

Food Waste Survey March-April 2017 summary report

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# Introduction

As Council funding continues to be squeezed, Richmond has to ensure that all services are performing efficiently and effectively. Each service has been reviewed to identify areas for improvement. Whilst looking at the Food Waste service, it has found that whilst the Council offers a comprehensive collection programme - performance levels are not as high as they might be.

Almost 20% of the food that UK households purchase is thrown away. This wastes the average family around £60 of food a month and costs local authorities thousands of pounds in landfill costs. We need to reduce the amount of food sent to landfill – environmentally, economically, and morally.

Richmond Council began collecting and composting food waste in 2011. The below highlights the amount of food waste we have recycled since then:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2011/12** | **2012/13** | **2013/14** | **2014/15** | **2015/16** | **2016/17 Q1** | **Total** |
| Paper and card | 10087.17 | 9894.86 | 10235.28 | 9412.8 | 9169.48 | 2296.36 | 51095.95 |
| Comingled | 7021.3 | 7242.14 | 7112.62 | 7116.73 | 7119.89 | 1892.54 | 37505.22 |
| Garden | 3867.36 | 3826.1 | 4783.16 | 5430.12 | 4953.12 | 1506.44 | 24366.3 |
| Food | 3449.92 | 3868 | 3034.7 | 2906 | 2990.28 | 755.92 | 17004.82 |
| **Total** | **24425.75** | **24831.1** | **25165.76** | **24865.65** | **24232.77** | **6451.26** | **129972.3** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Recycling rates** | **2011/12** | **2012/13** | **2013/14** | **2014/15** | **2015/16** | **2016/17 Q1** |  |
| 44.70% | 46% | 43.30% | 41.20% | 40.50% | 42.60% |  |

These figures show that whilst the service is well used, there hasn’t been a huge rise in the amount that people are recycling. This forces food waste to the incinerator.

The highest performing villages in the borough for food waste recycling are:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ward** | **Number of Households** | **Average KG collected** | **Percentage of recycling** |
| Heathfield | 3996 | 3702 | 92.6% |
| Whitton | 3904 | 3198 | 81.9% |
| South Twickenham | 4153 | 3318 | 79.9% |
| East Sheen | 4294 | 3435 | 79.9% |

NB: Figures based on amount collected v number of households in the village, based on December 2016.

The lowest performing villages in the borough for food waste recycling are:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ward** | **Number of Households** | **Average KG collected** | **Percentage of recycling** |
| South Richmond | 5476 | 2058 | 37.5% |
| Barnes | 4566 | 2372 | 51.5% |
| North Richmond | 4943 | 2685 | 54.3% |
| Mortlake and Barnes Common | 5104 | 3087 | 60.5% |

NB: Figures based on amount collected v number of households in the village, based on December 2016.

Objectives

The Council has undertaken research into the Council’s food waste recycling service in order to inform a targeted campaign of strategic communications and engagement of those in the borough who currently recycle the ‘least’ amount of food waste (based on number of properties). This will be supported by communications to the rest of the borough on general ‘all round’ recycling. The specific communications objectives are to;

* To increase the amount of food waste recycled in the lowest four villages in the borough
* To raise awareness of general recycling across the whole of Richmond upon Thames.
* Raise the number of people in the borough who feel that recycling is one of the best services Richmond Council offers (currently 64%)\*
* Reduce the number of people who disagree that the Council provides good value for money as a result of its recycling service. (8%)\*

\*Figure based on the 2015 Annual Resident’s Survey.

Methodology

Two forms of research were carried out with residents. The first took place through the online community Talk Richmond. A series of qualitative online conversations were carried out by c\_space, the first survey gathered thoughts on food disposal with 121 respondents, and the second survey gathered feedback to shape the future of food waste recycling in Richmond with 69 respondents.

The second piece of research was a quantitative survey into people’s thoughts around food waste recycling. The objectives of both pieces of research are to gauge insight to inform future communications activity in this area.

This report summarises the findings of a quantitative online survey carried out into food waste recycling. The survey gathered information on residents’ behaviour around food waste recycling, their motivations for recycling or not recycling, and suggestions for how to encourage more residents to recycle their food waste.

The survey was open from 12th April to1st March 2017. In total, 789 responses were received. The number of respondents who answered each question, or the ‘base’, has been highlighted where appropriate.

## Interpreting the findings

The findings in this report are the perceptions of Westco. The author of this report has sought to ensure that it is an accurate reflection of the research that has taken place. It is therefore important that the findings continue to be accurately reflected in any future internal or external publication. If you wish to reference the findings from this report please contact the author to ensure that your interpretation is correct.

Splitting results by demographic groups reduces the statistical reliability of each figure – on this basis please exercise caution when assessing results split by demographic groups. A general rule of thumb would be to treat as any individual scores representing a fieldwork sample of fewer than 50 as indicative only. This report refers to broad groupings of demographic groups, but smaller groupings have been identified throughout the text if the findings are statistically significant.

If the results from the survey do not add up to 100%, this may be due to more than one response being given, or to figures being rounded up or down. The results are based on all respondents giving an answer, unless it is stated otherwise.

Open ended questions which required unprompted answers were coded by Westco’s subcontractors coding team. A codeframe was produced by the team which was sent to Westco for approval. The codeframe was produced by analysing the open responses to questions in the survey and groups together key themes/words to create each category. Responses are then allocated a category and the number of responses in each category is measured.

