

Local authority communications case study: Derby

A partnership between Derby City Council and Groundwork Derby & Derbyshire to promote recycling

Introduction

Derby City Council introduced a new food waste collection scheme between September 2006 and November 2007. Between April and December 2007, Groundwork Derby & Derbyshire promoted recycling to non-English speaking communities in Derby. The two organisations worked in partnership on a campaign designed to promote take-up and understanding of the changes, and to increase recycling.

Key Facts

- Recycling rate increased from 25.4% in 2005-06 to 40.2% in 2007-08.
- Participation rate increased 25%.
- The campaign by Derby City Council lasted from September 2006 to November 2007, and cost £46,300.
- The campaign by Groundwork Derby & Derbyshire lasted from April to December 2007, and had funding of £42,900.
- Cost per household was £0.88.

About Derby

- Derby City Council is a unitary council in the East Midlands.
- Derby has a population of 233,741 in 101,008 households.
- 24% of these households live in terraced housing and 10% in flats.
- Derby has a significant number of black and minority ethnic (BME) communities.

Background to campaign

Until 2003 the only kerbside recycling service offered to residents was a fortnightly collection of newspaper/magazines and textiles in reusable bags. In 2003 alternate weekly collections were introduced across Derby, with refuse collected one week and dry recyclables or garden waste collected the other. In 2006 a new in-vessel composting plant opened and, with this facility available, Derby City Council decided to introduce food waste to the garden waste collection. Residents are provided with a brown organics bin, a blue recyclables bin, a blue newspapers bag, a red textiles bag and a black refuse bin.

Communication objectives

Derby City Council's key objectives were to:

- increase participation in the green waste scheme by 10% by March 2008;
- achieve 70% capture of food waste in the green waste scheme by March 2008; and
- communicate the changes in the types of materials that can be collected in the brown bin to all properties currently participating in the scheme by March 2007.

Groundwork Derby & Derbyshire's key objectives were to:

- encourage residents to become actively engaged in recycling, through individual and group consultation by November 2007;
- produce a waste and recycling booklet that can be easily understood by non-English speaking residents by the end of 2007; and
- monitor key numbers (community groups contacted, individuals communicated with, leaflets produced and distributed, community champions trained, events held and attendance, and recycling pledges received between April and November 2007).

Approach

Target audiences

Derby City Council's campaign informed all residents receiving the garden waste collection that they could now place food waste into their bin. Groundwork Derby & Derbyshire's campaign was aimed at hard-to-reach ethnic minority groups, many of whom were recent asylum seekers and refugees residing in the deprived areas of the city.



Design and branding

Derby City Council branded all its communication materials with the 'Recycle Now' call to action to guarantee that they:

- tied in with the national campaign; and
- were consistent in emphasising the message that residents should recycle as an everyday activity.

To overcome problems with language and to ensure campaign messages were made as clear as possible to the different communities, Groundwork Derby & Derbyshire consulted a BME group to obtain community opinions on booklet design. Incorporating this advice, its waste and recycling booklet was produced with an emphasis on graphic explanation, pictures and diagrams but using the Recycle Now branding to ensure it worked seamlessly alongside the Derby City Council communication materials. Meetings with community groups continued to review and evaluate the booklet, and provided

opportunities for question and answer sessions on the scheme.

Communications

The campaign by Derby City Council involved distributing information leaflets, collection calendars and stickers to residents. Roadshows were undertaken in the city centre to attract more people. The changes were reinforced with nine bin lorry liveries and 40,000 cards distributed by their crews. A branded promotional paper bag was included in the leaflet pack for the collection of food waste before its disposal in the brown bin. During February 2007 the Council organised the design, printing and distribution of 70,000 information leaflets, 70,000 bin stickers and 70,000 calendars. The new lorry liveries were also seen for the first time during February 2007.

Bin stickers were distributed by Groundwork Derby & Derbyshire to targets properties and communal facilities. Recycling booklets, packets of promotional branded seed, paper pens (made from recycled paper and plastic), cotton branded bags and tubes of colouring pencils (made from recycled timber) were all used to reinforce the message.

Community group meetings and doorstep canvassing were used in the target areas. Many residents in these areas were unable to speak English and these activities, using interpreters where necessary, allowed residents to voice concerns, raise questions relating to waste and recycling and request additional bags and larger bins.

The design, printing and distribution of 7,600 visual information booklets by Groundwork Derby & Derbyshire took place during June 2007. Outreach events and use of promotional merchandise were between June and November 2007.

Results/Conclusion

Derby City Council saw a 25% increase in the number of residents participating in the scheme city-wide from 71% in November 2006 to 96% November 2007.

In 2005-06 the combined recycling and composting rate in Derby was 26.4%. The target of 38% set for 2007-08 looks to have been exceeded with an expected rate of 40%.

The project has been successful in increasing the awareness of the materials collected in the brown bins and the number of residents

participating in the scheme. The Council has decided, as a result of feedback from residents, to expand the use of the Recycle Now call to action and branding.

Circulation of the waste and recycling booklet and stickers proved successful in helping to reduce contamination. Initial feedback from the Council's Street Care Inspectors indicated that contamination of bins had been much less compared with other non-targeted rounds. This may well have been achieved through the easy-to-understand format of the booklet and the face-to-face contact with canvassers from Groundwork Derby & Derbyshire.

The partnership between the Council and Groundwork Derby & Derbyshire proved very successful in communicating with hard-to-reach groups and engaging with these communities. Groundwork Derby & Derbyshire has also continued development of the Recycle Now branded leaflets, which worked well in overcoming language difficulties among Derby's BME communities. These leaflets have now been used more widely at community sites and, more recently, in schools. To give added value to the project, the leaflets are now distributed by housing associations to new tenants to the area and sorting waste correctly now forms part of many tenancy agreements.

Unfortunately the capture of food waste in the organic waste collection has been very low, missing the 70% capture rate objective. This is a disappointment and something which Derby City Council is reviewing.

Key Learning Points

- Taking time to build close links between the two partners proved very beneficial, allowing both to complement each other's strengths and achieve cost efficiencies.
- Recruitment of community champions was particularly challenging. It had been envisaged that champions would be utilised to help their local community with how and what to recycle, which would have been particularly beneficial. Four different methods were used to try and recruit champions but were unfortunately unsuccessful. However, this problem had limited impact on the project as interpreters were used instead at community group sessions and an alternative method of finding a sustainable mode of communication was established through the housing associations.

'The project has been very successful in increasing the awareness of the materials suitable in the brown bin as well as raising the profile of recycling in Derby generally. We are continually undertaking road shows at events etc and expanding the use of the Recycle Now logo and branding. The work being undertaken with Groundwork Derby and Derbyshire is also proving very successful and is continuing the development of the text free/language friendly leaflets. This leaflet has received many positive comments from the public and members. We are planning to expand this work to cover other areas of communication within the service.'

Rachel Bailey, then Waste Policy and Projects Officer for Derby City Council

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