

Communications & Engagement Behaviour Change Plan

Recycle for Greater Manchester

1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026

September 2024

Recycle for Greater Manchester Communications & Engagement Behaviour Change Plan 2025/26

Introduction

Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA)'s Communications and Engagement Strategy sets out its organisational mission, which is to build people's trust and confidence in our organisation, empowering them to participate in and benefit from Greater Manchester's ambitions and priorities.

The audience focussed strategy has people at its heart, aligned with the Greater Manchester Strategy's mission of "good lives for all". Our actions are tailored and targeted according to backgrounds and life stages, informed by insight into experiences, opportunities and challenges of different people living and working here.

Trust and confidence are key to securing our future – helping us to maintain our legitimacy and secure further opportunities, investments, contributions, and collaborations. They provide our mandate for delivering our plans and build reputational capital to protect us through challenges.

Each of the GMCA's Communications and Engagement team's functional areas is **committed to excellent and professional service, in line with the GMCA's values** – collaborating, empowering, delivering. In addition to following our service's key principles, they work towards delivering agreed functional aims, as well as the objectives of their portfolio teams.

Each portfolio team works with programme leads to **develop year-round plans** which enable delivery of their Business Plan objectives and Greater Manchester Strategy commitments.

This plan outlines the Recycle for Greater Manchester communication and engagement behaviour change plan which supports the Waste and Resources team function, their Business Plan, and the Waste contracts with SUEZ recycling and recovery UK (SUEZ UK), as well as supporting the nine councils' communications priorities related to their waste and recycling collections.

R4GM Communications & Engagement Behaviour Change Plan

The Recycle for Greater Manchester communications and engagement behaviour change plan aims to;

- Inspire and encourage the residents of Greater Manchester to manage their waste responsibly.
- Help residents to see the value of waste and the real benefits that can be achieved by wasting less, reusing, repairing and recycling right.

Communication Objectives

The Recycle for Greater Manchester annual communications plan is designed to meet the following objectives:

- To support the Greater Manchester district councils (excluding Wigan) with joint communications to educate, promote and encourage residents to minimise their waste and recycle correctly. This leads to the development of specific campaigns to improve the quality and quantity of recycling collected by the district councils
- To provide communications, engagement and media expertise to support the delivery of the Waste contracts by working in partnership with SUEZ UK on joint campaigns and communications about the household waste recycling centres, construction work at the waste sites, the Renew Hub and shops, R4GM Community fund and other social value initiatives.
- To raise awareness of the role of the waste sector in contributing to the GM growth agenda specifically around the growth of the circular economy sector and the need for investment in green skills in reuse and repair jobs and through decarbonisation of waste treatment operation.
- To raise awareness of the changes in legislation being introduced by government including the Simpler Recycling Policy, Deposit Return Scheme, Extended Producer Responsibility and the Emissions Trading Scheme designed to promote recycling and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Specific objectives and KPIs are set for each individual campaign based on available data. This is used in a Plan, Do, Review cycle to monitor and evaluate the communications and engagement plan, and adjust the communications tactics and channels accordingly.

How do we get there?

We will build trust by **being clear with people** about our activities, purpose, and behaviours, and **creating genuine and meaningful opportunities for residents and partners to participate** in them, beyond a simply transactional relationship.

And we will build confidence by fulfilling our commitment to **form meaningful connections with individuals and organisations** across our city region, and regularly demonstrating how, by doing so, we are **delivering on the promises** of the Greater Manchester Strategy and the associated plans including the Greater Manchester waste and resources contracts in partnership with SUEZ UK.

Insight and evaluation are vital. Gaining information and ideas from residents and stakeholders based on their personal experience and expertise will help us create better priorities, policies and actions. And knowledge of our own performance, reputation and environment will equip and inform a continuously improving response to people's ideas and expectations.

Background

The **recycling rate** for Greater Manchester is **over 50%** (2022/23 figures 50.2%, latest verified data from DEFRA), making it one of the best performing urban city regions in the UK. The landfill diversion rate is 98.7% (2022/23) meaning that only 1.3% of household waste went to landfill. Non-recyclable waste from Greater Manchester's households goes to an Energy from Waste plant in Runcorn.

