

Beacon case study

Beacon theme:	Waste and recycling
Authority name:	Bexley Council
Case study title:	Community engagement – recycling project with Bexley's Sikh community at Guru Nanak Darbar Gurdwara

Overview of Authority

Bexley Council is a unitary authority in London that has a population of 220,000. Bexley has gained beacon status in waste twice now, the first time in 1999. It has a history of good practice in waste and recycling and currently recycles over 37 per cent of its waste. This makes it among the highest recycling urban council's in the United Kingdom, including the highest in London in four out of the last five years. This success is underpinned by its comprehensive urban cutting-edge recycling services, the Council's corporate processes that drive performance, the development of markets for waste materials and the management of waste on its own premises.

Bexley has also used imaginative ways to ensure that all sections of the community are actively engaged in recycling with an impressive Schools Waste Action Club, 'Waste Minimisation and Recycling Focus Group' and extensive door stepping campaign with the authority's recycling wardens each achieving over 500 visits per week. Bexley has also worked hard with its various communities to get them engaged with the three R's message. This case study will look at how Bexley engaged its Sikh Population.

What has been achieved?

Bexley has a population of nearly 3000 Sikhs, many of whom use the Guru Nanak Darbar Gurdwara in Belvedere to worship. In line with the teachings of the Sikh religion the Gurdwara has a volunteer run free kitchen open seven days a week. The waste from the food preparation consists of milk bottles, food cans, cardboard boxes, glass jars and vegetable peelings, all of which could be recycled but were being disposed of in the general refuse bin instead.

Bimla Lyall, Vice President of Bexley Council's 'Waste Minimisation and Recycling Focus Group' is a member of the Gurdwaras community. She believed that its potential for waste reduction and increased recycling would provide an ideal platform for spreading the recycling message to the Sikh community. The principle of a protective and loving guardianship is very much at the heart of Sikh feelings towards the earth and therefore the Gurdwara elders agreed to allow the Council to install a set of recycling containers for paper/cardboard, plastic bottles/ cans, mixed glass bottles/jars and food waste.

Prior to the installation of the bins the recycling officer met with the volunteers that cooked the food and who would be organising the main bulk of recycling to make sure that they were ready for the scheme. Posters and stickers were produced in

Punjabi and English and supplemented with pictures so that all of the congregation would be reached by the recycling message.

The Gurdwara President, Vice President, Secretary, a councillor and other temple elders were all present when the recycling bins arrived. They were so enthusiastic that the secretary even fixed examples of what could go in the bins to the outside of them to help get the message across. See picture below:



In addition to providing recycling facilities at the Gurdwara itself, Bexley Council has also installed recycling facilities at the nearby Belvedere Community Centre. The Gurdwara community and Bexley Council for Racial Equality (BCRE) Groups use this centre regularly.

It is estimated that 80 per cent of the waste produced at this Gurdwara has been diverted from landfill and has made the Sikh community in Bexley more aware that they can recycle at home, at work and at school, as well as at the Gurdwara. Its' success has been down to the involvement of the whole Sikh Gurdwara community, and it is being hailed as the greenest Gurdwara in Britain by London 21.

We are now expanding the provision of recycling facilities to other places of worship and community and public halls in the Borough. To date 30 churches and all seven community centres have joined the scheme.



Bimla Lyall, Recycling Focus Group member and Rebecca Goodwin, Recycling Officer, recycling at Guru Nanak Darbar, Belvedere

Service Delivery Tips:

Do:

- make sure all communities in your borough are involved with your schemes in as many walks of their lives as possible i.e. at home, at work, at their place of worship or community group meeting place.
- encourage the community to take part by providing them with all the materials that they need to make a difference.
- offer your time and help during implementation so that they are ready for the scheme and so that all bumps are ironed out easily.
- run negotiations through a contact and the elders so that they take it on and make it work.
- put literature in both English and in the relevant translations so that the whole community and all its generations are reached. Also use as many pictures as possible as they speak a thousand words

Don't:

- put recycling in without the background work above, as it won't be as successful.
- investigate other facilities and groups that the community use so that they can recycle in other places and hear the message via a drip feed effect.
- forget about the scheme after it is implemented - keep revisiting it so that the community links are continued.

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