

A targeted campaign to increase participation in recycling services by black and minority ethnic groups

Introduction

By 2007-08, major changes to Bristol's waste services had raised the rate for recycling and composting of waste from 12.5%¹ to 36.5%. A performance review identified there were areas experiencing low participation in the recycling services. Bristol City Council reviewed why each of these areas was underperforming and revised its communications approach. From January to December 2007 Bristol City Council targeted these areas with bespoke communication campaigns.

Key Facts

- Year-on-year increase in participation of 5.8% for organics and 4.6% for dry recycling collections.
- Consultation with key stakeholders and communities at each stage of campaign.
- The campaign lasted from January 2007 to December 2007.
- The campaign cost £26,400 and monitoring cost £19,300.
- Cost per head was £2.64.

About Bristol

- Bristol City Council is a unitary authority in the south west of England.
- The area is made up of 179,206 households and has a population of 410,500.
- According to the 2001 Census, 8.2% of the population belong to black and minority ethnic (BME) groups.
- Over 60% of 'Black or Black British' residents and over 40% of 'Asian or Asian British' residents live in the 'East Inner City' ward. Over 13% of residents of this ward were born outside the UK. The ward houses over 50% of the city's Muslim population and over a third of the city's Sikh population. Nine of the 10 mosques in Bristol are based there.

Background to campaign

Low participation in the new recycling services was observed in the East Inner-City ward of Bristol. This area has a high proportion of social housing, many houses of multiple occupation and high levels of population movement. It has a high proportion of BME communities and religious diversity. Despite the inclusion of translated messages in all communications regarding service changes, only 140 foreign language leaflets had been requested between 2005 and 2007. Bristol CC concluded that its communication materials were not effective in reaching residents and a new campaign aimed at these BME communities, which was also sensitive to housing type and tenure, was initiated to increase participation rates.

¹ 2004/5 recycling rate

Communication objectives

The aim of the campaign was to increase awareness, understanding and commitment to recycling among the BME communities in Bristol, leading to increasing participation in the black box (dry recycling) and food waste and cardboard kerbside collection schemes. The campaign's main objectives were to:

- increase overall participation in the dry recycling and food waste collection service by 11% in target areas by December 2007; and
- increase tonnages of dry recyclables and food waste collected by 11% in target areas by December 2007.

Approach

Grounds4Change, a local organisation with extensive experience of working on environmental initiatives in the East Inner City area, was selected to deliver the campaign on behalf of Bristol City Council. A steering group ensured that community groups and residents were aware of the campaign, and incorporated their input from the beginning.

Campaign staff

Before advertising for staff, Grounds4Change consulted other local authorities with experience running similar campaigns (including Tower Hamlets and Preston). Essential criteria included knowledge of the respective groups that the staff would be working with and appropriate language skills. Three local people with strong bi-lingual skills (in Urdu, Somali and Bengali), natural enthusiasm and a hard-work ethic were recruited rather than people with previous experience of recycling (which could be quickly learnt).

The 'Recycling and Islam' element of the campaign focused on mosque visits and sermons, and utilised community resources such as the Bristol Muslim Cultural Society's radio station Salaam Shalom. Grounds4Change was not able to recruit a suitable person for this element of the campaign so appointed the Bristol Muslim Cultural Society to deliver it.

Publicity materials

Multi-lingual materials focused on graphic explanation, clarity and brevity of texts and the campaign message, "Make a Better Future for Your Children – Recycle!". A separate leaflet was produced linking Islam and recycling with the title, 'Do not be Wasteful' (Qur'an 7:31): Save the Earth and Recycle'. This leaflet was developed by BME workers in consultation with local religious and community leaders.

A leaflet informing residents how to recycle and motivating them to do so was developed by Grounds4Change following WRAP guidelines and in consultation with local residents and the local Imams (leaders). The leaflet design was consistent with the current city-wide recycling leaflets produced by the council.

Given the prominence of stories and pictures in Somali and Asian culture, it was decided to use pictorially based leaflets which explain what happens to items recycled within the home, the process they go through outside the home and what they are eventually made into. The photographs used in the leaflets were chosen to resonate with the target groups. Permission has been granted for these photos to be used nationally and they can be downloaded from www.recyclenowpartners.org.uk

The language used was jargon free, concise and simple because of the focus on graphical explanation and to aid translation, particularly as languages such as Somali use many more words than English.

