

London Environment Directors' Network

**LEDNET**

**CENTRE FOR  
SOCIAL  
INNOVATION**



# **UNDERSTANDING AND TACKLING FLY-TIPPING IN LONDON**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**JULY 2018**

# ABOUT

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## London Environment Directors' Network

The London Environment Directors' Network (LEDNet) is the membership association for Environment Directors in London's local authorities. We work together to deliver more effective and efficient environmental services, as a key component of place-shaping. The outcomes we want to see are:

- Increased adoption of circular economy approaches, reduced residual waste and increased recycling, cleaner air, more resilient green and blue infrastructure, a more resilient energy system and a thriving natural environment;
- Increased adoption of best practice around digital solutions and SMART working, proactive use of effective demand management and behavioural change approaches and effective financial strategy; and
- More cost-effective outcomes for London residents.

We are working towards our outcomes by:

- Developing research, best practice and policy on environmental and place-shaping issues of strategic importance for London;
- Influencing development of relevant policy and legislation at a national and regional level;
- Providing a professional support network for LEDNet members; and
- Facilitating collaboration between directors that contributes to London's joint working.

Find out more at [www.londoncouncils.gov.uk](http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk)

## Keep Britain Tidy's Centre for Social Innovation

Keep Britain Tidy is a leading independent charity with three goals – to eliminate litter, improve local places and prevent waste. We have a long history of successfully delivering campaigns and programmes that have positive impacts for society and the environment at a local, regional and national level.

In 2015, Keep Britain Tidy launched the Centre for Social Innovation, becoming the only UK charity to take a systematic approach to applying behavioural insights to tackle litter and waste issues. Our approach involves gathering insights into specific behaviours and using these to develop, pilot and scale innovative behaviour-change interventions.

We are part of a new global movement of policy-makers, academics and practitioners looking at the application of behavioural insights to encourage pro-social and environmental behaviour. We have won numerous awards for our work including from Nudge Awards 2018, AIM Nudging for Good Awards 2017 and the Charity Awards 2016.

What makes our approach further unique is our ability to take our interventions to national scale. Over 160 local authorities have implemented one or more of our tested interventions since we launched.

Find out more at [www.keepbritaintidy.org/centre-for-social-innovation](http://www.keepbritaintidy.org/centre-for-social-innovation)

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This report presents research conducted by Keep Britain Tidy in partnership with the London Environment Directors' Network (LEDNet) as part of a project to better understand the triggers and barriers that lead to fly-tipping in London, and to identify opportunities for addressing these. The project is being delivered in two stages:

- Stage One: Research to better understand the issue of fly-tipping in London (January to May 2018)
- Stage Two: Piloting interventions to change behaviour (July 2018 onwards).

This report presents the findings and outcomes from Stage One, which will be used to develop targeted behavioural interventions that will be piloted in partnership with London local authorities in Stage Two.

This research focuses on the following types of fly-tipping due to the prevalence of these issues in London:

- 'Black bags' (i.e. bags of rubbish) fly-tipping by residents
- Commercial waste fly-tipping by local shops and other businesses
- Fly-tipping by transient populations
- General fly-tipping by residents (bulky waste and other issues).

## Methodology

The research involved:

- 1) a desk-based analysis of fly-tipping data provided by 16 London local authorities and gathered from Defra's online WasteDataFlow database (2016/17 only);
- 2) four focus groups with 36 London residents who had disposed of their waste in a way that constitutes 'fly-tipping' over the past year;
- 3) eight semi-structured face-to-face interviews with representatives from local businesses in Southwark; and
- 4) an online survey with a statistically representative sample of 1,000 London residents.

## Results

### Rates and costs of fly-tipping in London

- According to WasteDataFlow, in 2016/17 London local authorities recorded 366,087 incidents of fly-tipping.
- Over the same period, London local authorities estimate that they spent £18,395,660 on clearing up fly-tipping, an average of £557,444 per each of the 33 London authorities.
- The fly-tipped waste overwhelmingly came from households – almost half (47%) of all incidents were ‘other household waste’ (bulky waste items, such as mattresses, furniture, whitegoods, children’s toys, etc.), while just under one quarter (24%) were ‘black bags’ of household waste.
- Rates of ‘other household waste’ fly-tipping were highest in the London boroughs of Enfield, Brent, Newham, Hounslow, Haringey and Croydon.
- Rates of ‘black bags – household incidents’ fly-tipping were highest in the London boroughs of Enfield, Haringey, Hounslow, Kensington and Chelsea, City of London and Croydon.
- Rates of ‘black bags – commercial incidents’ fly-tipping were highest in the London boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Southwark, City of London, Islington, Brent and Greenwich.

### Fly-tipping behaviours

- While the vast majority of Londoners dispose of their waste responsibly, one in five Londoners disposed of their waste in a way that constitutes ‘fly-tipping’ over the past two years.
- The most common fly-tipping behaviours were leaving black bags next to household bins on collection day, leaving cardboard boxes on and around public recycling bins and leaving donations outside a charity shop when it is closed.
- Those in younger age groups (18-24 and 25-34 year olds) were considerably more likely to say to say that they had fly-tipped black bags/cardboard waste compared to all other age groups, whereas fly-tipping of bulky/other household waste items was somewhat more evenly spread across the age groups.
- The results suggest that people of European nationalities are more likely to fly-tip black bags and cardboard waste compared to those from other regions, including the UK. There is evidence to suggest that this is largely driven by respondents from these nations not realising that what they were doing is ‘wrong’.  
People who live in smaller household accommodation types were more likely to fly-tip both black bags/cardboard and bulky/other items. This may be due to limited waste storage space in smaller household accommodation types.

