London Borough of Lambeth Case Study

The London Borough of Lambeth (“Lambeth”), like LBTH, has a high proportion of the population living in flats; over 70% of households live in flats, either purpose built or converted houses. Around 6% of the population of Lambeth have a first language that is not English. Lambeth also has a relatively young age profile - although it is a largely residential borough, it is a destination for young working age people, rather than families with the majority of people being 20-44. In addition to this, approximately 12% of the population leave each year and are replaced[[1]](#footnote-2).

Due to the difficulties in flats recycling that arise from the factors noted above, Lambeth unsurprisingly was one of the six London boroughs involved in Re-London’s flats initiative. During this trial one estate was chosen to receive improvements and the outcome was a 30% increase in the estate’s recycling rate, a 17% increase in capture rates and a 40% decrease in contamination rates. Following its success, Lambeth and Veolia jointly did a further series of flat improvements across a further four estates in December 2019, covering 1,118 households. This was followed by a further four estates in December 2020 with the aim of improving recycling rates and reducing contamination.

Making improvements to the communal bin facilities and infrastructure and enabling recycling to become easier for residents was shown by Lambeth to have a significant impact upon capture, recycling, and contamination rates. Across the four estates involved in the 2020 intervention, the average recycling rate increased from 12.4% pre-intervention to 16.43% post-intervention and contamination rates also saw a drastic decrease, reducing by 47.64%.

The engagement with residents was an instrumental driver of this success. Residents were interviewed at the start to find out what their barriers and drivers were towards recycling, which informed the communication material developed. Feedback on the trial was also provided to residents and they were again interviewed to get their views on the trail.[[2]](#footnote-3) The bin stores were very clearly signed and marked to delineate between the different material streams. Due to the transient nature of the population typically living in communal properties, it was also important that ongoing communications were maintained, such as the yearly leaflet.

Alongside the benefits outlined above, such changes over numerous estates can also have a positive impact upon the public perception of the local authority implementing the changes and shows residents in communal properties that they are valued by the authority. The exemplary nature of the bin stores helps to encourage further recycling and ‘normalise’ the behaviour of good recycling. Lambeth’s similarities in demographic to LBTH suggest that the success in recycling in flats could be echoed in LBTH with the improvement of bin stores and successful communications and engagement with the residents.

1. <https://moderngov.lambeth.gov.uk/documents/s80062/FINAL%20Appendix%20One-%20Summary%20of%20Lambeths%20demographics%200803.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. https://relondon.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/LWARB-Making-recycling-work-for-people-in-flats-full-report\_200128-1.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-3)