# Executive summary

This executive summary provides key findings for the online quantitative survey exploring behaviours and attitudes towards recycling, food waste in particular. Further detailed analysis and reporting can be found in the subsequent sections of this report.

Knowledge and awareness of what respondents are currently able to recycle

Overall, 99% of residents stated they were currently able to recycle card and paper, 99% for plastics, tins and aerosols, 85% for food waste and 70% for garden waste.

How respondents currently put out their recycling

The vast majority of respondents (92%) claim to put their recycling in containers for collection, while 7% take their recycling to communal bins.

If respondents currently recycle food waste

Overall, 77% of respondents stated they do currently recycle their food waste, while the remaining 23% stated they do not.

Motivations for recycling food waste

For those who currently recycle their food waste, 94% of respondents stated that they do so because it is good for the environment and 74% do so because it reduces the amount of rubbish I put out.

Ease of recycling food waste

For those who currently recycle their food waste, 93% of respondents found it very/quite easy to do so, whilst 7% stated that they found it quite/very difficult.

Barriers to recycling food waste

For those who do not currently recycle their food waste, 31% said they do not do so because they do not want the food caddy in their kitchen. 31% also said that they do not do so because food recycling is too messy, 28% stated that they live in a flat and therefore cannot recycle food waste and 27% stated that food recycling is too smelly.

Encouraging food waste recycling

Food recyclers and non-recyclers were then asked what they think the Council could do to help people recycle food waste. For current food recyclers, 21% stated that the Council should provide or continue to provide free or discounted caddy bin liners. 15% stated publicity/advertising/promotions around food recycling and 15% for more information/education about benefits and tips to recycling food and how it is used once recycled.

For those who do not currently recycle food, the base sizes for each answer option were not higher than 50, and therefore statistically significant findings cannot be reported.

# Current recycling practices

Knowledge and awareness of what respondents are currently able to recycle

Residents were asked what materials they are currently able to recycle, and found that most were likely to say that they are able to recycle ‘card and paper’ (99%) and ‘plastics, tins and aerosols’ (99%). However, responses were also high for other materials; 85% of respondents stated they are currently able to recycle food waste, and 70% garden waste.

However, it should be noted that due to the nature of the question, the responses demonstrate higher levels of knowledge and awareness that respondents are able to recycle these materials, but does not necessarily translate in to actual recycling behaviour.

Talk Richmond report

Unlike the Talk Richmond research, this survey did not capture information about what percentage of household waste respondents recycle, which found that 53% of residents reported recycling more than 75% of their food waste, 40% reporting a 95%+ recycling rate, 37% reporting that they recycle less than 10% of their food waste, and 32% not recycling any at all. However, it should be noted that these figures should be exercised with caution. When investigating reported vs. actual behaviours in market/social research, particularly when focusing on ‘desired’ behaviours such as recycling, some respondents may ‘overstate’ their intended behaviour and not accurately reflect their actual behaviour.

**Demographic differences**

The table below highlights demographic differences of those who report what they are currently able to recycle. Please note were an ‘\*’ has been placed this means the base size is lower than 50 for the particular sub-group and therefore we are unable to report statistically significant differences.

*Card and Paper*

Those aged between 25-34 years were less likely to state they are currently able to recycle card and paper (93%) compared to those aged 45-54, 55-64, and 65-74 years (all 100% respectively.)

*Plastics, tins, glass and aerosols*

Those aged between 25-34 years were less likely to state they are currently able to recycle plastics, tins, glass and aerosols (93%) compared to those aged 45-54, and 65-74 years (100% respectively.) Those who live in a flat were also less likely to state this (94%) compared to those who live in a house (100%).

*Food waste*

Those aged 35-44 years were less likely to state they are currently able to recycle food waste (93%) compared to those aged 65-74 years (90%). Those who lived in a flat were considerably less likely to state this (54%) compared to those who live in a house (92%), and those who live in Hampton Wick were less likely (73%) compared to those living in Teddington (5%) and Whitton and Heathfield (93%).

*Garden Waste*

Those aged 35-44 years were less likely to state they are currently able to recycle garden waste (66%) compared to those aged 65-74 years (78%) and those who live in Hampton Wick were also less likely to state this (67%) compared to those living in Hampton (88%.)

