

Communications Campaign to Support Southwark's Food Waste Recycling Trial



The Issue

Southwark approached Recycle for London for communications support to roll out their food waste recycling service in October 2010. The trial targeted 10,000 properties in five areas of the Borough and involved providing:

- A weekly commingled collection of dry recyclables;
- A weekly collection of food and garden waste; and
- A fortnightly collection of refuse.

Southwark wanted to ensure information specifically targeted those residents receiving the trial service. As a result, they opted to use a mixture of traditional communication channels alongside more innovative 'pedal bike media' (a mobile advertising hoarding that is pulled around the target locations by a person on a push bike within the trial area) which enabled them advertise and engage directly with residents in one go.

Campaign Objectives

- To achieve an additional 1.88 kg/hh/wk of organic waste through the food waste collection trial of 10,000 properties by March 2011;
- To achieve an additional 1.67 kg/hh/wk of recycle collected through the commingled recycling collection trial of 10,000 properties by March 2011; and
- To gather feedback from residents about the trial service and supporting communications to aid and inform further Borough-wide rollout by March 2011.

Key Facts

- Total cost of campaign: £18,500 of which £5,430 was allocated to pedal bike media;
- On average, participation in the blue box recycling and food and organics collection increased by 13% in those areas where pedal bike media was used;
- The campaign targeted 10,000 households at a cost of £1.85 per hhs;
- The diversion from landfill target was 3.55 kg/hh/wk. The actual diversion achieved was 3.59 kg/hh/wk; and
- The campaign demonstrated a positive impact where more than one type of communication was used.

The Approach

A Recycle for London Adviser worked alongside the London Borough of Southwark to plan and develop a campaign to support the new services and trial the use of a variety of communication techniques including 'pedal bike media'. The trial area covered ten different collection rounds within the 5 areas so it was possible for Southwark to trial different combinations of communications across these rounds. The following activities were agreed:

- Community road shows carried out in each of the 5 areas that focused on promoting the service, its benefits and gaining feedback from residents on the service via a survey. This information, alongside tonnage data collated as part of the trial, helped inform Southwark about whether to roll the service out Borough-wide;
- Trialling the impact of bin stickers – initially targeting 4,000 households. Following participation rate monitoring, which demonstrated the success of the stickers, a further 6,000 stickers were issued to the remaining properties on the trial;
- Trialling the impact of a thank you leaflet amongst 4,000 households. This included a survey to gain feedback from residents receiving the new service; and
- The 'Pedal Bike Media' targeted roads and streets on four of the collection rounds. Two campaigners were trained to engage directly with the public about their recycling activities and gather feedback on what people thought about services and the campaign.

Detailed maps were provided by the Council, including areas that would be likely to be busy at particular times of day – for example: community centres, train stations and shopping areas. The team selected 4 rounds that would be targeted with the bike media and visited all the streets covered by these rounds (and also spent time at the busy area locations). Their aim was to display the advertising hoarding but also stop and engage members of the public in conversation, wherever possible. £5,340 was spent on the pedal bikes. This included all design and production and media purchase costs as well as staff.



Why not traditional media?

Pedal bike media was trialled in addition to traditional communication channels. This allowed Southwark to target specific streets in the trial areas. Traditional media channels such as bus shelters or local press advertising were more generic and unable to target residents as effectively.

Key Lessons

- The team had significant success with parents and children leaving school for the day, Saturday shoppers and Sunday morning church goers;
- Pedal bike media proved to be a highly effective method of engagement and outdoor advertising. It is very flexible in terms of location and can combine the power of a traditional advertising campaign with an outreach team who can directly engage with the public and address queries relating to recycling services;
- The method worked well despite challenges presented by the weather and could be even more effective during the summer months; and
- Some of the community road show events were disappointing in terms of attendance. Although the road shows did not appear to have an impact on participation, Southwark felt that the events were useful and effective for those residents that attended. They may have been more effective had they been able to take place in the summer and be held outdoors as part of larger, open air events.

The Results

The campaign was able to demonstrate the positive impact that communications have in improving participation in recycling.

Overall, across the trial area, the organics and dry recycling services collected an additional 3.59 kg/hh/wk.

These results were achieved through the delivery of the trial service and supporting communications.

The survey element of the campaign was extremely successful. Out of 3,891 postal surveys that were distributed 542 were returned resulting in an approximate response rate of 14%. The format and creative that was used was felt to be particularly effective.

Feedback from residents on the 'Pedal bike media' feedback found that:

- 94% found the interaction with the campaign team helpful or very helpful; and
- 49% said they would recycle more as a result of information provided via the pedal bike media team as they found out more about the types of materials that could be recycled through the collection services provided.

Properties were sampled from across four of the ten different rounds, providing a mixed sample.

Participation in blue box recycling and food and garden waste services (organics) were recorded separately.

Participation was monitored over three consecutive weeks and households were deemed to be participating if they presented recycling on at least one of these occasions. Participation rate monitoring was then carried out again after the campaign communications had all been rolled out.

Summary of Campaign Impact

- Overall participation increases for blue box recycling and food/organics across each of the ten rounds:
 - Blue box recycling: 10.3%
 - Food and organics 11.1%
- Rounds including survey, stickers and roadshows showed an overall participation increase of +5% for the blue box recycling and +6% for food and organics;
- Rounds including survey, stickers, roadshows and pedal bike media showed an overall participation increase of +18.4% for the blue box recycling and +18.67%; and
- This clearly demonstrates that the 'pedal bike media' was an effective way of engaging with residents and raising awareness of what could be recycled through their improved service.

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For more information about Recycle for London visit: www.recycleforlondon.com

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