

# Delivering Increased Recycling and Reducing Household Waste

A waste action strategy for LBHF, 2017-2020

## The Purpose and Structure of the Waste Action Strategy

The London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham aims to be *the* best Council. It will work with residents, businesses, community groups and organisations in the borough to reduce the amount of waste produced and to increase the amount of waste which is recycled. This strategy sets out our waste reduction and recycling goals for the borough up to 2020 and outlines how they will be delivered.

This strategy is divided into four sections:

### 1. Our Green Vision

This provides the recycling and waste reduction vision statement for the borough and sets out its main aims and objectives.

### 2. Next Steps and Future Initiatives

This outlines the next steps to ensure the recycling rate is increased and household waste is reduced, as well as highlighting areas for improvement and potential future initiatives to help increase recycling rates in the borough.

### 3. Communications Strategy

The Communications Strategy sets out the approach, methodology and rationale being used to engage and communicate with residents in order to increase recycling rates and reduce household waste. This includes a detailed communication plan which is a live document showing all current and planned future communications.

### 4. Work Plan

The Work Plan is a separate document detailing all the recycling and waste reduction projects, campaigns, and initiatives being delivered or planned by the Waste Action Team. This is a live document, updated regularly, and used to co-ordinate the work of the Waste Action Team.

# 1. Our Green Vision

Our vision is to be the best Council and work in partnership to reduce household waste and increase recycling in LBHF year on year up to 2020.

Household waste will be reduced by 5kg per household per year, resulting in a reduction of 20kg of waste per household by 2020. The recycling rate will increase by 2 per cent per year, resulting in a 30 per cent recycling rate by 2020.

## Aim

To deliver a high quality waste action service capable of increasing the household recycling rate by 8 percent from the 2015/16 baseline (22.0 percent) by 2020 and reducing household waste by 20kg from the 2015/16 baseline (481kg) by 2020 by:

- encouraging more people to recycle
- improving the way people recycle
- increasing the range of materials which can be recycled
- promoting and encouraging the use of the waste hierarchy
- promoting waste as a resource with a value

## Objectives

This strategy has a series of operational and strategic objectives to reduce household waste and improve both recycling rates and the recycling service in the borough. The objectives are:

- I. To increase the household recycling rate to 30% by 2019/20.
- II. To promote the waste hierarchy and support the reduction and reuse of waste.
- III. To decrease the average amount of residual waste produced by each household by 5kg per year.
- IV. To maximise the amount of material that is recycled (higher tonnages and capture rates) by:
  - ◆ increasing the collection of heavyweight recyclables
  - ◆ reducing contamination levels
  - ◆ targeting non-recyclers and making current recyclers recycle more
  - ◆ exploring ways new materials can be recycled, such as food waste
- V. To collect recyclable waste efficiently, reliably and with the least disruption to residents and harm to the street scene.
- VI. To develop and update an effective communications strategy and communications plan, which:
  - ◆ clearly communicates how to recycle correctly
  - ◆ effectively communicates with a transient and diverse population
  - ◆ encourages higher levels of recycling
  - ◆ sets out how and when communications will be used
  - ◆ promotes the use of the waste hierarchy
- VII. To produce and update an annual waste action work plan, which
  - ◆ details the full work programme of the Waste Action Team
  - ◆ enables a co-ordinated approach to delivering higher recycling rates
  - ◆ allows the whole work programme to be easily reviewed and monitored

- VIII. Explore internal and external joint working opportunities, new initiatives, and link with national and regional campaigns.
- IX. To achieve savings of over £200,000 through reduced waste disposal costs by 2020.

## **2. Next Steps and Future Initiatives**

This section briefly outlines the next steps to ensure the recycling rate is increased. It highlights areas for improvement and potential future initiatives to help with increasing recycling rates in the borough.

In order to increase recycling, the Waste Action Team will work in partnership with its waste collection contractor, residents, community groups, organisations and businesses to:

- provide the most efficient recycling collections
- encourage more people to recycle
- improve the way people recycle
- increase the range of materials which can be recycled

To achieve this, the Waste Action Team will continue to deliver the Work Plan, which is updated monthly but will also explore new ways of working and interventions which will concentrate on overcoming the main challenges to increasing the recycling rate in LBHF, which are:

- targeting non-recyclers and making current recyclers recycle more
- communicating how to 'recycle right'
- communicating with a transient population
- increasing the collection of heavyweight recyclables
- reducing contamination levels
- exploring how new materials can be recycled, such as food waste

Potential new projects and areas of work being explored include:

- establishing a reporting dashboard to improve reporting
- developing a food waste collection service for estates
- working with WRWA to ascertain how to gain sustained improvements of recycling on estates
- exploring different ways to incentivise recycling
- exploring external funding opportunities to deliver innovative solutions and service changes
- researching best practice from other Local Authorities and organisations, and better use of business intelligence to develop services
- dealing with contaminated bins on estates and the potential use of a dirty MRF
- closer working with the commercial waste team
- closer working with the planning and housing departments

Over the four years of this strategy, a range of new interventions will be delivered and used to shape the future of the recycling service in the borough alongside the ongoing work of the Waste Action Team. The continual improvement of the recycling service will be designed to deliver the strategic aim of increasing recycling by 8 percent by 2020.

