

## 25 Waste Prevention Ideas for Local Authorities

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### Introduction

Waste prevention<sup>1</sup> is at the top of the waste hierarchy. Everyone agrees it is a good thing. Yet it is often claimed that it is difficult to find good, concrete examples of waste prevention activities. This list for local authorities<sup>2</sup> is intended to meet this demand and show that waste prevention can be a positive and practical agenda.

The ideas are drawn from a range of sources. Some are national initiatives – a training manual, for example, that can be adapted according to need. Some are examples of good practice already in use. Many are easy but effective ways of publicising existing services. Others are simply a matter of integrating waste prevention into other activities. Wherever possible, we give contact details.

### General recommendations

**1. Formally adopt waste prevention as an internal council-wide policy.** Integrate the policy into staff training and widely publicise it within the whole council and in council run services e.g. schools, leisure centres, libraries. This alone could have significant impact on waste quantities.

**2. Conduct a waste audit throughout the council.** This will make staff think about how much is being wasted, how it could be better used, and provide source information for developing and implementing your waste prevention policy.

**3. Announce that the authority aims to reduce the amount of rubbish generated in its area,** working with and seeking support from businesses and other organisations.

**4. Include awareness-raising and “hands-on” waste-avoiding activities in waste education measures.** For example see “clear out days” (see 22).

**5. Measure changes in consumer behaviour by measuring take-up of alternatives,** such as has been done for nappy services in West Sussex, and

could also be done for vegetable box delivery schemes, customers taking part in bottle deposit schemes, etc.

### Specific suggestions

#### 6. Reduce waste at conferences, events and festivals

Produce guidelines for waste reduction, which can be distributed and implemented at public events. A useful resource with guidelines for conferences is “Simply the Best” £7.50 from Sustainable Wales, First Floor, 41 John Street, Porthcawl, CF36 3EP email: [suswales@globalnet.co.uk](mailto:suswales@globalnet.co.uk). This bi-lingual guide suggests ways for conference and event organisers to attain high environmental standards – from minimising waste to using local services and goods. It draws on advice from diverse groups to make events accessible and attractive to all sections of the community.

#### 7. Promote local repair and reuse services

Business/Economic Development Services can encourage new ‘green’ enterprises such as repair and reuse services.

A handbook of local contacts for waste, repair, recycling and reuse services is a useful resource for residents, provides publicity for local businesses and diverts waste from landfill. In Vienna, a network of repair shops has been set up which also provide training. A handbook giving details of local repair shops has been proven to increase the business of jewellers by 20%.

Croydon Council has produced a Green Guide which lists open markets and box schemes, as well as hire shops, toy libraries, real nappies and other means of reducing waste. Contact, LA21 team: 020 8760 5791, email: [local\\_agenda21@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:local_agenda21@croydon.gov.uk)

London Borough of Enfield has produced excellent publicity about local repair and hire shops. Contact Mary Blake in the Wipe out Waste! Team at Enfield Environmental Services, 020 8366 6565 email: [mary.blake@enfield.gov.uk](mailto:mary.blake@enfield.gov.uk)

#### 8. Work in partnership with community recycling groups to promote waste prevention

Community recycling groups are well placed to promote waste prevention (eg repair and real nappies) because of their good contact with householders. They could distribute information given some extra resources. Magpie Home Delivery for example (which offers products in refillable

<sup>1</sup> Waste in this document typically refers to solid, domestic waste. By prevention we mean preventing waste at source or any action taken to minimise the amount of waste created.

<sup>2</sup> Where business waste is discussed it is in the context of benefits to individual consumers and households.

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containers) was set up on the back of the existing recycling service – this gave them an initial customer base: 01273 688022.

### 9. Promote national waste reducing services

Many people are unaware of useful national waste prevention services. Councils could publicise them.

See our website: [www.wen.org.uk/waste](http://www.wen.org.uk/waste) and the recycling section of the excellent new green consumer website [www.greenchoices.org](http://www.greenchoices.org). Ideas include a mobile phone reclamation unit or removing your name from junk mailing lists.

### 10. Offer training for local businesses and community organisations

*a) Develop stand-alone waste prevention training* such as waste audits and staff awareness-raising or outreach work with small and medium sized enterprises. With a strong cost saving angle, targeted and appropriate training can be very welcome. Wastebusters (now merged with Waste Watch) run partnership schemes with the London Boroughs of Bexley, Bromley, Harrow, Camden, Haringey and Islington. Bexley contact: Stephen Didsbury, 020 8303 7777, ext 3600; Wastebusters: 020 7207 5308. The Environment Agency guide 'Waste Prevention – Getting Staff Involved' includes useful suggestions and sample materials such as posters and staff feedback forms. General enquiries: 0845 933 3111, Videoline (to order pollution prevention and waste prevention videos/guidance): 08457 337700.

