

WR1204

Household Waste Prevention

Evidence Review:

L3 m7-1 (D) – Stakeholder Views on

Waste Prevention

A report for Defra's

Waste and Resources Evidence Programme

**October 2009**

This research was commissioned and funded by Defra. The views expressed reflect the research findings and the authors' interpretation. The inclusion of or reference to any particular policy in this report should not be taken to imply that it has, or will be, endorsed by Defra

## Table of Contents

1.1	Aims and scope of the stakeholder engagement	1
1.2	The regional workshops	2
1.3	The Surveys	5
1.4	Findings	8
1.5	Expert Panel Consultation	17
1.6	Expert interviews	18

© Brook Lyndhurst 2009

This report has been produced by Brook Lyndhurst Ltd under/as part of a contract placed by Defra. Any views expressed in it are not necessarily those of Defra. Brook Lyndhurst warrants that all reasonable skill and care has been used in preparing this report. Notwithstanding this warranty, Brook Lyndhurst shall not be under any liability for loss of profit, business, revenues or any special indirect or consequential damage of any nature whatsoever or loss of anticipated saving or for any increased costs sustained by the client or his or her servants or agents arising in any way whether directly or indirectly as a result of reliance on this report or of any error or defect in this report.

## L3 m7-1 (D) Stakeholder views on waste prevention

This paper reports on the stakeholder engagement that was undertaken to complement the desk based research in the evidence review.

Topics covered are:

- Aims and scope of the stakeholder engagement
- Method for running the workshops
- Details of the electronic survey
- Findings from the workshops & the surveys:
  - Evidence gaps
  - Monitoring and evaluation
  - Experience of working with consumers
  - Perceptions of barriers and motivating actions
  - What could stakeholders do to support household waste prevention?
- Expert panel feedback
- Expert interview findings

The paper provides a **detailed account** of the engagement process and the data generated by it. A topline summary of findings can be found in the Executive Report ([L1 m1](#) section 7). Modules related to the stakeholder views presented here are:

L1 m1 Executive Report (section 7)	L2 m1 Technical report, section 5 L2 m3 Consumers – engaging L2 m4/1 Reuse and the third sector L2 m4/2 Retail solutions L2 m5 Policy measures L2 m6 Monitoring and evaluation L2 m7 Stakeholder feedback L2 m8 Evidence gaps
------------------------------------	--

### 1.1 Aims and scope of the stakeholder engagement

The review adopted Defra’s definition of ‘evidence’<sup>1</sup> :

*“We can say that evidence is any information that Defra can use to turn its policy goals into something concrete, achievable and manageable. It can take many forms: research, analysis of stakeholder opinion, economic and statistical modelling, public perceptions and beliefs, anecdotal evidence, and cost/benefit analyses; as well as a judgement of the quality of the methods that are used to gather and synthesise the information.*

*Evidence for policy is has three components. First is **hard data** (facts, trends, survey information) but the second component is the **analytical reasoning** that sets the hard data in context. Third, an evidence base comprises **stakeholder opinion** on an issue or set of issues. The reason for this tripartite approach is: if there is any weakness in the hard data on which you are basing a policy option, then you will need to fall back upon the analysis that underpins the data. If there is any weakness in the analysis, or any risk that others could bring an alternative interpretation to the table, then you need to go back to your stakeholder base in order to understand the different interpretations that could give rise to different analyses of the same set of data.”*

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.defra.gov.uk/science/how/evidence.htm>

In light of this definition, one of the work streams within the evidence review was a stakeholder engagement process which:

- sought out evidence from stakeholders
- asked for feedback on evidence gaps
- drew in stakeholders' experience of working on waste prevention
- invited comment on themes emerging from the evidence review

The work in this stream comprised:

- three regional workshops, in Leeds, Bridgwater and London;
- facilitation of Defra's Waste Stakeholder Group (WSG) February 2009 meeting;
- two electronic surveys:
  - Wave 1 alerted the stakeholders to the work, invited their suggestions for evidence material and asked a compact set of questions about their waste prevention experience and views on evidence gaps;
  - Wave 2 outlined the preliminary results of the research and invited views and comments on these.
- interviews were conducted with 19 UK waste prevention experts to elaborate on evidence found and ask about future directions for waste prevention; and 40 international experts were consulted for input into the International Review (L3 m5/2 (D)).

In all, the workshops and WSG meeting were attended by 148 stakeholders. There were 106 responses to the Wave 1 survey and 148<sup>2</sup> responses to the Wave 2 survey. Participants and respondents represented a wide cross section of stakeholders, including academics, local authority representatives, the third sector, consultants, waste managers and policy officers. In response to the request for evidence, 54 stakeholders suggested possible sources, all of which were checked against our scoping database, assessed for relevance if they had not already been identified, then followed up where appropriate.

It should be noted that whilst this module reports on information gathered from the engagement process, care has been taken throughout the various other report modules to distinguish clearly between statements based on stakeholder opinion and those based on 'hard data' or analytical reasoning. It should also be remembered that the material presented here comprises a summary of the views of those who attended workshops, responded to surveys and gave their time for the purposes of interview – it in no way represents Defra's position and should not be taken as an indication that Defra is considering any of the suggestions as a possibility for implementation in England.

## 1.2 The regional workshops

The regional workshops were held as follows:

- Monday 26 January 2009 – 42 The Calls, Leeds
- Tuesday 27 January 2009 – The Exchange, Bridgwater, Somerset
- Wednesday 28 January 2009 – The Brewery, 52 Chiswell Street The City, London

---

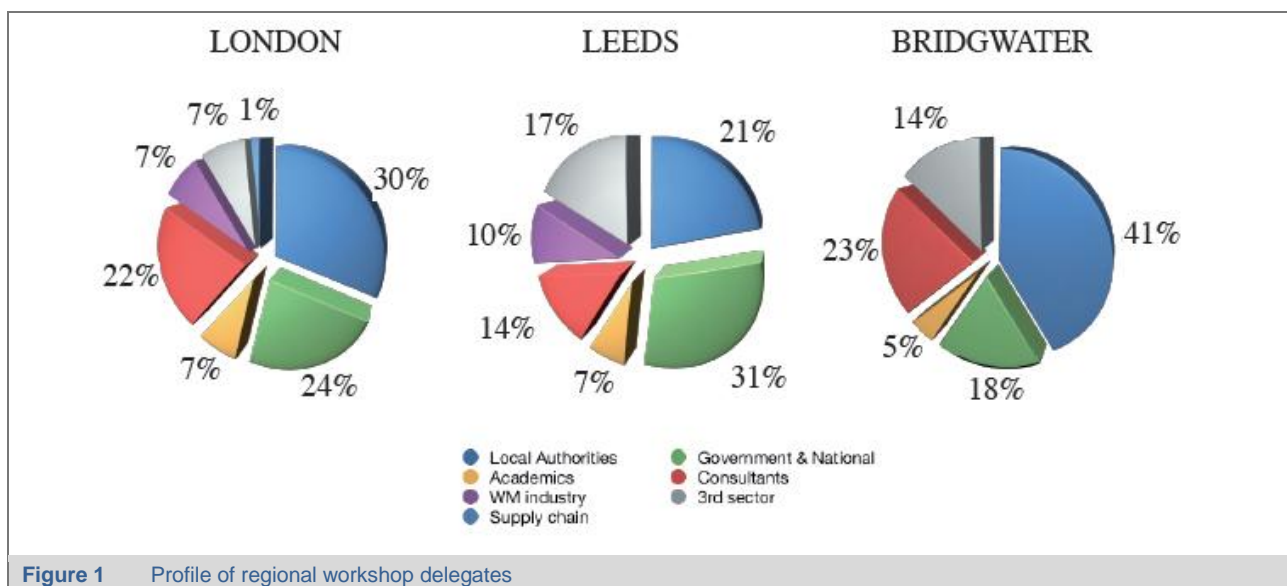
<sup>2</sup> It is merely a coincidence that the number of responses to the second wave was the same as the number of workshop attendees.

