

A well planned communications campaign for the introduction of a new recycling service



Key facts

- **Recycling rates increased** from 34% in 08/09 to 48% in 09/10. Overall, recycling increased by 3,302 tonnes, of which 1,389 tonnes was dry recycling and 1,913 tonnes was composting.
- Participation in the service **rose to 96%** following the introduction of the new service.
- The media campaign resulted in more than **two million** visual contacts.

The issue

WRAP were approached by Cheshire West and Chester Council to provide insights and guidance to support the introduction of their new recycling service.

The existing service was felt to be complicated for residents, with up to three collection days and different collection frequencies for different containers. The new scheme offered a blue 240l bin instead of the existing three bags, with an inner caddy for recycling glass and household batteries.

The new service was aimed at encouraging participation by moving refuse and recycling collections to the same day, with weekly refuse in a new 120l bin and alternating garden and recycling collections. It involved using the existing garden waste bin as the new residual bin, which presented particular communication issues for the council to avoid confusion and contamination.



The approach

Working together WRAP and Cheshire West and Chester Council produced and implemented a communications plan both for the roll out and also information provision after its implementation to act as a reminder.

The communications plan consisted of a wide range of activities including:

- **Pre and post-campaign participation monitoring** and also a post-campaign survey of 300 residents to assess the impact of the communications activities.
- **Printed communication material** consisting of a new service introduction leaflet followed by more detailed information packs. Service reminder leaflets were also produced along with collection calendars, informational bin stickers, posters and contamination cards. All material was designed to be positive in tone, clear and eye-catching.
- **Road shows** were held in local communities to explain the new service in more detail and answer any questions and queries local residents had.
- A **stakeholder event** was held for local media and council members to help them understand the new scheme and gain first-hand experience of the recycling process. This allowed a greater knowledge of the service which could then be easily and effectively communicated to residents
- **Local media** formed a key element in raising awareness of the campaign. The work undertaken with the local radio station proved particularly successful with them acting as advocates for the new service. The branded bins also appeared on an episode of TV series Hollyoaks (more than 840,000 viewers).
- **Advertising** to raise awareness that the new service was coming using local newspapers, bus backs and Adshel sites.
- **Livery** on the collection vehicles was used to reinforce the messages about the new service.



Key lessons

- By using both pre-and post- campaign monitoring Cheshire West and Chester Council was able to **show the effectiveness** of the new service roll out and the effectiveness of the accompanying communications activity. This demonstrated the importance of a well-planned and effective communications campaign when introducing new services.
- Using road shows enabled the Council to carry out **face-to-face** interaction with local residents to answer their questions and address any concerns about the new service.
- **Public feedback** through the contact centre and emails gave the Council the information they needed to update media messages and press activity. The feedback also informed the development of the information pack.



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The results

A survey of 300 residents was used to assess the impact of the communications materials in helping people to know how to use the new service. The results were impressive and of those residents that responded:

- Recycling and composting rates increased to **48%** by 2009/10.
- Recycling increased by **3,302 tonnes**.
- Participation in the service **rose from 82% to 96%**.
- **90%** of residents were aware of how the service was changing.
- **66%** had first heard of the changes through the introduction leaflet.
- **83%** recalled receiving a leaflet about the changes, 40% recalled seeing a newspaper advertisement and 21% attended a road show.

More information

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