

# Kerbside Recycling – Experiences from authorities receiving funding from the National Waste Minimisation and Recycling Fund

Appendix II: Blackburn with  
Darwen Borough Council

# Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

## Introduction

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council (BwDBC) received Round 2 funding, as part of a partnership bid by Lancashire County Council, to enable it to introduce a kerbside dry recyclables collection to 25,000 properties (43% of total). Round 2 funding covered purchase of boxes. The service was part of a larger integrated collection system including the collection of paper, garden waste and a change to alternate week collections for refuse. In 2002/03 its BVPI 82a was 8.5%. This rose to 23.05% in 2004/05 with the full roll out of the collection across the whole borough.

This report describes the detail of the collection and its performance together with a discussion of the lessons learnt in implementing the collection.

## Description of the collections

### Recycling and refuse collections before the Round 2 funding

BwDBC comprises approximately 58,000 households in a mixture of urban and rural wards, including some of high deprivation. It is ethnically diverse and has a large number of narrow streets with terraced houses, many with back alleys for access. Until 2003 all refuse was collected weekly in 240L wheeled bins. Prior to 2001 it provided no kerbside recycling collections.

In 2001 a local paper merchant introduced a fortnightly kerbside collection of newspapers and magazines (inc. junk mail and directories) using sacks which the residents provided (supermarket/shopping carriers). In 2002 the collection was brought in-house following the collapse of the merchant and in 2003 RU Recycling was awarded the contract for the paper collection and also to extend the collection to other dry recyclables.

At the same time as expanding the number of dry recyclables collected at the kerbside BwDBC also planned to introduce garden waste collections for properties with gardens (approx. 24,000) and also to change the frequency of refuse collection to alternate weeks.

BwDBC is a unitary authority but it works together with the other Lancashire authorities through the Lancashire Waste Partnership (LWP). The LWP adopted a joint waste strategy and has received PFI funding for in-vessel composting facilities, MRFs and an MBT plant.

### Collections funded from Round 2 NWMRF

BwDBC received funding from a number of different sources to implement its dry recyclables and garden waste collection, including funding from Defra through Rounds 1, 2 and 3 of the NWMRF. Round 1 funded the purchase of 12,000 240L wheeled bins for garden waste. Round 2 funding covered the purchase of 25,000 55L boxes and lids. Funding for the vehicles was not provided by Defra. In one box residents were asked to collect paper (newspapers and magazines, brochures, white telephone directories and junk mail) and in the second box glass jars and bottles, cans and plastic bottles.

Round 1 and Round 2 funding provided the containers for the first phase of household to receive the enhanced recycling service. The new service replaced the existing borough wide collection of paper.

## Kerbside Recycling Experiences

The materials are collected into split bodied vehicles, Eurocyclers. The paper is placed in one compartment and the mixed recyclables in the other. This split enables the paper to remain clean from contamination and it is sold to Aylesford newsprint. The other materials are automatically sorted at a MRF.



### Roll-out of the collection

The first 12,000 properties to receive the dry recyclables collection received their containers in April 2003 and the collections started at the end of April. Initially, these households were provided with one 55L box for the containers and reusable plastic sacks for the paper. At the same time the collection of their refuse was changed from weekly to alternate weeks with the dry recyclables and garden waste. A no side waste policy was introduced for these households at the same time.

At the end of September a further 6,000 properties were added to this collection together with a further 10,000 that only received the dry recyclables collection as they were unsuitable for the garden waste service.

Between September 2003 and March 2004 the remainder of the properties in BwDBC received green boxes and plastic sacks for the dry recyclables.

In February 2004 the initial 12,000 properties that had received the collection in April 2003 received a second 55L box for their paper, and in March 2004 their collection was changed to a weekly collection of dry recyclables. The garden waste and refuse remained on an alternate week cycle.

Finally, in June 2004 all the properties were moved to a weekly collection of dry recyclables. Properties with the garden waste collection receive an alternate week collection with the refuse and are subject to the no side waste policy, but all other properties continue to receive a weekly collection of refuse.

The roll-out of the collection and the variation in service level between different housing types makes it difficult to attribute tonnes collected for recycling to any particular funding source, whether Defra Round 1,2 or 3 or from elsewhere.

The collection has achieved an average set-out of approximately 49% for the dry recyclables box and approximately 38% for the paper. The set-out of the garden waste bins has not been monitored. No obvious differences were identified between the areas of greater deprivation and the rest of the Borough.

A no side waste policy was introduced to a further 20,000 households in October 2005.

### **Communications and promotion of the collection**

A letter was posted to all residents receiving the garden waste bin as well as the dry recycling containers and to those changing their refuse collection to alternate week. The letter was delivered two to four weeks prior to the change in collections. A contact telephone number was provided for residents with queries about the service and all calls to this number were dealt with by the Refuse and Customer care centre. On delivery, residents received a leaflet providing more details on the collections and a calendar.

Residents complaining that they would be unable to manage with the alternate collections were visited and a waste audit carried out and it was explained to them how to separate their waste into the different streams, thereby ensuring adequate space in the refuse bins. Only residents who could demonstrate that they were correctly separating out their waste and were not using their refuse bin for bulky items or DIY materials, would be allowed a second bin.

Residents only receiving the recycling boxes simply received a leaflet with the box. There was considerable press coverage on the alterations to the collections and it was felt that additional promotion material was unnecessary.

In the first year a feedback leaflet was provided to residents receiving the alternate week refuse collection, and these residents also receive a leaflet twice a year because the garden waste collection does not operate over the winter. Other residents receive one leaflet a year.

