



**Friends of
the Earth**

Doorstep recycling

**a good practice guide and
local authority case studies**



Introduction

Friends of the Earth has long campaigned for increased recycling and most recently for better doorstep recycling collections. Research we have carried out into the services currently available in England, Wales and Northern Ireland indicates that doorstep services are improving, but there is still a long way to go before all local authorities have a doorstep collection scheme that could be considered good practice. Whilst almost all local authorities operate a doorstep service there is a need to share best practice to tackle some of the more challenging aspects including reaching out to high-rise flats and rural properties and collecting difficult-to-process materials, such as plastics and cardboard.

The Household Waste Recycling Act

Research into recycling schemes in the UK and across Europe indicates that doorstep collections of materials are the most effective way for local authorities to increase their recycling rates.¹ Over the past few years Friends of the Earth has campaigned for better doorstep recycling services through drafting and supporting the Household Waste Recycling Bill.² This Bill was sponsored by Joan Ruddock MP and was finally made an Act in November 2003. The Act requires that by 2010 local authorities in England must provide a doorstep collection service of at least two materials for every household in their area. This signifies a big change to the way doorstep collection services are provided and the major success of the Act is that everyone in England will soon be able to take part in recycling waste at their doorstep.

The state of doorstep recycling

Between September 2003 and April 2004, Friends of the Earth undertook a survey³ of the doorstep recycling services available throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland. We wanted to find out what services are currently offered to householders to see how far local authorities need to go to meet the requirements of the Act. The main findings of the research were as follows:

- Doorstep recycling services are growing, with 93% of local authorities now offering a doorstep collection of 2 or more materials to **some** of the households in their area. Only 3 local authorities offer no collection at all.
- But only 90 local authorities in England (26%) are currently compliant with the Household Waste Recycling Act's 2010 target, offering **all** of their households a doorstep collection of at least 2 materials.
- On average local authorities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland serve only 68% of households in their areas with a doorstep collection of 2 or more materials.⁴
- 'Best practice' doorstep collections are more scarce. Less than half (42%) of the local authorities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland provide a collection of 5 or more materials, and only 26% of households on average in each authority are served with this collection.

The need for 'best practice' doorstep recycling

The Household Waste Recycling Act sets a minimum standard and means that all households will be serviced, but it does not prescribe what form those services should take. We believe that to be worthwhile collection services must be comprehensive and include a wide range of materials so that there is little left for householders to put into their rubbish bin.

An effective doorstep collection scheme should produce high quality materials for recycling and composting, encourage high rates of participation from householders and capture a high proportion of recyclable and compostable waste from households. To achieve this, the collection must be convenient and reliable.

Friends of the Earth has developed a Best Practice Code for Doorstep Recycling (see Appendix 1) which includes the features most likely to guarantee high take-up and set-out rates and high yields of materials. In short, the code sets out that best practice doorstep recycling should:

- **Be frequent** - because regular collections are more convenient for householders.
- **Be on the same day of the week as the rubbish collections** - to avoid any confusion.
- **Include a wide range of materials** – because the greater the number of materials collected, the more people are likely to participate and the greater the amount of material people will put out for collection.
- **Include good customer care** – with regular information about the service.
- **Provide an easily storable container** – as yields of materials for recycling have been found to be higher in areas provided with a bag or box compared to similar areas without.
- **Involve separation at the doorstep** – because these materials will be less contaminated than those sorted at a central sorting facility. Cleaner materials are more valuable to reprocessors and a higher proportion of these can be recycled.

The doorstep recycling challenge

Most local authorities need to improve their doorstep recycling services if they are to meet the statutory recycling targets set by the Government. However, there are difficult challenges for local authorities in introducing best practice schemes. Friends of the Earth is therefore calling on the Government to provide support in two key areas.

1. Funding

A deficiency in central funding for recycling has, until very recently, put the brakes on new doorstep schemes being introduced by all but the most environmentally committed local authorities. The £140m Waste Minimisation and Recycling Fund is having an impact in England and its replacement, the Performance Fund, is being developed. In Wales, the National Assembly has allocated £21million for recycling and composting grants in 2004/5 and the same amount for the following two years. In Northern Ireland £10 million has been provisionally allocated for the Council Waste Management Grant Scheme for 2004/5 and roughly the same amount for 2005/6 and 2006/7. However, funding is generally not at the level which will enable every local authority to introduce a good quality doorstep recycling scheme for every household.

