

Low Participation Areas: Case Study 1 – London Borough of Hackney

Improving participation through targeted cultural and religious communication campaigns



London Borough of Hackney targeted their Turkish and Jewish communities with communication messages which appealed to each group's cultural identity.

London Borough of Hackney: Jewish and Turkish Communications Campaigns

Background

Hackney Borough Council operates a weekly kerbside recycling service (for thirteen materials) and a kitchen waste service to all its street level properties. Most high rise estates and block of flats receive near-entry bring site service.

In 2006 recycling was made compulsory in four of the boroughs' wards, which resulted in a 20% increase in the amount of recyclables collected in these areas.

Aim

To engage with the Turkish and Jewish communities of Hackney to promote the council's kerbside recycling and kitchen waste services and increase participation across these two communities.

Identifying low participating areas

In 2005 London Borough of Hackney undertook a series of monitoring activities to review participation rates in their kerbside collection services. They discovered relatively low rates of participation in particular areas of the borough. Among the areas identified as performing poorly was Stamford Hill - home to one of Europe's largest Hasidic Jewish communities. Anecdotal evidence also suggested that there were particular trends in the composition of residual waste collected from this area at certain times of year. This included unusually large amounts of organic waste being generated in early autumn.

Furthermore, subsequent door-to-door canvassing in the borough revealed a significant number of requests for information to be

provided in the Turkish language. Census data showed that the Turkish speaking community forms Hackney's largest Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) population with approximately 60,000 residents.

Understanding the issues

Aware that it had a relatively large proportion of Jewish and Turkish residents living in Hackney, the council looked at the services and communications provided to them. It established that around half of the Turkish population live in apartment blocks or flats and the other half in houses serviced by the kerbside scheme. Turkish residents are fairly well dispersed throughout the borough whereas most Jewish residents live in houses clustered together in a relatively well-defined area of the borough. A smaller proportion of Jewish residents live in flats or apartment blocks.

The council wanted to engage these communities for a number of reasons:

- to improve recycling participation;
- to engage with minority ethnic groups in order to address cultural and diversity issues; and
- to utilise communications funding available to promote recycling in these areas.

As a result, the council decided to develop two targeted communications campaigns to promote recycling to the Jewish and Turkish communities.

Defining the Target Audience

The target audiences for this project were defined as the Turkish and Jewish communities of Hackney, based on evidence which

suggested that these two community types had particular recycling behaviour and/or communication needs.

Developing communications solutions

The council's initial strategic approach to targeting these audiences was to identify key stakeholders and influencers within each group. They then planned to enlist their help and support in communicating messages to their respective communities. This was to be achieved using existing structures and active events within the communities themselves.

Developing Communications Solutions to Engage with Jewish Orthodox Residents

One of the barriers to communicating with Orthodox Jewish residents was the fact that they make very little use of mainstream media. Most do not own or use radios or televisions, nor do they read mainstream newspapers. Another barrier was the lack of trust placed in people from outside their community.

To tackle these problems, the council decided to approach Jewish community groups and invite them to become involved in engaging their fellow residents in recycling. The council worked with community leaders and the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations to deliver information about recycling and provide input into future campaign design.

A key stage in this work was to employ two staff members who were Jewish and could work as outreach officers in the community. Initially, a Rabi was asked to assist in engaging local residents to communicate messages about recycling. When it was identified that in some cases he was unable to engage female residents owing to cultural sensitivities, the council recruited a Jewish female outreach worker.

Additional Communication Methods

The council also used the following communication methods:

- recycling leaflets with Yiddish translations and the logo of the Union on the front cover. Even though the Jewish community is largely English speaking, feedback suggested that readers would be less likely to discard the leaflet if it had been produced in their own language and in partnership with an important local institution;
- advertisements in the local Jewish media about recycling;
- a recycling competition organised with local schools and designed to encourage children to take the message home. The competition required improved participation to qualify for a prize. Children from the local Jewish school were given charts with pictures of materials that can be recycled locally. They then had to take these home and use the charts to record the amount of materials put out for recycling. The school with the highest record of materials presented for recycling won a prize of £200; and
- roadshows were set up at public events and Jewish gatherings.



