

Local Authority communications case study: Poole

Improving participation through targeted tourist visitor campaigns

Introduction

Stage one of the 'Recycle at Home and Away' campaign by Poole Borough Council (the 'at Home' element) sought to increase recycling among householders. Stage two (the 'Away' element) aimed to influence the behaviour of the 3.5 million tourists who visit Poole each year to make recycling a 'way of life' rather than something 'you do only at home'.

Key Facts

- Capture rates for recyclable materials on the beach waste were as high as 90%.
- More effort needed to increase capture rates at the caravan park targeted by the campaign.
- The 'Away' element of the campaign lasted from June to September 2007. The 'at Home' element began in June 2006 and ran for six months.
- Funding of £259,100 for the 18-month long 'Recycle at Home and Away' campaign.
- Cost per household for the 'at Home' element was £1.25. It cannot be calculated for the 'Away' element, but the budget for campaign activities was £120,000 including monitoring.

About Poole

- Poole is a unitary authority on the south coast in Dorset.
- It has a resident population of 137,000 in 63,219 households.
- Poole is a popular seaside resort attracting long and short stay visitors mainly from the UK.
- Most visitors stay in temporary accommodation ranging from hotels to caravan parks and campsites.

Background to campaign

In 2004 Poole BC introduced a fortnightly kerbside co-mingled recycling service to all households. Paper and card, plastic bottles, glass and cans are collected in blue bins with a capacity of 140 or 240 litres.



Tourists create a seasonal influx of visitors to Poole who stay in the area for only short periods of time. Their patterns of behaviour are different to their normal 'at home' routines, posing communication and operational challenges in encouraging people to recycle while away from home. Communications therefore need to be eye-catching, frequent and preferably fun to mirror visitors' holiday mood.

Deciding the location and frequency of recycling bins to capture the highest volumes of recyclable materials from tourists has to be learnt through trial and error. The cost versus the benefits was another important consideration for the council when planning recycling provision for tourists.

Surveys carried out at the start of summer 2007 identified visitor characteristics as:

- mainly within the 25-44 age group;
- predominantly families with children;
- a smaller, yet significant number, in the 45-64 age group; and
- coming from a very wide range of postcodes from Bournemouth to Birmingham, to Belgium.

Communication objectives

The overall aim of the 'Away' campaign was to increase recycling by tourists visiting Poole. The campaign targeted two audiences:

- holidaymakers and day trippers visiting Poole's beaches (many staying in and around Poole); and
- holidaymakers staying in a popular caravan park (i.e. living outside Poole).

Approach

The headline 'Recycle for Poole' was combined with the campaign message 'Recycle at Home and Away'. The 'Away' element sought to encourage tourists to use the new public recycling facilities on the beaches as well as the recycling banks at the caravan park.

Promotions for the 'Recycle at Home and Away' campaign included:

- participation in the annual Poole tourism awards event in 2006 to garner support from landlords, businesses and the local seaside attractions;
- radio advertising (June to September 2007);
- interviews and visits from roving reporters and events team from a local radio station; and

- a feature on the local TV news programme on the 'Pirates of the Carrybin' beach landings.

The communications materials used during 2007 in support of the 'Recycle Away' campaign and new public recycling services included:

- bus adverts (June to September);
- large posters (six sheets) in Sandbanks, the Condor Ferries terminal, Poole Station, car parks and the town centre during July and August);
- A4 posters on notice-boards at the beach directing the public to the recycling and refuse points (July and August);
- A2 posters on pillars in car parks (July and August); and
- a mobile exhibition unit.

Roadshows were run on the beaches and in seafront areas during the school holidays. Information was provided by 'towel-to-towel' canvassers and a staffed exhibition unit. The popular 'Pirates of the Carrybin' show was supported by promotional giveaways including branded cotton rucksacks, buckets and spades, tea towels and frisbees.

The campaign directed visitors to use the dual blue recycling and black refuse bin collection points. Poole BC set up 55 recycling points (360-litre bins) along the most popular stretches of beach, providing the public with the same commingled, blue bin recycling service used by householders.

On-street dual recycling and refuse services were introduced throughout all public and quayside areas of Poole in spring 2008.



Results/Conclusion

The various elements of 'Recycle Away' allowed council staff to engage face-to-face with over 9,000 tourists and day trippers during the course of the campaign.

Anecdotal feedback suggested the campaign had a positive impact with the visiting public. However, the transient nature of the tourist population and the inability to measure participation at an 'individual level' posed challenges when evaluating the campaign's impact. Poole BC therefore commissioned two sets of research – a 'committed recycler' survey (Table 1) and a compositional analysis (Tables 2 and 3) – carried out at points along three of Poole's busiest beaches and at the caravan park. The research was conducted over three phases in 2007 (first week in July, last week in July and third week in August). The committed recycler survey also recorded how long visitors had been in Poole. This provided useful insights to the recycling behaviour of tourist and day trippers, which will be used to guide future campaigns.

Analysis of beach waste showed that recycling was highest during the last week in July when campaign activities were at their most intense. Capture rates tailed off towards the end of the campaign though they remained higher than before it started. Most of the recycling bins had higher than average levels of contamination, though the direct cause was not established. Table 2 shows the three highest volume materials found in the residual waste bins on the beach and at the caravan park.

Very low volumes of captured materials were found at the caravan park (Table 3). These can be attributed to low levels of promotion and the limited facilities for recycling, with only two skips provided across the whole park. In addition, the skips for trade waste and recycling were the same colour (blue), possibly confusing users and making campaign messages difficult to implement.

Behaviour	Beaches	Caravan park
Committed recyclers	81.1%	70.9%
Awareness of recycling facilities	55.0%	40.0%

* 1,240 visitors to the caravan park and 1,210 visitors across the three beach areas were surveyed.

Table 1: Survey results*

Material	% found in residual waste bins on beaches	Material	% found in residual waste bins at the caravan park
Glass	24	Food waste	32
Organics	15	Paper	14
Paper	14	Plastics	13

Table 2: Highest volume materials found in residual waste bins

Material	Capture rates	
	Beach	Caravan park
Plastics	79%	5%
Metal cans	68%	4%
Glass	90%	9%
Cardboard and card	56%	5%
Paper	82%	9%

Table 3: Capture rates of recyclable materials

Key Learning Points

- 'Fun factor' mix of campaign elements fitted the public's 'holiday frame of mind'.
- High frequency and visibility of recycling bins.
- Use of same recycling service as for households meant those beach goers who were residents were familiar with the system.
- More effort needed at caravan parks (e.g. more recycling units, better signage, provision of recycling sacks for visitors, posters in central areas).

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