volumes have decreased significantly, consistently remaining below 0.05% since November.

Ashford has seen consistently lower and more stable complaint levels since the start of the contract, accounting for approximately 18% of total complaints across the Partnership. In contrast, Maidstone and Swale, which experienced a greater number of missed collections due to more pronounced operational and external pressures, accounted for 40% and 42% respectively.

#### MONTHLY COMPLAINTS AS PERCENTAGE OF PROPERTIES SERVICED



We understand the frustration this caused for residents and we sincerely apologise to those affected during the initial adjustment period. We are grateful for their patience and support. A thorough review has been conducted and valuable lessons have been learned. We are now pleased to be delivering the service levels set out in the contract and will continue to build on this foundation to maintain and improve performance across all three boroughs.

Compliments over the mobilisation period largely focused on the friendliness of the crews and their helpful nature. We are proud that our colleagues maintained a positive attitude during challenging phases of the mobilisation period and are confident that the operational improvements we are aiming for in contract year 2 will continue to reduce the number of complaints received.

One resident shared: "I know recently you have received bad press in Kent, but I would like to pass on a big thank you to the Ashford Kent team. I requested a cleanup of a bulk bin area, and it was dealt with immediately – excellent service."

Another expressed gratitude: "A wonderful member of your team just returned a lost purse to me. How can I contact his local office to provide positive feedback?"



A third resident praised an act of kindness:



If anyone knows the lovely men who do bin collection in the Woodchurch area - they noticed our dog wasn't outside to greet them today, so they kindly left him a present instead. I just wanted to share this thoughtful gesture, as it is very much appreciated (mainly by the dog!)."

### **People**

At SUEZ, we measure the social value we create which is determined by our combined environmental, social and economic impact. This is at the core of our business, and as part of our contract with Mid Kent, we are committed to providing local employment opportunities, having a skilled and engaged workforce and supporting healthier communities.

On this contract, SUEZ employs 273 staff. The workforce is largely made up of drivers (HGV and LGV) and loaders, with 77% of staff being from the local area and all receiving as a minimum the real living wage. We have also welcomed two new apprentices, with plans to hire over six more over the course of contract year 2.







### **Health and Safety**

Health and safety is at the heart of our culture at SUEZ. It is for everyone, anywhere, at any time. Together, we strive for a culture that is open, honest, and accountable, with continuous improvement firmly embedded in everything we do. This approach was the first key area to become entrenched during the mobilisation period and has been a consistent focus throughout the contract. We have applied our rules and standards consistently and without compromise. Our goal is simple: to ensure that every person goes home safely at the end of each day.

All front-line supervisory staff across the Mid Kent partnership will soon have achieved their IOSH qualification. This will continue to ensure that those with responsibility for health and safety fully understand workplace hazards, the associated risks and how to control them. High completion rates so far has helped ensure we have seen no RIDDOR-reportable incidents and minimised lost time accidents, with six occurring between all three boroughs in contract year 1.



Our teams have proactively reported and engaged with health and safety across all boroughs, with 122 near misses recorded in year 1, a reflection of the culture of vigilance we are working to embed. In addition, we facilitated 624 'Safety in Mind' conversations between crews and supervisory teams, reinforcing positive behaviours, identifying areas for improvement and embedding safety into daily routines.

While we recorded 34 personal injuries, we continue to drive down incidents through improved processes, close supervision and a visible leadership presence. This approach has delivered a standard of performance that we consider to be industry best practice. Through consistency, training, open dialogue and accountability, we continue to raise the bar for health and safety across the Mid Kent Partnership.

	Apr 24	May 24	Jun 24	Jul 24	Aug 24	Sep 24	0ct 24	Nov 24	Dec 24	Jan 25	Feb 25	Mar 25	Total
Near Miss	12	13	13	17	7	7	28	16	1	1	4	3	122
Safety In Mind Conversations	58	42	28	56	43	40	28	24	33	34	80	158	624
Vigiminute Conversations	7	18	8	29	2	7	5	15	9	0	0	1	101
Lost Time Accident	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	6
Road Traffic Accident	12	9	6	5	7	2	8	7	2	6	5	7	76
RIDDOR	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0



#### Skilled and confident workforce

At SUEZ, we are committed to the wellbeing and inclusion of all our employees. It underpins all of our strategic goals and is something we embed across every level of our operations.