Friends of the Earth has called for the Performance Reward Fund to be ring-fenced for spending on waste minimisation and recycling so that local authorities in England who have not been successful in bidding for Defra grants can still receive dedicated funding.

Research for Waste Watch and Friends of the Earth⁵ found that a doorstep collection of dry recyclables and compostable waste would cost on average £17 per household per year (in addition to existing refuse collection costs). Where local authorities responded to our survey with the cost of their scheme, the evidence suggests that this £17 figure is still realistic.⁶

2. Leadership and targets

Faced with competing demands on stretched local authority budgets and public pressure to keep council tax down, it takes political leadership within local authorities to make recycling a priority. Local authorities have repeatedly asked for high profile support from central government for recycling and waste reduction, through initiatives such as national communication strategies with TV advertising. Defra has made a start through the education and awareness strand of the new Waste Implementation Programme. It must now set clear targets for improvements in recycling by increasing the statutory recycling targets to 50% by 2010 and 75% by 2015.

Current good practice

Despite the challenges, some local authorities have put in place good practice schemes which are rapidly increasing their recycling rates. We showcase some of those authorities in this report to allow other councils to learn from their experiences. There is still some way to go and some of the councils featured haven't yet reached high rates of recycling, but their schemes are taking them in the right direction.

Bath and North East Somerset - South West

Paper, glass bottles & jars, cans, plastic bottles, foil, textiles and pairs of shoes, spectacles, car batteries, engine oil & filters, mobile phones, toner & ink cartridges are collected at the doorstep from every household at street level. In Bath and North East Somerset residents can choose to use either a 55litre green recycling box or a smaller 25litre basket. The baskets have handles and are recommended for people who may have problems lifting a bigger box.

For flats where Green Box Collections are not suitable, there are two options:

- Mini Recycling Centres (MRC)
A set of recycling banks (for paper, glass and cans), each the size of a household wheeled bin, for use by residents. Green boxes are still offered for the storage of recyclables in the home before transferring to the MRC.
- Green Bag Collections
Green bags which are used to collect recycling in the centre of Bath can be used as an alternative to a recycling box and can be collected on a weekly basis from a central collection point. The full range of recyclables detailed above can be put in the green bag.

Home composting bins are available at reduced rates and the council also offers a fortnightly collection of green waste. Residents can either pay £36 for a wheeled bin, which covers three years service, or they can buy paper sacks at 35p each to take part in the scheme.

Contact: Bryn Williams, Recycling Officer on 01225394180 or bryn_williams@bathnes.gov.uk

Household waste recycling and composting rate: 26.1% (BVPI data 2002/3)

Weekly collection	✓	Same day collection	✓	Over five materials collected	✓	Service reaches all households	✓	Materials separated on-street	✓
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Blaenau Gwent County - Wales

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council offers a fortnightly collection of five materials and collects from every household in the area. The materials collected are paper, glass, plastic bottles, food and drinks cans and textiles. The council supplies re-usable bags for the collection of plastic bottles, which are replaced free of charge if lost or stolen. Toys, books, games and kitchen crockery/utensils are also collected for re-use.

The recycling service currently reaches 98% of households. The remaining 2% must be reached via a smaller recycling collection vehicle, which will commence rounds shortly. The council is responsible for the collection and all the materials are separated on the collection vehicle.

Contact: Beth Jones, Strategy and Policies Assistant on 01495 355 648 or beth.jones@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Household waste recycling and composting rate: 11-12.5% (Council data, 2003/4)

Weekly collection		Same day collection		Over five materials collected		Service reaches all households		Materials separated on-street	
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Carrickfergus - Northern Ireland

The district council has recently extended its service so that it now collects six materials every week from the doorstep of every household in the area. These materials are paper, glass, plastic bottles, food and drinks cans, aluminium foil and textiles, including shoes and clothing. The service is operated by Bryson House, a not-for-profit organisation and the materials are separated on-street.

