

Bath and North East Somerset Council – Exploring efficiencies in collecting recycling from a range of residential properties

- 1.1 Bath and North East Somerset Council is leading a project along with its recycling collection contractor Kier and social housing partners to trial a range of interventions to increase recycling rates and create efficiencies in their methods of collection.
- 1.2 At the time of the bid to the LGA, the council's recycling collection service from flats was running inefficiently and had reached capacity. On average, four separate collection vehicles were visiting communal collection points on a weekly basis to separately collect a range of recycling and refuse from 4,073 flatted properties. The need to stream-line the collections was clearly recognised by the Council and their contractor, Kier. The grant from the LGA presented the Council with the opportunity to take action without having to take money from their existing budget. Likewise the funding enabled the Council to seek further efficiencies in its kerbside recycling service.
- 1.3 In a bid to increase the quality and quantity of recycling through the kerbside sort scheme, the first intervention involved providing 35 properties on one road with an additional two kerbside boxes for storing and sorting the 13 different recycling materials collected by the Council. Residents were requested to use three clearly labelled boxes to segregate materials in a bid to increase awareness of the materials collected and capture more recycling, as opposed to the existing one box and re-usable woven bag for card.
- 1.4 The introduction of the three box system has prompted behaviour change among some residents, for example residents were observed to flatten and rip their cardboard into smaller pieces for storage in the boxes, as opposed to cramming oversized pieces into the bag. There is no compaction on the collection vehicles for card so this helps make the service more efficient. Residents also reported more awareness of the range of materials that were collected and help to target materials often overlooked (e.g. batteries, small WEEE, textiles).
- 1.5 The second intervention targeted homes of multiple occupancy and properties split into apartments. These areas were selected because of their typically low recycling rates and problems with communal storage of waste. The Council provided these homes with 'Trolley's', three separate boxes for recycling different materials mounted on a wheeled stand. These have proved really successful at small blocks of flats, particularly flats above shops, where multiple boxes cause obstructions and slow down the collection crews. They have since been removed from a high density student road, where we hoped they would improve the collections and improve the street scene, but dense urban parking and neglect of the boxes after collection proved problematic. It is the Council's intention to now roll these out to other small blocks of flats to improve the efficiency and service provided.
- 1.6 The third intervention aims to introduce fixed stands containing six labelled boxes for different materials. These recycling stands will replace the current communal 'mini recycling' bins at a number of blocks of flats within the district to assess whether this proved a more effective way of collecting the recycling, incorporating these properties back onto the regular kerbside collection rounds.

- 1.7 This intervention is hoped to bring about significant improvements in recycling in the area and reduce the number of collection vehicles travelling to each site. The locations were chosen based on their remoteness (situated at the end of a long road), proximity to existing kerbside collections or where collections were proving challenging for the contractor. Under the 'mini recycling centre' system, the sites had up to 5 large communal bins for 6 segregated materials which required collection from three separate vehicles. The new services will enable residents to recycle over 16 different materials and be collected by 1 collection vehicle. This has involved close working with the housing association and collections contractor to ensure a smooth transition from one service to another.
- 1.8 The fourth intervention will target 250 urban residential properties. The aim is to install five large bulk bins at strategic locations throughout Bath City Centre where practical and planning permits. The key aim is to make recycling more accessible for residents within the heritage urban area and increase the volume of recycling collected to help the services run more efficiently. We are also exploring the potential of communal food waste bins to improve the street scene.
- 1.9 The project as a whole aims to trial a variety of methods to improve the efficiency of its operations whilst also improving the services offered to residents. The Council is also seeking to make budget saving through implementation of the methods on trial, primarily by easing pressure on the 'mini recycling centre' service and increasing the volume of recycling captured.
- 1.10 The authority's approach to trialling different interventions to test what works and in what circumstances is highly replicable. Particularly in relation to multiple occupancy buildings and in areas recycling can be difficult for residents, other authorities will be able to learn from the experience of Bath and North East Somerset and adapt this to their own areas.