



Bedfordshire
county council

Food Waste Trial: Communications with Households in Mid Bedfordshire

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Overview of Bedfordshire

- Approx 163,000 households in Bedfordshire
- Countywide three stream collection for 3 years
- Co-mingled dry recycling scheme to MRF (Shanks Waste Solutions)
- Garden waste to open windrow composting sites
- 5 household waste recycling centres, 180 recycling sites
- Average 70% households using kerbside schemes
- Alternate bin collections Mid Beds since October 2004, started South Beds last month



Food Waste Collection Trial

- Bedfordshire County Council reached a recycling/composting rate of 34.86% in 06/07
- Further reductions in biodegradable waste sent to landfill necessary (LATS)
- Bedfordshire County Council, as lead authority, secured funding through WRAP to trial food waste collection
- Trial launched in April 2007 across 6,000 households in Mid Bedfordshire
- Collected food waste taken to Anaerobic Digestion plant within County (Biogen)



Communications Schedule

- Introduction leaflet delivered 8 weeks before launch of collections
- Doorstepping commenced one week after introduction leaflet delivered
- Final instruction leaflet delivered with bin and kitchen caddy one week before launch
- Clearly branded 'Recycle Now!' literature, vehicle livery and uniforms



Written Literature

- Continuity
- Literature designed to be simple and clear
- Based on WRAP design but adapted to local 'Recycle Now' style
- Pictures used to relay messages
- Explaining how and why food is being collected and what will happen to it





Doorstepping Team



- Three temporary staff recruited via Student Force
- Joined existing Recycling Team, Bedfordshire County Council
- Six enthusiastic doorsteppers with excellent communication skills



Doorstepping

- Doorstepping is very successful method of communication
- Ensure public understanding of how food waste trial would operate and why scheme is important
- Guarantee that maximum rates of participation are achieved
- Ensure excellent quality of material collected in the food waste trial, minimal contamination



Key Messages

- Residents were asked whether they would be using the scheme. If not, what the barriers were
- Households advised trial would last twelve months, all food acceptable (except large bones & liquids)
- Only bags provided or newspaper could be used to wrap unwanted food waste
- Residents able to ask questions about trial
- All recycling schemes discussed during visit to encourage residual waste reduction



Results of Doorstepping

Area	Knocked	Spoken to	Contact rate	Survey
Cranfield	1167	502	42%	429
Flitwick	1005	567	56%	503
Shefford	1041	449	43%	407
Sandy	1141	528	46%	430
Potton	1256	531	42%	421
Totals	5610	2577	46%	2190



Survey Results

- Over 85% of residents had received and read the information leaflet prior to our visit
- This allowed residents time to think about whether they would use the scheme and formulate questions
- A staggering 92% of respondents claimed they would use the scheme
- The main reason (73% of non users) for not using scheme was residents seldom threw food away



Barriers to Participation

- 16 residents admitted they couldn't be bothered
- 16 residents stated they had no space
- 6 residents thought bins would be too smelly
- 1 resident thought it would attract vermin
- Another 433 residents home composted but were still keen to use collection for other food waste



Questions from Residents

- Most frequently asked question: ‘Will food waste be collected every week?’
- Frequency of collection seemed an important deciding factor in household participation
- Size of the food waste bin and kitchen caddy
- Storage was an issue for some residents
- How to get hold of more caddy bags, strength of bags and any weight or bag limits



Final Feedback

- Feedback very positive. Comments included ‘very pleased’, ‘fantastic’, ‘hope it’s successful’
- Only 5 respondents made negative comments, including ‘bad idea’, ‘waste of taxpayer’s money’ and ‘won’t be happy until weekly black bin collections return’
- Finally, a further 20 residents stated they did not want anymore bins delivered after the food waste bins



Monitoring of Trial

- Set out rates identified at 60% during first two weeks of trial
- Contamination negligible, less than 2%
- Participation monitoring conducted by Hyder Consulting July 2007 identified 75% participation
- In depth attitudinal surveys September
- Average bin weight 3 kilos, 2.2 tonne per day



Conclusions

- Excellent working relationship between Bedfordshire County Council, Mid Beds District Council and Biogen
- Free liner bags encourage high participation but dramatically increase costs
- Residents from outside trial areas have shown keen interest
- Evaluation of trial success in Spring 2008