

How can you get more residents to participate in food waste schemes?

Introduction

Food waste collection prevents organic matter ending up in landfill, a major contributor to climate change.

WRAP is currently offering funding support for food waste collections, including communications explaining schemes and encouraging participation.

Getting residents on board

For councils running pilot projects or established schemes, success relies on engaging residents and giving them the information they need to participate.

How do you let residents know about service changes, and tell people how and why food waste collections are being introduced?

How do you explain, in layman's terms, that food waste collected by the council gets composted, and why this is a better alternative to landfill?

How can you clearly explain what can and can't be put in the food waste bin?

How do you explain the benefits of home-composting without diluting the message about your food waste scheme?

Waste Watch and food waste

Waste Watch is a registered charity with 20 years' experience of running recycling campaigns. Our expertise can help you get the best from your food waste collection system.

We are experts in food waste projects and how to motivate people to participate in them. We (and partners Brook Lyndhurst) were

commissioned by DEFRA to research different schemes and their usage, so we have the most up to date information on best practice.

We have helped our clients raise awareness and participation; communicate service changes to residents and waste operatives; and measure the success of food waste schemes to improve them and prove they work well.

Our experience

We have worked with nearly 100 local authorities to promote local recycling schemes.

Behavioural change campaign success in Redbridge, 2007

This campaign aimed to increase recycling in two contrasting areas – one with high participation, and one with low participation.

Participation monitoring before and after our campaign showed an increase of 8% and 10% in each area respectively. So how did we achieve this uplift?

We ran focus groups, crew training sessions and a capture rate analysis to understand key issues in the areas we were working in. This allowed us to develop motivating and targeted messages for our doorstepping and communications campaigns in each area, which was critical to the success of the campaign.

How we can help you

These are some of the methods Waste Watch use to support the introduction of, and increase participation in your food waste collection service.

- **Communications campaigns** – we produce clear, simple, compelling and positive communications to encourage residents to recycle locally. We have helped councils communicate about recycling using leaflets, letters, posters, stickers, web copy, vehicle livery, PR activity, and advertising.
- **Community outreach** – we run events in the community to share information and encourage residents to participate in schemes. Community outreach can also target specific groups directly: religious, ethnic and linguistic groups; people of specific age groups or working in particular industries.
- **Monitoring and evaluation** – we use WRAP guidelines to assess participation and commitment towards recycling schemes and find out why residents may not be participating. We then communicate with these groups to encourage them to recycle more.
- **Education activities** – our programmes encourage young people to learn about food waste reduction and composting, and to take those messages home. We also offer teacher training.
- **Doorstepping campaigns** – we educate people face to face about how to take part in local recycling schemes; giving out information, answering questions and removing barriers to participation.

Increasing food waste composted in Ealing, 2007

This doorstepping campaign aimed to promote Ealing's food waste collection service. Teams of Recycling Promoters spoke directly to almost 39,000 residents. The campaign increased participation in the food and dry recycling services by 3% and 16% respectively.

Waste Watch Recycling Support Officers – your local advocates

Recycling Support Officers (RSOs) provide immediate, on the ground support for residents. The London Borough of Ealing recently introduced a no side-waste policy in Southall. We recruited RSOs who were fluent in the common languages spoken locally. They supported the change through visits, doorstepping, community events and monitoring. One example of their success was over 50% of residents who requested extra wheeled bins for their waste cancelled the initial request after a visit from an RSO, who provided information about how to reduce their waste and recycle more.

Food waste education in Kent schools, 2008

We ran a theatre programme featuring Gordon le Rotter, an eccentric French chef who went into 61 primary schools in Kent to teach 13,000 young people about food waste, as part of the national Love Food Hate Waste campaign.

- **Collection crew training** – we work with collection crews, call centre and street scene staff to ensure they understand new services inside-out and how they can contribute to their success. We find that well-briefed crews are the best advocates for new schemes as they can answer residents' queries and concerns, and can explain why new schemes are being introduced. Training also allows crews to provide valuable feedback.