

Making Litter Enforcement More Effective: Research Brief

Overview

Enforcement continues to be key to reinforcing litter prevention strategies.

Keep Britain Tidy regularly talks with authorities about different challenges around enforcement, including how to increase public perception of enforcement in order to improve its effectiveness as a preventative tool. We also know that around two-thirds of local authorities think that enforcement in their area could be improved by raising the profile of their enforcement strategy locally¹.



In 2011, Keep Britain Tidy conducted some research² into the effectiveness of enforcement on behaviour change. Since this research was conducted, there have been many changes to the ways in which enforcement has been conducted and changes to public awareness of enforcement. To our knowledge, no other research has been done to date which explores this topic and identifies insights which can be used to maximise the effectiveness of enforcement on behaviour change.

This project will build on the previous research and will examine how effective enforcement is in changing littering behaviour in the short to longer term, but also the awareness of and attitudes towards littering enforcement and how to increase these effects (e.g. How do we increase the perceived 'threat' of actually getting caught?; How do we ensure continuing public support for enforcement?).

Through the research we will aim to engage with local authorities with different approaches to enforcement, e.g. those that only do it on street, those that fine for littering from vehicles, those that do it in-house, those that outsource, etc.

The project will comprise desk research, qualitative research and quantitative research and will engage with environmental crime offenders, Enforcement Officers and the public to bring together the full range of perspectives. It will provide practical recommendations to local authorities about how to optimise their enforcement activity, as well as wider recommendations for national policy and practice.

As with our highly successful [Inside the Head of the Recycling Contaminator](#) and [Understanding Waste Management in HMOs: A Tenant Perspective](#) research projects, we are proposing a syndicated model for conducting this work. In this way, we will be looking for a number of local authorities to co-fund the research, resulting in significant mutual value for all involved. Authorities will also benefit from working with, and sharing insights with other authorities facing similar issues to themselves.

¹ Enforcement in Your Authority, a 'pulse' survey undertaken by Keep Britain Tidy, November 2022.

² The Effectiveness of Enforcement on Behaviour Change: Fixed Penalty Notices from Both Sides of the Line, Keep Britain Tidy, 2011.

Research Brief

The aim of this work is to evaluate the effectiveness of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) in reducing and preventing littering to uncover the insights that need to be considered to optimise the effectiveness of enforcement for littering behaviour.

In particular, it will...:

- Examine how effective littering enforcement is in changing behaviour in the short to longer term;
- Identify public awareness, attitudes and perceptions towards enforcement for littering behaviour/FPNs;
- Understand what external factors, if any, influence the effectiveness of FPNs and how to increase actual and perceived effectiveness and how ensure continuing public support for littering enforcement.

We propose the following approach:

Phase one – Desk research / review

A desk review of existing data to inform and shape the other elements of research and add context to both the wider project and resulting recommendations. This phase would also seek to identify any examples of best practice or evaluations of enforcement activity.

Phase two – In-depth interviews with enforcement officers in partner authorities

30 minute online interviews with enforcement officers in each of the partner authorities. We can facilitate two 30 minute sessions with contacts from each partner area and suggest that these are either one-to-one interviews or paired-depth interviews comprising two enforcement officers. These sessions will provide an in-depth understanding into the triggers and barriers to greater effectiveness of FPNs and gather local and operational insights.

Phase three – In-depth interviews with environmental offenders

Around twelve 30 minute telephone interviews with environmental offenders (people who have been issued with a fixed penalty notice for littering, at least two months ago). These sessions will provide an in-depth understanding of current attitudes towards littering, littering behaviour and will provide insight into the external factors affecting and influencing the effectiveness of fixed penalty notices. Recruitment of participants will be challenging, due to the low proportion of people eligible for participation amongst the wider adult population and the potential reluctance / sensitivities around admitting littering behaviour / being fined for littering. As such, it will not be possible to guarantee that research participants will reside in partner authority areas. Telephone interviews have been selected as the preferred approach to encourage recruitment and enable the discussion to move freely and openly within this sensitive topic.

Phase four – Local perceptions survey

We will conduct 100 x 5 minute on-street interviews with residents in each of the partner authorities. This short 'pulse' survey will provide partners with an indication of the perception of their littering enforcement activity amongst local residents e.g. whether they think the council currently undertakes littering enforcement activity and if so, how they know, etc. Partners will

receive their own local results alongside the average response across all partner areas, which cumulatively will provide a wider assessment of the perceived effectiveness, and ultimately how it might be made more effective.

Phase five – National perceptions survey

A nationally representative survey, carried out via an omnibus survey provider, to quantify the extent to which beliefs and attitudes are held by the wider public and to gauge awareness of FPNs, identify public attitudes towards enforcement and opinions on how effective they are, and assess potential options to increase effectiveness as both a deterrent to littering behaviour and in changing behaviour of littering offenders. This element will also generate statistics that could be useful in wider communications.

Phase six – Reporting, presentation and dissemination

Keep Britain Tidy will use the insights to develop a series of recommendations for how to improve the effectiveness of fixed penalty notices, both as a deterrent to littering and as a means to change littering behaviour. We will present the results of the research in an online debrief meeting with all partner authorities. The results will be presented as a PowerPoint report.

We will also lead on dissemination of the results more widely through trade media, drawing attention to the research findings and recommendations amongst other land managers. We expect to publish results in Autumn.

Potential timings

Confirm partners	By mid July
Inception telephone/video meeting	Late July
Research phases	August-September
Reporting	October
Feedback to partners and wider dissemination of research findings	November +

How do we join in?

We require a minimum of five partners for this collaborative research project. Collaborative research allows resources to be pooled, meaning larger scale projects can be developed in a cost effective way, promotes relationship building and creates a higher profile (both within the industry and with media). We will work with you to understand how this research can best support your littering enforcement activity to enable you to get the most from your investment.

As we are keen to progress this project quickly, we are offering a discount to partner authorities. The cost of collaboration is **£9,647** per partner, excluding VAT. It is a great opportunity to gain some insights to prevent litter through enforcement and to join the growing number of local authorities using insight-led practice to tackle littering behaviour.

If you are interested in partnering on the project, or would like to talk it through, **please contact Andrea Turner, Centre for Social Innovation Manager andrea.turner@keepbritaintidy.org**. We are seeking to confirm partners by mid July.