## Profile of the delegates

A breakdown of the attendees can be found in table 1 and figure 1.

CATEGORY	LONDON	LEEDS	BRIDGWATER	TOTAL
Local Authorities	20	6	9	35
Government & National	16	9	4	29
Academics	5	2	1	8
Consultants	15	4	5	24
WM Industry	5	3	0	8
3rd sector	5	5	3	13
Supply chain	1	0	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>118</b>

**Table 1** Breakdown of regional workshop delegates



## Workshop preparations

Attendance was on an 'invitation only' basis to optimise value through expert contribution. The invitation process comprised three key stages:

- An 'expression of interest' e-mail asking people to request an invitation to attend a specific workshop;
- A specific invitation e-mail to those who responded; and
- A follow up e-mail to those invited providing details of venue and location.

The 'expression of interest' e-mail was prepared and sent during the week beginning 8 December 2008 and again on 22 December 2008 to the following groups:

- Those key groups originally e-mailed for the Wave 1 survey (600 organisations via the RRF);

- Those who responded to the survey and contributed information;
- Those who had written asking to be invited to the workshops;
- The Expert Panel;
- Defra, other government departments and devolved administrations;
- Environment Agency (EA);
- WRAP (for internal circulation) and WRAP's E-Zine; and
- Letsrecycle.com, CIWM, SDRN.

Follow-up contacts were made with key groups, such as EA, CIWM, LARAC and Welsh Assembly Government, to ensure no potentially useful contributors were overlooked.

It was essential that stakeholder expectations were managed and made clear at the presentation outset. Delegates were briefed on the context within which the research was being conducted and their role in the workshops. This was made explicit in the follow up invitation e-mail and on the day.

Two of the regional events were sponsored as follows:

- Leeds: Sponsored by Yorkshire Forward
- Bridgwater: Sponsored by the Somerset Waste Partnership, Viridor and May Gurney

## **Structure of the day**

The workshops were scheduled to take place over a half-day and were chaired and facilitated by members of the project team. The workshops were supported by a structured agenda and detailed facilitation guides. In summary, the structure was as follows.

During registration delegates were provided with a delegate pack comprising:

- An agenda for the day;
- A delegate pack containing a summary of the project containing the six research questions (research objectives), a diagram of the research project process and key stages, and a list of Defra WREP projects; and
- A delegate exercise sheet with two questions, one on key barriers to household waste prevention, and one on evidence gaps.

The aims of the workshops were to:

- draw on stakeholders' knowledge and insight to identify gaps in the evidence base, and to identify sources to plug those gaps where possible;
- share early insights from the evidence, particularly on opportunities and barriers, and test them against stakeholder experience;
- gain insights from practice and wider experience to feed into the analytical stages of the evidence review.

The workshops also provided an opportunity for stakeholders to share experiences with each other around key questions relating to household waste prevention.

Delegates were asked to complete the exercise sheet and hand this in during the break. These were later analysed by the project team and the key findings were then fed back to delegates towards the end of the workshop.

Following an introduction from the chair, the project team gave a short presentation to provide context and teasers for the workshop discussions, covering:

- an introduction to Defra WREP;
- an overview of the project;
- emerging evidence – initial insights; and
- key research questions (for discussion).

The presentations were followed by two breakout sessions where delegates were asked a series of questions. To facilitate the discussions, the breakout sessions were accompanied by record sheets which delegates were asked to complete to capture their responses. Each breakout session was followed by a plenary where delegates summarised their prioritised responses. The two breakouts covered:

- **Breakout 1:** delegates were asked to draw on their own experience and to pinpoint examples of: what consumers are already doing to prevent waste, what they want to be doing, what they should be doing in terms of priority actions, and how they can be motivated to do it. Delegates were also asked to think about what evidence exists in relation to these topics and where the gaps are.
- **Breakout 2:** this focused on delegates' views of what options stakeholders could pursue to support household waste prevention, namely, local authorities, the third sector, retailers and national policy or agencies. Delegates were then asked to rate each option suggested for its feasibility, waste impact and carbon impact. Again, they were asked to think about evidence and gaps.

The workshops ended with a discussion summarising the key barriers and evidence gaps (analysed by the project team during the breakout groups), and next steps. Delegates were then asked to jot down any further thoughts on evaluation techniques and the potential for a waste prevention network on flipcharts during the lunch period.

### 1.3 The Surveys

Two waves of electronic survey were undertaken. The first wave preceded the workshops. Its purpose was primarily to seek information on evidence sources. The second survey followed the workshops. Its primary purpose was to test some of the findings from the three workshops.

The first survey was circulated to some 600 organisations through the Resource Recovery Forum network. 106 responses were received. Five open-ended, *qualitative* questions were asked:

1. Do you have or know of any literature relevant to the six domains we are researching? (The domains are: incentives; waste policy and strategy; research and thinking on consumer attitudes, motivations, behaviour and habits; re-use; retail innovation; and options available to households.)
2. Do you think there are any gaps in the waste prevention evidence base? If so, what do you think they might be?
3. What do you understand by the term "waste prevention"?

4. How do you think your work relates to waste prevention?
5. What is the core focus of your work?

Just over one third of respondents were able to advise us of potential sources of information that could be relevant to waste prevention. Sources were checked against the 'long list' being developed by the research team (see L3 m1 (D)), and were added to the list if they were new.

Various suggestions for gaps in the evidence base were made, notably around the availability of impact data and the extent of waste prevention behaviours. Interpretation of the term 'waste prevention' was broad, with respondents most frequently mentioning 'stopping waste occurring', 'waste minimisation' and 'reuse'. Issues such as resource efficiency, lifecycle assessment and designing out waste were also mentioned.

