

Meeting: Better Places Partnership
Date: 22 October 2009
Report Title: Faith and Recycling – Discussion Paper
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Purpose

To inform a discussion around the barriers certain communities face in fully utilising recycling services and how faith ‘infrastructure’ (networks, groups, institutions) can be used to overcome these barriers.

Summary

It is well known that recycling participation and capture rates are lower in the east of the Borough compared with the west. The east of the Borough has more diverse, and more recently arrived, communities and this presents barriers to access and usage of a number of Council services, including recycling.

The main barriers are around language barriers and cultural practice in native countries, however, lower recycling rates amongst different communities can also be due to a perception of particular religious requirements – perhaps the most notable example being the Hasidic Jewish community where certain festivals have traditionally resulted in an increase in certain waste streams.

This paper seeks to inform a discussion as to how participation rates can be improved in our diverse religious and cultural communities and to what extent the Better Places Partnership members can use their knowledge of community infrastructure and networks to support this targeting.

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1. Background

1.1 According to the Office of National Statistics, Haringey is London's fourth most diverse Borough¹ - almost half of school pupils speak English as a second language and over 50% of the population is non white British. Within this, there are also some particularly large cultural groupings, including almost 40,000 Turkish speakers as well as large newer communities from Somalia and Eastern Europe. There is also an estimated population of 5,000 Hasidic Jews within South Tottenham (20,000 in total in the Stamford Hill area).

1.2 Increasing recycling rates is a key partnership priority for Haringey, this is reflected both in its status as a Local Area Agreement (LAA) target as well as a key National Indicator (NI 192). Currently, performance for recycling in the borough is at 24% against a year end target of 32%. Although we do not have specific figures for particular areas we do know that recycling routes in the west of the Borough take longer as more houses recycle (participation) and houses recycle more (the capture rate) compared with the east. This suggests that the biggest increases in participation and capture rates can come from households in the east of the borough.

2. Barriers to recycling in Haringey

2.1 Barriers to recycling are often similar to barriers more generally in accessing public services. Of particular importance are language barriers, communication barriers (non-access to the mainstream media) and cultural barriers to do with traditional practice in communities' homelands. There is also the issue of particular religious requirements impacting on recycling, this is most commonly seen in the Hasidic Jewish community, particularly around Pesach (Passover).

2.2 In certain communities, recycling is not an everyday concept. For example, there is no direct translation for the term 'recycling' in Turkish. Also importantly, some groups do not make use of the mainstream media (such as Orthodox Jewish communities) and, as such, engagement should be sought through existing community infrastructure including community leaders and religious groups.

3. What can Faith do?

3.1 All the major world religions speak positively about the environment; common themes include the respect humans should have for the environment and our role in stewarding the earth's resources. Therefore, it is no exaggeration to say that faith is a way in to overcome the actual barriers of language and culture.

3.2 Using faith as a tool for communicating and engaging has been successful where it has been tried. Preston City Council has had notable successes with extensive community engagement with its south Asian community. Key phrases from the Koran were highlighted to demonstrate that it is people's religious duty to recycle. They were also early in implementing a food waste

¹ ONS 2009

service and this has been extremely popular amongst the Muslim community as the composting of food waste helps them to meet religious obligations.

3.2 The London Borough of Hackney undertook a series of monitoring activities to review participation rates in their recycling services. This identified low rates of participation amongst the Hasidic Jewish population in Stamford Hill (and amongst its wider Turkish population). The Council decided to undertake a specific communications campaign aimed at the Hasidic Jewish community.

3.3 One of the barriers to targeting the Orthodox Jewish community was the fact that they made little use of mainstream media, as well as a perceived lack of trust that may be placed on people from outside their community. To overcome this, the Council approached local Jewish community groups to invite them to become involved in engaging their fellow residents. The Council also worked with community leaders and the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations to deliver information about recycling and provide input into future campaign design. The Council also employed Jewish outreach workers to support this message. As well as sustained communications messages, there was also targeted messages linked to particular festivals and religious ceremonies.

Examples include:

- Purim festival (Usually in March): During this festival, a lot of wine is used and much communal cooking is done. Materials which were particularly targeted by media advertising at this time included glass bottles, aluminium foil and heavy cardboard (the latter is prevalent following all the festivals);
- Pesach festival or Passover (Usually in April): During this festival, many people do a spring clean and get rid of old items, including reusable bulky waste and clothing items. At this time, the media messages focused on encouraging donation of such goods to charities for reuse; and
- the Jewish New Year & Succot (September – October): Also known as the Feast of Tabernacles, this festival generates a lot of garden waste when Jewish families build "Succot" (meaning huts, shelters or tabernacles) as temporary dwelling booths. These are made of palm fronds and other organic materials and generate a significant amount of garden and other organic waste. The council used media messages and produced leaflets encouraging the use of available garden waste services over this period.

4. Points for discussion

4.1 What role can the Better Places Partnership play in utilising the existing community infrastructure to improve participation in recycling?

- What is the role for the Multi-Faith Forum?
- Can we use the neighbourhood management function more effectively (particularly as not all Local Authorities have this function).

4.2 How can we use our own diversity (e.g. the Council's diverse workforce, the BPP's wide range of networks) to engage with particular communities? Can we develop a true partnership model of engagement?

4.3 How can we understand our communities better e.g. are our collection times sympathetic to communities' (religious) requirements?

4.4 Communications

- Should we identify the important dates in religious and cultural calendars and target particular waste streams at these times (i.e. reusable bulky waste and clothes at Pesach which could be reused)?
- How can we target our communications messages to particular religious and cultural groups?