

Engaging a culturally diverse community when implementing a new recycling service



Key facts

- Targeted campaign to engage a culturally diverse community to participate in a new recycling service.
- 11,000 households; 53% of which are Pakistani and 47% Bengali.
- Participation in the paper and new commingled dry recycling service rose from 31% to 74% (an increase of 43%).
- Participation in the new food waste collection service was 46% exceeding local targets.

The issue

Oldham Council approached WRAP in 2008 for technical and communications support. Their new 'managed weekly collection' scheme was to include fortnightly recycling, separate weekly food waste and fortnightly refuse.

The final phase of the rollout included engaging a culturally diverse community where a high proportion of residents first language wasn't English, recognising that this would require specialised communication activities.

Oldham has a population of 219,000 with over 94,000 households. The Borough has significant levels of deprivation but also areas of prosperity. It is a diverse community with 14% of the population being from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups. In certain inner wards of Oldham this figure rises to almost 60%.

11,000 households were included in this final phase requiring a targeted campaign; 53% of which are Pakistani and 47% Bengali.



*For households who receive the Garden Waste Service

The approach

A Local Communications Adviser from WRAP worked directly with Oldham's Waste Minimisation and Recycling Manager to identify the issues, examine the evidence, and share local authority experience from elsewhere so that an informed local decision could be made about what specific communication activities and methods should be used. The final communications plan included:

- **Local research** to understand the community groups and residents in the chosen area; understanding their motivations and barriers to recycling.
- **Direct one to one engagement** with residents including community events and estate walkabouts. The latter involved the council and trusted community leaders walking round the local estates meeting residents and answering queries about the new service. Talks to local established groups included a local group learning English, a local sewing group, a Dad's group, and an Elders group.
- **Inter-faith engagement** – working with Oldham Inter-faith Forum to encourage the faith leaders to deliver the message to their community. Following direct discussions with Imams and the Oldham Mosque Council leaflets were handed out outside the local Mosques. The Imams then talked about the new service in Friday prayers.
- **Community delivery team** - five local **community language speakers** who worked with residents to help them use the service effectively. The team worked with residents in advance of, during and after the rollout.
- **Multilingual and pictorial** information pack – simple messages in English, Urdu and Bengali accompanied with simple visual instructions
- **Community posters** to raise awareness of the improvements to the recycling service.
- **Bin stickers** to help residents identify what they can recycle again in Urdu, Bengali and English including clear photographic images.



Your brown bin/black box collection

اپ کے بھورے/کالے ڈبے کو اکٹھا کیا جاتا
আপনার বাদামী/কালো বাজ সংগ্রহ



Key lessons

- Engaging with faith and community leaders who are **trusted members of the community** proved to be a very useful channel of communication. The barriers they broke down and acceptance they created of the new scheme with the messages they were able to convey to their communities was invaluable. This was particularly so in the mosque's. Ensuring they were fully involved and partners in the new scheme was key. Many households in the area were connected to the Mosque by local radio which meant that both the men within the Mosques and the women listening at home got the key messages being promoted.

- Community language speakers as part of the Community Delivery team were **employed directly from within the communities** they were engaging with. Oldham used more Urdu speakers when working in the Pakistani community and more Bengali speakers when working with the Bangladeshi community to help break down the barriers.
- All leaflets and information packs were based on **photographic images** and included **simple messaging** in English, Urdu and Bengali. The communications were easy to understand by all residents.
- The bin stickers **remind residents** what they can and can't put into the containers. These stickers proved effective and were also requested by residents in the Borough.
- Community activities **explained the new service to local residents** before, during and after the roll out. They included meetings, walkabouts, school assemblies and door-to-door canvassing.
- There needs to be enough time to develop **trusted relationships** with local communities. This can't be done quickly and should be an on-going activity.

More information WRAP

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- Poor participation was found to be the direct result of ineffective communications with the BME community. As a result of the communications the **communities accepted and participated** in the new recycling services.

The results

Oldham Council successfully introduced the final phase of their new recycling service.

- Participation in the paper and co-mingled dry recycling service rose from 31% pre-campaign, to 74% post-campaign (an increase of 43%).
- Participation in the new food waste collection service in this area was 46% exceeding local targets.

Mark Hudson, Waste Minimisation and Recycling Manager, Oldham Council said:
"We knew we would need support and advice on engaging this culturally diverse community and it has been invaluable. We exceeded our targets for this area and are really pleased to have increased the overall recycling rate for Oldham Borough."

A local resident said:
"...it's a good idea that you have people in your team who can speak the local language...I appreciate your efforts and hope that you will continue...in future and do some more...it really helps the resident to understand the new system."

Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council

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