Contact: Alan Barkley, Director Environmental Services on 02893 351 604
John MacIntyre, Deputy Director Environmental Services on 02893 351 604
Jean Stewart, Cleansing Operations Officer on 02893351192

Household waste recycling rate: 9.1% (Council data, Jan-Mar 2004)

Weekly collection		Same day collection		Over five materials collected		Service reaches all households		Materials separated on-street	
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Dacorum - East of England

Newspapers, magazines, junk mail, all food and drink cans and all plastic bottles are collected from 88% of households in the borough. Garden waste and cardboard are collected alongside these materials from almost half the households.

The council was recently awarded a grant of almost £1 million from DEFRA, which it used to improve its recycling service and employ two waste inspectors to give face-to-face advice to residents. The waste services unit also distributes thought-provoking posters, leaflets and calendars, runs roadshows and takes part in school and community talks. It has an enquiry hotline and offers assisted collections to help elderly and disabled residents with their recycling. The pilot areas for the enhanced scheme have seen recycling rates rise from 13% from July-September 2002 to 53% for the same period in 2003. The new scheme has enabled residents in Dacorum to recycle 43% of their waste.

The education campaign has helped to change people's attitude to recycling alongside a rapid change in the waste collection service. The original weekly black sack collection and opt-in dry recyclables scheme has been replaced by an alternate weekly refuse and organic waste/cardboard collection, with dry recyclables picked up weekly in boxes – newspapers, magazines and junkmail in black boxes and cans, aerosols and all plastic bottles in green boxes.

Contact: Natalia Rita, Assistant Waste Development Officer on 01442 228 666 or natalia.rita@dacorum.gov.uk

Household waste recycling and composting rate: 16% (BVPI data 2002/3)

Weekly collection	✓	Same day collection	✓	Over five materials collected	✓	Service reaches all households	✗	Materials separated on-street	✗
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Darlington - North East

In 2003 Darlington Borough Council introduced their doorstep recycling scheme, which collects paper, cans, glass, PET plastic and textiles on a fortnightly basis. Home composting is promoted and low cost composting units are available from the council.

The collection service is offered to 100% of its households, with an estimated participation rate of 50-60%. The in-house operated collection service includes separation of materials on-street.

Contact: Phil Scrafton, Waste Minimisation & Recycling Officer on 01325 388 564 or philip.scrafton@darlington.gov.uk

Household waste recycling and composting rate: 12.8% (BVPI data 2002/3)

Weekly collection	✗	Same day collection	✓	Over five materials collected	✓	Service reaches all households	✓	Materials separated on-street	✓
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Daventry - East Midlands

In 1995, Daventry District Council launched its red and blue box scheme. This opt-in scheme allowed residents to recycle papers, textiles, plastics bottles, cans and glass at their doorstep. In 1998 the authority introduced a collection of compostable waste (garden and kitchen organics) to a trial area of 5,000 households. The trial lasted for twelve months and was successful - with over 50% of waste collected in the area being recycled and composted.

Following the trial, in January 1999, the go-ahead was given for the authority to introduce the alternate weekly collections of organic waste and refuse district wide. By September 1999, all 30,000 properties within the district were receiving a weekly collection of their red and blue boxes, and an alternate weekly collection of their compostable waste and residual waste. This waste collection system is generating one of the highest recycling and composting rates in the country with 43% recycled in 2001/02. All residents can now have their paper, card, glass, cans, textiles, shoes, plastic bottles, aerosols and garden waste collected for recycling at their doorstep.

Contact: Sue Reed, Lead Officer, Waste Management, on 01327 300 001 or sreed@daventrydc.gov.uk

Household waste recycling and composting rate: 44.37% (BVPI data 2002/3)

Weekly collection	✓	Same day collection	✓	Over five materials collected	✓	Service reaches all households	✓	Materials separated on-street	✓
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Fermanagh - Northern Ireland

The Council operates an alternate weekly collection. Rubbish is collected one week and recyclable materials and garden waste the next. The blue bin collection for dry recyclable waste includes paper, cans, plastic and cardboard. The council has aims to reach a 25% recycling rate by 2005.

