This publication updates the 2009 guide and pulls together the findings from more recent studies and pilots conducted by WRAP and others. Through the various sections, this guide is designed to support local authorities by detailing good practice and evidence which can help inform the design and delivery of high capture, cost-effective food waste collections.

Section 6: Food waste communications

This section looks at the use of communications with householders to ensure the success of a food waste collection service.

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6.1 Key principles

- All communications should be presented in ‘Plain English’ and the use of jargon should be avoided. Depending on the local authority, materials may need to be made available in other languages spoken in the area.
- Materials should adopt simple, eye-catching messages and make good use of pictures.
- There should be a clear call to action.
- Include simple instructions and use pictures where appropriate in all printed media.
- More detailed information about the service should be provided on websites.
- All frontline staff should be provided with information and training.
- There is no point spending money promoting a poor service – ensure the service is fit-for-purpose and well delivered.

6.2 Communications plan

Whether introducing a service or improving participation in an existing one, a communications plan is essential. This will ensure the food waste collection service is promoted effectively. The plan should include:

- the purpose of the communications and the promotional tools to be used;
- a budget;
- a schedule outlining what activities will take place where and when; and
- monitoring and evaluation activities.

Useful communications resources from WRAP
To help select the right communication tools and materials, refer to WRAP's resources for local authority communications.

For free communication templates for food waste collections, visit the Recycle Now section of the WRAP resources library

6.3 Different audiences

Although most residents are generally keen to participate, there will be some who may need more persuasion. Most non-users claim they don’t have enough food waste, either because they don’t prepare much fresh food or they use up leftovers. However, the WRAP study, ‘The Food We Waste’, found that all sectors of a community produce food waste and so this opinion may be based on perception not reality. Communications should look to highlight a range of food waste groups to help overcome this barrier.
WRAP research indicates a distinction between ‘lapsed users’, ‘low users’ and ‘non-users’. ‘Lapsed users’ tend to be more receptive to service changes – they have tried the service and stopped for a specific reason (invariably connected to cleanliness) and, if these specific barriers are addressed, these users will be open to trying again.

In contrast, those who have never used the service are less preoccupied with specific barriers and more with the simple fact that they don’t want to use the service. Since the initial launch of the service, they have developed a ‘non-user’ identity to reinforce this position, resulting in them becoming ‘unwilling recipients’ of changes to the service and communications about it (and underlining just how important it is to get the service roll out right from the outset). ‘Low users’, however, may use the service only sporadically or recycle only certain types of food waste.

Further information detailing the characteristics of ‘lapsed’, ‘low’ and ‘non-users’ can be found in Section 2.

6.4 Key messages and useful strategies when designing communications

- Simple instructions and the use of pictures and icons in leaflets as shown in Figures 6.1 and 6.2 avoid long explanations. This can be particularly helpful for residents who do not have a good command of written English.
- Show the full range of waste that can be put in the food containers in communications (see Figures 6.1 and 6.2). Waste composition data suggest low capture of certain types of food waste such as meat and bones compared with unavoidable food waste such as vegetable peelings.
- Encourage even those with small amounts to put out their food waste for collection each week.
- Don’t devote a lot of space to addressing concerns about flies and smells – instead encourage people to use liners and to change them regularly.
- Address key barriers to householder participation in food waste collections, e.g. explain what happens to food waste once collected and what happens to food waste that is sent to landfill. Stress there’s no amount of waste too small to not participate and identify local benefits.
- If planning a targeted communications campaign, look to tailor messages to your audience.

6.5 Launching a new scheme

When launching a new scheme, it’s good practice to issue a pre-launch communication so householders are prepared for the new service. When the new scheme is being rolled out, more detailed information about the service and how to take part can be
distributed. If budget allows, wider communications (e.g. PR, adverts, vehicle livery) are advisable as it helps to build awareness around the scheme changes.

When promoting a new service, authorities should allow a budget of £1.50 per household.

### 6.5.1 Step 1: Pre-launch communication

Pre-launch communication should include an information leaflet – a teaser leaflet, and where possible, wider communication informing residents that a new service will shortly be introduced.

WRAP recommends distributing the teaser leaflet approximately one month before the start of the service. Figure 6.1 shows WRAP’s ‘introductory’ leaflet which local authorities can localise for their area. The leaflet explains:

- what the scheme is about;
- what will happen to the food waste;
- when the scheme will be introduced;
- what can be recycled; and
- the benefits of recycling food waste.

It also gives contact details for more information.

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**Figure 6.1** WRAP’s introductory leaflet
6.5.2 Step 2: New service communications

The pre-launch leaflet should be followed up with another communication to support the launch of the service. It is expected that this will be delivered to households at the same time as the food caddy and outside food recycling bin. This communication usually takes the form of an ‘instructional / information service’ leaflet. It should contain information on:

- why this scheme is being introduced;
- how to use the food caddy and outside food recycling bin;
- what food waste can be recycled; and
- when the food waste will be collected.

There should also be tips for recycling food waste and frequently asked questions and responses.

Figure 6.2 shows WRAP’s template ‘instructional/ information service’ leaflet.
Depending on your budget and how widely the new service is being provided within your area, a range of promotional activities can be used to support the introduction of the service. These include:

- a caddy sticker (see Figure 6.4);
- a residual bin sticker (see Figure 6.5 and Section 11);
- roadshows and events;
- outdoor advertising (billboards, adshels, bus backs); and
- press and radio advertising.