### **3. Communications Strategy** (provided at Appendix 1)

The communications strategy sets out the approach, methodology and rationale being used to engage and communicate with residents in order to increase recycling rates and promote the use of the waste hierarchy. This includes a separate, detailed communications plan, which is a live document showing all current and planned future communications.

There is currently no legislation to make people recycle and therefore communication is the main tool to influence any behaviour change. It is very important that communication is effective, and therefore the communication strategy aims to:

- budget, plan and focus communications more effectively
- develop our understanding of key stakeholders, partners, audiences and the best methods of how to engage them
- develop targeted communications to inform and motivate stakeholders
- promote the use of the waste hierarchy
- ensure consistent, clear and effective communications are used
- develop a set of key waste reduction and recycling messages
- develop evidence based communications
- ensure the recycling infrastructure allows and supports the recycling communications

The communications strategy covers all forms of communications, including publications, web pages, social media, press releases, livery panels, advertising and campaigns.

The communications plan sets out what communications will be used and when. This is a live document used by the Communications Officer to co-ordinate the delivery of all the recycling and waste reduction communications used in LBHF.

### **4. Work Plan**

The Work Plan details all the recycling and waste reduction projects, campaigns and initiatives being delivered or planned by the Waste Action Team. This is a separate, live document which is updated regularly and used to co-ordinate the work of the Waste Action Team. This delivery plan shows how the aims and objectives of this strategy will be delivered.

The Waste Action Work Plan focuses on the following:

- Service Improvements - working with Serco and WRWA to improve the recycling service, train staff, address contamination and improve reporting.
- Partnership Working - developing productive working relationships with the main housing providers to improve recycling arrangements.
- Better Communication - improving and rationalising all the waste minimisation and recycling communications.
- Increased Resident Engagement – increasing the amount of direct engagement with residents to promote and encourage recycling.
- Innovation - Researching and developing new recycling and waste reduction interventions, such as introducing a food waste collection.

## **The London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham**

### **Recycling Communications Strategy - Options to Increase the Recycling Rate**

#### **Introduction**

In the current climate, in the face of financial adversity, finding financial savings is a priority for LBHF, whilst still providing excellent services and addressing environmental issues. There are significant disposal cost savings to be made from diverting waste from the residual to the recycling stream. A 1% shift in tonnage saves LBHF approximately £69k per annum. As the recycling rate in LBHF is relatively low (22% in 2015/16), an aim to increase the recycling rate by 4% over 2 years should be achievable through various practical interventions, and an effective communications campaign. This equates to savings of £276k per annum.

Another area where savings can be realised is through reducing the cost of recycling contamination. In LBHF, recycling contamination currently stands at about 15%, costing approximately £41k per annum. Additionally, contamination can also spoil a load of recycling, such as when black sacks are put in smart banks on estates. When this happens the whole load is disposed of as residual waste, which costs £146.50 per tonne instead of the £25 per tonne recycling fee.

However, focusing on contamination in recycling communications is problematic. It is difficult to get a message across that is not negative because of the inherent nature of the problem. Numerous studies, focus groups and surveys, by WRAP for example, have concluded that people do not respond well to negative messaging and, rather than change their behaviour positively, often will reduce the amount they recycle as a response to 'preachy' messaging. Additionally, contamination is quite technical and people tend to ignore, and do not engage with, terms such as 'contamination' and 'non-recyclable'.

Contamination should be dealt with as part of projects such as 'route riding' the rounds, bin monitoring and 'doorstepping', where conversations are had face to face with residents, or through specifically targeting offenders by 'sticker'ing contaminated bags and delivering letters.

It is therefore proposed that the focus of this communications campaign should be on increasing recycling and not on reducing contamination. This is where much larger savings could be made, where there is more of a scope for impact (as LBHF has a relatively low recycling rate), and there is greater likelihood of changing people's behaviour. Messages around non-recyclable items and contamination should be included in some materials, but only as a part of the wider message of promoting recycling.

#### **Overall aims**

To use data regarding the population characteristics of the borough and its recycling performance, coupled with research on promoting positive recycling behaviours, in order to develop and deliver a 2-year communications strategy aimed at increasing the recycling rates in LBHF.