Waste prevention was not a core concern for the majority of respondents; and for those who had had some active involvement with waste prevention issues, campaigns and promotions were by far the most frequently mentioned activity. Close to half of respondents chose not to describe the sector they worked in: otherwise, respondents from central and local government were most frequent, with consultants, academics, NGOs and others broadly equal.

The second survey was also circulated via the RRF network, and 148 responses were secured. The structure of respondents was very similar to that achieved in the first survey. The following, open-ended questions were asked:

1. At the regional workshops, we asked delegates: What options and measures could stakeholders implement to enable households to take action on waste prevention?

Delegates discussed this question together in groups and they identified the following as the top three options which stakeholders could implement:

- Better information provision to consumers about waste prevention activity (from government, retailers and local authorities) combined with more joined-up, cross sectoral, messaging (e.g. joined-up guidance on product disposal).
- Promote and build capacity of the third sector to further develop their re-use services.
- Householder incentives, implemented by Local Authorities with national support e.g. pay-as-you-throw.

Do you agree that these are priorities?

Would you add anything? Would you delete anything?

2. We also asked delegates to consider the extent to which the options they identified were:
  - (a) feasible to implement
  - (b) would have a significant impact on the amount of household waste
  - (c) would have a significant impact on household waste-related carbon emissions

Using a scale of high, medium and low, how would you rate the feasibility, waste impact and carbon impact of these three options?



3. Following a discussion about what consumers/households are already doing on waste prevention, delegates were then asked to think about which actions should be encouraged through measures such as campaigns. Delegates identified the following top five priority actions for consumers and households:

- Use re-use facilities (e.g. for electronic waste, furniture, bric-a-brac, textiles re-use)
- Develop a better understanding of the issues and be better informed (e.g. make a distinction between waste prevention and recycling)
- Smart shopping and plan shopping (e.g. avoid special offers, buy goods with less packaging, buy longer life products)
- Consume differently (e.g. buy less, buy exactly what you need)
- Home composting

Do you agree that these are priorities?

Would you add or delete anything?

4. How would you engage consumers and households in these actions? What would motivate consumers and households to take up these actions?

5. From your experience, what monitoring and evaluation techniques work well for waste prevention? And which don't work so well? Does any particular evidence come to mind?

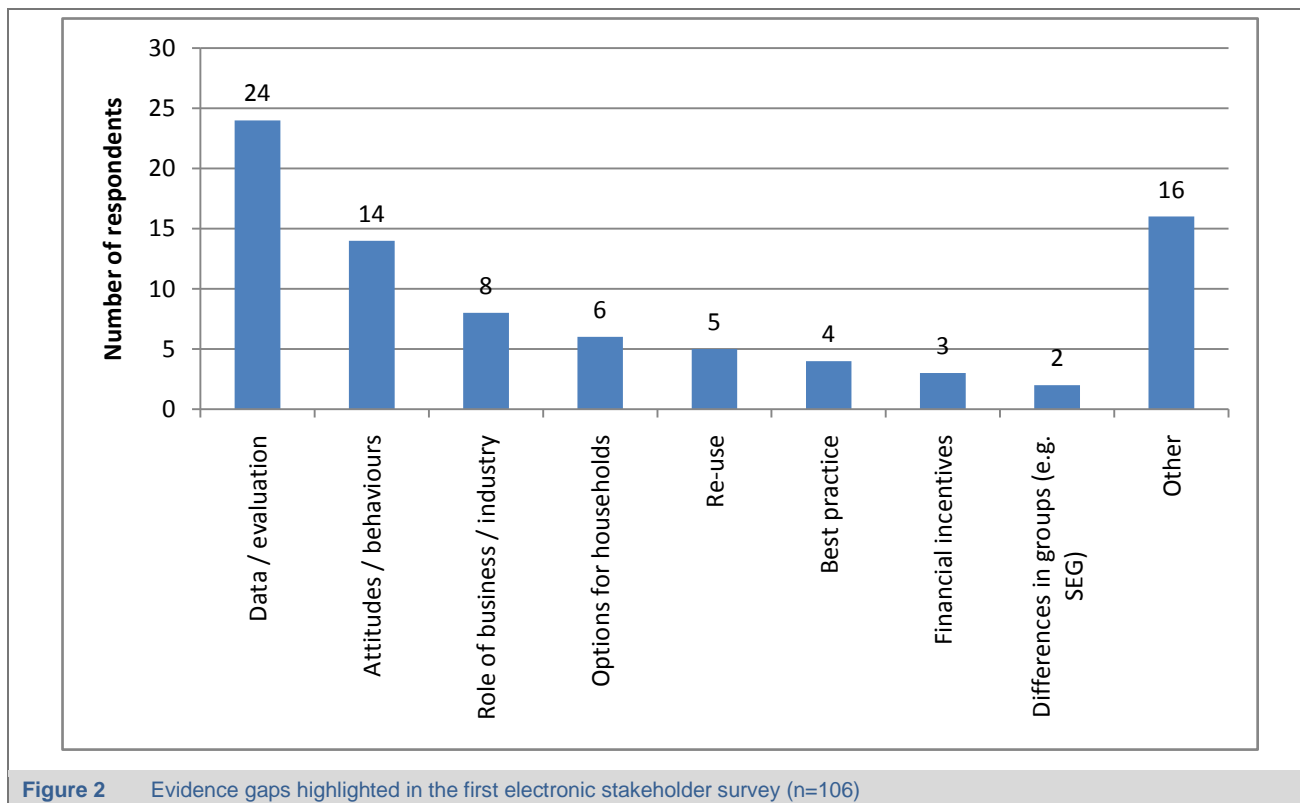
6. Thinking about sharing best practice between stakeholders, what are your thoughts on the scope for a waste prevention network?

Results from the second survey were integrated with the results from the workshops, and are presented in the next section.

