

WR1204

Household Waste Prevention Evidence Review: L2 m7 – Stakeholder Engagement Feedback

A report for Defra's
Waste and Resources Evidence Programme

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L2 m7 Stakeholder engagement feedback

This paper reports on the stakeholder engagement that was undertaken to support the desk based research in the evidence review. Feedback is provided under the following headings:

- Aims and scope of the stakeholder engagement
- Evidence gaps
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Experience of waste prevention – how to work with consumers
- Perceptions of barriers and motivating actions
- What could stakeholders do to support household waste prevention?

Related modules, particularly the sub-sections within them that cover barriers or evidence gaps, are:

L1 m1 Executive Report	L2 m1 Technical report, section 5 L2 m8 Evidence gaps	L3 m7/1 (D) Stakeholder views on waste prevention
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(D) denotes a briefing paper providing more background detail

1.1 Aims and scope of the stakeholder engagement

The review adopted Defra's definition of 'evidence'¹ :

"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."*

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;

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

- 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; 106 responded to the Wave 1 survey; 148 responded 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 (see L3 m7/1 (D) for details). 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.

The following is a summary of the main findings from the stakeholder engagement. Further detail, including graphs of the survey results and a summary of expert views can be found in L3 m7/1 (D).

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 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. Across the whole engagement exercise, 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.

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.

1.3 Monitoring and 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.

No clear view emerged, with almost as many respondents saying surveys *do not* work as saying they work; and the same picture emerged 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.

1.4 Experience of waste prevention – how to work 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.

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.

This emerging evidence was further tested with 19 expert interviewees. They largely endorsed the prioritisation above, and 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.

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 enforce prevention, and education campaigns. A minority of respondents wanted to delete shopping actions from the list.

1.5 Perceptions of barriers and motivating actions

To complement evidence emerging from the literature review, 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)
- 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 support²

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

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 of priorities. 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 1 and 2). 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.

² 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.

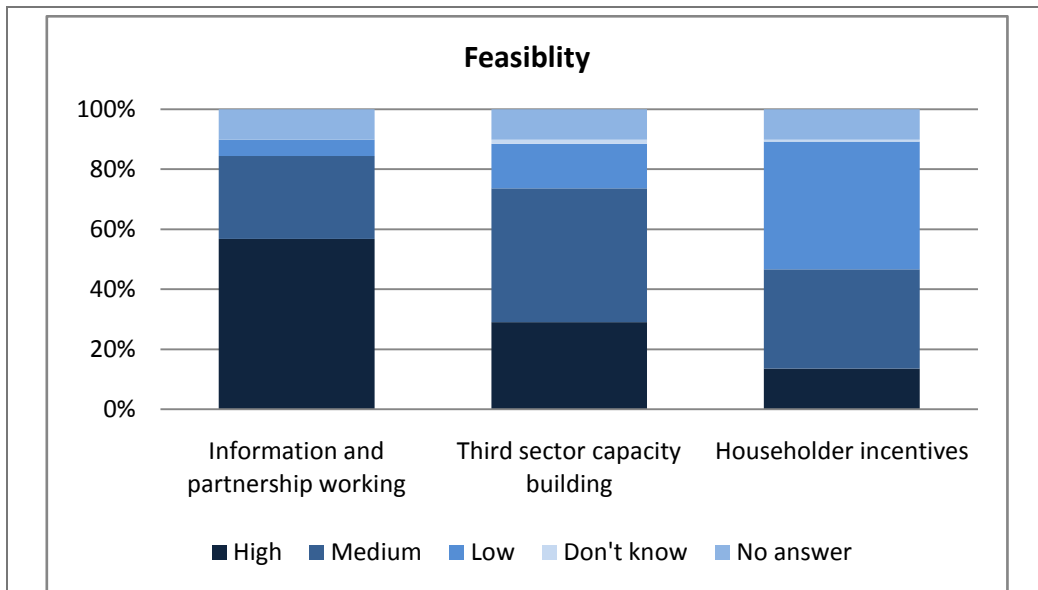


Figure 1 Stakeholder grading of **feasibility** of priority actions (second stakeholder survey n=148)

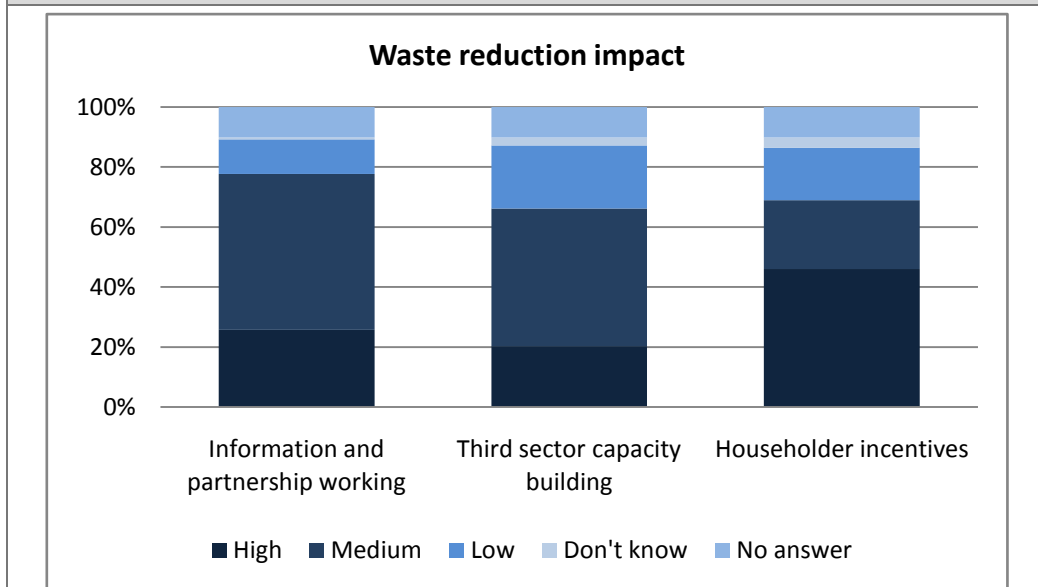


Figure 2 Stakeholder grading of **impact** of priority actions (second stakeholder survey n=148)

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.