## Overall objectives

- To increase LBHF's recycling rates by 2% per year for 2 years, resulting in a 26% recycling rate by the end of 2017/18
- To have a brand and visual identity, which can be adapted and used across all recycling communications
- To produce and distribute a range of fresh materials to residents, using varied communication channels
- To target audiences with specific communication materials based on demographic and recycling behaviour data
- To explore the potential to harmonise recycling communication across LBHF and RBKC as much as possible to minimise costs and maximise officer productivity, whilst ensuring sovereignty is maintained.

## **Developing the Communications**

It is important to be consistent with messages to build a strong brand that builds awareness, understanding and trust. However, refreshing communication materials regularly is vital, not just because information may be outdated and no longer accurate but also because people ignore them if they look familiar - a new design can grab someone's attention.

### Developing recycling communications: messaging

WRAP have collected feedback on recycling materials aimed at changing people's behaviour, through focus groups, surveys and questionnaires. From their findings they suggest the following:

- demonstrating the local and specific benefits recycling can realise is highly liked and has powerful 'stand out value'. This helps to make it feel closer to home, more relevant, and more informative for residents.
- transforming materials in to other items captures interests. (Anecdotally, on the BBC's 'Hugh's War on Waste', a woman was only convinced of the benefits of recycling when she tried on a coat made from recycled materials).
- combining the first two points, by demonstrating how materials can be transformed in to something that benefits people locally, changes and reinforces good behaviours.
- keeping messages simple and to the point.

They suggest staying away from:

- conveying the importance of recycling, as it comes across as 'preachy'.
- generic or vague benefits.
- feel good messages, as they are less engaging and can be patronising.
- humour, because it comes down to a matter of taste. However, it could potentially work on social media with a younger audience, or in videos.
- including messages about costs and saving the Council money. Many people don't see the benefit of saving the Council money and trying to demonstrate the benefits can be messy and misleading. Highlighting 'local' benefits is more effective.

Developing and implementing a successful recycling communications strategy involves more than just communicating with residents, however. Joint working with

colleagues in the Housing department, caretakers, housing associations, property managers, lettings agents, and landlords will be required in order to ensure maximum impact. To this end, officers are working on an 'estate based working' project which will be linked closely with the communications strategy to best deliver messages to tenants and leaseholders.

#### Developing recycling communications: materials

To understand the range of materials the LBHF Waste Action Team needs in order to achieve its overall aim, it is necessary to look at the population characteristics of the borough and the data available, which highlights residents' recycling attitudes and behaviours.

Analysis of this data has led to the recommendations for delivering the communications strategy described below.

- 1) Key messages should be pictorial and the amount of text limited.
- 2) Selected materials can be translated in to other languages and put in appropriate sites such as community centres and mosques.
- 3) Doorstepping should be carried out for residents living on estates.
- 4) Engagement/activity days should be carried out for residents living on estates, ideally jointly with Housing colleagues.
- 5) Permanent communications, such as posters and bin signage, should be strategically placed on estates.
- 6) Work with property managers, Housing, Housing Associations and caretakers to ensure materials put through a shared letterbox are delivered to each address and messages are getting through to tenants and leaseholders.
- 7) Communication should be constant or cyclical – not just one-off activities. More frequent communications in areas with high transiency indicators. This data is available on ACORN.
- 8) Include a communications piece in council tax booklets, which are given to new residents.
- 9) In areas where transiency is high, focus can also be placed on more permanent communications, (there is a cross over with recommendation 5) such as posters and billboards.
- 10) Based on ONS statistics, the largest group of transient people in London are 18-32 year old private renters. This group responds best to social media. A recycling Twitter and Facebook page linked to local community social media pages should be developed.
- 11) With a relatively low recycling rate, the bulk of communications should focus on getting the basics right. Simple instructional pieces of information, coupled with some behaviour change messages, should be used to encourage the non-recyclers to recycle.
- 12) Funding permitting, rounds with a higher recycling rate of around 30% should be targeted with more advanced messages, such as listing the 'usual suspects', e.g. commonly missed recyclable materials.
- 13) Communications should include guidance on the types of plastics that are recyclable and those that are not.
- 14) A communications strategy for estates should be a priority, with bespoke materials tailored to whether residents recycle using chutes, containers or mini centres.

### Brand, style, tone and imagery

Overall, the communications should have a transformative theme running through them, with the benefits localised where feasible. Most items will also inform residents of basic information and explain how recycling is easy. The same or similar font, colours, messaging and pictures should run throughout. This is what is known as the golden thread.

Recycle for London has developed a strong brand and line of messages to promote recycling. It wants London boroughs to adopt their branding, as the more consistent the message across the city the more people will absorb and engage with recycling messages through the drip feed approach.

The materials are customisable and flexible, so that LBHF photographs can be added as well as a stripe of colour to reflect corporate branding. It is suggested that, where possible, materials are customised and if new materials or graphics are required, they are made to reflect the Recycle for London style.