- Fly-tipping of black bags was highest amongst full time students and full time workers, indicating that there may be a perceived lack of time or convenience issue influencing behaviours. By contrast, fly-tipping of bulky waste was highest amongst unemployed people. This may be due to the costs associated with waste removal by council or private waste collectors, which was highlighted as a key barrier by participants in the focus groups.
- Having regular access to a vehicle does not appear to have an influence on the likelihood that a person living in London will fly-tip.
- Respondents in the AB and C1 social grades were more likely to fly-tip black bags/cardboard waste compared to those in the C2 and DE groups, whereas those in the C2 and DE grades were more likely to fly-tip bulky/other household waste.
- A person's feeling of personal connection to their local area, and the length of time they have lived there, does not appear to be a determining factor in their likelihood to fly-tip. This suggests that other factors have a stronger influence on fly-tipping behaviours.

## **Behavioural drivers of fly-tipping**

### **Residents**

- There is a lack of awareness of what constitutes 'fly-tipping'.  
This means that communications aimed at addressing fly-tipping may not be reaching audiences who do not recognise the behaviour as something that they, or someone else they know, might do.
- Certain types of fly-tipping are seen as more socially acceptable.  
This perception is linked to narratives around the 'intention' behind a fly-tip and a lack of understanding about its broader social, environmental and economic consequences.
- Fly-tipping is often motivated (or excused) by a perception of 'helping someone out'.  
Respondents who had fly-tipped were more likely to agree with the statement 'if someone can find a use for the items, then it's fine to leave them'.
- There is a lack of understanding about the impacts of fly-tipping (and waste service systems).  
Household fly-tipping was seen as low-impact and participants struggled to understand the cost impacts and implications for the broader community. A common perception is that 'council is already out there collecting rubbish, so they may as well collect mine while they're at it'.

- There is an expectation that fly-tips will be collected quickly and without repercussions.  
Fly-tipped items are often collected within a matter of hours and generally without consequences, such as a warning letter or fine. This appears to reinforce perceptions that fly-tipping is low impact.
- Some of the methods used by councils to clean streets and collect waste unintentionally drive fly-tipping.  
Three examples were identified: 'side waste' rules, which drive some people to leave excess rubbish by public litter bins where they know it will be collected; rules that increase the 'hassle' factor of using council bulky waste and 'tip' services (for example, councils being 'fussy' about what will and won't be collected/accepted); and practices such as 'time banding' that involve bags of rubbish being left on the street for collection.
- Households are not managing their waste effectively and frequently run out of room in their bins before collection day.  
Many participants felt overwhelmed with the amount of waste they were bringing into their households, particularly cardboard and plastic packaging.
- There is a very low perceived threat of enforcement.  
While participants were generally supportive of enforcement of fly-tipping (even if they had been caught themselves), they felt that fly-tipping was not generally being enforced and the perceived likelihood of getting caught fly-tipping was low.
- Disposing of waste responsibly is seen as a 'hassle' (and there is much scope for improving this).  
Fly-tipping is often perceived as the cheapest and most convenient option. By comparison, bulky waste services are perceived as costly and inconvenient.
- People feel a lack of personal responsibility for their own waste.  
The research suggests that many residents do not feel personally responsible for their unwanted items and waste once it is 'off their hands'. This is largely seen as the council's responsibility and often linked with paying council tax.

## Businesses

- The interviews with local businesses found that there was very low awareness amongst participants of what constitutes 'fly-tipping'. Despite this, when prompted, participants talked passionately about the negative impacts of fly-tipping in their local area (even if they contributed to the issue themselves).
- There was confusion around waste collection services in businesses' own area, which appears to influence fly-tipping. This confusion was caused by recent services changes, different collection schedules by council and private waste collectors, issues with non-council bags creating confusion around who collects their waste, and charges.
- As found in the research with residents, certain council practices and rules appear to be unintentionally contributing to the issue. For example, in one case the council provided a free clearing service for market traders, so local businesses simply put their businesses waste out at the same time, so that it would be collected for free with the market waste.
- The perceived effectiveness and threat of enforcement varied from business to business and relied heavily on whether they had heard personally of another business receiving a warning or fine.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of the research, Keep Britain Tidy has eight recommendations for tackling domestic and commercial fly-tipping in London:

1. Treat the fly-tipping of black bags/cardboard waste separately from bulky waste, as their behavioural drivers are different
2. Use relevant images when communicating about fly-tipping
3. Use plainer and more specific language when communicating about fly-tipping
4. Extend communications about how waste services work and consider use of values-based communications to strengthen personal responsibility for waste
5. Reduce the hassle factor and make bulky waste simpler and easier to dispose of
6. Ensure that current policies and services do not unintentionally drive fly-tipping
7. Encourage residents to maximise their bin capacity and avoid generating waste to help reduce excess waste and related fly-tipping
8. Increase the perceived threat of enforcement with residents, landlords and businesses