In addition advertisements were placed in the local press and on billboards around the borough and regular coverage was, and continues to be, sought in the local media.

A mascot, Recycling Rover has been used to brand all the information provided to residents regarding the collection.

### **Performance of the collection**

As already mentioned, it is difficult to attribute specific performance to the 25,000 properties provided with the boxes funded by Round 2 because the material is not collected in separate vehicles or on separate rounds from these households.

In 2003/04, 2,881 tonnes of paper were collected from the kerbside from 58,000 properties, equivalent to an average of 50 kg/household/year. In 2004/05 this increased to 3,508 tonnes, equivalent to an average of 60 kg/household/year.

## Kerbside Recycling Experiences

In 2003/04 the green boxes generated 1,280 tonnes; however, it is difficult to estimate an average quantity per household as the collection was being rolled out progressively over the year. In 2004/05 2,672 tonnes were collected from approximately 58,000 households, equivalent to an average of 46 kg/household/year.

In 2004/05, when the garden waste collection was fully rolled out to 18,000 households, 2,661 tonnes were collected, equivalent to an average of 148 kg/household/year.

Participation in the collection has not been measured, but is likely to be close to, or slightly higher than the set-out.

A couple of postal surveys have been used to evaluate the attitude of householders to the scheme. The results of the surveys showed that most residents were satisfied with it, although problems with the capacity of the green box, used for the containers, were raised. Also, the addition of cardboard and textiles would be welcomed.

Overall the collections contributed approximately 8% to the combined BVPI 82a and 82b in 2004/05.

### Standard collection costs

It is difficult to compare collection costs between authorities for many reasons including contracting out versus in-house service, lease versus purchase of capital equipment, accounting practices, etc. Therefore, for the purpose of the case study analysis, Kerbside Analysis Tool (KAT) has been used to estimate a standardised cost for each collection. It should be stressed that the use of KAT is to overcome difficulties in comparing a service that is operated and paid for in a number of different ways across authorities and not as a reflection of perceived inaccuracies in the audited or declared costs for individual authorities.

KAT uses information on the infrastructure actually employed to carry out the collection, for example the number and type of vehicles, and applies a unit cost, uniform depreciation and financing. **The standard costs calculated by KAT are not the same as the price paid to a contractor for operating the service or the same as the costs that appear in the audited accounts of the authority.** However, they enable a fair comparison between authorities of the costs of running kerbside collections.

Standard costs have been estimated for all the kerbside collections operating in the authority including refuse collection, regardless of if they were funded by Round 2 or not. It is sometimes impossible to separate out the elements funded by Round 2, for example if it only covered part of a collection or if it replaced an existing collection. Therefore, the cost analysis can only be undertaken at an authority wide level. Refuse collection costs are included as well as those for recyclables collection because it provides a useful base reference against which to compare the costs of the recyclables collections, refuse collection costs not being uniform over the country.

The cost analysis is for the financial year 2004/05 and can therefore be directly related to the performance above.

The standard collection costs for the refuse and kerbside collections in BwDBC are presented in Table 1. All the costs are **gross** i.e. do not include any benefits from the sales of materials or from the receipt of recycling credits if payable.

**Table 1:** KAT standard gross collection costs for household waste collected at the kerbside

Collected stream	Round 2 funding	Total households served	Collection frequency	Tonnes collected 04/05 (T)	Collection cost per tonne (£)	Collection cost per household (£)
Refuse	–	40,000 18,000	Weekly Fortnightly	40,000	26	18
Dry co-mingled 2 stream	for 25,000 households	58,000	Weekly	6,180	95	10
Green		18,000	Fortnightly	2,661	118	17
<b>Total</b>	–	<b>58,000</b>	–	<b>48,841</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>33</b>

When considering the costs presented in Table 1 it is essential to remember that they cover the collection of household waste/recyclables only i.e. trade waste is not included, and additional costs for spare vehicles, depots and other support costs relating to collection are not included. Post collection costs, such as gate fees for refuse, MRF processing and composting, and ancillary costs such as for promotion, education, call centres and communications are also not included. Depending on the extent of these facilities and activities, and also the level of recycling credits or sales revenues, the standard KAT cost may be lower or higher than the audited accounts and a direct comparison is impossible with BVPI 86.

### Lessons learnt

Overall, the roll-out of the collections has gone well, and most residents are pleased with the service. In particular Officers are pleased with:

- the roll-out schedule resulting in a smooth operation;
- rescheduling of the refuse rounds at the same time to improve efficiency;
- promotion campaign;
- the residents feedback from the surveys;
- the use of enforcement to help residents use the recycling collections and to accept the alternate week refuse collection; and
- Member support for the changes.

Some of the less positive aspects of the collection are:

- resource issues to deal with complaints regarding the alternate week collection and to undertake the waste audits (approximately 1 additional FTE was recruited to assist);
- problems using the 55L containers in some housing types;
- unable to ban side waste until recently; and
- no substantial increase in collection was noted when the collection moved from fortnightly to weekly.

### Developments following the Round 2 funding

#### Expansion of the dry recyclables collection

As described above, Round 3 funding was used to contribute to rolling out the dry recycling and paper collection to all residents and to change the frequency to weekly.

#### Other

Trials have been undertaken to collect cardboard in the brown bins during the winter when the garden waste collection does not operate.

The intention is to switch the whole borough onto alternate week refuse collections and offer the separate collection of cardboard to residents without gardens. The cardboard is required to meet the LATS targets.