

# Stick(er) With Doorstepping

Keep Britain Tidy's **Dr Anna Scott** looks at ways of improving the performance of food waste collection schemes. Can such simple solutions as stickers and doorstepping still work?

**D**oorstepping, otherwise known as doorknocking, canvassing and door-to-door engagement, is a form of direct marketing that involves face-to-face conversations with householders on their doorstep. These conversations attempt to identify and overcome any barriers to effective recycling by offering tailored information, thus aiming to improve participation and capture rates and/or reduce contamination.

Keep Britain Tidy (which merged with Waste Watch in 2011) has a long history of delivering doorstepping campaigns for local authorities – since 2008 alone we have delivered more than 100 campaigns across the country, knocking on in excess of 1.5 million doors and engaging with over half a million residents.

In 2014, Robert Pocock and Jill Jesson from MEL Research reflected on a decade of doorstepping campaigns and explored the question raised by local authorities as to whether carrying out standalone doorstepping campaigns (where recycling services remain unchanged) provides good value for money.<sup>1</sup> Many of the points raised resonated with us at Keep Britain Tidy. However, based on our experience, we were still of the opinion that doorstepping remains an important technique, particularly for driving up participation in established, but underperforming, services such as food waste collections. For example, a food waste doorstepping campaign we delivered for the London Borough of Hackney in 2014 increased participation in the service by 10 percent in the area monitored.

In 2014, WRAP trialled a number of different interventions designed to improve the performance of food waste collection

schemes. These interventions, which were delivered in seven local authorities across England, included providing households with a free supply of caddy liners, a scheme leaflet, putting "no food waste please" stickers on residual bins and doorstepping, among others.

The most effective intervention was shown to be the package of a "no food waste please" sticker and the provision of a scheme leaflet and free supply of liners (all delivered on residual waste collection day) – this increased tonnages of food waste collected by between 15 percent and 48 percent in the four trial areas. Doorstepping was used in other areas alongside other interventions such as information stickers on food waste bins and the provision of different types of liners (on top of free liners being available) – this increased food waste tonnages by less than five percent in the two trial areas.

The results of the WRAP trials created much interest from local authorities looking to increase the performance of their separate food waste collections. In autumn 2015, Keep Britain Tidy embarked on an ambitious project on behalf of Surrey Waste Partnership to deliver a programme of interventions across nine of the 11 districts and boroughs in Surrey. The programme aimed to increase the capture of food waste by 10 percent while reducing residual waste arisings by targeting 323,000 households with at least one form of intervention:

- Around 102,000 households in two districts/boroughs were targeted with a "no food waste please" sticker
- Around 80,000 households in three districts/boroughs were targeted with a "no food waste please" sticker plus ➔

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- scheme leaflet delivery
- Around 108,000 households in three districts/boroughs were targeted with the package of a "no food waste please" sticker plus scheme leaflet and liners delivery
- Around 33,000 households in one district/borough were targeted with just scheme leaflet and liners delivery.

## No Food Waste Please

THE INTERVENTION programme was delivered between October 2015 and March 2016. "No food waste please" stickers were placed on over 195,000 residual bins, and over 218,000 households received deliveries of food waste scheme leaflets and liners. The campaign, which was logistically challenging (primarily due to the need for households to receive their sticker and leaflet/liners delivery on residual waste collection day), involved 44 members of staff, more than 1,000 shifts and 8,000 hours of on-the-ground activity.

In autumn 2015, Keep Britain Tidy also delivered a 10-week engagement campaign on behalf of the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead (RBWM). Here, around 50,000 households were targeted with a 'no food waste please' sticker on their residual bin. Households also received a scheme leaflet and supply of liners, but this was delivered primarily through a follow-up doorstepping visit. Over 9,000 residents were successfully contacted at the doorstep and given tailored advice and encouragement about using the food waste collection service, which was around 35 percent of the doors knocked. The leaflet and liners were delivered where there was no answer. 800 food waste bins were ordered at the doorstep and a further 2,000 orders were placed directly with the council during the campaign.

Both the campaigns in Surrey and RBWM achieved very positive outcomes (noting that both were set in the context of wider food waste communications activity). Between November 2015 and May 2016 in Surrey, the tonnages of food waste collected across the areas targeted has increased by over 21 percent compared to the previous year. This saved 3,330 tonnes of food waste from disposal. Assuming that a 21 percent increase in food waste recycling is sustained for 12 months, over 5,700 tonnes of food waste will be saved from disposal, saving Surrey County Council around £114,000 in waste disposal costs and the project will have paid for itself in just nine months.

Beyond this, if the increase in food waste tonnage is sustained, then Surrey County Council is expected to save around £390,000 a year in disposal costs. The success of the project made a key contribution to the Surrey Waste Partnership's Recycle Food Waste Campaign being shortlisted for the Best Communications Campaign at the LARAC Celebration Awards 2016 and the Best Recycling Project at the CIWM Sustainability and Resource Awards 2016. Seemingly better still, in RBWM, in the first seven months since the campaign began, tonnages of food waste collected increased by 30 percent compared to the previous year.

Both Surrey and RBWM are among the least deprived local authority areas in the country. Given the broadly comparable socio-economic profile of the two areas, and the broadly comparable monitoring periods, what do the outcomes of the two campaigns tell us about the most effective way to drive up performance of food waste collections? On the surface it

appears that doorstepping has been the more fruitful approach. However, in Surrey the different interventions produced variable results...

In areas where only the "no food waste please" sticker was utilised, tonnages of food waste increased by 17.5 percent on average. This rose to a 22.5 percent increase in food waste tonnages in areas which utilised the sticker plus scheme leaflet delivery.

However, in areas where the package of a "no food waste please" sticker plus scheme leaflet and liners delivery was utilised, food waste tonnages increased by over 28 percent.

This demonstrates that the package of interventions was most effective. In RBWM, whilst doorstepping was employed, this was in conjunction with the package of interventions; in other words, the doorstepping visit was the main means by which the scheme leaflet and liners were delivered. Indeed, for around 65 percent of households (who were not contacted as part of the doorstepping), the intervention was the same as in Surrey – although households did not receive the leaflet and liners on residual waste collection day, but rather some days later.

It is also worth noting that there are differences between Surrey and RBWM. For example, Surrey had a recycling rate of 53.2 percent in 2014/15, while RBWM had a recycling rate of 45.5 percent. Alongside weekly collections of food waste, Surrey utilises alternate weekly collections of residual waste and recycling while RBWM has weekly collections of both. These differences may underpin how effective different interventions are at increasing the capture of food waste.

For example, any effective intervention may yield more positive results where the capture of food waste is lower to start with. Having said that the results of the package in Surrey (28 percent increase in food waste) and the package plus doorstepping in RBWM (30 percent increase in food waste), are broadly similar. However, taking a longer term view, food waste tonnages in RBWM have increased by 43 percent since the campaign began, although free liners have continued to be supplied to residents through libraries.

In conclusion, it is clear that the package of a "no food waste please" sticker on the residual waste bin, combined with delivery of a scheme leaflet and supply of liners, is highly effective at increasing the performance of food waste collections. Whether doorstepping is the key to enhancing the performance of this intervention even further still remains a question to answer. ■

## References

1. Robert Pocock and Jill K Jesson, As One Door Closes... CIWM Journal, August 2014

Anna is a Chartered Waste Manager with 14 years of experience in the waste and recycling industry, firstly in academia and then in the third sector at Waste Watch and Keep Britain Tidy. She is an expert in domestic waste behaviour and behaviour change gained through doctoral research, and has since applied this knowledge to over 170 practical projects designed to reduce waste and increase recycling.

