

Communications campaign to introduce alternate weekly collections to Corby residents

Introduction

Corby Borough Council initiated a design process and rebranded its communication materials to ensure successful introduction of alternate weekly collections in Corby in January 2007. The new scheme involved a number of changes including a change to collection days, a reassignment of bins, changing the refuse bin to green waste and temporarily moving glass out of the collection.

Key Facts

- Recycling rate has more than doubled.
- 92% of residents were participating in the new scheme by the end of the communications campaign.
- The campaign lasted from January 2007 to March 2008.
- Campaign funding was £43,600.
- Cost per head was £1.82.

About Corby

- Corby Borough Council is situated in north Northamptonshire. It consists of one main urban centre (the town of Corby) and seven surrounding villages (Cottingham, East Carlton, Gretton, Middleton, Rockingham, Stanion and Weldon).
- The population is 54,000.
- Corby has 24,000 domestic properties.

Background to campaign

The recycling service which had operated across the borough since 2000 (excluding flats) had begun with a fortnightly kerbside collection of paper. This was expanded in 2003 to include cans and glass bottles. In February 2005, alternate weekly collection (AWC) was introduced to a trial area of approximately 3,500 properties in a rural part of the borough. This service involved the introduction of a black 240-litre wheeled bin for residual waste and a green 240-litre wheeled bin for garden waste and cardboard. The two bins were collected on alternate weeks with the existing recycling box continuing to be collected fortnightly. In early 2006 this scheme was expanded into the main urban area (approx 8,500 households) and, at the same time, an additional box was provided for the kerbside collection of plastic bottles.

Following the successful operation of the trial, it was agreed in August 2006 to roll out the AWC service to all appropriate households across the borough (excluding flats) but to replace the existing box collection of dry recyclables with a commingled collection using a third wheeled bin. All households received a 240-litre brown wheeled bin for dry recyclables (paper, cans/tins and plastic bottles); those properties not already on an alternate weekly collection received a new black bin for refuse. Glass was removed from the kerbside collection service when the commingled collection was introduced. The existing green bins in the extended area, which up until that point had been used for refuse, were to be used for green waste and cardboard.

Communication objectives

The overall aim was to inform all residents of the new scheme so that they felt confident in using it, and understood how to use it and why it was being introduced. The specific objectives were to:

- inform all householders within the borough of the new AWC waste and recycling services by February 2007;
- achieve an average participation rate of 75% in the new recycling services by May 2007; and
- achieve the council's recycling and recovery targets of 40%+ for 2007-08.

Approach Branding

Corby BC rebranded all its communications material as part of the 'Recycle for Corby' campaign to make full use of the 'Recycle Now' design and brand in terms of both recognition and cost efficiencies.

The main campaign began in January 2007 with the development, in conjunction with WRAP, of new branding and design for all communication materials produced by the council's waste and recycling team.

As part of one survey at the council's One Stop Shop, 113 residents were asked a series of questions about the recycling service. People were shown the recently introduced 'Recycle for Corby' logo and asked 'Do you recognise this branding'. Initial results suggested that 95.5% said they did recognise the branding.

Awareness raising

The initial awareness campaign began in October 2006, with a tour of tenants' and residents' groups and visits to parish council meetings by council officers. This established early contact with the local groups to highlight the main areas of the new scheme and welcome any feedback to help improve the introduction.

A two-page article was printed in the council's one magazine in December 2006. This magazine is delivered to every domestic property in Corby, giving the council maximum coverage throughout the borough. The article provided an overview of the new refuse and recycling service, and gave information about the types of waste that could be collected and the start date of the scheme.



Informing residents

- **Letter.** A letter was sent to all households in the borough informing them of the proposed changes to the service. This letter was delivered in a printed envelope so that it would be eye-catching and not be mistaken for junk mail.
- **A5 flyers.** These offered easily accessible information regarding the new refuse and recycling service, and were distributed at roadshows and local events.
- **Pre rollout information pack.** As the bins were being distributed ready for the start of the new scheme, 30,000 information packs were delivered to residents consisting of a printed envelope containing a second letter, an eight-page instructional information booklet, bin stickers and a collection calendar. Residents were advised which materials they should put in each bin and when each bin would be collected, so as to enable them to participate fully in the scheme.
- **Community posters.** These were put up in strategic locations (supermarkets, libraries and community centres, etc.) to highlight the new refuse and recycling service.

- **Roadshows.** A series of roadshows were organised throughout February and March 2007 during the campaign rollout to offer on-the-spot advice for residents who required further information. A number of display boards were purchased to assist in the effectiveness of these roadshows. Additional roadshows were held throughout the year to help ensure continued involvement by residents.
- **Reminders.** Residents were urged to recycle with the distribution of 49,000 bin hangers (reminders/contamination tags). In November 2007, 25,000 copies of a further leaflet were distributed to act as a reminder to residents of the services on offer and how to use them.

Results/Conclusion

The recycling rate has more than doubled since the introduction of the new three-bin refuse and recycling scheme in February 2007. The recycling rate of 18% (including glass) in 2005-06 increased to 43% (excluding glass) in September 2007, with a final rate for 2007-08 of 39%. With the re-introduction of glass to the kerbside recycling collection, hopefully later in 2008, it is anticipated that the recycling rate will increase by a further 2-3% within a short period of time.

The percentage of residents participating in the scheme by the end of the communications campaign had risen to 92%.

As a result of the campaign, Corby BC has decided to reinforce the Recycle for Corby message and to continue using the localised Recycle Now call to action and branding as it is widely recognised and liked by residents. The council also intends to continue to carry out monitoring to ensure it targets residents accurately.

Key Learning Points

- The highly visual, clear communication materials helped the council mitigate the impact of the quite extensive changes on residents.
- At the beginning of the scheme some residents were contaminating their recycling bins. For the first four weeks of the campaign, a tag was attached to contaminated bins to inform these residents that further contamination would lead to the bin not being collected. While this practice was generally welcomed by residents as helping them to use the scheme correctly rather than penalising them, in some cases it was found that problems arose by mistake through the resident's eagerness to participate in recycling. Following promotion through roadshows and press coverage such as articles in one magazine, the number of bins being contaminated fell significantly.

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