Local Authority Communications case study: Barrow Borough Council

Service change introducing restricted waste and more materials for recycling

WRAP training for Council helpline staff and recycling crew to enable them to deal effectively with inquiries from local residents.

Printed material including a pre-roll out ‘teaser’ leaflet outlining the new service, an information leaflet distributed at the time of the new service roll out, a collection calendar and contamination cards.

A recycling ranger who was appointed on a fixed term contract to engage with local communities to explain the new service, its benefits and how it works.

Advertising to raise awareness of the new service - advertisements on local buses, radio advertisements and advertorials in local newspapers.

Livery on collection vehicles and community posters to highlight the new service.

The issue
Barrow Borough Council approached WRAP in 2008 for communications support. Their new waste recycling collection scheme was to include a new red bag to collect cardboard and plastics.

This was in addition to an existing green box for cans and glass; a green bag for newspapers and magazine and a brown bin for garden waste. At the same time the existing 240 litre refuse bin was to be replaced with a new 120 litre capacity bin, to be collected weekly.

The approach
One of WRAP’s Local Communications Advisers worked with Barrow Council’s waste prevention team to identify the local issues which would affect the roll out of the new service. Key evidence and experiences from other local authorities was then considered and the Council made a decision about the communication activities they would use. The communications plan included:

Key facts
- Borough-wide campaign engaging with all households to inform people about a change to their waste and recycling services.
- 32,500 households.
- Recycling increased by 2,479 tonnes.
- 73% of residents felt the information provided was ‘excellent’ or ‘good’.
- Total cost of the communication activity was £78,000.
Key lessons

- Making use of **best practice and shared learning** from other local authorities that have rolled out similar schemes, helped Barrow Borough Council to develop their communication plan and the Council was able to introduce their new service to local residents in an efficient and cost effective way.

- The recycling ranger was able to **engage directly** with local residents and answer questions and concerns. Having a dedicated resource working with community groups proved to be so effective that Barrow Borough Council extended the contact beyond the WRAP funding period.

- All printed material made use of the **WRAP on-line** resources which are available to all local authorities, via the Recycle Now website. Printed material was presented in a clear and concise way and local residents, when asked, thought the material was ‘good’ or ‘excellent’.

- Council helpline and crew training is an effective way to communicate with all staff who have a responsibility for delivering the new service. The training course provides an opportunity to **share information**, exchange ideas and address any areas of concern.
"Cumbria County Council and the Cumbria Strategic Waste Partnership has been a proud partner to WRAP since 2005. In that time the support in terms of communications and branding advice has been invaluable. This was exemplified during the Recycle for Barrow campaign which saw the re-launch of an improved recycling service for all 32,500 households across the borough. Working closely with WRAP’s Local Government Services unit helped us to design and deliver a robust and intensive public engagement and communications campaign, informed by best practice and our local knowledge. WRAP’s help ensured the campaign was a huge success taking the local recycling rate from 22% to 36% and reducing the amount of waste going to landfill by a third. The campaign’s success was recognised by our local authority peers and won the Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee (LARAC) Best Communications campaign for 2009."

Martin Allman, Waste Prevention Manager, Cumbria County Council