## 1.4 Findings

### Evidence Gaps

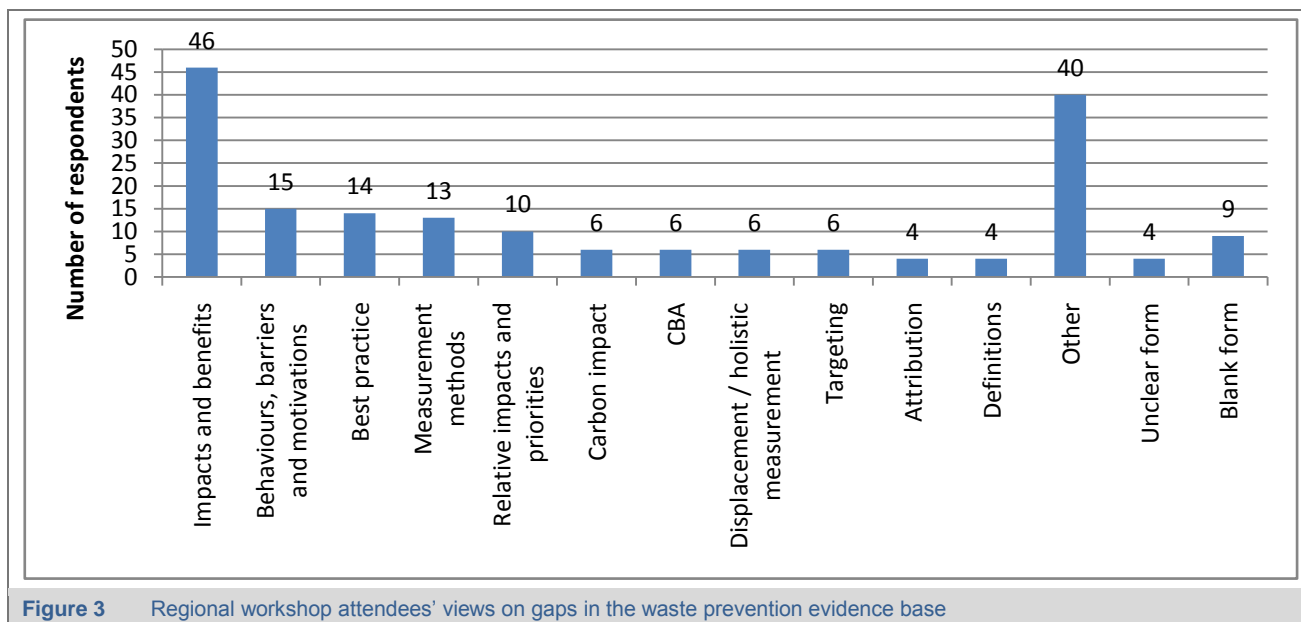
In the first electronic stakeholder survey, respondents were asked whether they thought there were any gaps in the waste prevention evidence base. Gaps were most frequently highlighted in the areas of waste prevention data, monitoring and evaluation.



At the regional workshops, attendees were also asked about their views on the evidence gaps. The data issues highlighted in the first electronic survey surfaced again, as the majority of the comments focused on the lack of data on waste prevention impacts and benefits (figure 3). Across the whole engagement exercise (surveys and workshops), stakeholders reported that they need more evidence specifically with respect to:

- **'Hard' (i.e. statistical) data on the impact and/or potential of waste prevention activities** – including impacts of campaigns, relative benefits of different options, central guidance on actions to prioritise, and LCA/carbon benefits for different options.
- **Guidance on accepted methods for measuring waste prevention** – including techniques, standardised benchmarks for measuring performance, and how to deal with issues such as attribution and displacement effects.
- **Campaign messaging and evidence on successful behavioural change levers** – most notably understanding of consumer motivations but also how to target or segment audiences, what messages are effective and lessons from best practice case studies. Recycle Now and Love Food Hate Waste were frequently mentioned as exemplary models, supporting local authorities with thoroughly tested messaging based on expensive research that no single authority could afford.

- **How the configuration of waste services can favour waste prevention** – including robust evidence on the impact of system design on recycling and source prevention (e.g. alternate weekly collection or bin size) and cost benefit analysis of waste prevention versus recycling to help 'make the case' for prevention to local authority councillors.



**Figure 3** Regional workshop attendees' views on gaps in the waste prevention evidence base

It should be noted that these views acted as a complement to the main literature-based evidence gathering processes. As explained in [L2 m8 Evidence Gaps & Signposts](#), the identification of 'evidence gaps' was based primarily on the literature.

## Monitoring & Evaluation

In response to the prominence given to measurement and monitoring issues in both the first survey and the workshops, a question on these issues was included in the second stakeholder survey. Respondents were asked what monitoring methods for waste prevention they thought worked well and which did not work well.

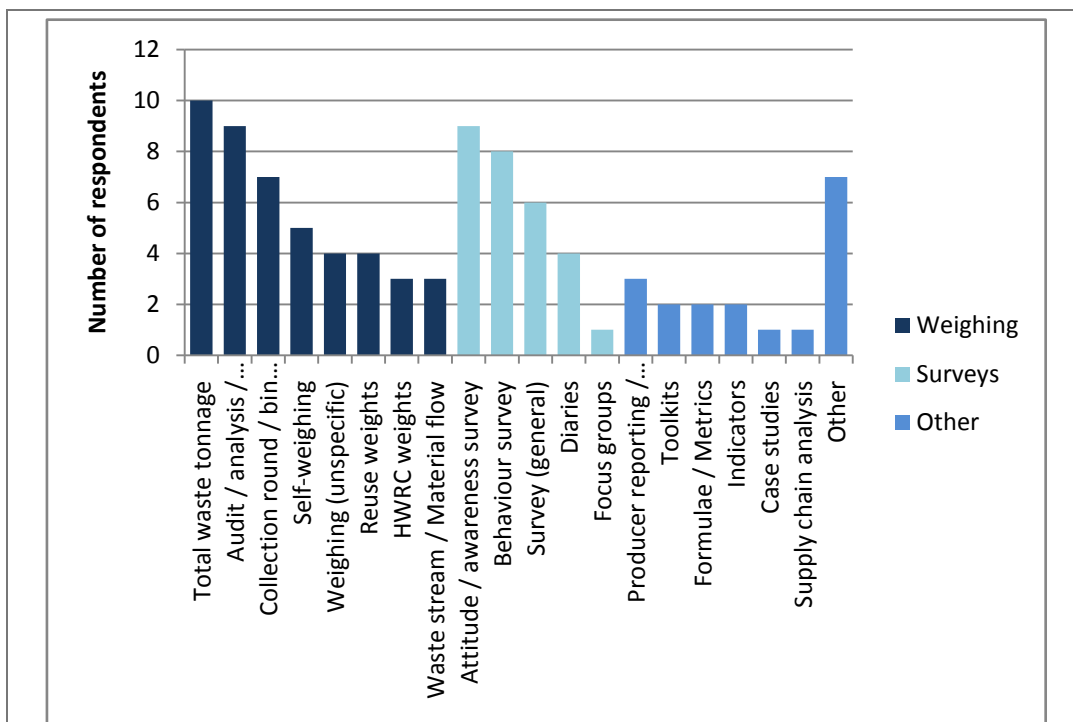


Figure 4 Monitoring and evaluation methods considered to work well (wave 2 survey, n= 60)

