

Communications & Engagement Behavioural Change Plan

Recycle for Greater Manchester

1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024

September 2022

Recycle for Greater Manchester Communications & Engagement Behavioural Change Plan 2023/24

Background

The cost-of-living crisis and the energy crisis is dominating our daily lives and creating uncertainty not only for residents, but for businesses and other organisations.

Rising costs inevitably leads to changes in consumer shopping habits, with more people reducing spending on non-essentials like take-aways and dining out. It is also likely to impact spending on clothing and home appliances. As people's shopping habits changes, the waste that residents create changes too.

An increase in fuel costs also affects the supply chain and commodity prices. The reverberations of a potential recession may reach beyond households and potentially hit government policy and upcoming legislation.

Over the last week, we have also had a new monarch and a new prime minister. The government's priority in the coming months will be in responding to the cost of living and the energy crisis. This may see further delays in the National Resources and Waste strategy which will have a direct impact on the direction of waste policy in England. The strategy includes the proposed introduction of separate weekly food waste collections, improving the consistency of recycling collections with the introduction of plastic pots, tubs and trays, a deposit return scheme and extended producer responsibility where the producers of packaging are responsible for financially supporting the collection, treatment, recycling and disposal of their products from both households and businesses.

The Recycle for Greater Manchester communications plan will need to react to the changes in national politics and cost of living crisis and subsequent impact on our waste services.

Overall Communication Objectives

The purpose of the communications and behavioural change plan is:

- To provide communications, engagement and media expertise to support the delivery of the Waste and Resources contracts;
- To support the 9 local councils with joint communications to educate, promote and encourage residents to minimise their waste and recycle correctly both at home and at the 20 household waste recycling centres; and

- To deliver joint communications with SUEZ on the social value plan, including the Renew shops and Hub, construction work at waste management treatment facilities and regular stakeholder engagement.

Specific objectives and KPIs will be set for each individual campaign based on available data.

How do we get there?

Our communications strategy is based on:

- Using insight, market research, focus groups and surveys as well as results from previous campaigns to develop a targeted approach;
- Working closely with the local councils to understand their service needs and develop the campaigns in partnership;
- Continuing to use consistent language when referring to recycling, repair and reuse ensuring that this is used across all communication channels;
- Being flexible to react to changes, for example, the introduction of recycling containers for new material streams such as hard plastics at the HWRCs to increase recycling rates; and
- Incorporating key messages into the education centre visits to ensure they are aligned to the campaigns. A sustained change in behaviour occurs over time as new habits are formed. It is essential that education and engagement is a key part of the campaigns.

Core Communication Deliverables

Communications in support of existing schemes, projects and funds will continue to be delivered into the next financial year, this includes:

Education Service

The education service is a core part of the behaviour change programme. The visitor centre at the Longley Lane Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) focusses on educating visitors on correct recycling behaviour and reducing contamination. The visitor pod at the Renew Hub (due to open in October 2022), will focus on reuse and repair (moving further up the waste hierarchy) and the tour of the solar farm in Bolton provides more general environmental education around energy use.

The education officers have noticed a decline in visitor numbers especially from schools as coach prices increase and schools are catching up on missed study time lost during COVID.

A promotional plan will be developed to promote the education service to increase visitor numbers. The plan will raise awareness of the free educational visits available as well as the outreach programme where the officers visit schools and community groups to deliver assemblies and lessons around recycling, reuse and waste prevention.

Social Value Plan

The Recycle for Greater Manchester (R4GM) teamwork in partnership with SUEZ UK to promoting the outcomes of the social value plan including but not limited to the R4GM Community fund, the Renew shops and Hub.

R4GM Community Fund

Up to £220,000 is available every year for community groups, schools and voluntary groups to apply for. The money is raised from donated household items sold at the Renew Shops and the new online eBay store. The fund is open every year for applications from 1st April to 31st May. Over the last 2 years, it has funded 47 different projects including those focused on reducing food waste and providing free healthy food to those in need, such as the Manchester Urban Diggers project. Humans MCR are using the funds to break the cycle of food poverty by providing clients with the tools and resources to sustain themselves without relying on emergency foodbanks as a regular measure.

The Community Buds project in Bury is creating a community garden using people's waste, they intend to bring members of the community out of isolation and help them to overcome mental health barriers.

In Trafford, the Little Green Sock project has also won funding to increase storage at their clothing and baby bank to help reach more families in poverty and provide access to pre-loved baby clothing and accessories.

Renew Shops

Ongoing promotion is required to encourage residents to continue to shop in the Renew Shops located at household waste recycling centres in Oldham, Salford and Trafford. The shops sell pre-loved household items at affordable prices. A fourth shop is planned on the Reliance Street household waste recycling centre which is due to be redeveloped next year.

Renew Hub

The Renew Hub in Trafford Park is a key part of SUEZ UK's social value commitments and is the largest reuse operation of its kind in the country. Recently, media coverage has been secured on BBC Breakfast, BBC Radio Manchester, Oldham Times and several trade publications including LetsRecycle, Materials

Recycling World and Resource Magazine. A media event is planned at the end of October to generate more interest and communications and media will be ongoing into next year to raise awareness of repair and reuse and encourage residents to donate household items at their local recycling centre and to promote the Click and Collect Ebay shop.

The repair pods in the hub, contain equipment for repairing, upcycling or repurposing items, for example cycle repair, white goods checking and repair, upholstery, and painting.

The Hub creates training and employment opportunities for the local community and as it develops will create partnerships with businesses, charities and other organisations.

Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs)

A core part of our communications is to promote the household waste recycling centres to residents and encourage them to separate their waste to maximise recycling. 20 sites are available for residents living in any of the 9 boroughs in Greater Manchester. The sites are open 7 days a week and accept more than 40 different types of household items for recycling. Residents visiting in a van or with a twin axel trailer must apply for a permit before they visit.

Research is being carried out to provide insight to help develop the communications. The work will help us to understand why some residents do not use the service and for those who do, whether they understand the importance and significance of separating their waste into the correct containers so it can be recycled. Communications will focus on explaining what happens to the recycling, much of it being recycled locally in the Northwest.

Redevelopment of Reliance St HWRC

The redevelopment of the Reliance St household waste recycling centre in Newton Heath, Manchester is due to start in Spring 2023. A communications and stakeholder engagement plan will be implemented well in advance of the site closing to the public. The plan will include providing regular updates to the established client liaison group managed by SUEZ and attended by residents living closer to the site as well as information events in the local library.

Fly Tipping

A fly tipping workshop was organised by GMCA and facilitated by Keep Britain Tidy. The workshop held on 16th August, attended by council officers from each of the 9 councils heard the results of 5 years of research into fly tipping behaviour which has been published in a report called Beyond the Tipping Point: Insights to Tackle Householder Fly-tipping. GMCA has agreed to develop communication assets to raise awareness of householders' duty of care and the impact of using rogue traders

who often advertise on social media to remove household waste for a small fee, the waste is then often fly tipped. The assets will be created so they can be localised and supplied to the council's communications team to use on their channels. Communications around a householders' duty of care and rogue traders will continue into 2023/24.

Recycle for Greater Manchester Website

The R4GM website is currently being redeveloped to make it easier to use. The website has on average over 50,000 visits a month. The new website will have an updated content management system that will allow us to update the pages more easily, it will be live from early 2023. In addition, the team are also researching the feasibility of a recycling App, that provides information on what to do with household items, and information on the nearest household waste recycling centre.

Priority Themes

In discussion with the waste officers from each council, key themes have been identified that will form the focus of the behavioural change communications and engagement plan for the next financial year; these will be delivered in addition to the communications listed above. These are as follows:

Reduce Contamination and Increase Recycling

The results of the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) tracker 2021 reveal that contamination is still an issue across all recycling streams; over 85% of UK households put one or more items in the kerbside recycling that is not accepted in their kerbside recycling collection (Source: WRAP Recycling Tracker 2021).

The tracker also identifies that a council leaflet is the main source of information about what can/can't be recycled (cited by 29% of UK households), followed by recycling labels on product packaging (22%) and information on recycling bins/bags/boxes (15%).

However, there is misunderstanding about what the labels indicate – for example, over three quarters (76%) of those who have seen the Green Dot take this to mean they can recycle the packaging (which is not what the label means).

Many householders are confused about what they can and cannot recycle in their household bins. In addition to contamination, missed capture of recycling is also an ongoing issue with over half (57%) missing opportunities to recycle items from home.

Communications will focus on developing a set of core messages around reducing contamination and increasing recycling. Rather than focus on one material stream, the communications plan will be flexible so we can support districts where specific issues exist. Communications will focus on people rather than material stream so that communications can be targeted to certain groups.

Batteries

Batteries are a significant fire risk if disposed of incorrectly. Batteries are often placed in the waste or recycling bins, which can spark and cause fires. Fires may also be caused if the batteries are struck by shredding or compaction machinery and damaged during the waste treatment process.

Clear communication will be provided to increase awareness of the risk of fires and provide clear guidance of how to recycle batteries correctly.

New waste streams are beginning to emerge, namely e-cigarettes and e-scooters. Both have been found to be the cause of sparks and fires at the sites. Both contain batteries but it's clear that many residents are unsure on how to dispose of these items correctly and safely, e-scooters for example are commonly found in the scrap metal container. Regular communication between SUEZ UK and the R4GM team will enable us to respond to new waste streams and helps us to provide up to date clear guidance on how to correctly dispose of these items.

Food Waste

Food waste remains a global issue, with around a third of the food produced globally lost or wasted which has a real impact on climate change, contributing 8 – 10% of total man-made greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (source: WRAP. Food Waste Action Week). The Buy, Keep, Eat, Repeat campaign aims to educate residents on how to reduce food waste by only buying what you need, storing food correctly and using up leftovers. The campaign will continue into next year but will focus more on how to correctly recycle unavoidable food waste using the council food waste service. GMCA will also support National Food Waste Action week which is scheduled for 6-12 March 2023.

Textiles

Unfortunately, many textiles are found in the general waste or recycling bins. The amount of clothing consumed is increasing mainly due to the increase in fast fashion and because many clothes do not last as long as they used to.

Clothing and textiles found in the bins cause a problem during the processing of the waste often causing damage to shredding machinery. There is no need to put any textiles or clothing in any of the waste or recycling bins. Even damaged clothing can go in the textiles bank at the HWRCs as they can be used for a variety of different uses depending on the material they are made from. For example, cotton is made into industrial wiping rags, wool can be made into housing insulation panels and

cotton/polyester blended textiles can be made into carpet underlay and mattress stuffing.

There is a general lack of awareness of what to do with damaged clothing, so the team will look at the best way of raising awareness of how to correctly dispose of textiles and clothing and how we can change behaviour to encourage residents to do the right thing.

General

In addition, the team will continue to support national campaigns such as Recycle Week and Food Waste Week in March 2023 and work with external organisations including Keep Britain Tidy, Alupro, and WRAP etc on campaigns that help to promote general messaging around reducing, reusing, repairing, and recycling waste.