A critical part of the mobilisation has been ensuring that all staff received a thorough induction into SUEZ and the appropriate training to ensure their safety, wellbeing, and readiness for work. Ahead of the contract start, we hosted health, safety and wellbeing induction weekends for over 260 new colleagues. These were described by attendees as "great and rewarding," and featured a mix of presentations and an interactive info market'. Experts from across the business were on hand to demonstrate new vehicles, vehicle CCTV, tools, personal protective equipment and visual management standards.

Information on staff benefits, pensions and payroll was also provided. Meanwhile, regional GMB representatives attended to help establish a cooperative and supportive relationship from day one. As part of our commitment to an inclusive culture, all staff also received diversity and inclusion training as part of their induction.

To ensure ongoing support, we have a dedicated HR team, health and safety leads, and front-line supervisors actively engaged with the workforce every day. We have continued to support employee wellbeing through a variety of channels, including webinars on topics such as combatting stress, eating for immunity, and allyship in the workplace. These sessions are available both live and on-demand to provide flexibility for our teams. We also support our people through dedicated staff networks, including a diversity and inclusion network, a parents' network and a veterans network, helping to foster allyship and inclusion across the business.

In November and December, we offered health screening to all colleagues, providing them with an opportunity to check in on their physical health and take proactive steps toward wellbeing. We have also received positive feedback from client-led surveys, in this area, reflecting the dedication and professionalism of our teams on the ground.

Looking ahead to contract year 2, we plan to introduce an employee of the month scheme to celebrate outstanding contributions, and are exploring opportunities to upskill our operational crews as part of our continued investment in staff development.

#### Healthier communities

Our support for people doesn't just focus on our SUEZ family, but also to the communities that we operate in. This forms a key part of how we measure our social value and will be an area of development on the Mid Kent contract as we go into our second (and first full) contract year.

As a company, we proudly support two national charities, Macmillan Cancer Support and the British Heart Foundation, while also encouraging our staff to contribute to local causes. Through our 'Day a Year to Volunteer' scheme, every employee is given a paid day to support a cause close to their heart

### Key highlights from contract year 1 include:

- ✓ Volunteering at Repton Connect Community Centre, assisting with the People's Pantry, deep cleaning the main hall and donating bags of food, hygiene products and festive treats.
- Volunteering at Demelza's Larkfield distribution centre.
- Hosting bake sales at each site to raise funds for the British Heart Foundation.
- Welcoming KMTV to join our street cleansing team in Swale, offering an inside look at the work that keeps the partnership boroughs clean.

- Repair roadshows and WEEE Initiatives, collaborating with local repair cafés to help residents fix, donate or responsibly dispose of waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE). The first event is set for April in Maidstone, with more planned throughout the year.
- Planting 633 trees at Allington Open Space in partnership with Maidstone Borough Council to mark the five year anniversary of the first COVID lockdown – one tree for each life lost to COVID-19 in the borough.

#### Looking ahead

We have an exciting year ahead, with further WEEE repair café events across Mid Kent, increased visibility of contract improvements and partnerships, and ongoing community engagement, including Christmas volunteering. Additionally, we will explore new engagement opportunities at our depots, promote electric vehicle adoption and continue to develop our partnerships and social value initiatives.



















### **Planet**

### **Environmental performance** and sustainability

Environmental sustainability is central to SUEZ's triple bottom line, alongside social responsibility and economic performance. In 2024, SUEZ earned a Gold Medal EcoVadis rating for the second consecutive year. With a score of 75 out of 100, we ranked within the top 5 percent of companies assessed globally. This recognition from the world's largest and most trusted provider of business sustainability ratings highlights our strong and ongoing commitment to embedding sustainability throughout our operations.

In support of the Mid Kent Partnership's environmental goals, we prioritised reducing the carbon footprint of our contract from the outset. During the first year, we introduced several key initiatives aimed at cutting emissions and improving energy efficiency. All refuse collection vehicles (RCVs) were fitted with electric bin lifts to reduce fuel consumption and idle times. Electric vehicles were also deployed across the supervisory team, with options extended to management, ensuring that low-emission transport is available at all levels.







We also improved our infrastructure to support environmental performance. Sensor lighting was installed in site cabins to minimise unnecessary energy use, and LED lighting was introduced across all workshops to lower energy consumption. Sustainability Champions were appointed at each site to lead best practices and engage colleagues in continuous environmental improvement.

Protecting and enhancing biodiversity is a vital part of our environmental strategy. Towards the end of 2024, we installed bird boxes and bug hotels at the Ashford and Maidstone depots to support local wildlife. Plans for contract year 2 include installing bat boxes at depots, creating green spaces and wildflower areas across our sites, and launching a PPE reuse scheme to reduce waste and extend the life cycle of equipment.