### *b)- Integrate waste prevention into existing training*

Larger businesses are likely to provide their own staff training – environment, health and safety training often being linked. Encourage them to integrate waste prevention policies and procedures with other training standards. Courses which add waste prevention to food hygiene training were being piloted in Tower Hamlets (1/6/2001) contact WEN.

### 11. Awards for Businesses

Give awards for businesses, such as food producing outlets, that successfully adopt waste prevention guidelines. High environmental standards go hand in hand with high overall quality and attractiveness. Rewarding change is an important element in sustaining it. Awards can encourage good practice, increase the local standing

of businesses, and, prominently displayed, educate and inform consumers.

Find local businesses (e.g. hotels, tourist facilities and leisure centres) which have led the way on waste prevention, and publicise them as an example. Facilities which are the best choice in other respects as well as avoiding waste could be used for local authority events, with the facility advertising its success and the local authority making it clear why it has made the choice. The authority could then work with the local tourist information centre to train and enable similar businesses to emulate the first ones. Free advice and publications are available from 'Envirowise' helpline: 0800 585794.

For details of awards given in Tower Hamlets as part of WEN's market waste prevention project see our website. For national environmental awards (many waste-related) developed by Royal Society of Arts see [www.sage-rsa.org.uk](http://www.sage-rsa.org.uk)

### 12. Support Real (Reusable) Nappies.

Disposal Nappies constitute 4% of all domestic waste and cost up to £500,000 a year per authority [Bristol] to dispose of. Reusable nappies, together with nappy laundry facilities, constitute a practical alternative. Real Nappy Week is held in April each year. Over 90 councils supported the Week in 2001, using it as a focus for activities to raise public awareness. For examples of activities, see 'Press Release' on [www.realnappy.com](http://www.realnappy.com). Ask the health authority to adopt a real nappy policy for babies and for child and adult incontinence wear users in the hospital and in the community. West Sussex County Council provided money for cash incentives and promotion in shops and hospitals taken from the saved waste costs. Contact Julie Wilkinson: 01243 777100, email: [jwilkins@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:jwilkins@westsussex.gov.uk)

### 13. Encourage Reduced Retail Packaging

Packaging waste constitutes approx 24 – 30% of household waste<sup>3</sup> in the UK. It represents £10 for each £75 spent (13%) of the average shopping bill.<sup>4</sup>

Shops can be encouraged to display goods in a low-packaged section and support the waste reduction policy. Customers, to whom excessive packaging is a nuisance, can be encouraged to exert pressure on retailers to do this.

Some food retail outlets offer price discounts to customers who bring back / bring their own reusable

<sup>3</sup> there is some variation in local authority figures

<sup>4</sup> source: the Recycling Consortium

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packaging (eg tupperware for fish and chips / curries). This encourages customer loyalty and reduces the shop's costs.

Leicestershire County Council produced '*Many Happy Returns*', a guide (now out of date) to where to shop for low packaged goods, with case studies of different businesses and a directory of services. Examples include an organic box delivery scheme, the Body Shop, Group Buying Wholefood Shop, Ecover, beer bottles on deposit return, returnable milk bottles, scoop and save shops, refillable containers and bulk buy outlets. Donna Worship: 0116 265 7242.

Ask retailers to adopt a policy of asking customers first whether they want a bag (some national stores do this). Most stores give them out whether people want them or not. This could tie in with the National Waste Awareness Initiative at WasteWatch t. 020 7089 2100, email: info@wastewatch.org.uk.

### 14. Encourage returnable bottles

In particular, publicise any local brewery or dairy which uses returnable bottles. Harveys in Lewes is an example. Miles Jenner: 01273 480209.

The National Dairymen's Association represents 2,500 regional and local companies processing liquid milk and providing doorstep deliveries. They are keen to work with local authorities to promote and introduce local innovative schemes involving low waste products: 020 7935 4562

### 15. Building Specifications

Integrate waste prevention into specifications for new public buildings and into guidance to private developers and registered social landlords.

Encourage the use of reclaimed or recycled, low waste and energy efficient materials. Promote estate and public space designs which encourage low waste lifestyles, eg, provision for shops and services within walking distance of people's homes; safe cycle and walking routes; safe bicycle parking; space within the home and/ or block for separate collection and disposal of different types of waste and recycling (single waste chutes in tower blocks make recycling difficult).

The Association for Environment Conscious Building have useful information/contacts for green building design t: 01559 370908 [www.aecb.net](http://www.aecb.net) See the innovative Zero Energy Development [www.bedzed.org.uk](http://www.bedzed.org.uk) a sustainable urban village

initiated by the Bioregional Development Group [www.bioregional.com](http://www.bioregional.com) t.020 8773 2376.

### 16. Composting

Promote home composting following the best and most effective examples by other local authorities, to make major savings in amounts of biodegradable rubbish. The Composting Association has case studies: 01933 227777. For examples of how residents have been involved in local promotion of home composting see the Community Waste Action Toolkit (see point 18).

