

Local Authority communications case study: Staffordshire

A partnership communications campaign to raise awareness of recycling and encourage participation at a local level

Introduction

The Staffordshire Recycling Partnership campaign was co-ordinated on behalf of the partnership by a dedicated project manager based at Staffordshire County Council. It covered all parts of Staffordshire managed by Staffordshire County Council and local targeted campaigns managed by Stafford, East Staffordshire, South Staffordshire, Cannock Chase and Lichfield councils. Separately funded but linked projects were run by Tamworth, Stoke-on-Trent, Newcastle-under-Lyme and Staffordshire Moorlands councils. The councils making up the Staffordshire Recycling Partnership are:

- Staffordshire County Council
- East Staffordshire Borough Council
- South Staffordshire Borough Council
- Stafford Borough Council
- Cannock Chase District Council
- Lichfield District Council
- Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council (separately funded project).
- Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (separately funded project)
- Stoke-on-Trent City Council (separately funded project)
- Tamworth Borough Council (separately funded project).

Key Facts

- Recycling rates rose significantly in all partnership councils.
- Overall increase in use of HWRCs of 1%.
- Campaign lasted from September 2006 to March 2008.
- Campaign budget was £647,600, of which £498,600 was allocated to the four separately funded projects.
- Cost per household was £1.85.

About Staffordshire

- Three-quarters of the land area of the county is rural and a quarter of the population live in small rural communities.
- The county's main urban areas include Stoke-upon-Trent, Stafford, Lichfield, Tamworth, Cannock, Burton-upon-Trent, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Leek and Codsall.
- Some 2.4% or 19,000 residents are from black and minority ethnic communities, with particular concentrations in Burton-upon-Trent.
- Pockets of multiple deprivation exist in Staffordshire. These pockets are most pronounced in Stoke-on-Trent, Burton-upon-Trent, Cannock, Newcastle-under-Lyme and Tamworth, though considerable rural areas experience deprivation.

Background to campaign

The different local authorities in Staffordshire each have different socio-economic characteristics and offer their own challenges towards service provision. Recycling rates in 2005-06 ranged from 16% for Newcastle-under-Lyme BC to 46.1% for Lichfield DC.

At the beginning of the campaign in September 2006, eight of the councils provided an alternate weekly or fortnightly collection of dry recyclables (varying material streams) and organic materials, together with alternate weekly collection (AWC) or weekly collection of residual waste. Staffordshire Moorlands DC and Stafford BC introduced new AWC schemes in August 2007 and February 2008 respectively.



The target audiences for the partnership campaign were:

- socio-demographic groups needing the most motivation and those most likely to support/use new services (75% of effort); and
- niche groups that have proved hard to engage in Staffordshire's 'Blue collar roots' Acorn group (20% of effort) and Asian communities (5% of effort).

Communication objectives

The aims of the partnership campaign were to:

- provide support to all partners to enable them to increase collected tonnages of recyclable materials;
- increase capture rates of recyclate on AWC kerbside schemes;
- increase participation rates in the recycling kerbside schemes not on AWC; and
- increase usage rates at Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) throughout the county.

Approach

The partnership campaign ran from September 2006 to March 2008. A generic campaign was used to target the major audience and a tailored marketing approach was adopted for the niche groups. The partnership funded a project manager who received support from existing council teams.

The partnership campaign made full use of 'Recycle Now' resources to produce high-quality, market-tested materials that provided both a consistent brand across the county and a link with the national campaign. The partners worked with high profile community groups and businesses, and ran a generic awareness raising campaign based on the national Recycle Now brand/campaign.

Existing and new HWRCs were promoted through leaflets and posters, and by rebranding the sites with Recycle Now branded signage.

Doorstep canvassing was carried out to try to reach hard-to-engage socio-demographic groups living in flats and high density terrace houses.

Other initiatives aimed at raising the level of awareness and recycling rates included:

- receptacle stickers and leaflets with Recycle Now branding;
- kerbside-specific advertising to improve support for the recently introduced AWC service;

- training collection crews on how to implement new contamination and enforcement policies; and
- a local radio campaign incorporating live interviews, news reports, adverts, visits to recycling sites, discussions with residents, etc.

Linked campaigns

The campaign in Newcastle-under-Lyme included:

- focus groups within the targeted collection rounds;
- new service leaflet about the kerbside dry recycling scheme sent to all households;
- doorstep canvassing campaign (6,000 households contacted);
- recycling 'wallet' containing service leaflet, calendar, green waste leaflet and 'bring' site details to be distributed via canvassers and to go to new residents;
- leaflet stands at libraries, council offices, town halls, etc. in the poorer performing rounds;
- new signage at 18 'bring' sites;
- crew training programme to raise awareness of the key messages and help them respond to questions from the public;
- press pack for local media and the Council's corporate communications team; and
- articles in the council's newspaper.

Tamworth BC employed two recycling wardens in a campaign which supported the introduction of new and improved collection infrastructure including communal recycling facilities for all multi-occupancy properties, doorstep collections of dry recyclate at six high rise blocks and the introduction of a smaller residual bin for householders who had so far failed to participate in recycling schemes. The campaign also included:

- distributing to all households a new service leaflet explaining the new policies with regard to enforcement, service calendars and a promotional leaflet to act as a reminder to recycle;
- a new leaflet and doorstep canvassing explaining the service for high rise buildings;
- roadshows; and
- newspaper adverts.

The campaign in Staffordshire Moorlands DC supported the introduction of AWC and the addition of food waste to its garden waste scheme. The campaign included a mobile exhibition vehicle, bin stickers, vehicle livery, display boards and roadshows.

Stoke City Council funded a project manager to run its campaign to promote existing services and increase participation. The campaign consisted of:

- doorstep canvassing;
- production of a recycling guide, service leaflet, contamination cards and collection calendars;
- introduction of new vehicle livery and HWRC signage;
- bus and press advertisements;
- billboards; and
- roadshows.



Results/Conclusion

There was an overall 1% increase in use of HWRCs in the county and recycling rates increased in all parts of Staffordshire (Table 1).

Local authority	2005-06	2007-08*
Staffordshire CC (overall)	33.7%	43.4%
Cannock Chase District Council	21.0%	40.2%
East Staffordshire Borough Council	25.2%	34.9%
Lichfield District Council	46.1%	50.6%
South Staffordshire Borough Council	31.3%	46.2%
Stafford Borough Council	24.0%	30.9%
Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council†	16.6%	25.5%
Tamworth Borough Council†	36.0%	39.1%

* Unaudited.

† Separately funded project.

Table 1: Recycling rates

Key Learning Points

There are a number of challenges involved in working as a partnership such as:

- increased time taken to communicate and make decisions;
- selecting the correct key community events as a group while ensuring all partners are included;
- building trust; and
- achieving an equitable share of the benefits.

Working in partnership requires trust and accountability to be successful, but we have found real benefits from joint working to manage peak workflows and making better use of each of the members' individual strengths to deliver a higher quality public service.'

**Mark Parkinson,
Staffordshire Recycling Partnership**

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