**What are you currently able to recycle?**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | **What are you currently able to recycle? (%)** | | | |
|  | | Card and paper | Plastics, tins, glass and aerosols | Food waste | Garden waste |
| **Average** | | **99** | **99** | **85** | **70** |
| *Base* | | *781* | *779* | *670* | *552* |
| **Gender** | Male | 99 | 98 | 84 | 67 |
| Female | 99 | 99 | 85 | 71 |
| **Age** | 18-24\* | 83 | 83 | 67 | 33 |
| 25-34 | 93 | 93 | 69\* | 38\* |
| 35-44 | 98 | 98 | 83 | 66 |
| 45-54 | 100 | 100 | 84 | 73 |
| 55-64 | 100 | 99 | 89 | 73 |
| 65-74 | 100 | 100 | 90 | 78 |
| 75+\* | 100 | 100 | 87 | 72 |
| **Tenure** | House | 100 | 100 | 92 | 80 |
| Flat | 96 | 94 | 54 | 24\* |
| **Ethnicity** | White | 99 | 99 | 86 | 71 |
| Asian\* | 100 | 100 | 82 | 76 |
| Black\* | 100 | 100 | 50 | 25 |
| Mixed\* | 100 | 100 | 84 | 80 |
| Other\* | 90 | 90 | 70 | 60 |
| N/A\* | 98 | 98 | 81 | 60 |
| **Children in household** | Yes | 99 | 99 | 85 | 72 |
| No | 99 | 99 | 85 | 68 |
| **Village** | Barnes\* | 100 | 100 | 71 | 63 |
| East Sheen | 100 | 100 | 89 | 73\* |
| Ham and  Petersham\* | 98 | 98 | 88 | 70 |
| Hampton | 99 | 99 | 87 | 88 |
| Hampton Hill\* | 88 | 88 | 69 | 63 |
| Hampton Wick | 100 | 100 | 73 | 67 |
| Kew | 98 | 98 | 89\* | 70\* |
| Mortlake\* | 100 | 100 | 59 | 24 |
| Richmond and Richmond Hill | 97 | 97 | 74 | 45\* |
| Strawberry Hill\* | 96 | 96 | 83 | 79 |
| St Margarets and East Twickenham | 100 | 100 | 83\* | 60\* |
| Teddington | 100 | 98 | 95 | 81 |
| Twickenham | 100 | 100 | 87 | 70 |
| Whitton and Heathfield | 100 | 100 | 93 | 83\* |
| N/A\* | 100 | 100 | 83 | 73 |

Table 1 What are you currently able to recycle? Richmond Food Waste Survey from March 1st to 12th April

\*indicates base lower than 50 and as such these findings cannot be reported as statistically significant

All respondents were also asked how they put out their recycling (which may include some who do not recycle). The vast majority of respondents (92%) claim to put their recycling in containers for collection, while 7% take their recycling to communal bins.

Those residents who take their recycling out to communal bins are more likely to say that they do not currently recycle food waste, with 28% saying that they do not[[1]](#footnote-1).

How respondents currently put out their recycling

Those residents who claim to put their recycling out in containers for collection were more likely to live in a house (99%) than a flat (65%), more likely to recycle food waste (99%) than not (69%) and more likely to live in East Sheen (98%), Hampton (96%), and Whitton and Heathfield (97%) compared to those who live in Richmond and Richmond Hill (86%).

Please note that demographic tables have not been created for this question as the base size for those stating ‘I take my recycling to communal bins’ was small (56) and therefore breaking down by demographic group would not allow for statistical comparisons.

Talk Richmond report

The research found that of those who stated they recycle more than 75% of their food waste, 94% used a designated food waste receptacle and of those who recycle less than 10% of their food waste, 54% disposed of their food waste in a standard bin. As the quantitative survey did not specifically ask respondents how much they currently recycle, cross comparisons of results cannot be made.

If respondents currently recycle food waste

The research also asked respondents for reasons why they used a designated food waste receptacle which included ease of use, convenience of service, discouragement of vermin, composters aren’t as viable and more hygienic than having food waste in a standard bin. For those who stated they used a standard bin to dispose of food waste, the key reasons for this were lack of service (particularly for large blocks of flats), lack of awareness in knowing how to use the receptacle, lack of space for additional waste receptacles and dislike keeping food waste in kitchens (unpleasant, smell.)

Respondents in the quantitative survey were then asked if they currently recycle food waste. It was found that around three-quarters (77%) of people stated they do currently recycle their food waste, while the remaining 23% stated they do not. Again, actual vs. reported behaviours should be exercised with caution.

However, of the 85% of those who stated they are currently able to recycle food waste; 37% stated that they do not currently recycle food waste. It could be interpreted from the data that although knowledge and awareness of the food waste recycling service is reasonably high, this does not translate in to encouraging all to use the service. Using the data collected from the Talk Richmond survey will complement the research findings from this survey to determine as to why this may happen.

**Demographic differences**

The table below highlights demographic differences of those who report what they are currently recycle food waste. Please note were an ‘\*’ has been placed this means the base size is lower than 50 for the particular sub-group and therefore we are unable to report statistically significant differences.

For those who stated they currently recycle food waste, they were more likely to live in a house (83%), and more likely to live in Teddington (92%). Those aged 35-44 years (71%), those living in a flat (48%) and those living in Richmond and Richmond Hill (66%) were less likely to state they currently recycle food waste.

