

SITA UK HELPS 'SORT IT!*' IN SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE

- » South Gloucestershire Council is a unitary authority covering an urban and rural area including large parts of the north of Bristol City and several market towns.

THE CHALLENGE

South Gloucestershire has a target to recycle over 50 per cent of household waste. The South Gloucestershire contract includes waste and recycling collection, operation of civic amenity sites and transfer stations, plus all recycling, treatment and disposal of waste – currently over 145,000 tonnes per annum.

THE SOLUTION

SITA UK and South Gloucestershire Council entered into a 25-year PFI contract in 2000, which has already seen recycling rates rise from six per cent in 2000 to over 40 per cent in 2008.

In addition to the recycling and waste management services, SITA South Gloucestershire delivers an integrated communications and education strategy to make residents aware of the area's waste strategy, as well as waste minimisation messaging designed to change people's behaviour.

SITA South Gloucestershire has a developed, well-resourced and long-term strategy, which links all communications with educational activity and delivers simple and effective messages through the SORT IT!* brand which covers all activity in the area.

Through SORT IT!*, SITA UK is able to deliver simple messaging about how to use the services delivered hand-in-hand with more complex messages about waste minimisation. Regular newsletters to every household cover all aspects of waste and recycling and focus on key themes such as reducing food waste and maximising civic amenity site recycling, while messages through bin hangers reinforce key service information. This has enabled significant increases in recycling rates, while using an alternating weekly collection method to ensure resources are used efficiently.

An active programme of road shows and face-to-face contact with householders is essential to breaking down barriers to recycling. A recent ambitious project aims to deliver 'doorstepping' to 100,000 households in the area in order to increase recycling participation to 90 per cent across the entire region. The project is also an opportunity to promote waste reduction to existing committed recyclers.

SITA UK employs two waste minimisation advisors in the South Gloucestershire area, who spend most of their time out and about meeting the public, solving problems and promoting waste minimisation. A programme of over 30 road shows each year gives other opportunities to see people face-to-face and to tailor communications and waste minimisation messages to individual needs.

Public participation in recycling services is essential to success and the waste minimisation team engage in a wide range of activities researching views and gaining feedback to influence service development. A detailed annual satisfaction survey is sent to 1,000 households and covers all service areas.




RESULTS AND BENEFITS

The communication of simple and clear messages through the SORT IT!* brand has enabled SITA South Gloucestershire to effectively roll out an alternate weekly collection method to ensure that resources are used efficiently.

In addition, the education aspect of the campaign has helped recycling rates increase significantly to 43 per cent, with aims to increase this to the Council's target of 50 per cent in the near future.

The surveys carried out by the waste minimisation team reveal overall customer satisfaction to be at 90 per cent and rising, and have also helped the team to target specific areas of improvement, such as longer opening hours at civic amenity sites and a wider range of materials collected at the kerbside.



“Working in partnership within a PFI contract brings its own benefit to the client, such as risk aversion and known costs, but also brings with it its own challenges. SITA UK and South Gloucestershire have worked hard at developing trust and a common vision. We are now one of the top performing Unitary Authorities with a common aspiration to become the best.”

– Paul Trew, Strategy and Development Manager, South Gloucestershire Council