Encourage community composting schemes and relationships between composters and local farms and gardens.

### 17. Use local media

Local media are often happy to have regular and reliable contributions from local councils and community based NGOs. In Tower Hamlets, WEN has written a monthly column on waste prevention with practical suggestions for individuals and businesses. Topics have included avoiding waste at Christmas, waste audits, paper recycling, composting food waste and computer reuse.

### 18. Residents' Waste Action Groups

Set up a local residents' waste action group. The Recycling Consortium based in Bristol has worked with communities to tackle their own waste. They have produced a Community Waste Action Toolkit which offers a bank of good examples with advice on working with businesses, community groups and local authorities. Email: [cwa@recyclingconsortium.org.uk](mailto:cwa@recyclingconsortium.org.uk) ; 0117 930 4355. The London Borough of Hounslow has a successful waste action group: 020 8583 2000.

### 19. Awareness Raising Campaigns

A local awareness raising campaign on waste reduction fits well with many of the other ideas mentioned here.

Norfolk Waste Management Partnership formed in 1996 to coordinate waste management practices and initiatives with particular emphasis on action to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill and to promote more re-use. Gives information on reducing waste on its website.

<http://www.resource-not-waste.co.uk>, Chris Mutch, Waste Action Coordinator 01603 222227

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### Reuse Projects

There are many good examples of successful reuse projects. These demand good partnerships with different local groups. Ideas may exist already – in which case they may well benefit from more publicity – or they could be set up.

#### 20. Local equipment and furniture refurbishment

Many projects refurbish old computers and furniture and sell or give them to people who need them. Find ways to work in partnership with them to ensure that more items are re-used rather than thrown away.

Encourage new schemes, if none already exist in your area. Social enterprises can meet local authority best value and sustainability targets by tackling social and financial exclusion as well as creating environmental benefits.

Tower Hamlets Streetline Service which collects unwanted household items has developed a pilot project with local charity 'Homestore', run by Quaker Social Action. A proportion of the collected items will be refurbished and sold to people on low incomes. Contact Mike Jenn, Quaker Social Action: 020 7250 1193.

CreateUK is a national charity which run social enterprises refurbishing white goods. Their flagship project is in Liverpool and runs open days once a month. Contact National Development Officer: 0151 448 1431

A paper on white goods reuse is also available from the Department of Trade and Industry.  
<http://www.dti.gov.uk/support/good.htm>

#### 21. Resource exchanges

Resource exchange are systems where equipment and materials no longer wanted by one user can be advertised and made available to others. There are many different types of resource exchange – ranging in scale from community based to industrial. A good example of a regional scheme is the Pennine Waste Exchange, a partnership between Calderdale and Kirklees Green Business Network and Bradford Business and the Environment Forum. The scheme offers advice on waste prevention, free entries onto the waste bulletin and access to the waste listings: 01422 316661. For an evaluative report on resource exchanges contact WEN.

#### 22. Reuse in residential buildings

The MCLAREN project in Southwark, London is a very simple project which collected and redistributed all the unwanted things which students left behind in halls of residence at the end of term. Similar schemes could be applied in other higher education institutions, as well as other organisations such as hospitals and hosts. Contact Victoria Hands at CRISP: 020 7525 4909 email [Pastille@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:Pastille@southwark.gov.uk)

#### 23. Clear out days

"Clear out days" are events in which residents put unwanted items outside their homes or at a community centre and others take what they want. They aim to decrease waste and promote community involvement, and can also provide good publicity for other waste prevention activities. The Forest Recycling Project can offer advice – contact Mark Webster: 020 8539 3856. As another example contact Jonathan Smith, North Wiltshire District Council, Brookfields House, 39 St Paul Street, Chippenham, SN15 1LJ. 01249 706 416.

#### 24. Repaint schemes

These allow people to give old paint for use by community groups, with support from the local authority and often from DIY stores such as B & Q. Existing schemes are sponsored by ICI Dulux with Save Waste and Prosper (SWAP) as consultants. SWAP produces a guide for £25. Contact Mark Gregory: 0113 243 8777 email [mark@swap-web.co.uk](mailto:mark@swap-web.co.uk) website [www.swap-web.co.uk](http://www.swap-web.co.uk).

#### 25. Woodbanks

Woodbanks recover and sort wood for reuse. The Brighton and Hove Wood Recycling Project estimates 6,000 tonnes of timber is landfilled in Brighton and Hove alone. The project collects from building sites, sorts the wood into different grades for DIY, craft work and kindling, and sells it through a retail outlet. This project has been the model for others. See [www.woodrecycling.org.uk](http://www.woodrecycling.org.uk), email [info@woodrecycling.org.uk](mailto:info@woodrecycling.org.uk).