

CASE STUDY

KERBSIDE TEXTILE COLLECTION FOR CHARITY: LONDON BOROUGH OF BEXLEY AND TRAIID

INTRODUCTION

London Borough of Bexley



The London Borough (LB) of Bexley is a unitary waste authority in South East London. It has a population of 228,000 living in 95,100 households. It has the highest recycling rate of all 33 London Boroughs at 51%, and operates an alternate weekly collection for refuse and recycling.

Waste composition analysis in LB Bexley in 2009 showed that textiles comprised 2% of the residual waste stream. As a result, the Council wanted to investigate kerbside collections of textiles to help meet the Boroughs' recycling target of 55% by 2014.

LB Bexley wanted to introduce a kerbside textile collection service that would ultimately cover the whole Borough and to maximise the volume of textiles diverted from residual waste. It sought a partner that was:

- willing to collect from all parts of the Borough (not cherry-pick the areas most likely to produce quality material);
- a third sector organisation that would bring socio-economic and charitable benefits;
- able to help deliver communications and education.

Having been approached by several organisations (both commercial and third sector), the Council felt TRAIID was the only one that could meet their requirements.



About TRAIID

TRAIID is a UK registered charity, working in partnership with councils, businesses, schools and communities collecting textiles. TRAIID provides a bring bank service for unwanted clothing and textiles with 1,400 banks located across 147 boroughs and districts nationwide, including 30 of the 33 London boroughs. TRAIID also has a number of stores where residents can donate directly.

The profits generated by the collection and resale of textiles are used to fight global poverty in some of the world's poorest communities. Since TRAIID launched in 1999, the charity has raised over £2.2 million by collecting textiles for reuse and resale. TRAIID provides fashion customisation workshops and waste education for schools as well as youth groups, church groups and community centres. Since 2004, TRAIID has delivered waste education to over 60,000 children, young people and adults.

Home

Key facts

- TRAIID and the LB Bexley are working in partnership to deliver a kerbside collection service. The first monthly collection trial ran from June to November 2011 diverting over 2,400kg of textiles from landfill.
- The original trial area serviced 8,000 properties. A second trial, running for a further 6 months, covers an expanded area of 12,000 properties.
- TRAIID funded the trials and receives the income from the sale of the clothes. The service is free to LB Bexley.
- Bags distributed to residents during the first phase of the trial were costly, accounting for up to 50% of the total cost of the scheme. Due to the high cost of bags, the second trial uses stickers, distributed to residents, to be applied to any bag put out for collection.

The approach

LB Bexley was keen to engage third sector organisations involved in textiles re-use and recycling. Following an approach and discussions with officers from LB Bexley, TRAIID offered the Council a free trial collection service to approximately 8,000 households on one collection round. The specification was as follows:

- One collection each month at the property boundary within the pilot area. This equates to collecting from approximately 2,000 households per week.
- Six co-branded LB Bexley/TRAIID bags and a leaflet explaining the scheme to be delivered through the letterbox of all households in the area, no less than one week before the first collection.
- Tonnage data to be provided to LB Bexley, no more than ten days after a collection. In addition, LB Bexley to receive a monthly tonnage report.
- Paper Round, TRAIID's existing collection contractor, was permitted (as a registered waste carrier) to carry out the distribution of the bags and undertake collections on TRAIID's behalf.
- All collection vehicles to be co-branded TRAIID and Paper Round, to inform residents who is carrying out the collections and to make the identification of theft easier.

- All Paper Round's collectors were fully trained to know what materials could and could not be added to the collection sacks. They had full Health and Safety and Customer Service training and were equipped with TRAIID branded hi-visibility jackets.
- All missed collections were collected on the same day, one week later. (For the pilot TRAIID was unable to provide a missed collection service within 24 hours as per the Council's other collections.)

Communications

For the first 6 month pilot, TRAIID used a variety of promotional activities including:

- co-branded LB Bexley and TRAIID collection bags, with full instructions including what materials were acceptable and how the bags should be presented;
- 9,000 A5 full colour 2-sided fliers promoting the new collection and explaining how to use it, distributed at the same time as the 6 collection bags, with spare copies supplied to local authority outlets for example call centre, libraries, etc;
- a template article for publication in LB Bexley's magazine and the Council website;
- press release for the local media;
- publicising the scheme on the TRAIID website and via social media; and
- approaching local shops to put a poster in their window to promote the scheme.

Quantity Collected

The quantities, shown as kg's, from the first phase of the trial is shown in [Table 1](#).

Table 1 Total tonnage collected per month in the LB Bexley Trial

Month (2011)	June	July	August	September	October	November	Total
Weight (kg)	110	1450	1605	707	337	142	4,351

traid Your monthly collection will take place on Wednesday:
6th July, 3rd August,
7th September, 5th October,
2nd November, 7th December

✓ Clothes & paired shoes
Linen
Accessories

✗ Pillows & duvets

BEXLEY

traid Recycle Unwanted Clothes for Good
In Partnership with the London Borough of Bexley

This clothes collection trial is a partnership between the London Borough of Bexley and the charity TRAIID (a charity no. 097489). The proceeds will be used by TRAIID to fund recycling education in the UK and projects fighting poverty in some of the world's poorest communities.

✓ Clothes & paired shoes
Linen
Accessories

✗ Pillows & duvets

Collection day is the first Wednesday of each month

You have been provided with 6 clothes recycling bags for this 6 month trial. Extra TRAIID recycling bags are available at the Writing and Mailing Service.

Please put the bag at the front edge of your property by 6.45am on the day of collection only. Please place the bag next to your bin and leave for collection.

