# Health risks escalate as Birmingham bin strike enters seventh week



A secret council dossier has revealed the escalating health risks faced by residents of Birmingham as the city’s bin strike enters its seventh full week. The document warns of a surge in rat-borne diseases and mental health challenges resulting from uncollected household rubbish, which continues to pile up across the city.

Every day, full rubbish bags line streets in numerous areas, including residential neighbourhoods such as Sparkbrook and the south of Birmingham. With refuse workers, represented by the Unite trade union, continuing their strike over the council’s decision to abolish the waste recycling and collection officer role, concerns have grown over the impact on public health. The strike began several weeks ago and is reported to involve hundreds of bin workers.

A risk assessment addressed to local authority bosses outlines the severity of the situation. It states that the elderly, disabled people, infants, and those who are immunocompromised are "particularly susceptible" to the adverse health effects caused by the disruption to refuse collection services. The document highlights potential contamination risks through land, air, and water as a result of fly-tipping, decomposing waste, and residents resorting to burning rubbish.

The dossier describes a "medium" but "tolerable" risk of gastrointestinal diseases emerging from the accumulating food, animal, and human waste. It further draws attention to diseases carried by pests such as rats, noting that these rodents are vectors for illnesses including leptospirosis, salmonella, and hantavirus. According to the report, the UK Health Security Agency is monitoring the situation despite a "low likelihood of spread" at present. Residents have reported sightings of rats reportedly as large as small cats scavenging amid the rubbish, although the report states there is currently "no evidence" of increased contact between pests and residents.

Birmingham City Council, which declared a major incident over the bin strike last month, has been working alongside the UK Health Security Agency, the Environment Agency, and its own public health teams. The dossier incorporates evidence from previous bin strikes and ongoing input from the Refuse Public Health Risk Assessment review group to assess the present hazards.

Despite the ongoing strike, talks resumed between Birmingham City Council and Unite on Wednesday. Within hours of restarting negotiations, Unite announced the involvement of the conciliation service Acas for the first time in a bid to progress towards a resolution. The union expressed optimism that a deal could be "in touching distance."

A Local Government spokesman commented: "The situation in Birmingham remains a priority and we have worked intensively with the council to clean up the city’s streets, with the vast majority of excess waste now cleared."

The strike continues to affect day-to-day life for many residents in England’s second city, as families contend not only with the mounting refuse but also the potential for related health and safety challenges.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://ppconline.org/health-safety-and-legislation/eight-risks-to-be-aware-of-during-the-birmingham-bin-strikes> - This article corroborates the escalating health risks including rat-borne diseases and other public health challenges due to uncollected household waste piling up during the Birmingham bin strike.
2. <https://news.sky.com/story/birmingham-bin-strike-resolution-could-be-in-touching-distance-as-conciliation-service-drafted-in-13354350> - This source confirms the involvement of the conciliation service Acas in the talks between Birmingham City Council and Unite union, and the optimism about a deal being close.
3. <https://news.sky.com/story/birmingham-how-long-have-bin-workers-been-striking-and-why-is-it-taking-so-long-to-settle-13339621> - The article provides detailed information about the duration of the bin strike, the accumulation of rubbish in residential areas like Sparkbrook, and the public health concerns including rat infestations.
4. <https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/news/article/2101/birmingham_declare_major_incident_over_bin_strike> - This official Birmingham City Council notice confirms that a major incident was declared over the bin strike and outlines the council's collaboration with health and environmental agencies.
5. <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-health-security-agency> - This government page about the UK Health Security Agency supports the article’s point that the agency is monitoring public health risks arising from the bin strike in Birmingham.
6. <https://acas.org.uk/news/birmingham-bin-strike-talks-resume-with-acas-involvement> - This Acas announcement details their involvement in the conciliation efforts between Birmingham City Council and Unite union, confirming the progress towards a strike resolution.
7. <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/grim-reality-birmingham-bin-strikes-35107945> - Please view link - unable to able to access data