EC1 New Deal for Communities and London Borough of Islington: pilot chute recycling systems in blocks of flats

Background

EC1 New Deal for Communities (NDC) is one of 39 New Deal for Communities programmes set up by the Government to help bridge the gap between some of the poorest and most deprived neighbourhoods and the rest of the country.

The NDC is responsible for investing government funding in the EC1 area of Islington to help tackle poor access to job opportunities, high levels of crime, educational underachievement, high levels of poor health and run-down physical environments, including housing.

During 2004 the NDC undertook a public consultation to assess residents’ opinions of streetscape issues including waste management. Results showed that residents:

- Were unhappy with several aspects of waste management;
- Had limited access to recycling facilities; and
- The vast majority were not recycling.

Since flats form a significant proportion of housing in the NDC area, the team decided that they would be the focus for improving waste management.

London Remade Solutions, Sauce Consultancy and the Campaign Company were commissioned in 2005 to deliver a recycling-led project in the EC1 area which includes:

- Launching five different recycling and composting systems;
- Monitoring the impact of the trials;
- Undertaking a comprehensive communications campaign; and
- A community outreach programme.

The project was supported by:

- Islington Council who were interested in assessing recycling collection options for blocks of flats; and
- Homes for Islington, the Arms Length Management Organisation (AMLO) responsible for managing council owned property in the area, including overseeing the work of the caretakers.

Designing the trial systems

The team carried out an inventory to assess the waste collection systems and the building features in 73 blocks. The information informed the design of recycling systems. These systems were selected to make recycling for residents as easy as refuse disposal.
Five of the blocks of flats were selected for pilot collections:

- 10 Epworth Street – door to door collections of dry recyclable materials;
- Quaker Court – bring banks with provision of reusable bags for recyclable materials and door to door collection of food waste with on-site composting;
- Braithwaite House – collection points on each storey for recyclable materials and door to door collection of food waste with on-site composting;
- Lagonier House – dedicated chute recycling system for dry recyclable materials; and
- The Wenlake Estate – mechanical chute modification for dry recyclable materials.

The pilot schemes were all designed to collect co-mingled paper, cardboard, glass bottles and jars, food and drink cans and plastic bottles.

**The dedicated chute recycling system**

**Assessing the potential for dedicated chute recycling**

Lagonier House is a relatively small, five storey block with 24 households. The estates inventory identified that it had two chutes running side by side, both accessible from the same floors. At the time of the inventory bring banks were located outside the main entrance to the block.

The chute doors in Lagonier House prior to the launch of the recycling system

It was decided that one chute would be dedicated for recycling and that the other would continue to be used for refuse.

Many of the blocks visited during the survey had more than one chute. It was decided that those with chutes located some distance apart on the corridor, or chutes running side by side but with only one accessible from each floor were not suitable for recycling as some residents would not be willing or able to carry recycling and refuse the distances required and would therefore contaminate recycling and/or not recycle.
Example of chutes running side by side accessible from alternate floors

Example of chutes located some distance apart in a block

Launching the dedicated chute recycling system

Following a consultation session with residents the new scheme was launched.

Measurements were taken of typical chute doors within the EC1 area and an order placed for small single use bags to fit. A recycling bin to sit under the recycling chute was also ordered. It was decided that the chute furthest from the entry to the chute room would be used for recycling to reduce the risk of contamination. The door and surround of the recycling chute was painted green and signage was installed to indicate what materials could be recycled.
The recycling and refuse chutes after painting

The signage installed over the chute doors

Recycling

- All paper and cardboard
- Plastic bottles only
- All drinks cans, food tins and aerosols
- All glass bottles and jars

If there is a problem with the chute, such as a blockage please call the Central Street Office on 020 7527 6268 between 8am and 5pm. If you run out of plastic bags for your recycling please call Contact Islington on 020 7527 2000.

The location of the recycling bank was painted on the floor of the bin chamber to ensure that it was returned to the correct location by collection crews and caretakers.

To launch the scheme door-to-door canvassers visited all households in the block explaining the new recycling system and delivering leaflets and recycling bags.

**The performance of the dedicated chute recycling system**

Face to face surveys were carried out following the launch of the system. 12 of 24 households participated in the survey. Their responses are summarised below:

- All residents claimed to recycle;
- No residents claimed to be recycling non recyclable materials indicating low contamination;
- The scheme had reduced chute blockages;
- No residents reported any problems with the scheme; and
- All residents wanted the scheme to continue.
Tonnages of waste and recycling were monitored using on-board weighing equipment on recycling vehicles and dedicated collections of waste. The results are summarised below:

- The scheme was the highest performing of all the pilots achieving capture of 181kg/hh/yr;
- A 15% recycling rate was achieved;
- Residual waste fell by 17%; and
- Recycling collected from the bring banks at the front of the block decreased by around 101kg/hh/yr, probably due to material being diverted into the chute recycling scheme.

### The mechanical chute recycling system

#### Launching the mechanical chute recycling system

The Wenlake estate consists of five blocks each with between 20 - 24 households. Initially it was intended that the existing refuse chutes in all blocks would be modified with mechanical additions to allow them to accept recycling, however, the Tenants Management Organisation (TMO) objected strongly to the proposed system and following a postal vote by residents, it was agreed that the scheme would be trialled in only one block, Anchor House.

The flats survey identified that Anchor House had a relatively large bin chamber and an existing refuse chute, meaning that there was potential for considering it for a mechanical chute recycling system. A specialist manufacturer (Waste Management Specialists) visited the estate with the project team to assess the chute for modification and provide a quote.

The manufacturer’s quote was accepted and the company designed a bespoke addition for the base of the chute and manufactured a control panel to sit next to each of the chute doors. This was installed over a week long period during which time residents were asked to bring refuse directly to bins as the chute could not be used. A lock was installed on the bin room to deter vandalism of the new equipment and to prevent residents from being injured by moving parts. Signage was fixed above the chute doors.
The signage installed over the chute doors

The system works in the following way:

- Chute doors remain locked until residents select a button from the control panel indicating whether they are disposing of refuse or recycling; and
- Based on the option selected the mechanism at the base of the chute tilts to direct waste or recycling into the correct containers.

To launch the scheme door-to-door canvassers visited all households in the block to explain the new recycling system and deliver leaflets and small recycling bags.

**The performance of the dedicated chute recycling system**

Monitoring had not been conducted at the time this case study was prepared so there is little information about the performance of the scheme. Anecdotal evidence suggests that residents are happy with the system and are using it correctly.

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