In July 2024, it was announced that GMCA had extended its contracts with SUEZ UK until 2034, providing long term certainty to enable investment in the waste treatment plants and to prepare for the changes in government policy.

As part of the national resources and waste strategy, the introduction of several new policies will influence the communications strategy over the coming years. The Simpler Recycling policy was introduced to make it easier for residents and businesses to recycle by introducing a consistent set of materials that must be recycled both at home and at work. By **31st March 2025**, all businesses and other non-household premises with 10 or more full-time employees must separate plastic, paper and card, glass, metals (cans, tins and foil) and food waste from general waste, saving valuable resources from going to waste and supporting the circular economy in the UK. **Local Authorities** have until the **31st March 2026** to implement these requirements for all residents.

In October residents in all the nine boroughs will be able to start recycling plastic pots, tubs and trays in addition to plastic bottles in their mixed recycling bin. GMCA is also constructing a new materials recovery facility (MRF) which will accept plastic films and soft plastic. These materials must be collected for recycling by 31st March 2027.

The Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) will change the economics of the waste sector driving the carbon reduction of waste. Overall, the ETS aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the waste sector, aligning it with broader climate goals and encouraging more sustainable practices. From 2026 to 2028, emissions from energy from waste plants will be monitored but not traded in preparation for the sector becoming part of the ETS UK in 2028.

Therefore, one of the priorities for councils over the next 2 years is to remove fossil-based carbon from the general waste bin. In practise this means reducing the volume of plastics and textiles in the general waste bin to reduce the costs to councils.

Communications – Priority Themes

To address this and to start raising awareness of why clothing and shoes should not be placed in general waste bins, R4GM launched the **Cotton On** campaign in August 2024. The campaign aims to encourage residents to **recycle damaged or old clothing and shoes** rather than throw them in the general waste bin. This campaign which includes advertising near to the point of purchase in shopping centres such as the Trafford Centre, Manchester Arndale and Merseyway shopping centre will continue into next year.



Plastic pots, tubs and trays will be collected for recycling from October 2024, an initial announcement will be made during National Recycle Week (14-20th October) with communications continuing into 2025. Alongside this, R4GM will also provide information on how to recycle other types of plastic such as hard plastics like garden furniture and children’s toys which can be recycled in containers at the household waste recycling centres.

It is important to balance the specific policy updates with more general messaging around recycling and how to dispose of household waste correctly to keep the public engaged and informed. **Fly tipping** is still one of the main environmental challenges experienced by most councils across the country with almost two-thirds of reported fly tips made up of household waste (Source; Keep Britain Tidy; Beyond the Tipping Point. Insights to Tackle Householder Fly tipping, 2022). Therefore, it is important to continue to provide residents with basic information on how to dispose and recycle of their waste through sharing tips and best practise on how to use the services available such as the recycling and waste bins provided by their council, the household waste recycling centres and the council’s bulky waste collection service.

Earlier this year, R4GM launched Top Tips for your Trip to the Tip, a campaign aimed to provide easy to understand instructions on how to use the HWRCs including the location of the nearest HWRC, opening hours and how to separate your waste before visiting. This campaign can be easily tailored to address local issues and will continue to be developed into 2025.

Top tips for your trip to the tip!

We can't recycle time, so make the most of yours! Our recycling centres are open 7 days a week with no need to book in advance!

Scan for our latest opening hours

R4GM
Recycle for Greater Manchester

Council Logo

You don't need to book to use your local recycling centre - just turn up!

*van users need a permit
*household waste only, no trade waste.

● Shaun - Ayrwight Street, Oldham

Battery fires continue to be a problem across the waste industry primarily due to the improper disposal of lithium ion batteries. When a lithium ion battery is disposed of in any of the recycling or waste bins, a fire can occur when the battery is crushed in the back of the bin wagon or whilst going through the waste sorting facility meaning that fires in bin wagons and at a waste sites are unfortunately a common occurrence. GMCA has invested in fire detection systems at the waste sites, however there is still a need to continue to educate the public about the dangers of putting a battery in their bin, so R4GM will continue to work with the Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) on the joint battery safety campaign.



R4GM will also continue to support the national battery recycling campaign led by Material Focus which features the pink 'hypno' cat and encourages the public to find their nearest battery recycling point at a local supermarket or HWRC.

