

## metroSTOR Webinar Transcript

### Increasing Recycling from Flats - 22.02.23

#### Guest Speaker: Liz Horsfield

##### *Nigel Deacon*

As you know, metroSTOR have been upgrading thousands of bin stores over the last decade, helping landlords create safer, cleaner neighbourhoods, and we take every available opportunity to share good practice and the things that we think the sector should know about, or wants to know about, indeed. We're looking particularly at recycling from flats, as you know, it's a big issue, that's why you've all joined, and we wanted to share some of the great work that's been going on recently at ReLondon. So, as you all know already, it's looking at the barriers to recycling, especially for people living in flats, and just to put that in perspective, that's 20% of all UK households, and in some inner-city boroughs that can be up to 80%, and with an average recycling rate of only 10% that obviously has a big impact when we look at our national recycling target of 65% by 2035.

So, Liz Horsfield has kindly agreed to join us today from ReLondon to share the learnings that they gained with the latest Flats Recycling Projects, along with some great takeaway resources that you can use on your own blocks going forward. Liz works on the Local Authority Support team working with London Boroughs to reduce waste and increase the quantity and quality of recycling. I'm going to then spend a few minutes with some additional tips from metroSTOR on bin store, location and design, before opening up the session to the floor for the Q&A. So, welcome Liz.

##### *Liz Horsfield*

Thanks, Nigel, and good morning, everyone. Great to see so many people on the call this morning. Thank you very much, Nigel, for inviting me to talk to everyone this morning about the work that we've done at ReLondon on the issue of increasing recycling from purpose built flats. The result of that work is our Flats Recycling package, which was published last year and which is a set of operational and communication guidelines designed to bring the look and feel of recycling services to flats up to common standards, and to provide residents with clear and reliable information about their services.

So, I'm going to explain a bit, first of all, about who ReLondon are and what we do, and then move on to our work on recycling from purpose-built flats, what we've done, the projects that we've carried out, what we found out and how we develop that recycling package, and then I will talk through the package itself in more detail. So who ReLondon are; we are a statutory body and we are a partnership of the Mayor of London and London Boroughs. We work across London to reduce waste, increase recycling and speed up the transition of London to being a low carbon, zero waste economy. We do this in three main ways, by helping local authorities with their plans and policies to support recycling improvements and move to a circular economy, we support London's small and medium sized businesses to adopt or scale circular business models, and we do that through advice, grants and connections, and we also work directly with Londoners to empower and educate them, to revolutionize their relationship with stuff through our campaigns such as London Recycles and Love not Landfill.

So one of the areas of what we've been focused on for a few years is improving recycling from purpose built flats, and the reasons for that, I'm sure, are not news to anyone on the call but worth recapping. So, the drivers for improving service provision at flats, there are several: so under the government's proposed consistency reforms, all households we're expecting will have to receive a recycling collection of key dry recyclable materials and food waste. And that would include all flats and flats above shops; and also under the EPR- Extended Producer Responsibility Scheme, authorities will be receiving payments for packaging collected and some of these payments could be withheld if systems are found

to be inefficient or ineffective, so making sure that recycling from flats is effective is going to be really important. Nigel's already mentioned recycling targets, obviously there are also strategic local targets for London. We have a 65% recycling by 2030 target and 50% household recycling by 2030. And also that the issue with flats is just one that's going to continue to grow; in London, it's projected that almost half of the population will live in purpose built flats by 2030, so the need for really effective services is just going to increase.

So those are the drivers for focusing on recycling from flats. We've already seen from Nigel's opening slide, that recycling rates tend to be much lower than from curbside collections, as low as 10%. The contamination in recycling bins from council collections also tends to be much higher. The reasons for this vary, but they can include historically poor services to flats, poor design or condition of bin stores and a lack of accountability over an individual's waste due to the communal nature of collections. But it can also be things like population, transience, language barriers and just people having other priorities. We can't assume that people living in flats don't want to recycle because we know from other research that the vast majority of UK adults see recycling as a normal behaviour, we have to assume that barriers to effective recycling are having a significant impact on that behaviour.

We've carried out two research projects over the last four or five years, looking at services from a resident's perspective to try and design solutions that work for people, as well as for organizations, to try and address these challenges. I'm going to talk briefly about the two projects that we've carried out and how we've used that information. So our first project in 2018 to 2020, the Flats Recycling 1.0, also known as the Peabody Project. That was a really large-scale, two year project, which was delivered in partnership with Peabody and six inner London Boroughs, and the aim was really to understand the barriers for recycling for people who live in purpose-built flats and trialling interventions to try and address those.

And so we started off by undertaking detailed inventories of 132 estates across London to really understand what was going on in terms of service provision and conditions of facilities. And that revealed, perhaps not surprisingly, that there was a general lack of consistency in service provision. We also carried out extensive ethnographic research with residents to really understand people's perspectives and the barriers that they were experiencing. That research with residents was particularly interesting, we framed it as being household chores in general so that people didn't know they were talking about recycling to start with, so that they weren't telling us what they thought we wanted to hear. And it showed that the barriers to effective recycling were many and could be complex, and it showed that good intentions to recycle are not enough to help people do so, and that effective recycling is only achieved when people want to recycle, know how to do it, and find it easy to do so.

