

Collections Blueprint: Communal recycling



Communal recycling facilities for flats in Newport

Newport City Council has been collecting dry recyclables using a single-pass, kerbside-sorting system since it started recycling collections. Over the last 25 years, social enterprise Wastesavers has worked in partnership with the council to deliver this service.

Initially, the recycling service was offered just to single-family homes, but for the past 10 years, an option focused around communal recycling facilities has been rolled out to high-rise flats as well as houses of multiple occupancy (HMOs). The HMOs typically have between 6 and 18 flats located within them. Today, there are 445 of these communal recycling facilities in the city, covering approximately 7,000 households.

In order to achieve its recycling targets, Newport City Council requires residents of both high-rise and low-rise housing to separate their recycling into appropriate containers for weekly collection by bespoke

vehicles, including the separate collection of kitchen waste.

Communal recycling facilities

Residents in flats in Newport are provided with five different wheeled bins in the communal recycling facilities for paper, plastic, glass, cans and cardboard.

Given the limited amount of space in flats, the council has provided households with 'easy to store' hessian sacks for bringing recyclables to the communal bins.

Glass is collected in a 240-litre bin. The size of bin for the other recyclables is determined by the number of flats served, with 360-litre bins used in some cases for other materials.

In larger blocks of flats, 660-litre bins are used to deal with the increased volume of waste. All bins are clearly labelled both on the outward-facing side and on top. This means they are visible at a distance and at the point

of use, which plays a key role in reducing contamination. Where practical or necessary, bins are secured at the site with the use of locking posts.

Capturing food waste

Some of the communal recycling facilities also have an additional external 240-litre brown food waste bin. To enable residents in flats with the use of this service to participate, the council provides a 5-litre food caddy and free caddy liners.

Specialist bins are used for food waste, which are sturdier and have a curved base, making the inside of the containers easier to clean because food does not get stuck in corners.

To support this comprehensive recycling service, the council provides specific promotional leaflets to highlight the service specification. Due to the varied demographic of flats in Newport, particularly with regard to ethnicity, these leaflets have been produced in a range of languages, including Polish, Arabic, Bengali, Urdu and Kurdish.

This has been augmented with informal recruitment of resident advocates for many of the communal facilities.

Targeting material quality

For the weekly communal recycling collections, specialist collection vehicles are used. These have been designed to pick up the wheeled bins, tipping the recyclables into specific compartments.

The vehicles combine collection from residential flats with collection from the council's commercial customers, as each type uses similar containers for recycling.

Unlike single-family households, there is less scope for providing direct feedback to those responsible for contamination in communal recycling facilities. To address this, the council has ensured containers have clear signs on both the lids and sides. In addition, some of the bins, such as those that take paper and cans have been fitted with an aperture to limit the potential for putting the

wrong material in the container; this is allied with a gravity lock system, such that the bin lids will only open when the bins are tipped onto the recycling collection vehicle.

Benefits of recycling

Newport has always focused on ensuring that collected materials can achieve a good sale price. Through the measures described here, Wastesavers has been able to minimise contamination and, as a result, obtain high-quality recyclate. This helps to secure a good, stable price despite fluctuations in the market for recyclables.

Selling waste resources for reprocessing means the council avoids disposal fees, which reduces the economic and environmental impact of the waste management process, and also generates an income from the waste.

Sorting by the householder also negates the need for expensive sorting facilities and associated gate fees.

Income obtained by selling high-quality materials has helped provide financial support for Wastesavers to encourage local children to recycle through its education outreach programme. In 2014/15, the organisation's education room received 930 students from 25 schools in Newport.