A food waste recycling campaign will be launched later this year aimed to encourage residents to use their food waste recycling service provided by their council. Data from the latest waste compositional analysis shows that nearly 25% of the general waste still contains food waste despite a separate food and garden recycling service being offered to most residents living in houses.

Earlier this year, Keep Britain Tidy launched a report titled **Improving the Public's Understanding of Waste Prevention**. GMCA contributed to the research along with colleagues from the Merseyside Waste and Recycling Authority, SUEZ UK and the Chartered Institute of Waste Management (CIWM). There is an urgent need to move towards a more circular economy, it is recognised that the current levels of consumption are not sustainable, and there is a need to move focus from recycling to waste prevention in order to meet climate change targets. The report uses research and insight to suggest ways of communicating waste prevention messages to the public. R4GM are using the report to develop our communications to challenge consumption habits and to prioritise reuse and repair over recycling. Keep Britain Tidy have updated the waste hierarchy to provide a visual aid to support these messages.



An example of the way that this is being used is in the educational tour at the Renew Hub. Education officers show the public on a tour of the Hub highlighting the work being done to repair items such as bikes, and electricals. Then the officers engage with them using the diagram above to explain how buying less is the most effective way of reducing waste and is better for the environment than recycling.

In addition to the development of the Renew hub and shops, SUEZ UK deliver an extensive **social value plan** with 54 individual annual commitments all designed to achieve value from Greater Manchester's waste. These include offering at least 65 apprenticeships over the course of the original contract, 88 work experience placements and to support local schools with career days.

SUEZ UK also pay their staff the Real Living Wage and are now members of the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter. The team will continue to work jointly with the SUEZ Communications Manager to communicate the range of ways that SUEZ UK are generating value from waste and giving back to the local community to generate positive news stories.

SUEZ UK are also supporting the new Mbacc, the Greater Manchester Baccalaureate which is being developed to give young people a clear pathway from school to a high quality job in the GM city region. SUEZ UK have agreed to be part of a new network of employers to drive forward Greater Manchester's ambition to

create a technical education city-region and galvanise industry to commit to take action.

Tactics

In support of the delivery of the R4GM communications and engagement plan, the following tactics will be implemented.

- Maintain a clear narrative throughout our communications and campaigns so that R4GM is seen as the trusted voice on recycling, reuse and repair, signposting residents to clear and honest information, without jargon.
- Continue to develop the Renew brand associated with the Hub and the shops to develop trust in the brand.
- Engage with residents face to face at events, meetings to provide them with information on recycling but also to receive feedback and insight on their knowledge and understanding to help better inform our campaigns.
- Engage and educate residents at our three visitor centres which provide education and advice on recycling, reuse, repair and wider environmental issues to deliver specific learning outcomes.
- Keep the Recycle for Greater Manchester website updated with the latest recycling guidance, campaigns and information on the 20 household waste recycling centres.
- Use the R4GM social media channels to inspire and connect with residents providing jargon free advice, useful tips and clear explanations.
- Use images where possible to assist communities where English is not their first language.
- Use photographs depicting residents carrying out recycling, reuse and repair in local places.
- Take a multi-channel approach making the most of on and offline channels to reach a wide audience.
- Identify and work across portfolio teams where appropriate, e.g. Fire Service, Digital, Homelessness etc.
- Produce campaign materials for the local councils and other partners to share on their own channels.
- Work with influencers to deliver the recycling messages, e.g. Cloud Gardener is a well-known small space gardener helping to raise awareness of our home composting offers.
- Update the GMCA waste and resources page regularly with case studies, annual reports, newsletters etc to demonstrate our progress on delivering high quality waste management services in GM.
- Use R4GM LinkedIn, Twitter/X and Facebook channels to champion our success in delivering the largest waste disposal contract in the country.
- Enter awards to raise awareness of our success in delivering successful campaigns and communications.
- Submit regular articles in the trade press to further raise awareness of the work of the GMCA among industry professionals.
- Network and horizon scan for opportunities to work in partnership with key leading national organisations such as Keep Britain Tidy, WRAP, Alupro, Recycle your electricals etc.