The activities used were also linked to important times in the Jewish faith, particularly festivals and religious ceremonies, during which certain waste streams often dominated and could therefore also be targeted. Examples of such festivals and materials targeted included:

- **Purim festival** (Usually in March): During this festival, a lot of wine is used and much communal cooking is done. Materials which were particularly targeted by media advertising at this time included glass bottles, aluminium foil and heavy cardboard (the latter is prevalent following all the festivals);
- **Pesach festival** or Passover (Usually in April): During this festival, many people do a spring clean and get rid of old items, including reusable bulky waste and clothing items. At this time, the media messages focused on encouraging donation of such goods to charities for reuse; and
- **the Jewish New Year & Succot** (September – October): Also known as the Feast of Tabernacles, this festival generates a lot of garden waste when Jewish families build "Succot" (meaning huts, shelters or tabernacles) as temporary dwelling booths. These are made of palm fronds and other organic materials and generate a significant amount of garden and other organic waste. The council used media messages and produced leaflets encouraging the use of available garden waste services over this period.

Developing Communication Solutions to Engage with Turkish Speaking Residents

Given that language was the main barrier, the council identified and established a relationship with active Turkish community groups, notably 'Day-Mer' - a community organisation which was well-known and trusted by the Turkish community. The council and Day-Mer worked together to produce a leaflet on recycling. This was particularly useful when trying to find a solution for issues around the word 'recycling' as there is no word for 'recycling' in Turkish and the direct Turkish translation actually means 'go home' or 'return'!

Day-Mer also helped the council by providing access to Turkish speakers who could undertake door-to-door canvassing work and speak in Turkish to local residents.

The council worked with Day-Mer to develop an 18 month communications campaign to target the Turkish community.

Elements of the campaign included:

- door-to-door canvassing, using Turkish-speaking operatives. A supporting recycling information leaflet, produced in Turkish, was available for householders and provided information on collection times as well as the importance and benefits of recycling;
- information stands were used at local community centres to distribute translated materials;
- recycling activities were organised with a local Turkish women's group, youth group and other social organisations within the community; and
- the Turkish community centre acted as a hub of information and support for recycling to the local Turkish-speaking community. The community centre were motivated to be involved in the project as it also helped broaden their contact base within the community in order to promote their own activities.



Funding

Funding information given in this section excludes all core staffing and overhead costs.

London Borough of Hackney funded the recycling campaign for the Jewish community. This included:

- the design and production of recycling leaflets in Yiddish;
- door-to-door canvassing; and
- education work with schools, Jewish charities and community groups.

Funding for the Turkish community recycling campaign came from two different sources: the council (who funded the recycling leaflet that was translated into Turkish with help from Day-Mer) and the London Recycling Fund (who funded the door-to-door canvassing and other elements of the campaign).

Total campaign costs for both the Turkish and Jewish communications campaigns came to £36,334, which included all publicity and communications (£7,086) and two part time campaign staff (£29,248).

Achievements and results

Overall, there has been a 68% drop in the number of residents who were previously not participating in recycling within the community. On average a 20% increase in recycling tonnages was noted within the Jewish areas. Unlike the Jewish community, the Turkish community is more dispersed making it more difficult to attribute specific participation or tonnage increases to the campaign. However the overall recycling rate in Hackney increased from 2% in 2002 to over 18% in 2006/07. Whilst this in part has been due to significant investment in new infrastructure, the communication campaigns described in this case study will have played a part in achieving this improvement.

Lessons learnt

The willingness of partner organisations such as the Jewish Union and Day-Mer to work with the council on these initiatives contributed to their success. The council already had good contacts with Day-Mer through its Central Communications Department. The partnership work with the Jewish Union however was new and developed as a result of council staff seeking out community leaders in the Jewish community.

Contact between council staff, Day-Mer and the Jewish Union was most intensive during campaign peaks e.g. when agreeing text and design of leaflets. This was clearly important in terms of getting buy-in to the campaign approach. When working with community groups it is important to recognise that recycling is probably not their top priority and care must be taken not to impose too much on their time whilst at the same time making sure that you do get their support for the campaign approach and methods.

The four key lessons learnt for this project can be summarised as follows:

- some communities (like Orthodox Jewish communities) may not use mainstream media and, as such, engagement should be sought through existing community infrastructure including community leaders and religious groups (such as the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations);
- outreach workers should be recruited from the target community and female staff may be required to engage with women in target communities (as in the Jewish community);
- locate and engage with established local ethnic community groups (such as the Day-Mer Turkish community group); and
- canvassers should be recruited from the communities in which they are doing door-to-door canvassing.

For further information, please contact:

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