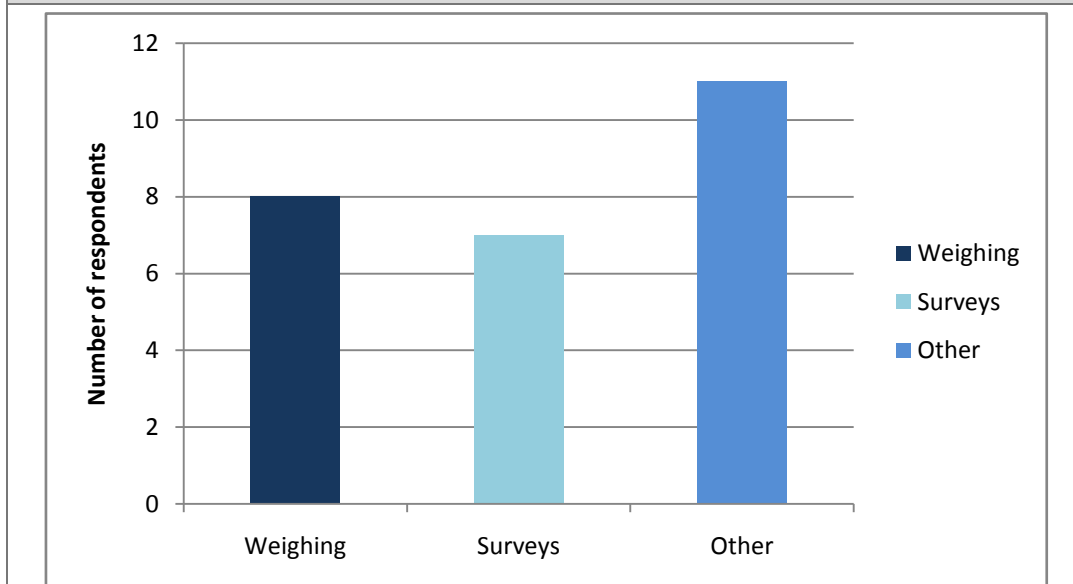


Figure 5 Monitoring and evaluation methods considered not to work well (wave 2 survey, n= 24)

No clear view emerged, with almost as many respondents saying surveys *do not* work as saying they work; and the same picture for the use of tonnage data. Discussion in the open floor sessions of the workshops often focused on there being a lack of agreed methods for measuring impacts of local interventions (i.e. similar to participation rate monitoring for recycling), or agreed benchmarks for what

sort of participation should be anticipated. There was common support for unified guidance on monitoring and evaluation for waste prevention (which will be provided by WRAP in its updated M&E guidance and in the newly revised WRAP waste prevention toolkit).

## Experience of working with consumers

Workshop attendees were asked to list which waste prevention actions they think householders are currently taking, what they think consumers should be encouraged to do and how people could be motivated. These views were further tested in the wave 2 survey, where respondents were asked if they agreed with the prioritisation of actions. Key findings on **current household behaviour** were:

- The most mentioned actions that stakeholders thought households were already doing were using Freecycle, eBay and charity shops, home composting, reusable nappies, avoiding junk mail, food waste and plastic bags.
- Bulky waste reuse and shopping related prevention behaviours were ranked lower.

The top five **priority actions** that workshop attendees thought households **should be** doing were:

- Use re-use facilities
- Develop a better understanding of what needs to be done, particularly the distinction between recycling and waste prevention
- Smart shopping (e.g. avoid special offers) and plan shopping
- Buy less
- Home composting

Renting of (e.g. consumables and appliances) and reducing food waste followed these top five.

Waste prevention behaviour	Number of breakout groups listing the behaviour
Freecycle	12
Charity shops	11
Compost	11
e-Bay	9
Nappies	9
Junk mail	9
Food waste	9
Bags for life	7
Rechargeable batteries	5
Bulky reuse	5
Reuse carrier bags / packaging	4
Re-paint	3
Hire	3
Avoid carrier bags / packaging (or leave in shop)	3
Car boot sales	2
Concentrate purchase	2
Energy and water saving	2
Long-life products	2
Smart shopping	2
Give to family	2
Other	9

**Table 2** What consumers are willing to do according to stakeholders (workshop delegates)

A majority (74%) of survey respondents endorsed the five actions above, re-emphasising the need for general attitudinal and behavioural change, as well as wanting to add food waste and junk mail to the list (figure 6). Expert interviewees from local authorities further added that communication on aspects such as carrier bags or junk mail could be a 'hook' to start to engage households in the idea of waste prevention.