Leaflets were translated into Somali, Urdu and Bengali with an English version that linked recycling and Islam. They were distributed to residents:

- during face-to-face canvassing;
- at venues such as local day care centres, language schools and community groups;
- at roadshows; and
- during mosque visits.

Workshops

Fifteen workshops involving over 300 targeted residents were organised during the campaign with help from members of the steering group. Nearly 80% of the participants were either Asian or Somali, usually in a small group setting of typically less than 20 people. The workshops offered residents the opportunity to discuss issues connected to the campaign and to resolve any problems. Many of the participants were already recycling advocates in their respective communities.

Key issues raised included:

- recyclers wanting plastic bottle collections;
- problems with food waste smelling;
- recycling containers going missing; and
- the perceived difficulties of recycling business waste.

The workshops proved invaluable in gathering feedback about the effectiveness of the campaign at resident level, its impact on the community and the delivery of campaign goals.

Roadshows

Recycling roadshows visited eight local community events varying from street parties to The Islamic Cultural Fayre. The latter, in particular, provided an opportunity to speak to women from the target communities.

The roadshows resulted in around a thousand direct resident contacts. Around 6,000 people would have seen the branded 'Recycle for Bristol' campaign materials and, in some cases, recycling facilities at the event. The larger roadshows enabled staff to engage members of the public and make more contacts than just recycling enthusiasts who visited the stand.

Mosque visits

Eleven mosque visits took place and over 1,200 contacts were made. Bristol's Imams were contacted and meetings arranged at which links between the teachings of Islam and responsible environmental behaviour and the Recycle for Bristol campaign were discussed. Following these initial meetings, the Imams delivered a recycling 'khutba' or sermon at Friday prayers and the campaign staff distributed the 'recycling and Islam' leaflet as people left the mosque. An advert, based on an edited version of the 'khutba', ran on Radio Salaam Shalom (a joint Islamic/Jewish radio station run by Bristol Muslim Cultural Society).



Door-to-door canvassing

Door-to-door canvassing focussed on areas with particularly low recycling rates or high levels of side waste. Canvassers knocked on about 3,000 doors; over 1,400 resident contacts made and over 700 target residents spoken to. In addition, 204 black boxes and 122 food waste containers were ordered.

Supplementary activities

A number of supplementary activities took place in the target areas during the campaign period. These included:

- collection of food waste from mosques during Ramadan;
- community clean-ups;
- painting of bring banks and mini recycling centres;
- additional door-stepping; and
- further recycling-related publicity.

Results/Conclusion

Grounds4Change conducted participation monitoring according to WRAP guidelines in Bristol's inner city areas of St Paul's and St Agnes during December 2006, June 2007 and December 2007; 1,501 households were monitored for participation in dry recycling and 1,188 for participation in organic collections (one street did not receive food waste collections). The data suggest there was a year-on-year increase in participation of 5.8% for organics collections (to 31.5%) and of 4.6% for dry recycling collections (to 34.3%) between December 2006 and December 2007.

It is estimated that well in excess of 10,000 residents were made aware of the campaign through leaflets, articles in community and stakeholder newsletters, local radio publicity and branding at events.

Key Learning Points

- **Working with communities.** Grounds4Change has six years of experience of working with the BME communities in the East Inner City area of Bristol. This experience combined with help from the steering group recruited from the local community allowed it to develop an effective communications solution.
- **Reliability of demographic data.** Census data for BME communities are unlikely to be as accurate as for other groups (data are collected via forms) and are now quite dated. There were few alternative data sources so local knowledge was needed to determine ethnic groupings in Bristol.
- **Limitation of available recycling data.** Before the campaign there was limited detailed information on recycling performance in Bristol. Existing data did not provide breakdowns by ward, neighbourhood, or economic and social groups. Although tonnages per round do provide data at a collection round level, rounds are structured to ensure operational efficiency and do not correspond with wards, output areas or neighbourhoods. The results cannot therefore be mapped against other data. Local knowledge was required to interpret the datasets in order to fully understand the issues and monitoring performance proved challenging.

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