The council warns residents that blue bins containing waste that is not suitable for recycling will not be emptied and likewise bins for residual waste containing recyclable materials shall not be emptied. The bins are inspected to ensure that everyone complies with guidance about what to put out for the different collections.

Contact: Paul Slowey, Recycling Officer, on 028 6632 3533 or paul.slowey@fermanagh.gov.uk

Household waste recycling and composting rate: 20.1% (Council data, Oct-Dec 2003), 14.4% (Council data, Jan-Mar 2004)

Weekly collection	✗	Same day collection	✓	Over five materials collected	✓	Service reaches all households	✓	Materials separated on-street	✗
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Hounslow - London

Hounslow has a weekly Green Box Recycling Collection Service that is available to over 70,000 households. The collection is made on a weekly basis by ECT Recycling Ltd, a not for profit organisation. The collection service includes paper, cardboard, glass bottles and jars, cans, aerosols, aluminium foil, household and car batteries, engine oil, shoes, textiles and Yellow Pages.

The Recycling Team have been installing 260 small near-entrance recycling sites for all medium and high-rise estates (blocks of 12 flats and over) across the borough. The recycling service operates weekly for residents living in medium to high-rise flats. Under the scheme residents can use the mini recycling centres to recycle all their paper, glass and cans.

ECT Recycling also provides a seasonal garden waste collection service to Hounslow Borough residents. Weekly collections begin in April and end in November.

As a part of their communications strategy, the council investigated the barriers to recycling among different elements of the community. One recommendation to increase participation was to do more targeted communications with residents in the form of door-stepping – talking to residents face-to-face. Hounslow successfully secured funding from the London Recycling fund for a three month door-stepping campaign to be carried out this year with Waste Watch.

Contact: Frederick Thompson-Brown, Recycling Team, on 020 8583 5060 or frederick.thompson-brown@hounslow.gov.uk

Household waste recycling and composting rate: 3.36% (BVPI data 2002/3)

Weekly collection	✓	Same day collection	✓	Over five materials collected	✓	Service reaches all households	✓	Materials separated on-street	✓
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Lichfield - West Midlands

Lichfield District Council operates an alternate weekly collection of household waste which is collected in a 240ltr wheeled bin and a weekly collection of recyclables to every household. Two boxes are provided for recyclable materials: paper and cardboard are collected in the small box and glass bottles & jars, food and drinks cans, textiles and plastic bottles are collected in the large box. The materials are separated on-street and collection service is run by the council. There is an 80-90% participation rate in the scheme.

There is also a composting collection service for garden waste which operates fortnightly. Garden waste is collected in a 240ltr wheeled bin and made into soil improver, which can be bought back by residents for use on gardens and allotments.

Contact: Christine Foxley on 01543 308 999 or waste.strategy@lichfield.gov.uk

Household waste recycling and composting rate: 42.6% (BVPI data 2002/3)

Weekly collection	✓	Same day collection	✓	Over five materials collected	✓	Service reaches all households	✓	Materials separated on-street	✓
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Milton Keynes - South East

Milton Keynes Council offers a weekly collection service of paper, cardboard, glass, cans and plastic bottles to almost all of the residents in their area, including those in flats. The paper, cardboard, cans and plastic bottles are collected in a pink sack and separated at an MRF and glass bottles and jars are collected in a blue box. For flats where the pink sack scheme is not suitable the council have introduced wheelie bins for collecting the recyclable materials.

Residents can buy home compost bins from the council for £5 or join the garden waste collection service. Collections take place every fortnight from March to November and residents can take part by paying a fee of £12 for a year. The recycling rate in Milton Keynes has been provisionally estimated at 24% for 2003/04.