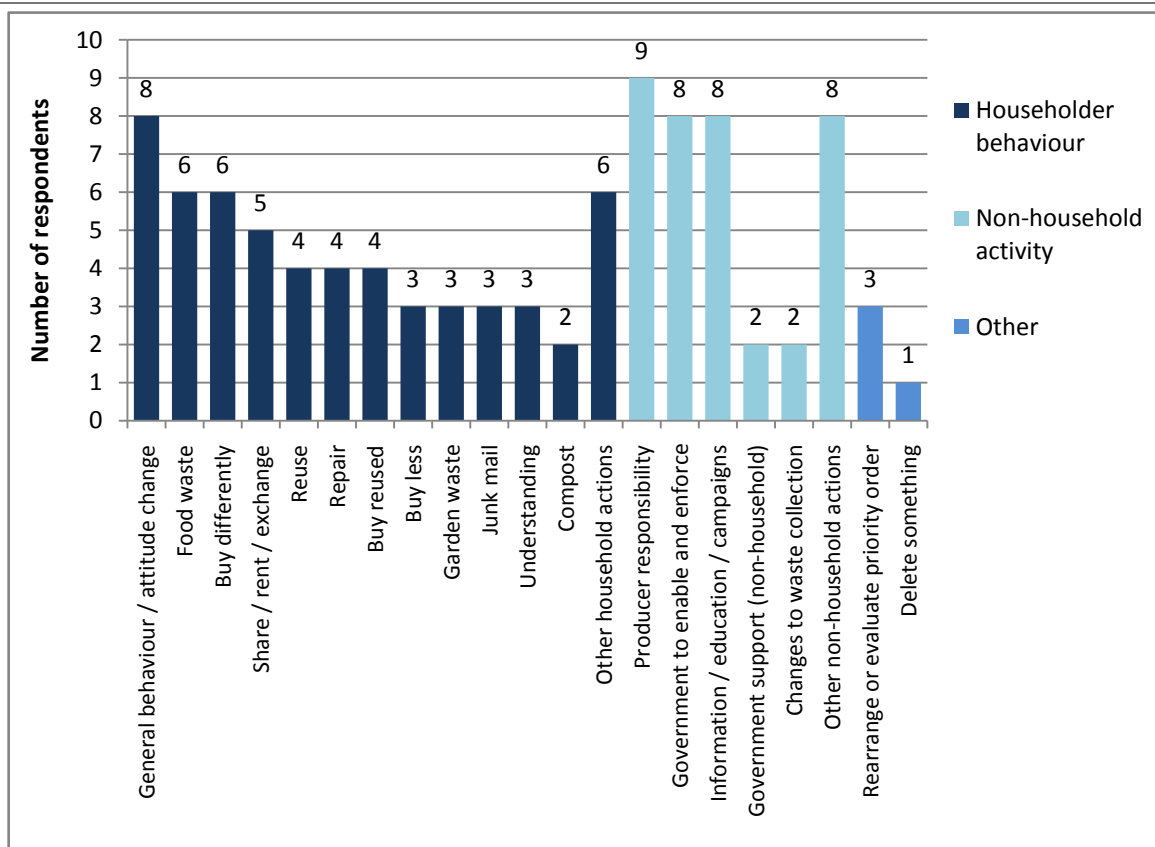
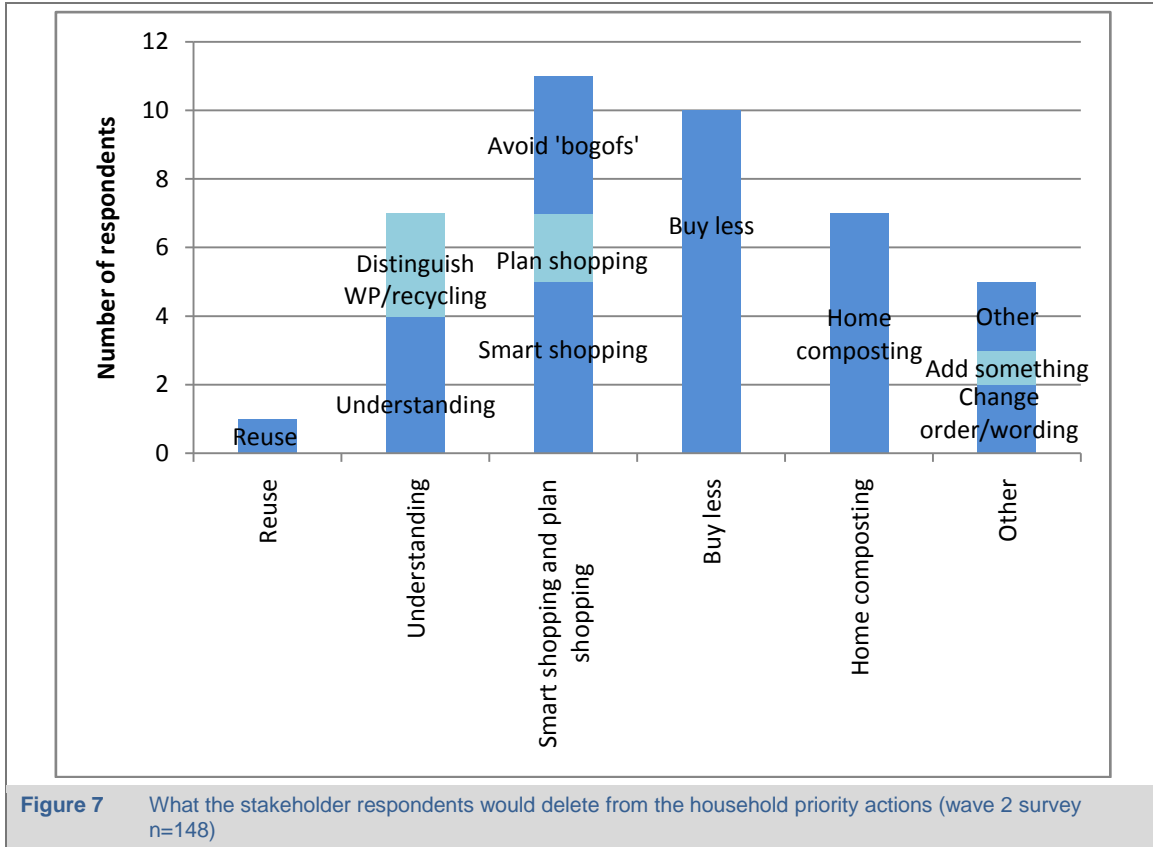


Figure 6 What the stakeholder respondents would add to the household priority actions (Wave 2 survey, n=148)

In the survey, three actions that would need to be taken by other stakeholders rather than households were also flagged as priorities: producer responsibility, government action to enable and encourage prevention, and education campaigns. A minority of respondents wanted to delete shopping actions from the list (figure 7).



Stakeholders in the wave 2 survey made a number of suggestions as to how consumers might be motivated to take action on the five key areas identified above (table 3).

Priority action	Top motivators (number of respondents)
Use re-use facilities	Advertising / promotion (8) Provision of services / facilities (8) Information (6)
Develop a better understanding	Use comparisons / examples (3) Practical advice (2) Use media messages (2) Communicate through social networks (2)
Smart shopping and plan shopping	Retailer legislation / action (12) Financial incentive / cost saving (11) Media promotion (4) Education / awareness / communications (4)
Consume differently	Cost savings (6) Education / awareness / communications (4) Practical advice (3) Retailer action (3)
Home composting	Free / subsidised compost bins (11) Support / advice / education (10) Master composters / other volunteers (6) Publicity / promotion (6)
General comments	Communications / promotion (25) Information (18) Incentives and rewards (15)

**Table 3** Survey respondents' answers to the question on motivating and engaging householders in the priority actions identified

## Perceptions of barriers; and actions that stakeholders could take

Attendees at the regional workshops were asked what they considered to be the key barriers to achieving a greater level of action on waste prevention. Key barriers were thought to be:

- Consumer culture, understanding and knowledge
- Lack of retailer partnerships with other stakeholders (e.g. local authorities)
- Weak supply chain incentives (e.g. implementation of producer responsibility)
- Gaps in, and sustainability of the reuse infrastructure
- The nature of incentives operating on local authorities as a result of waste policy (a feeling that the current system inadvertently favours recycling over prevention)
- Lack of evidence of what works to support decision making
- Lack of feedback to householders on waste performance

Stakeholders think these factors, together, lead to inconsistent messages to households, and make it difficult to define what the priority actions should be at local authority level.

Workshop attendees were then further asked to discuss:

- what actions retail, policy or local authority stakeholders could take to motivate action on waste prevention
- how feasible they thought these might be to implement
- and what sorts of impact they might achieve



In discussing the options, stakeholders were encouraged to refer to evidence that they had seen or to their own practical experience, and to avoid speculation as far as they were able. The top three measures identified by workshop delegates were:

- Better – and more cross-sectoral - information provision to consumers about waste prevention activity and options (from government, retailers and local authorities working together)
- Better promotion and capacity building of the third sector to develop re-use services.
- Householder financial incentives, implemented by local authorities with national support <sup>3</sup>

Other suggestions made in the workshops related to:

- retail options - including joint working between retailers and other stakeholders, packaging innovation, and stronger producer responsibility
- design of collection systems (e.g. alternate weekly collection or bin limits as part of an overall package of collection arrangements)
- strategic level stakeholders (WSG) wished to see a continuing or greater emphasis on life cycle thinking for specific material streams
- using the credit crunch as a 'hook' to engage the public in waste prevention activity

