Executive Director of the Environmental Services Association (ESA), Jacob Hayler, said: “The resources and waste management sector provides an essential public service and the ESA, and its members, are engaging with Government to ensure proper guidance and contingency plans are in place so that public services can be maintained and carried out safely, as far as possible, during this pandemic. We continue to monitor this rapidly changing situation closely and will provide further updates as and when official guidance changes.

ESA members and individual operators will also have specific contingency plans in place with their public sector and major private sector clients around service continuity, and members have confirmed that these plans are being discussed between parties.

Naturally, the safety of collection crews is also a priority and ESA members have their own individual guidance, and safe working practices, in place to protect crews and prevent the transmission of infection. However, the public has an important role to play in keeping crews safe and preventing the spread of infection through waste material.

Defra has issued updated guidance in respect of how waste should be handled, as it arises from households in which one or more inhabitants may be experiencing symptoms of COVID-19. That guidance is published here.

At present, in line with government advice, we would urge anyone who feels unwell with symptoms of COVID-19, or indeed any other infectious illness, and in isolation at home, to please be careful about how they treat any waste which may be infectious – such as tissues and sanitary products. This waste should be double-bagged, securely tied, and should be retained inside for at least 72 hours before being placed in the general rubbish for collection.”

ENDS
Notes to editors:

A. The **Environmental Services Association** (ESA) is the trade association representing the UK’s resource and waste management industry, which is leading the transformation of how the UK’s waste is managed.

B. We work with all levels of government, regulators and the public to deliver a more sustainable waste and resource management solution for the UK. ESA’s recent Circular Economy report ‘Going for Growth – A practical route to a circular economy’, which outlines how a Circular rather than a linear economy can help manage resources sustainably, can be downloaded [here](#).

C. ESA’s Members manage waste on behalf of the whole of society and we are recovering more than ever before. For example, the industry has helped quintuple the UK’s household recycling rates over the last decade.

D. **The sector at a glance:**
   - Total turnover: **£11 billion**
   - Direct Employment: **106,000 people** *(including waste collection, treatment and materials recovery)*
   - Municipal waste handled each year: **27 million tonnes**
   - Energy generated (across landfill gas, anaerobic digestion and energy from waste) each year: **approximately 11,867 GWh**, which is 3.5% of the UK’s electricity
     - 9,083 GWh of that was **renewable electricity** *(taking out non-biodegradable portion of EfW)* which is **11%** of UK’s renewable electricity
   - Greenhouse gas emissions down by **70%** since 1990.
   - The **top seven companies** account for approximately **40%** of turnover. Many hundreds of SMEs provide either localised or more specialised services
   - Waste & recycling is the **most highly rated of all council services** by the public (2016 survey)

For further details please visit [www.esauk.org](http://www.esauk.org)

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