Figure 6.3 shows the range of icons developed by WRAP to illustrate the whole range of food wastes that can be accepted. These feature in WRAP’s introductory and instructional/information leaflets as well as on the kitchen caddy sticker (Figure 6.4). The icons cover all food waste groups to encourage full participation.
Figure 6.3 Food iconography – two possible layouts

Figure 6.4 Caddy sticker

What can I put in my caddy?

Place any raw or cooked food in your caddy. You can even scrape uneaten food straight into your caddy.

Top tip: Remember to not let your caddy get too full before emptying it.

Remember: Recycle your mouldy and out of date food, including ready meals removed from their packaging.
Communicating a food waste service to households living in flats presents a number of challenges. An exploration of the issues specific to collecting recycling from flats can be found at http://www.wrap.org.uk/content/recycling-collections-flats-communicating-residents-flats

6.6 Improving an existing service

When a service has been running for a while, new communications are required to remind residents about the service and encourage its use. See Section 11 for the findings of WRAP’s funded pilot projects.

Key points that communications should address when looking to improve an existing service include:

- the lack of a widespread social norm for food recycling – both ‘non-users’ and ‘users’ feel the subject of food waste needs to be made more of a local talking point, with people needing to be told why they ought to participate;
- information on why it’s important for households to use the service;
- the need to emphasise the scheme elements (caddy, liners and external container) and how they fit together and how householders can order replacements if needed;
- reassurance that the scheme has improved – if, for example, liners are now being supplied free of charge this needs to be highlighted to householders;
- clear advice on what types and range of food can be recycled as householders can still be uncertain on what can be recycled;
• simple steps to reduce/ prevent odour and any potential hygiene issues (e.g. emphasise the need to empty the caddy into the outside container regularly); and
• concerns that residents are required to buy liners.

The communication solutions used in the WRAP funded pilots outlined in Section 11 are shown below.

To download all the templates please visit the Recycle Now section of WRAP’s resource library. Remember to read the guidance document before using any of the templates.

For further details on the WRAP funded pilots and the successful impact that the communication solutions had on the food waste collection schemes please visit Section 11.

6.6.1 ‘Relaunch’ leaflet

Based on the findings from WRAP’s funded pilots, the leaflet (Figure 6.6) takes on board some key elements:

• how and why it’s important to take part in the service;
• what the local benefits are and what happens to food waste if it’s not recycled;
• where food waste goes and what it is used for;
• what can and can’t be recycled including an emphasis on the wide range of food that can be recycled to help address consumers’ belief that they don’t produce enough food waste to use the service;
• top tips on how to make recycling food waste convenient; and
• a thank you message or message around how much food residents have recycled – this helps to build a social norm.

Other findings from the funded pilots include how many ‘users’ were interested in accessing more information and looked to find this on council websites. A key recommendation is to make sure all food recycling information on council websites is up-to-date and gives more information to that provided in the leaflet.

For ‘non-users’, a leaflet may not trigger the behaviour change required. It’s therefore important to consider other communication channels and messages for ‘non-users’ to address their barriers. See the motivation communication templates shown in Section 6.7.
Figure 6.6 ‘Relaunch’ leaflet

Note: Since the WRAP funded pilots were conducted the A5 leaflet has been refreshed to reflect the new look and feel of Recycle Now – Figure 6.6 shows the refreshed version.

6.6.2 Residual bin sticker

Residual bin stickers (see Figure 6.5) are a powerful tool for engaging residents where leaflets alone can be ignored. The importance of the wording ‘No food waste please’ is key as it is a polite reminder rather than emphasising a ban. The bin stickers were seen...
to be effective in the WRAP funded pilots where the council was also emphasising the positive aspects of food recycling through the relaunch leaflet.

6.6.3 Standardised liner print

A food caddy liner print (Figure 6.7) is a constant reminder of what can be included in the collection. This is useful given that many households purchase liners from retail sources; these liners are designed for sale to people who might also use them for home composting and often omit the full range of materials.

Figure 6.7 Food caddy liner print

6.7 Motivational communication templates

Following consumer research, WRAP has produced a suite of new downloadable and adaptable communication templates for all partners to use when engaging with the public on food recycling. The new resources feature posters, vehicle livery and much more. They can be found on the Recycle Now section of WRAP's resource library. All the templates can be used alongside WRAP's introductory and instructional/information leaflets as well as on their own to create a fully integrated food recycling campaign.

The communication templates have been designed to help overcome the known barriers to householder participation in food waste collections. They explain:

- what happens to food waste once collected;
- what happens to food waste in landfill;
- that no amount is too small; and
- local benefits.

**Figure 6.8** Examples of WRAP’s motivational communication templates

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**6.8 Videos**

Given the wide range of perceptions held by residents and the complex issues around food recycling, it’s not always possible to convey all the information to the necessary level in a leaflet.
Perhaps because food recycling schemes are not widespread in the UK and there are variations in design, the findings from WRAP's research suggest that residents are sometimes unclear how other households use the service.

A key area that needs to be addressed is to create a social norm for separating out and storing food waste in the home.

Experiences from a range of households have been captured in a series of videos. These include tips and advice from people from a wide range of demographics who regularly recycle their food waste in their homes. The main messages conveyed are:

- the ease of separating and storing food waste;
- the possible storage locations for the caddy; and
- the use of alternative storage vessels to fit in with kitchen designs.

These videos are available on the Recycle Now website (www.recyclenow.com/recycle/food-recycling).

Local authorities can link to or embed these videos on their websites to help inform residents on how others make food recycling services work for them.

6.9 Animations

WRAP is also constantly creating new digital resources to assist local authorities in their digital communications. Make sure you are signed up to the e-newsletter (www.wrap.org.uk/content/sign-up) to hear about our latest news.

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