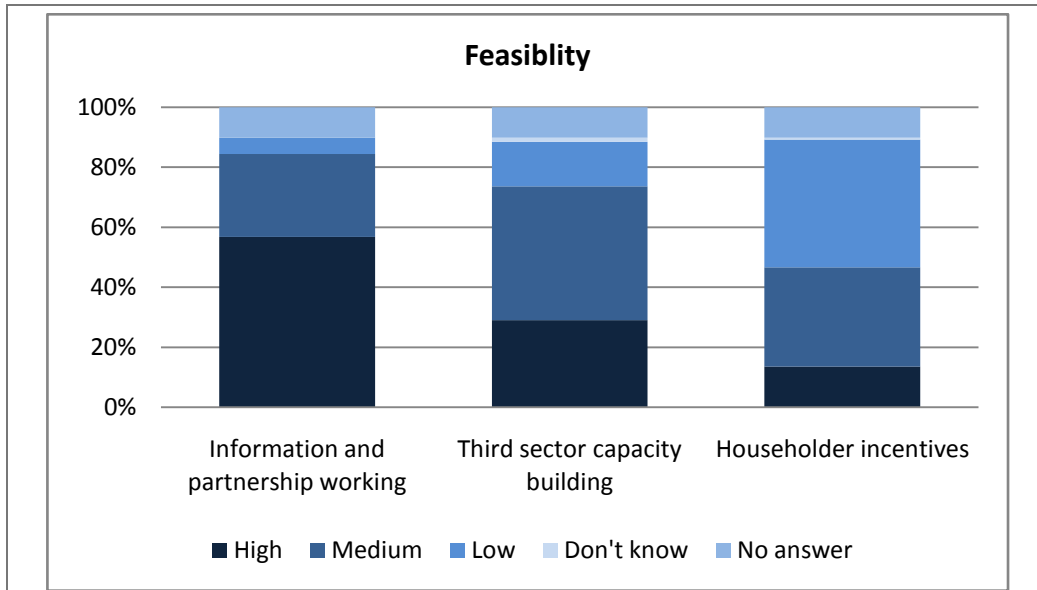
Specific mentions were also made of issues around patchy coverage of a reuse infrastructure and the capacity of third sector organisations, including their long term sustainability. In respect to the latter, a few delegates suggested that concerns about financial sustainability were a barrier to local authorities entering into service level agreements with third sector organisations – which is shown elsewhere in the literature to be an important driver of effective reuse operations (see [L2 m4/1](#)). Some also mentioned the need to develop greater consumer interest in reuse.

The top three options above were then put forward in the second stakeholder survey to gauge the extent to which the qualitative feedback from the workshops was supported more generally. A majority (86%) of survey respondents agreed with these priorities. The biggest area of debate was around financial incentives; 26 (of 148) respondents wanted to remove incentives from the list. Producer responsibility measures were the main aspect thought to be missing.

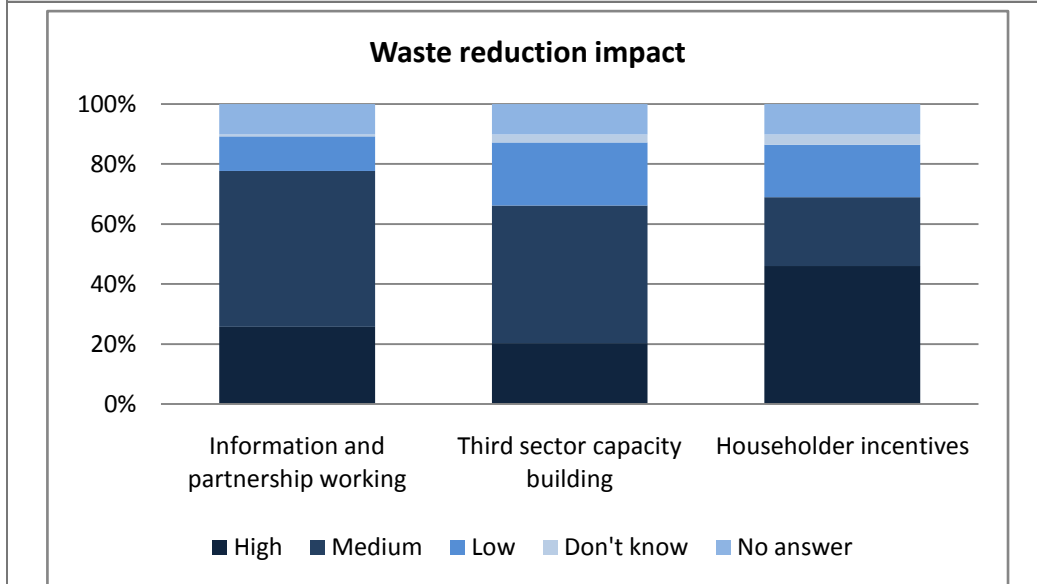
In both the workshops and the second survey, the picture of what stakeholders thought was most feasible was roughly the inverse of what they thought would have most impact. Communications and partnership working were thought to be the most feasible; householder incentives were thought to have the highest impact but few thought they were feasible (figures 8 and 9). Stakeholders were asked about carbon impacts too but they generally felt (in the workshops and the survey) that they did not have enough evidence or experience to have a view.

---

<sup>3</sup> The workshops were held shortly after the closing date for applications to Defra to be a pilot authority for financial incentives. A few comments were made in the workshops that incentives would only work if they were introduced universally across England.



**Figure 8** Stakeholder grading of **feasibility** of priority actions (second stakeholder survey n=148)



**Figure 9** Stakeholder grading of **impact** of priority actions (second stakeholder survey n=148)

## 1.5 Expert Panel Consultation

An Expert Panel was recruited early on in the project. The panel members are listed in table 3.

	Name	Organisation
Academia	<b>Prof Marie Harder</b>	University of Brighton
	<b>Rachel Slater</b>	Open University
Consumer Products	<b>Vicky Lofthouse</b>	University of Loughborough
Waste Industry	<b>Keith Riley</b>	Veolia and RRF Chair
NGO	<b>Matthew Thomson</b>	London CRN
	<b>Nicki Souter</b>	Scottish Waste Awareness Group
Local Authority	<b>Paul Vanston</b>	Kent County Council
	<b>Marten Gregory</b>	Dorset County Council
Communications	<b>Melanie Chilton</b>	Waste Resources Action Programme
International	<b>Pilar Chivas</b>	Barcelona Catalan Recycling Centre

Table 4 Expert panel

The panel helped the project team to identify stakeholder contacts and provide literature sources. Briefing materials were provided and panel members were asked to sign the Defra Confidentiality Agreement so that the team could share confidential work in progress with the experts.

In mid-January 2009, expert panel members attended a meeting in London. This included a number of steering group members. An introduction to Defra WREP, a project overview, and the initial insights emerging from the evidence review were presented. A series of topic areas were discussed with the panel which are outlined in table 5.

Topic areas	Research questions
External influences, challenges and trends	What are the most likely challenges and influences on household waste prevention?
Household waste prevention policies	What measures are likely to have the biggest impact on reducing growth in household waste?
Stakeholder groups	How best to engage consumers? Which stakeholder groups are likely to have the greatest influence? In what way?