**Do you currently recycle food waste?**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | **Do you currently recycle food waste? (%)** | |
|  | | Yes | No |
| **Average** | | **77** | **23** |
| *Base* | | *609* | *180* |
| **Gender** | Male | 77 | 23 |
| Female | 77 | 23 |
| **Age** | 18-24\* | 67 | 33 |
| 25-34\* | 66 | 34 |
| 35-44 | 71 | 29\* |
| 45-54 | 77 | 23\* |
| 55-64 | 82 | 18\* |
| 65-74 | 81 | 19\* |
| 75+\* | 75 | 25 |
| **Tenure** | House | 83 | 17 |
| Flat | 52 | 48 |
| **Ethnicity** | White | 78 | 22 |
| Asian\* | 65 | 35 |
| Black\* | 50 | 50 |
| Mixed\* | 72 | 28 |
| Other\* | 60 | 40 |
| N/A\* | 74 | 26 |
| **Children in household** | Yes | 76 | 24 |
| No | 78 | 22 |
| **Village** | Barnes\* | 66 | 34 |
| East Sheen\* | 82 | 18 |
| Ham and  Petersham\* | 78 | 23 |
| Hampton | 81 | 19\* |
| Hampton Hill\* | 63 | 38 |
| Hampton Wick\* | 80 | 20 |
| Kew\* | 77 | 23 |
| Mortlake\* | 53 | 47 |
| Richmond and Richmond Hill | 66 | 34\* |
| Strawberry Hill\* | 71 | 29 |
| St Margarets and East Twickenham\* | 75 | 25 |
| Teddington | 92 | 8\* |
| Twickenham | 76 | 24\* |
| Whitton and Heathfield \* | 78 | 22 |
| N/A\* | 80 | 20 |

Table 2 Do you currently recycle food waste? Base: All respondents 789, Richmond Food Waste Survey, From 1st March-12th April

**\*indicates base lower than 50 and as such these findings cannot be reported as statistically significant**

# Motivations for recycling food waste

Respondents were asked why they recycle their food waste. The base of this question includes all of those who stated that they currently recycle their food waste.

Respondents were offered two options: “It’s good for the environment” and “It reduces the amount of rubbish I put out”, and in addition to this, were given space to detail other reasons as a free text response.

The findings demonstrate that respondents were most likely to say that they recycle their food waste because “it’s good for the environment”, with the vast majority of respondents (94%) saying this was one of their reasons. Three quarters (74%) of respondents chose “it reduces the amount of rubbish I put out” as a reason why they recycle their food waste.

**Demographic differences**

The table below highlights demographic differences of the reasons for recycling food waste. Please note were an ‘\*’ has been placed this means the base size is lower than 50 for the particular sub-group and therefore we are unable to report statistically significant differences.

There were not many statistically significant differences, but those who stated that it reduced the amount of rubbish I put out were more likely to be aged 55-64 years (82%) and more likely to have children aged 18 and below in the household (95%).

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | **Please tell us the reason(s) you recycle your food waste (%)** | |
|  | | It's good for the environment | It reduces the amount of rubbish I put out |
| **Average** | | **94** | **74** |
| *Base* | | *575* | *453* |
| **Gender** | Male | 95 | 74 |
| Female | 94 | 75 |
| **Age** | 18-24\* | 100 | 75 |
| 25-34\* | 87 | 75 |
| 35-44 | 96 | 71 |
| 45-54 | 94 | 76 |
| 55-64 | 96 | 82 |
| 65-74 | 93 | 73 |
| 75+\* | 94 | 71 |
| **Tenure** | House | 95 | 71 |
| Flat | 92 | 73 |
| **Ethnicity** | White | 94 | 75 |
| Asian\* | 100 | 73 |
| Black\* | 100 | 50 |
| Mixed\* | 100 | 72 |
| Other\* | 83 | 83 |
| N/A\* | 100 | 71 |
| **Children in household** | Yes | 95 | 95 |
| No | 94 | 78 |
| **Village** | Barnes\* | 96 | 64 |
| East Sheen\* | 98 | 78 |
| Ham and  Petersham\* | 87 | 71 |
| Hampton\* | 87 | 69 |
| Hampton Hill\* | 90 | 100 |
| Hampton Wick\* | 75 | 58 |
| Kew \* | 95 | 85 |
| Mortlake\* | 100 | 67 |
| Richmond and Richmond Hill\* | 98 | 70 |
| Strawberry Hill\* | 82 | 59 |
| St Margarets and East Twickenham\* | 98 | 63 |
| Teddington | 98 | 81 |
| Twickenham | 97 | 77 |
| Whitton and Heathfield \* | 91 | 80 |

Table 3 Please tell us the reasons you recycle food waste, Base: All those who recycle food waste 609, Richmond Food Waste Survey from 1st March – 12th April

**\*indicates base lower than 50 and as such these findings cannot be reported as statistically significant**

Respondents were also able to leave a comment in a text box. Codes assigned to open responses are *italicised* below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Please tell us the reason(s) you recycle your food waste** |
| *Base* | *609* |
| It's good for the environment | 94 |
| It reduces the amount of rubbish I put out | 74 |
| *To stop animals getting it\** | *7* |
| *It is the best/right thing to do with food*  *waste, socially responsible, creates energy\** | *6* |
| *If you put it in ordinary rubbish bins they*  *would get smelly\** | *5* |
| *Can use it for some items which will not*  *Compost\** | *2* |
| *Believe in recycling everything possible\** | *2* |
| *Asked/required to do so\** | *1* |
| *Healthy\** | *0* |
| *Other answers (inc. makes you realise*  *how much you waste)\** | *1* |

Table 4 Please tell us the reasons you recycle food waste, Base: All those who recycle food waste 609, Richmond Food Waste Survey fromm 1st March – 12th April

**\*indicates base lower than 50 and as such these findings cannot be reported as statistically significant**

Around 7% of respondents said that they recycle their food waste in order to stop animals, mostly foxes, scavenging in their refuse sacks. This was the top-mentioned reason in the open responses.