Contact: Gill King on 01908 252 570 or envservices@milton-keynes.gov.uk

Household waste recycling and composting rate: 16.35% (BVPI data 2002/3)

Weekly collection	✓	Same day collection	✓	Over five materials collected	✓	Service reaches all households	✓	Materials separated on-street	✗
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Newport - Wales

Newport Wastesavers, a not-for-profit, community recycling organisation, launched its Green Box Scheme in partnership with Newport County Borough Council in 1998. Paper, glass, cans, aluminium foil and textiles are now collected at the doorstep from 52,000 households on a fortnightly basis. A new weekly service is being introduced, which will include the collection of plastic bottles and this should be available to all households on the existing scheme by the summer. Residents use a 55 litre recycling box for their materials, which are separated on-street. Flats and sheltered housing do not currently receive a recycling collection, but there are plans to provide communal recycling collection services in the near future.

Garden waste is collected by the council and the resulting compost has been used in Newport's parks, gardens and school grounds. 14,000 households currently receive this optional collection service and it is shortly going to expand to cover another 4,000. The service will be offered to flats from August 2004. Subsidised home compost bins for kitchen and garden waste are also available for £12.

The council is aiming to collect kitchen waste and cardboard in the future and is currently working on numerous initiatives to raise awareness of recycling, including interactive web games, video projects, radio advertising, roadshows and leafleting.

Contact: Christopher Seal, Recycling Officer on 01633 232308 or christopher.seal@newport.gov.uk

Household waste recycling and composting rate: 20% (Council data, 2003/4)

Weekly collection	✗	Same day collection	✓	Over five materials collected	✓	Service reaches all households	✗	Materials separated on-street	✓
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North Cornwall - South West

North Cornwall District Council offers a fortnightly collection service to all the households in their area. The scheme consists of providing a number of different coloured bags for residents to separate their recyclable materials into:

- Blue bag for all types of white paper including newspaper, junk mail and telephone directories
- Clear bag for drink and food cans, aerosol cans, plastic bottles and aluminium foil
- Red bag for clothes, accessories and household textiles
- Carrier bags for glass bottles and jars
- In a separate bundle cardboard boxes, packets, brown paper and envelopes are collected.

The scheme is operated by Cornwall Paper Company and the participation rate is around 55%. All materials collected in the district are processed at a new £2m MRF in the district which was provided by Defra grant funding acquired through a partnership agreement with Caradon District Council, a neighbouring local authority.

Contact: Operational Services on 01208 262800 or mike.beckett@ncdc.gov.uk

Household waste recycling and composting rate: 24.6% (BVPI data 2002/3)

Weekly collection	✗	Same day collection	✗	Over five materials collected	✓	Service reaches all households	✓	Materials separated on-street	✓
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Tower Hamlets - London

Green boxes for newspapers, magazines, flattened cardboard, phone directories, glass, metal tins and cans, aluminium, textiles and shoes are collected from households with a street-level doorstep. However, eighty-three percent of homes in Tower Hamlets are high rise, so providing doorstep recycling to every household is challenging.

The council is finding new ways to ensure everyone has access to collections - pilot projects are underway and some high rise schemes are already in place. Tower Hamlets Community Recycling Consortium (THCRC) is the local, not-for-profit company responsible for the flats recycling service. This service includes paper, cardboard, glass, cans, plastics, food waste, textiles, shoes and telephone directories. THCRC have designed and manufactured a dedicated high-rise door-to-door recycling vehicle that can go up lifts and enable doorstep sorting of recycled materials. Besides this, they have a specially designed recycling winch for removing bulk bags of recyclable items such as bottles and paper from high rise flats without lifts. As an incentive for residents to take part in the scheme, THCRC have also introduced weekly prizes for those who recycle.

Contact: Kevin Maypole, Recycling Officer on 020 7364 6699

Household waste recycling and composting rate: 3.36% (BVPI data 2002/3)

Weekly collection	✓	Same day collection	✓	Over five materials collected	✓	Service reaches all households	✗	Materials separated on-street	✓
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Vale of White Horse - South East

A collection is offered every week to all street-level houses and the participation rate is estimated at 78%. The service does not include all flats where it is difficult for residents to have a green box, but the council hopes to address this in the near future, probably by installing mini recycling centres.

The collection service includes all types of paper, drink and food cans, aerosols, car and domestic batteries, mobile phones (for charity), clothing and shoes (for charity), glass bottles and jars, plastic bottles and aluminium foil. The materials collected in the green box scheme are separated on-street and the scheme is operated by Cleanaway Ltd.