Table 5 Expert panel research questions

In summary, the main issues identified from the discussion were:

### Metrics:

- Measuring embedded carbon impacts of waste prevention activities; and
- Understanding material flow impacts (e.g. displacement of waste from one waste stream to another).

### **Joined up thinking:**

- Link waste prevention to a more integrated approach (with other sustainable behaviours and practices, e.g. transport, water, energy); and
- Waste prevention needs a more holistic approach which considers waste avoidance, reduction, re-use and diversion from landfill.

### **Understanding waste prevention behaviour:**

- Catalyst behaviours / foot in the door / entry points / hooks – waste prevention needs to be specific and topic driven, e.g. junk mail, saving money;
- Need to understand each waste prevention behaviour individually as these are still grouped, e.g. Smart shopping; and
- Segmentation of public with respect to waste prevention behaviours

These views were taken into account in scoping and analysing the evidence base. The expert panel was invited to attend the draft report presentation on 26 March 2009 and to comment on the draft final report.

## **1.6 Expert interviews**

### **Scope**

To support the in-depth research during the evidence review stage, 19 interviews were carried out. Interviewees ranged from project managers within local authorities to academic researchers. Interviewees were selected through the following means:

- recommendations from the project steering group and members of the expert panel;
- authors of articles evaluated during the review stage (in order to clarify queries raised by the review)
- authors/project managers of work highlighted and referenced in reviewed articles.

Of those who were asked questions beyond clarification of points within documents reviewed by the research team, four main questions formed the basis of the interview. These were then supplemented with additional queries specific to the expertise and experience of the interviewee. The four main questions were designed to:

- gather further detail on the research or work the interviewee/interviewee's organisation has been doing on household waste prevention;
- understand which measures are successful in achieving waste prevention;
- gain insight into where household waste prevention is headed in terms of the measures that are going to be deployed in both near and longer term horizon;
- gather opinion on the key gaps in evidence on household waste prevention.

Findings are presented according to the questions presented above.

### **What research/work on waste prevention is being carried out?**

In terms of household waste prevention activities being carried out 'on the ground', the representatives of local authorities interviewed named several common themes, including home composting and the Love Food Hate Waste campaign being supported by WRAP. Interviewees also mentioned campaigning on junk mail, plastic bags and real nappies as common means of encouraging waste prevention among their

residents. Generalised events (for example holding a waste free week) and providing consumer advice and guidance were also mentioned.

Similar activities were reported as being carried out by waste campaign groups although activities also included initiatives related to packaging.

Interviewees indicated that some local authorities were in the process of developing more unusual initiatives such as a reward card through which consumers collect points from shopping in stores known to have low waste outputs.

### **Which measures work?**

Drawing on their experience of carrying out household waste prevention campaigns and activities, a number of local authorities noted that issues such as junk mail and carrier bags were popular among residents and had been used successfully as a 'hook' to then encourage further action on waste prevention. Interviewees from local authorities also noted the benefits of a sustained period of campaigning which includes a variety of different approaches operating in tandem, for example a doorstepping campaign alongside a series of events focusing on different aspects of waste prevention. They also noted the importance of targeting a combination of behaviours during the course of a campaign in order to attract a wide range of residents. A final point to note in terms of campaign design is the need to demonstrate benefits to householders beyond those of waste prevention, for example financial benefits. This point was echoed by an interviewee whose background is in research and consultancy.

In terms of service delivery, some local authority representatives noted that food waste collections had been influential in reducing waste arisings. This was attributed anecdotally to increasing the visibility of the amount of food waste produced by the household.

Also worth noting is the impact the 'credit crunch' is having on waste prevention, with local authorities reporting that they are already seeing evidence of reduced waste arisings.

Similar to the experiences of local authorities, campaign groups also noted that providing consistent messaging was key in delivering a waste prevention campaign. The need to provide information on the actions householders can take at a local level as well as more general, national advice was raised. Related to this point, one interviewee (from an academic background) noted the importance of partnerships across both supply and demand in order for a campaign to be effective.

One interviewee raised the point that whilst some measures are achieving reductions in waste, we are only dipping our toes in the water. In order to prevent waste at the scale that is needed, a wholly different approach to waste management is required.

### **What is on the horizon for waste prevention?**

In terms of activities planned for the future by local authorities, interviewees noted the scope for extending and continuing existing schemes such as home composting and the Love Food Hate Waste campaign. One interviewee also predicted that service delivery would become more important for local authorities in achieving waste prevention, for example the benefits that might be achieved through alternate weekly collections and differential bin sizes. On the whole, local authority representatives felt that their activities were limited to encouraging behavioural changes among their residents, lacking the power to tackle the issue at a higher level. Some, however, were looking to extend their behaviour change activities into new areas, for example influencing businesses to enable transfer of behaviours between the workplace and the home.

Interviewees with a background in waste campaigning felt that the current recession would be an important influence on waste prevention, the key point being to encourage the continuation of behaviours learnt during this time once the economic situation begins to improve.

Interviewees from an academic background highlighted a number of areas where gains could be made in reducing waste arisings. Addressing the issue of product durability (for example through targets for product lifespans and lifespan labelling) was raised, alongside using economic drivers to encourage preventative behaviour. Of the latter, the exemption from VAT of carrying out repairs was given as an example.

Highlighting a more systemic issue, one interviewee noted the need for waste management to be integrated with other departments within local authorities (for example within planning) in order to properly address residents' consumption patterns. Related to this is the need (established by an interviewee with a research and consultancy background) to bring in skills from beyond the waste sector in order to properly address household waste prevention, for example sociologists and psychologists.

### **What are the key gaps in evidence?**

On the whole, interviewees hoped that the current evidence review would go some way to highlighting the key gaps in evidence. Drawing on their own experience, a number of issues were raised which chime with findings from the rest of the stakeholder engagement exercise.

- Interviewees representing local authorities felt that more evidence on the impact of alternate weekly collections on waste prevention specifically (rather than the diversion to recycling) was required.
- In terms of delivering activities, more guidance and best practice advice on monitoring and evaluation of campaigns and initiatives is desired alongside more relevant (at a local level) data on the waste produced<sup>4</sup>.
- The definition of municipal waste was also felt to be key as it often defines activities local authorities are permitted to undertake.

Interviewees with an academic background felt that robust and proper research into the impact of the credit crunch on waste prevention is needed. Better information (or availability of information) on how long products last and are designed to last, in particular relating to household goods and clothing, is also seen as important.

One interviewee, however, noted that evidence was sufficient for waste prevention schemes to be fully rolled out, and that rather than more researching and evidence development, real action should be taken.

### **Basis of this report**

The material in this paper is derived from a large scale evidence review of household waste prevention conducted by Brook Lyndhurst, the Social Marketing Practice and the Resource Recovery Forum for Defra's Waste and Resources Evidence Programme.

---

<sup>4</sup> The new WRAP waste prevention toolkit will help to fill this gap.