

Recycling in Portsmouth goes green

Traffic light system reduces container contamination

At a glance

- Client: Portsmouth Council
- Type of project: Targeting low performing areas
- Duration: Six months
- Techniques: Door-stepping, incentivisation

The aim of this project, targeted at low performing areas in Portsmouth, was to assess whether direct feedback and/or incentives are effective in encouraging householders to reduce the amount of unsuitable materials they put into their recycling containers.

Stop contamination

Resource Futures monitored the recycling behaviour of 10,788 households in order to assess the levels of contamination in recycling containers. Households were provided with feedback – based on a traffic light system – according to the level of contamination in their recycling containers, and were offered an incentive for improving their recycling behaviour.

Those with 'amber' (some, unintentional contamination) and 'red' (deliberate contamination) ratings were also engaged in doorstep conversations in order to provide them with information about which materials were acceptable in their recycling containers.

It's good to talk

There was a 34% increase in the number of 'green' ratings and a 29% reduction in the amount of contamination amongst 'amber' households. The social interaction between the doorstep canvassers and the householders was deemed to be the influencing factor in effecting positive behaviour change, as the value and type of incentive was never disclosed to householders.



If contact with households is direct, performance-related and visible to all in the community, it can be very effective. We found that neighbours were checking out each others' scores and it became a talking point.



Resource Futures provides specialist resource management solutions to local authorities, government agencies, private sector companies and third sector organisations.

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