Contact: The Waste Team on 01235 520 202 or waste.team@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

Household waste recycling and composting rate: 17.6% (BVPI data 2002/3)

Weekly collection	✓	Same day collection	✗	Over five materials collected	✓	Service reaches all households	✗	Materials separated on-street	✓
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Wear Valley - North East

The council is responsible for the fortnightly collection service which is offered to all households in the area. The Green Box Recycling Scheme covers nearly 80,000 households and is unusual in that the boxes have been tagged with a barcode which will enable participation in the scheme to be monitored. Paper, cardboard, food and drink cans, aerosol cans, glass bottles and jars, clothing, textiles and shoes are all collected in the green box and the materials are separated on-street.

Contact: Jo Bussey on 01388 761617 or j.bussey@wearvalley.gov.uk

Household recycling and composting rate: 5.95% (BVPI data 2002/3)

Weekly collection	✗	Same day collection	✓	Over five materials collected	✓	Service reaches all households	✓	Materials separated on-street	✓
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Conclusions

Increasing the UK's poor recycling record is a real challenge, for national and local government alike. But as this report shows, good practice does exist. New and innovative schemes are being introduced faster than ever before. It's critical that the new schemes are the right schemes. As a result of the findings from our survey, Friends of the Earth concludes that there are 5 key steps that will help local authorities rapidly improve their recycling rates:

1. Expand existing doorstep collections to all households and invest in reaching 'difficult' properties e.g. high-rise, high-density and remote rural homes.
2. Increase the number of materials collected. Some local authorities are successfully collecting 7 or more materials.
3. Increase the frequency of recycling collections to weekly, or introduce a fortnightly alternating recycling and rubbish collection where residents support it.
4. Ensure the cleanest, most valuable recycle by gradually replacing commingled 'twin-bin' collections with collections that are separated on-street into specially designed compartmented vehicles. Local authorities that have not yet introduced multi-material schemes should introduce source-separated collections from the start.
5. Invest in providing a good customer care service for householders so that they are encouraged to take part in the scheme and recycle as much of their waste as possible.

Friends of the Earth would like to thank all the local authorities that took part in our survey and contributed to this report for their time and cooperation.

Appendix 1

Best Practice Code for Doorstep Recycling

Research carried out into recycling in the UK and across Europe indicates that doorstep collection of materials is the most effective way to increase a local authority's recycling rates. ('Maximising recycling rates – tackling residuals', Community Recycling Network, 2002 http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/reports/maximising_recycling_rates_report.pdf) A good doorstep collection needs to produce a high quality of materials for recycling and ensure high rates of participation and set-out from householders. The collection must therefore be:

- Convenient
- Reliable
- Separate from the refuse collection

The same research also indicates that the following features are those most likely to guarantee these attributes:

Weekly collection

Weekly collections are more convenient for householders than fortnightly collections. In Daventry, the local authority has also been able to reduce the refuse collection to fortnightly by running a weekly dry recyclables collection and a fortnightly food and garden waste collection, which has increased participation in the scheme and the overall recycling rate. However, the frequency of refuse collections should only be reduced to fortnightly where a comprehensive recycling and composting scheme, including the collection of kitchen waste, has been established and good promotion of the change has taken place.

Collection of recycling and residual waste on the same day of the week

The recycling and refuse collections should both take place on the same day of the week to avoid confusion, i.e. both collections should take place on Mondays, whether or not those collections happen weekly or fortnightly.

Wide range of materials collected

The greater the number of materials that are collected the more people are likely to participate and the greater the amount of material people will put out for collection. For example, Recoup has reported that when plastic bottle collection is added to existing recycling schemes, capture rates of other materials typically increase by 10-30%. Collecting food waste for composting has also been found to have great potential for increasing overall recycling rates ('Maximising recycling rates – tackling residuals', CRN, 2002). If certain materials are excluded from the collection then an explanation for this should be given to householders and advice on the nearest bring sites should be offered.

Good customer care including regular information

Customer care can take many forms including operating a telephone hotline service, having a dedicated web page for information, delivering leaflets or newsletters, doing face-to-face education about the service or liaising with local schools. A combination of measures is the best way to reach a wide audience. Letting the public know about what happens to the materials once after they have been collected also helps to reinforce the 'feel-good' factor and encourages participation.