“Stops foxes ripping open the bin bags if no food is present, thus keeps pavements cleaner and less need for street sweepers etc.”

“Foxes don't attack the bins so much.”

The second reason was a general belief that it is the “right thing to do”.

“It's a responsible thing to do, especially given how easy it is”

Around 5% of open responses said they choose to recycle food waste because it helps to prevent ordinary rubbish bins from smelling. Some respondents noted that recycling food waste helps them take out their refuse sacks less often.

“I find it more hygienic and my household bin is less smelly and dirty”

“Our main waste bin is less smelly and doesn't need emptying as often”

Talk Richmond report

The Talk Richmond survey identified that the majority of respondents considered food waste recycling to be important, or “essential” for three main reasons;

* Reducing landfill: beneficial for the environment and to be processed and used in other ways
* Safeguarding the future: moral responsibility of looking after the environment and protecting/ensuring desirability of areas for future generations to inhabit/enjoy
* Controlling vermin

It is interesting to note that while these were the top responses for the Talk Richmond survey, this did not necessarily translate for the online survey. Safeguarding for the future and controlling vermin were not the top responses for the online survey.

# Ease of recycling food waste

Respondents who stated that they currently recycle their food waste were asked how easy or difficult they find the process.

The findings demonstrate that 93% of respondents who recycle food waste find it ‘very easy’ (67%) or ‘quite easy’ (26%), while 7% find it ‘quite’ or ‘very difficult’ (however the base size for this was below 50 so we cannot report statistically significant findings.)

**Demographic differences**

The table below highlights demographic differences of those who report the ease of recycling food waste. Please note were an ‘\*’ has been placed this means the base size is lower than 50 for the particular sub-group and therefore we are unable to report statistically significant differences.

Those who live in a house were more likely to state that they find it easy to recycle food waste (95%) than those who live in a flat (84%).

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | **How easy or difficult do you find recycling your food waste? (%)** | |
|  | | Easy | Difficult\* |
| **Average** | | **93%** | **6%** |
| *Base* | | *569* | *39* |
| **Gender** | Male | 91 | 9 |
| Female | 95 | 5 |
| **Age** | 18-24\* | 50 | 50 |
| 25-34\* | 89 | 11 |
| 35-44 | 93 | 7 |
| 45-54 | 93 | 6 |
| 55-64 | 96 | 4 |
| 65-74 | 94 | 6 |
| 75+\* | 97 | 3 |
| **Tenure** | House | 95 | 5 |
| Flat | 84 | 16 |
| **Ethnicity** | White | 94 | 6 |
| Asian\* | 82 | 18 |
| Black\* | 100 | 0 |
| Mixed\* | 100 | 0 |
| Other\* | 83 | 17 |
| N/A \* | 89 | 11 |
| **Children in household** | Yes | 92 | 7 |
| No | 94 | 6 |
| **Village** | Barnes\* | 88 | 12 |
| East Sheen\* | 96 | 4 |
| Ham and  Petersham\* | 90 | 10 |
| Hampton | 95 | 5 |
| Hampton Hill\* | 100 | 0 |
| Hampton Wick\* | 75 | 25 |
| Kew \* | 95 | 5 |
| Mortlake\* | 89 | 11 |
| Richmond and Richmond Hill\* | 92 | 8 |
| Strawberry Hill\* | 94 | 6 |
| St Margarets and East Twickenham\* | 88 | 10 |
| Teddington | 96 | 4 |
| Twickenham | 95 | 5 |
| Whitton and Heathfield \* | 91 | 9 |

Table 5 How easy or difficult did you find recycling your food waste?. Base: All those who recycle food waste 609, Richmond Food Waste Survey from 1st March – 12th April

**\*indicates base lower than 50 and as such these findings cannot be reported as statistically significant**

Table 6 If you find recycling food waste difficult, please tell us why? Base: All those who find it difficult recycling food waste 39, Richmond Food Waste Survey from 1st March – 12th April

Amongst respondents, only 6% of those who recycle food waste said they find it difficult. These respondents were asked to describe why they find recycling food waste difficult. The table below summarises the responses to this question, which have been coded. Please note that with a base size below 50, we cannot report statistically significant findings.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **If you find recycling your food waste difficult, please tell us why? (%)** |
|  | **6%** |
| *Base* | *39* |
| Dirty/smelly/messy | 41 |
| Animals attack the bins, damage, spread the waste | 28 |
| Cost of liner bags – expensive | 18 |
| Collections not done regularly or often enough | 13 |
| Use food waste elsewhere: compost, allotment | 10 |
| Container gets damaged, not robust, especially after being thrown | 8 |
| (Small) bin not suitable for my kitchen | 8 |
| Uncertain exactly what should be recycled | 5 |
| Other answers | 8 |
| Don’t know/no opinion | 3 |

Respondents were most likely to say that they find food waste recycling difficult because it can be a messy process. 41% of comments related to this theme.

“I cannot find a bag that fits the bin. It is very messy and often the bag leaks. Out bin has been chewed by a badger/fox.”

“It can be a messy process. Both in terms of temporarily storing food waste in the kitchen and the resulting bin mess (even when composting bags are purchased)”

“The bins are smelly and off putting, we buy compostable liners to make this easier at our cost, although they don't fit the indoor caddy so well.”