We are also increasing community involvement. Each site will participate in the Great British Spring Clean through local litter-picking events. A garden project will be launched in Swale and we will enhance the grassy bank behind the depot to further support biodiversity.

These initiatives reflect our long-term approach to sustainability, ensuring that Mid Kent benefits from a responsible, environmentally conscious, and future-focused service.



### Introducing re-use

We are dedicated to helping our customers reduce waste and embrace re-use. In early 2025, we published our Re-use Manifesto, *Repair*, *Re-use*, *Reform – How to Accelerate Progress to a Circular Economy*, outlining steps to drive meaningful change in this area.

In Mid Kent, we have embedded re-use practices both internally and externally. Internally, all staff received reusable water bottles during their inductions at the start of the contract in March. Internal best practice will also be consolidated with the PPE reuse initiative we are launching.

Alongside this, externally, we are exploring our relationship with Demelza to focus on reusing bulky waste and will run Repair Cafés and WEEE initiatives throughout contract year 2.

### **Profit**

Alongside environmental compliance and our continued commitment to social responsibility, it is essential that we continuously grow, evolve and invest in order to deliver the best possible service for Mid Kent and ensure value for money in everything we do.

At SUEZ, continuous improvement is embedded within our culture and our team in Mid Kent have embraced this wholeheartedly from the outset. Throughout contract year 1, we have implemented accurate reporting and data analysis, which has enabled us to make more informed operational decisions, drive efficiencies, and maintain a high level of service delivery across the partnership. Looking ahead, this strong data foundation positions us to be even more proactive and responsive.

We now have access to comprehensive datasets covering tonnage, seasonal holiday trends, absence patterns, and average finish times. This information gives us the ability to anticipate and address operational challenges more effectively as we move into future contract years. In Mid Kent, as elsewhere, this data insight enables us to dynamically manage our resources, increasing capacity during high-demand periods and optimising staffing during quieter times.

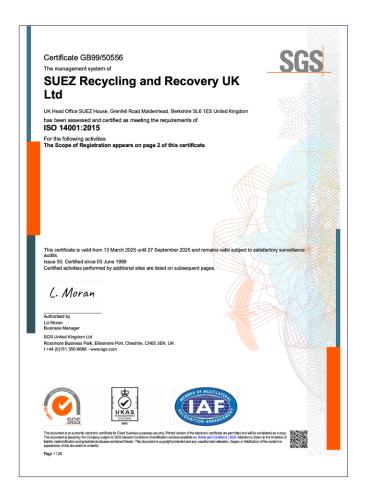
To further support this agile approach, we have established robust relationships with staffing agencies, giving us the flexibility to bring in additional support when required and maintain service continuity under pressure.

As the industry landscape continues to evolve and new regulatory frameworks emerge, we are committed to staying ahead of the curve, offering innovative, data-driven solutions that respond to the changing needs of our partners and the communities we serve. By doing so, we ensure that the Mid Kent partnership remains not only compliant and effective but also cost-efficient and future-ready.

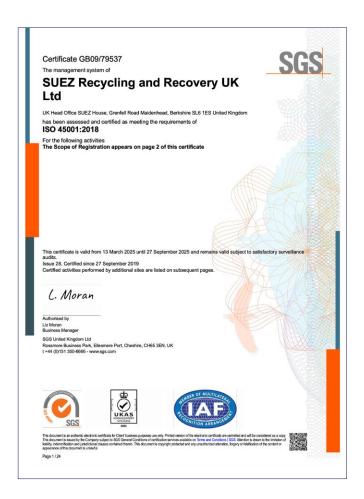


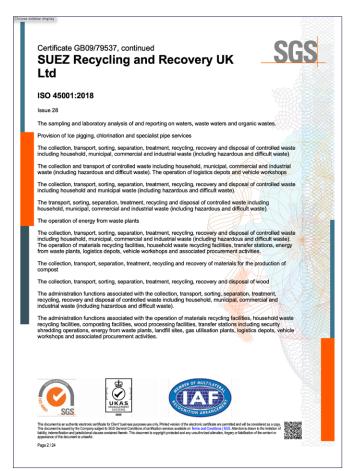


### Certification and legal compliance









## Certification and legal compliance







SUEZ recycling and recovery UK
SUEZ House, Grenfell Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 1ES

www.suez.co.uk

**X**@suezuk **f** facebook.com/suezukofficial