Behavioural Change principles

Behavioural change principles are used to develop the campaigns. Unconscious behaviour is tied to everyday routines and linked with specific spaces. The more we repeat a behaviour, the more automatic and habitual it becomes. People prefer to behave as we always have done and tend to go with the default option.

Large scale social change is driven by social interdependencies – it is crucial to observe that others are acting to change your own behaviour.

Recycling is now the social norm, and most people now do it as part of everyday life.

A popular behaviour change model that we use is the COM-B model, to do a behaviour an individual must have the **Capability** to do it, the **Motivation** to do it, and external factors must provide the individual with an **Opportunity** to do it.

When designing behavioural change campaigns, the following steps are followed:

- Identify the audience,
- Identify the specific behaviour that we want the audience to take, e.g. recycle food waste in their food and garden waste recycling bin.
- Identify the possible motivations and barriers to carrying out the behaviours such as they don't have the right bin or knowledge to carry out the behaviour.
- Identify when and how we want them to carry out the behaviour, focussing on one audience and one behaviour at a time.

Using research and insights, appropriate behaviour change interventions can then be developed into a campaign and communicated.

Activity Plan 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026

The table below summarises the main communication, engagement and campaigns.

Communications Activity	Timescales
Annual or Ongoing Activities	
R4GM Community Fund – promote the fund in April-May to encourage applications. Fund awarded in September.	April – May 2025 Sep – Oct 2025
Promote Renew Shops and eBay and online shop to increase sales	Ongoing
Promote discounted compost bin offer through Get Composting.com website	Ongoing
Compost donation scheme – promote free compost for community groups and schools	Ongoing
Education service – provide learning outcomes via 3 visitor centres, outreach and online sessions, continue to raise awareness of the services available	Ongoing
Maintain and update R4GM website	Ongoing
Deliver the social media strategy, continuing to monitor, analyse and engage with our audience on the right channels.	Ongoing
Operational Comms and Engagement	
Communicate Reliance St, Manchester HWRC temporary closure (May 2025)	December 2024 to site opening
Campaigns	
In the Loop recycling campaign – continue to develop campaign for different audiences and for different materials	Jan 2024
Battery safety joint campaign with GMFRS – continue to develop this in support of battery fire hotspots.	Ongoing
Electricals recycling including vapes – continue to work with Materials Focus on recycling campaign	Ongoing
Cotton On campaign (launched Aug 2024), continue to evolve and develop the campaign	To be scheduled in 2025
Food waste recycling campaign	Launch Jan 2024
HWRC recycling campaign – raise awareness of service available and encourage better separation to increase recycling rates	Ongoing
Continue to incorporate buying less messages into ongoing comms to drive waste prevention behaviour	Ongoing
Support national awareness weeks including GM Repair Week (March), Compost Awareness Week (March), Food Waste Awareness Week (March), Recycle Week (Oct)	

Deliver seasonal communications e.g., at Christmas, Eid, Hannukah etc. ensuring messaging is relevant to the audience.	Ongoing
Corporate Communications	
Develop communications to raise awareness of the decarbonisation and improvement in biodiversity at the waste treatment sites.	TBC once programme of work has been finalised
Develop a communications narrative in support of the policy changes being introduced by DEFRA (Simpler Recycling Policy, Emissions Trading Scheme etc)	To be updated once Defra has provided an update
Develop good news stories related to the social value commitments being delivered by SUEZ	Plan to be developed linked to milestone moments
Raise awareness of the role of the waste sector in the growth of the GM Economy specifically around the circular economy and opportunities for training and skills development in reuse and repair.	

Monitoring and Evaluation

Quarterly impact reports are produced to demonstrate the effectiveness of the campaigns, communications, and engagement and to report on progress against this plan.

Specific KPIs are set for each activity depending on the specific objectives.

Throughout the year we use contractual data to monitor contamination and recycling rates.

The waste compositional analysis data will also provide us with useful insight into the composition of each of the recycling and general waste bins so that we can better target our communications.

Controls are put in place for each campaign and communications activity so that adjustments can be made if the campaign isn't reaching the intended audience.

Self-evaluation surveys and engagement data provides feedback from residents to help us to understand if the communications are effective and the campaigns are adapted accordingly.