Some respondents noted that they find purchasing the liner bags expensive. A number of comments said that they found the liner bags hard to find as they are not supplied.

“One comment I have is that the compostable bags are quite expensive and hard to source (for lining the kitchen bin for food waste) - I suspect that the 'messy' aspect puts others off.”

“you don't supply starch bags. I had to order them on line”

“Only found one shop selling compostable bags”

## Barriers to recycling food waste

Respondents who stated that they do not currently recycle food waste were asked to as to why they do not recycle. A number of options were provided, and respondents were also able to write their comments in an open text box.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Can you tell us why you don't currently recycle your food waste? (%)** |
| *Base* | *180* |
| I don't want the food caddy in my kitchen | 31 |
| Food recycling is too messy | 31 |
| I live in a flat so can’t recycle my food waste | 28 |
| Food recycling is too smelly\* | 27 |
| I would have to buy my own livers for the food caddy\* | 14 |
| I wasn’t aware I could recycle my food waste\* | 13 |
| Do not have a bin for that/not done locally\* | 11 |
| I already compost my food waste\* | 9 |
| Animals attacking the bins (foxes, rats,  squirrels)\* | 8 |
| I don't know why it's a good idea\* | 7 |
| Other answers (inc. health/mobility issues)\* | 5 |

Table 7 Can you tell us why you don’t currently recycle your food waste? Base: All those who do not recycle their food waste 180, Richmond Food Waste Survey 1st March – 12th April

**\*indicates base lower than 50 and as such these findings cannot be reported as statistically significant**

Of the available options, around a third (31%) of those who said they do not recycle food waste because they do not want the food caddy in their kitchen, and the same proportion selected the ‘food recycling is too messy’ option. Around a quarter (28%) of respondents to this question stated that they live in a flat and cannot recycle food waste and 27% found food recycling too smelly.

In addition to the multiple choice options available on the survey, respondents were also able to leave a comment. 62 respondents chose to leave a comment for this question.

Respondents were most likely to leave a comment here relating to not being able to recycle from their address.

“Council doesn't provide residents on Hampton hill high street any option to recycle anything even though the majority of residents would gladly. It's a shambles.”

“I live in block of flats and this service isn't currently provided to this building”

“I was shocked to find out, when we move in, that we could not recycle our food waste, purely because we live in a block of flats. This needs to be addressed and corrected.”

There were also a range of other reasons offered for not recycling including having mobility issues, not understanding the benefits, collection staff leaving a mess in the street, and feeling concerned about the infection risk from the bacteria build-up on the container.

Please note that demographic tables have not been created for this question as the base size for those stating the top answer ‘I don’t want the food caddy in my kitchen’ was small (56) and therefore breaking down by demographic group would not allow for statistical comparisons.

Talk Richmond report

As mentioned previously in this report, the data collected from the Talk Richmond survey will be able to complement and build on the online survey findings to determine barriers to recycling food waste. It appears from the online survey that the practical barriers seem to be more prominent than those cited in the Talk Richmond survey.

The Talk Richmond survey identified practical and attitudinal barriers to recycling food waste which included;

**Practical barriers**

* Size/shape of receptacle: not big enough for larger families, those with small kitchens do not have the space to accommodate for it
* Liners used: some considered to be expensive to purchase, only available from certain locations and likely to break easily
* Waste viscosity: Food waste that is liquid can make the process seem less hygienic and unpleasant
* Collection frequency/scheduling: regular collections would be beneficial from those with larger households and to stop receptacle smelling
* Collections damage: Collection teams can damage receptacles after emptying

**Attitudinal barriers**

* Laziness
* Lack of information/benefits
* Faith in effectiveness: doubtful of the benefits of recycling
* Unopened food: disposing unopened food seen as an additional burden to recycle as also have to dispose of packaging separately

# Encouraging food waste recycling

Suggestions from those who currently recycle food waste

Respondents were asked “What do you think the Council can do to help people recycle food waste?” This was an open question, and was asked separately to recyclers and non-recyclers.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **What do you think the Council can do to help people recycle their food waste? (Current recyclers) (%)** |
|  | **77%** |
| *Base* | *609* |
| Caddy bin liners - provide (or continue to  provide free or discounted) | 21 |
| Publicity / advertising / promotions - press,  schools | 15 |
| More information/education about benefits,  tips, what can be recycled, how it is used  to create energy | 15 |
| Collection more frequent, especially in  summer, regular times, weekly\* | 6 |
| Outside bin does not empty properly -  sticky/smelly/unhygienic\* | 5 |
| Outside bin needs to be more secure  against animals (mainly foxes)\* | 5 |
| Outside bin thrown about after collection,  damage, looks bad\* | 3 |
| Better kitchen bin/container/liners -  Biodegradable\* | 3 |

Table 8 What do you think the Council can do to help people recycle their food waste? Base: All those who currently recycle 609, Richmond Food Waste Survey 1st March – 12th April

**\*indicates base lower than 50 and as such these findings cannot be reported as statistically significant**

Among residents, the top suggestion offers was to offer free or discounted caddy bin liners, with around a fifth (21%) of respondents choosing this option. Some respondents also suggested making liners easier to buy, providing sealable or better fitting liners.

