

Communications to support a major waste and recycling service change



The issue

WRAP was approached by Solihull Council in 2008/09 to help develop and deliver a communication plan for the roll out of a revised recycling and waste service.

All households in Solihull were to receive a weekly kerbside-sort recycling service with a restricted weekly refuse collection. Glass and cans collected in one box and paper and card in another, with a sack for plastic bottles. All properties received a 140-litre wheeled bin for household waste.

Following a successful introduction of this scheme the council then focussed on helping residents to recycle more and avoid additional side waste.

The issues identified were:

- A move from a 'clear all' policy to restricted residual waste.
- A need to ensure capacity for recycling was adequate given less capacity for residual.
- Need to ensure all stakeholders were bought into the service changes prior to roll out.

- Need for a consistent message, brand and 'tone of voice' for all communications.
- Low participation in existing service.
- 30% recycling and composting baseline; aiming for 40%.

Key facts

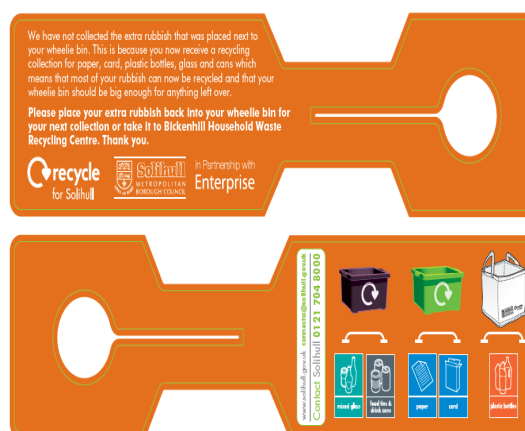
- Additional 4,188 tonnes dry recyclables collected at kerbside from October 2009 to September 2010.
- Residual waste has reduced by 13%, from 11,515 tonnes in quarter 1 of 2009/10 to 9,982 in quarter 1 of 2010/11.
- Total tonnage diverted from Residual waste from October 2009 to September 2010 was 7,176 tonnes.
- **Recycling rates increased from 33% in 2008/09 to 41% in 2010/11.**
- Incidences of side waste have reduced from nearly 3,000 households before the campaign started to under 300 per week.
- Campaign cost per household £1.70.
- Cost per tonne diverted £20.90 per tonne.
- **The gross saving (avoided disposal costs) was £261,800, a net saving of £127,000 in 2009/10 alone. This is the reduction in incineration costs and is a result of both the additional recycling, introduction of wheeled bins and no side waste initiative.**

The approach

WRAP's Local Communications Adviser provided initial technical support, the development of a communications plan, activities and schedule, the development of a local brand to integrate Recycle Now with the Council's own corporate needs, support during rollout – from September 2009 onwards - and the development of motivational messaging after the roll out. The campaign included:

- **Printed material** including a teaser leaflet to let people know that the new service was coming, an information leaflet distributed at the time of the new service roll out and a collection calendar.
- **Training** for crew and helpline staff from WRAP to enable them to deal effectively with inquiries from local residents and to be local ambassadors for the service.
- Three **recycling champions** employed to carry out visits on request and hold road shows to explain the new service to local people.
- **Calling cards** for the recycling champions which included their contact details. Copies of the teaser leaflets were carried by the collection crew to give to residents if they were asked questions about the new service.
- **Bin/box stickers** to show clearly what materials can and can't be put into each of the receptacles.

- **Advertising** to raise awareness of the new service using local newspapers, radio stations, taxi livery, billboards and bus backs.
- **Articles** in the Council's newsletter to local residents.
- **Public relations** activities including press packs and media releases.
- **Livery** on collection vehicles to reinforce messages about the new service.
- **Contamination hangers** – as part of the second phase.
- **Internal communications** using existing channels to ensure staff and elected members were kept fully informed.
- Solihull Council signed up to the **Waste Collection Commitment**; a commitment that recognises the customer experience is central to the design and delivery of the collection services.



Key lessons

- **Clear, consistent** information is critical.
- Information provision should continue **long term** to maintain participation and capture and avoid contamination.
- A **range of messages** is needed to reflect different barriers to recycling - how, when and why.
- Using **recycling champions** enabled the Council to undertake effective community engagement activities. Face-to-face interaction can be a very effective way of helping people to use a new service and overcome barriers.
- **Training crew and helpline staff** provided professional briefings for staff prior to the roll out of the service.
- **Information postcards for crew** were very useful for residents.
- **Need for on-going motivational communications** to show where the recycling goes with local examples where possible and most importantly say 'thank you'.



- Solihull Council made good use of the **advertising opportunities** available to them in a metropolitan area. This included advertising on taxis and a range of outdoor bill board locations.
- **Delivering on the 10 principles of the Waste Collection Commitment** has helped Solihull deliver a high performing service.

The results

Solihull's recycling rate increased from 33% in 2008/09 to **40% in 2009/10** clearly hitting their initial target. They **diverted an additional 4,188 tonnes** of dry recyclables from October 2009 to September 2010 and residual waste reduced considerably from 11,515 tonnes in quarter 1 of 2009/10 to 9,982 in quarter 1 of 2010/11 – a reduction of 1,533 tonnes. **The total tonnage diverted from residual waste from October 2009 to September 2010 was 7,176 tonnes.**

Incidences of side waste have reduced from nearly 3,000 households before the campaign started to fewer than 300 per week.

The gross saving (avoided disposal costs) was £261,800, a net saving of £127,000 in 2009/10 alone.

More information

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