If your recycling has not been collected by 8pm please call Bexley Council within 48hrs on the number provided to rearrange your collection for the following Wednesday.

If you have any queries please call the London Borough of Bexley on 020 8302 7777 Option 1.

BEXLEY

traid
A charity helping communities give up unwanted clothes for good

✓ Clothes & paired shoes
Linen
Accessories

✗ Pillows & duvets

Please put this bag outside at the front edge of your property by 6.45am on the day of collection only. Refer to the leaflet for your collection day.

SAFETY FIRST
To avoid collisions being into parked bag away from footway and young children.

BEXLEY

Diverting unwanted clothes from disposal in partnership with the London Borough of Bexley

The total collected, 4,209kgs, is approximately 0.5kg per household. Tonnages collected increased monthly from June reaching a peak of 1,605kgs in August. However, the amount of material collected decreased to just 142kgs in November.

The trends could be explained by people having an initial clear-out of unwanted clothes, then not requiring another collection until the next season when they may have another clear-out. Alternatively, the initial increase may be due to the message being relatively fresh in resident's minds, but after 3–4 months they need a reminder.

Residents were provided with 6 sacks at the start to last them for 6 months. TRAIID believes a more regular collection may encourage residents to donate more.

End markets

The highest quality clothing is removed by an initial pre-sort and resold in TRAIID's ten shops in London. Material not suitable for resale in the UK is passed on to a wholesaler who sells to markets in the UK and also exports to Europe, West Africa and Pakistan.

Finance

- TRAIID covered all collection and communication costs for the first trial and receives the income from the sale of the clothes. The service is free to LB Bexley.
- A significant proportion of the cost of the first trial was the collections (including staff and vehicles). TRAIID was charged by Paper Round per tonne of material collected. This proved very costly for TRAIID because the amount collected each month (as shown in Table 1) did not always reach one tonne of material. It is expected that the expansion of the trial to 12,000 properties will provide sufficient tonnages to reduce the cost.
- The bags, which are 125 micron thick to ensure they do not spilt when collected, were a high cost item. Due to their high cost and the associated distribution costs, they are not being issued to households in the next phase of the trial. There is a risk that residents' own bags may split and this will be monitored.
- WRAP, as part of a pilot to test communication messages and designs, is covering the costs of producing and printing leaflets for the second phase of the trial.

Third Sector Added Value

The profits raised from the resale of textiles will enable TRAIID to deliver waste education in schools across London, and to provide funding to projects in the developing world fighting conditions of poverty and abuse in the textile industry.

A third of TRAIID's total collected tonnage comes from London-based local authority banks. Of the textiles collected by TRAIID (and its collection contractor Paper Round) 70% goes to re-use (14% goes to the 10 charity shops owned by TRAIID), 22% non-textile products are recycled and 8% is contamination (other materials).

Savings

The savings achieved by the Council through the diversion of material from landfill have been minimal. TRAIID found the trial beneficial in allowing them to explore different collections and sorting options which will inform further ventures in the future. They did not require additional staff to sort the extra tonnages of material.

Lessons Learnt

The initial scheme was designed with a 3 month break, after which another trial is running for 6 months from March 2012. For this second period the trial area will be expanded to cover a minimum of 12,000 properties.

As a result of the first trial, LB Bexley is now exploring ways to improve the level of service and participation in the service. The second trial will involve a higher frequency of collection, taking place on the same day as existing local authority recycling collections. This will make it easier for residents to know when to put out their textiles.

As part of the second trial, bags will no longer be distributed to residents, due to the high cost of both the sacks and their distribution. Instead, stickers will be provided to residents to be attached to any bag (e.g. plastic shopping bag). A leaflet providing information about the trial will be attached to the sticker so that residents do not lose either piece of information.

Key points:

- It is important to use as many local media / communications methods as possible to get the message across when running a trial.
- Theft of bags has been an issue. Collections have to be made early in the morning to reduce theft and all those involved need to be vigilant for suspicious behaviour. LB Bexley is working with TRAIID and Neighbourhood Watch to reduce the occurrences of theft and increase awareness and vigilance amongst residents. There needs to be full buy-in from all parts of the Council to address this issue and take steps to reduce it.
- Clear and targeted information to residents regarding the details of the trial – in particular which streets are involved and why – in order to avoid confusion amongst those not involved.
- In TRAIID's view, the "everything delivered at once" approach was limited in its use, as the collection service was only at the forefront of residents' minds at the beginning of the trial (they were given 6 sacks to last for 6 months). This may be a reason for the drop in tonnages collected later on and so the second trial has two areas: one a monthly collection and the second will be a fortnightly collection.

"A kerbside textiles collection service in Bexley will prevent up to 2% of household waste going to landfill or incineration. We are very pleased to be working in partnership with TRAIID, and are eager to extend the trial to give more residents the opportunity to recycle their textiles from their doorstep."

Andrea Cornwall at LB Bexley

Achievements

- LB Bexley in partnership with TRAIID has successfully implemented a kerbside collection service to residents in a trial area.
- 4.2 tonnes of textiles were collected from 8,000 households over 6 months.
- The success of the first trial has led the council to expand the textiles collection service from 8,000 household to 12,000 households.

Acknowledgments

TRAID

Mike Webster, Recycling & Development Manager

T. 0208 733 2584

E. mike@traid.org.uk

London Borough of Bexley

John Matthews, Waste & Recycling Projects Officer

T. 020 3045 4632

E. john.matthews@bexley.gov.uk

Andrea Cornwell, Waste & Recycling Projects Officer

T. 020 3045 4628

E. Andrea.Cornwell@bexley.gov.uk