“Supply a sealable biodegradable bag to put in the container to clean up the process”

“Sell the bags that fit again at the council office and in libraries. Other local shops would be good too.”

“Provide bio-degradable bags of various sizes, according to size of household, which can be put out for collection on specified days.”

Around 15% of respondents suggesting more publicity and advertising educating the public about how to recycle and what food waste is used for after it is recycled.

“Educate people on the options available - for people who live in flats as well as houses. Collection options (food caddy etc.). What can and can't be recycled. What to do with the caddy (if you have a garden and also if you are in a flat and don't have a garden. Make it easy!”

“My experience tells me (I have done work for the Council in this area before) that people can be put off by one bad experience and then won't return to using the service. I think help and support with this and reminders would be helpful.

“Explain what you do with the food waste recycling how does it save money and the benefits etc.”

Please note that demographic tables have not been created for this question as the base sizes for answer options are below 50 and therefore breaking down by demographic group would not allow for statistical comparisons.

Suggestions from those who do not currently recycle food waste

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **What do you think the Council can do to help people recycle their food waste? (Current non-recyclers) (%)** |
|  | **23** |
| *Base* | *180* |
| Issues in communal living/flats, including  central composting\* | 21 |
| Caddy bin liners - provide (or continue to  provide free or discounted\* | 17 |
| Provide bins / better bins\* | 11 |
| More information/education about benefits,  tips, what can be recycled, how it is used to  create energy\* | 10 |
| Outside bin needs to be more secure  against animals (mainly foxes)\* | 8 |
| Collection more frequent, especially in  summer, regular times, weekly\* | 8 |
| Outside bin does not empty properly - sticky/  smelly/unhygienic\* | 6 |
| Publicity / advertising / promotions - press,  Schools\* | 6 |

Table 9 What do you think the Council can do to help people recycle their food waste? Base: All those who do not recycle 180, Richmond Food Waste Survey 1st March – 12th April

**\*indicates base lower than 50 and as such these findings cannot be reported as statistically significant**

Please note that as each answer option did not have a base size higher than 50, the report is unable to provide statistically significant findings for this question.

Turning to those who do not currently recycle, the most frequently-mentioned suggestion related to extending recycling provision to residents living in a block of flats.

“They need to look at gated sites. We would be happy to recycle food waste as we used to before when living in a house. We could put our bins out at the front on collection day like other houses. Or we could put them in the bin store or we could tip our food bags into a big bin that the Council provide in the bin store.“

“I was shocked to find out, when we move in, that we could not recycle our food waste, purely because we live in a block of flat. I strongly feel that this needs to be addressed and corrected. I was planning on emailing our local councillor about this.”

Please note that demographic tables have not been created for this question as the base sizes for answer options are below 50 and therefore breaking down by demographic group would not allow for statistical comparisons.

# Conclusions and recommendations

The recommendations in this report are based from the findings from the online quantitative survey and the qualitative Talk Richmond survey.

Overall, the online survey found that knowledge and awareness of what materials respondents are able to recycle was high; 85% of respondents cited that they were able to recycle food waste. The online survey also demonstrated that 77% of respondents recycle their food waste (although it cannot be determined how much/how often they recycle), and the Talk Richmond report found that 53% of respondents reported recycling over 75% of their food waste, with 40% reporting 95%+ recycling rate. However, as mentioned previously these figures should be exercised with caution as actual vs. reported behaviours can differ.

These findings demonstrate that although knowledge and awareness of a food recycling service is high (although not as high as paper/card and plastic/tin/glass/aerosol recycling) this is not necessarily translating in to actual food waste recycling behaviour, as demonstrated in recycling service figures (outlined in the introduction of this report).

Please note that due to small base sizes for some groups and the Talk Richmond survey being qualitative in nature, and therefore not being able to provide representative findings, the findings are not able to provide recommendations based on targeting particular demographics in the borough. However, a cost effective campaign approach could be designed to encompass different demographic groups across the borough, but ensuring key messages resonate/appeal to all.

The following provides recommendations in order for the communications objectives to be met; to increase the amount of food waste recycled (particularly in the lowest four villages for food recycling), raising awareness of general recycling and to raise positive perceptions/attitudes towards the recycling service and its value.

Increasing knowledge and awareness for those who currently recycle

For those who currently recycle food waste, it is important that communications for these residents encourages the continuation of this behaviour and to encourage further food recycling behaviours where possible.

For those who recycle, in the online survey their motivations for doing so were because it is good for the environment and reduces the amount of rubbish respondents put out. These motivations slightly differed for the Talk Richmond survey which were controlling vermin, safeguarding the future and reducing landfill/can be used in other ways were cited as top motivations.

93% of respondents who currently recycle food waste stated that this was easy to do so; encouraging results as this demonstrates the current service is easy and accessible to use amongst those who currently recycle.

This group were also keen for the Council to provide further information/publicity/education/advertising/promotions on tips/benefits of food waste recycling, demonstrating that this group are likely to engage with and be receptive to Council communications in this area.

The Talk Richmond report also demonstrated that respondents were keen to know more about food waste recycling, both the process (which food stuffs can be recycled, where can receptacles and liners be acquired, when receptacles should be emptied/collected) and the benefits (where the waste goes/what happens to it, advantages for the individual/council/environment, context on detrimental effects of not recycling food waste.)