Provision of an easily storable container

Trials in Bath in 1993 found that yields of materials for recycling were over 50% higher in areas provided with a bag or box compared to similar areas without ('The Loop', LARAC, Spring 2003). There is a wide variety of containers available for collections and it is important to recognize that different shapes and sizes will suit different households and the space available in different kitchens. Also, certain materials will require specific containers, for example, glass needs to be stored in a sturdy container to prevent it from being broken, but paper may be better kept in bags as these can be stored more easily. Multi-material collections with kerbside sorting will require a basket or box to be provided rather than a bag and it may be beneficial to consult with residents to find the most appropriate container for their needs.

Collection of separated rather than commingled recyclables

Biffa Waste Services has found that the earlier materials for recycling can be separated from the waste stream, the lower the likely cost and environmental impact of the collection scheme ('Future Perfect', Biffa, 2002/3). Materials separated at the doorstep will be less contaminated than those sorted at a central material recycling facility (MRF) and will therefore require less treatment. Cleaner materials are more valuable to reprocessors and local authorities and a higher proportion of these can be recycled. Also, glass cannot easily be collected commingled and separated into different colours at a central facility because it is difficult to sort by hand when broken and the technology required for separating the different colours mechanically is only just becoming available.

Incentives to increase participation

Reducing the size of the refuse container and charging more for a larger bin or extra bin bags can help to encourage people to take part in the recycling scheme. It can be easier to reduce the amount of waste that people set out if the collection scheme is not tied into using large containers, i.e. 240litre wheelie bins. Other ways to involve residents include offering a free or reduced rate home compost bin and developing a reward scheme for high recyclers. Where possible, it is preferable for people to home compost rather than take part in collection schemes for green waste.

Appendix 2

Explanation of tick boxes

Weekly collection

Dry recyclables collection takes place every week.

Same day collection

Refuse collection and recycling collection takes place on the same day of the week, i.e. Monday, whether those collections are weekly or fortnightly.

Over five materials collected

Council collects five materials or more materials at the doorstep, whether or not that service reaches every household.

Service reaches all households

Every household is provided with a doorstep or boundary collection service, including all flats.

Materials separated on-street

All materials are separated at the kerbside, rather than being collected commingled and separated at an MRF.

References

- 1 Community Recycling Network (2002) 'Maximising recycling rates – tackling residuals'. Friends of the Earth briefing on this report available at:
http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/reports/maximising_recycling_rates_report.pdf
- 2 For more information on the Household Waste Recycling Act see:
<http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/waste/news/index.html>
- 3 The results from the survey and a report on the findings in England can be found on the Friends of the Earth website at:
http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/waste/news/doorstep_recycling_survey.html
- 4 The average percentage of households receiving doorstep collections per authority in England was arrived at by adding up the percentage of households reached in each collection authority and dividing it by the total number of collection authorities in England (352).
- 5 ECOTEC Research and Consulting Ltd (2000) 'Beyond the Bin: The Economics of Waste Management Options'. Report for Wastewatch and Friends of the Earth.
http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/reports/economics_waste_options.pdf
- 6 For more info on the cost of recycling see:
http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/factsheets/recycling_local_authority.pdf

It is very difficult to compare the cost of recycling schemes across local authorities. Often, the cost is not worked out separately from the refuse collection and sometimes the cost is held to be commercially sensitive information. In England, 74 local authorities (21%) answered this question in Friends of the Earth's survey. Their costs of recycling appeared to range from £1.15 to £22.86, with an average cost of £11.01. However, the services also range widely: from a monthly paper collection to a weekly collection of more than 5 dry and organic recyclables.

Friends of the Earth inspires solutions to environmental problems which make life better for people.

Friends of the Earth is:

- the UK's most influential national environmental campaigning organisation
- the most extensive environmental network in the world, with almost one million supporters across five continents and over 60 national organisations worldwide
- a unique network of campaigning local groups, working in over 200 communities throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland
- dependent on individuals for over 90 per cent of its income.

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