Increasing knowledge and awareness for those who currently do not recycle

For those who currently do not recycle food waste, it is important that communications for these residents encourage the take up of this service (and therefore encouraging behaviour change).

It is not clear from the research the reasons as to why these respondents do not recycle food waste due to small base sizes and therefore not being able to report statistically significant findings. However, it is recommended that communications provide basic/key messaging around the process and the benefits (as described in the previous section) to drive higher levels of understanding, awareness and knowledge. By doing so, residents would recognise the ease of using the service (and what is required of them) and the key benefits of using it, therefore making the service more attractive to use.

For those who do not recycle, the top three barriers for these respondents (in the online survey) were; I don’t want the food caddy in my kitchen (31%), food recycling is too messy (31%) and I live in a flat so can’t recycle my food waste (28%).

For this particular group, some of the practical/physical barriers are arguably too large to overcome i.e. if food waste recycling service is not provided where they live. However, for this particular group of residents, targeted communications regarding meal planning and knowing how to use/freeze leftover foods may encourage behaviour change amongst these residents to reduce the amount of food waste they produce, even if they are not able to recycle due to service capacity. These communications could be expanded more widely across the borough (rather than targeting this particular group) to encourage behaviour to prepare meals in advance and raising knowledge and awareness of how to prepare and store leftover foods, thereby another method of reducing food waste.

Behaviour Change model

We recommend that the campaign and communications uses the Behavioural Insights Team behaviour change model[[2]](#footnote-2), which all central government departments use as a guideline when developing behaviour change campaigns and communications.

The model describes that to encourage behaviour; it should be made Easy, Attractive, Social and Timely (EAST). This is described as follows;

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **EAST** | **Description** | **Recommendations** |
| Make it Easy | Reduce the ‘hassle factor’ of taking up a service; the effort required to perform an action often puts people off | It is important for both recyclers and non-recyclers that the message of why food recycling is important and its benefits are clear, attractive and resonate. Messages relating to saving money (for the individual and the council) are most likely to resonate (as use in WRAP’s Love Food, Hate Waste campaign[[3]](#footnote-3)) and will link to the wider communications objective of demonstrating value of the service and value for money.  Particularly for those who do not currently recycle, the campaign needs to clearly communicate the benefits of doing so, and how easy it is to do. This may encourage take up of the service. |
| Simplify messages; making the message clear often results in significant increase in response rates to communications |
| Make it attractive | Attract attention; We are more likely to do something that our attention is drawn towards | The campaign should use the findings from the Talk Richmond report which tested campaign creative and straplines. This should inform the campaign, in terms of what residents responded well to, and what messages/images/straplines encouraged behaviour change or reinforced positive perceptions of the council and the service.  The communications and messages should also focus on the benefits of the service, particularly how it saves the individual/council money, and other benefits such as environmental/moral etc. This would clearly communicate incentives of continuing to use/take up of the service. |
| Design rewards and sanctions for maximum effect; financial incentive are often highly effective, but alternative incentives also work well and cost less |
| Make it social | Show that most people perform the desired behaviour; describing what most people do in a particular situation encourages others to do the same | By providing messages on how the borough/council is performing regarding food waste recycling could encourage further participation, particularly if the Council phrased the message as a positive norm. Please note, this type of messaging should be carefully managed to ensure it does not come across as patronising/condescending.  Depending on the reach of the campaign, the Council could create “community champions” for example, whereby those who are particularly engaged in the community could be used to encourage food waste recycling. |
| Use the power of networks; we are embedded in a network of social relationships, and those we come into contact will shape our actions. |
| Make it timely | Prompt people when they are likely to be most receptive; the same offer made at different times can have drastically different levels of success. Behaviour is generally easier to change when habits are already disrupted, such as around major life events. | It should be considered that the campaign and future communications are delivered in a timely manner. So for example, around Christmas time when households are more likely to have leftovers.  As stated previously, behaviour change theory demonstrates that people are most likely to be receptive to taking up certain behaviours when the costs and benefits are clearly communicated, such as cost savings to the individual or the Council.  By producing a ‘tips’ campaign, this could provide friendly and positive advice to address barriers identified in the research to recycling food waste. This could include for example what foods to recycle, how to store the waste receptacle, where food recycling services are delivered and advice and tips on how to reduce the amount of food waste (e.g. using and storing leftovers.) |
| Consider the immediate costs and benefits; we are more influenced by costs and benefits that take effect immediately than those delivered later. |
| Help people plan their response to events; there is a substantial gap between intentions and actual behaviour. A proven solution is to prompt people to identify barriers to action, and develop a specific plan to address them |

# Contact details

**Westco Insight Team**

5 The Strand

London

WC2N 5HR

Name of author: Caroline Roper

Tel: 0207 641 2940

Email: croper@westminster.gov.uk

[www.westcotrading.com](http://www.westcotrading.com)

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As part of our ISO 20252:2012 accreditation Westco must ensure that all sub-contractors are compliant with our quality processes.

1. What are you currently able to recycle? ‘Food waste’ Base: Those that use communal recycling bins 50 respondents, Richmond Food Waste Survey from 1st March-12th April [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <http://www.behaviouralinsights.co.uk/publications/east-four-simple-ways-to-apply-behavioural-insights/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com/why-save-food> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)