So, from that research, we developed a set of interventions, the first Flats Recycling Package, which was designed to bring the look and feel of services up to a common standard with new bins with reverse lids and common signage, making sure that people had the right information. We trialled that package on 12 estates in London, in six London Boroughs, and we did lots of monitoring around that, waste composition analysis, and again, resident feedback. We found that on average, by putting those common standards in place across the 12 estates, dry recycling increased on average by 26% and contamination decreased by 24%. So around a quarter increase and decrease and so these positive results led us to publish the Flats Recycling Package, the first iteration of it.

But then in 2021, we wanted to go further and build on the information that we've learned from that project. So, thanks to funding from Ecosurety Discovery Fund, we were able to deliver a second project in partnership with London Borough of Lambeth and again with Peabody, and that was designed to build on the findings from the first project, but also to add to it by introducing food waste and by trialling collections of textiles and electrical items. We introduced the new services which were all based on the Flats Recycling Package principles to four sites in Lambeth, which were between 80 and 200 households per estate. We assessed and made improvements to the dry recycling services, we introduced more bins to increase capacity, introduced food waste and closed residual waste chutes; a new intervention for this project was putting all bins together and co-locating services.

We trialled pop-up collections for textiles and small electricals and we put in an electricals bin on each estate, so we were trying to increase the options for people to recycle as much as possible. We used a disruptive communications campaign to introduce the changes, which were based around a fresh start with in-home leaflets, new signage and eye-catching communications, and there will be more examples of all of this a bit later on. We brought in in-home storage for food waste and also for dry recycling with food caddies and liners and reusable dry recycling bags. And as before, we carried out extensive monitoring before, during and after so that we could understand what the changes were. We collected all of the waste from all of the flats for a week before the project, during and after, so we could get a full waste comp analysis.

There are a few before and after photos here, which I think is always quite nice to have a look at what we're talking about. So, the before photos at the top, so there was a dry recycling service in place but there were issues with lack of signage and overflows, broken lids that you can see there, and there were still rubbish chutes on some of the estates and problems with dumping and particularly smelly bin stores on one of the estates. So, these are the kind of situations that we're probably quite familiar with, the kind of situations that can lead to loss of confidence in the recycling system and discourage people from using them correctly. The photos at the bottom are the after photos. So, we've done a deep clean of all the bin areas, new recycling bins with additional capacity and reverse-lid bins and clear signage. We've got pedal-operated housing units for the food waste and all of the bins located together, so you can see the facilities look cared for and inspire a bit of confidence, it's very clear which bins are which.

We carried out all waste composition analysis, and what we found was that the average increase in recycling rate across the four sites after nine months was 152%. So six percentage point increase and a lot of that was from introducing the food waste, but we did also see a significant increase the capture rate for food waste. The amount of food waste that people had overall, which was making its way into their food recycling bins, was 35% on average, which varied, the highest was actually 43%, which is comparable with some kerbside rounds, and the capture rate of dry materials also increased on average by 44%.

We gathered feedback from residents and this varied, but we did find that eye-catching communications were effective in drawing attention to existing services as well as highlighting new ones, and we did receive some interesting feedback from some people that they felt that this sort of visible investment from the council was noticed and they wanted to reciprocate, including with the existing services as well, which was quite interesting, but it wasn't without its challenges. We still had fairly high levels of contamination, it did reduce, but higher than you would be seeing in kerbside, and what we did find was that although residents who were already engaged with the idea of recycling in some way were motivated to do more, the people who were not engaged in the system at all previously were less likely to take part still, so we didn't catch everybody, but we did see noticeable improvements.

And so we took all of the learnings from that and we've updated our Flats Recycling Package and I will talk through each of those in a bit more detail, but just to let me know what that looks like, it's a set of guidelines, six operational and four communications guidelines that when implemented together, have been shown to increase the quantity and the quality of recycling from purpose-built flats. The full reports from both of the projects that I've just talked about are available online, but we also have a Toolkit, which is what I'm going to talk through now really, which is a practical how-to guide for rolling out the Flats Recycling Package and putting the guidelines into practice. I'm going to talk through at relatively high level, these operational guidelines and the principles that underpin it.

So those three guiding principles that all of the guidelines are based on from our projects and from the insight that we've gained from residents are knowledge, ease and motivation. So, in order for people to recycle well, these three things all have to be in place. Effective recycling happens when people have the correct knowledge, so they need to know what can go in the bin, they need to know which bin it goes in and where that bin is, which sounds simple, but I'm sure most people will know that it's not always so. We know, for example, that most people go with their hunches when it comes to deciding what can be recycled. They don't necessarily check that information. It might be quite out of date

and things are changing; information has to be really visible to people to make them change their behaviour.

And the second condition is ease, so if people know what they should do, they also have to find it easy. It needs to be just as easy, if not easier, than the alternative. So, if people have to walk much further to recycle, or go out of their way, they're less likely to do it. If they have to clamber over an old mattress at the opening of the bin store to get to the bin, they may well not do that. Services that fit with people's existing routines will feel easier to use as well.

And the third condition is motivation, people have to want to do it. And that could be motivation because they feel that it's a positive thing to do, or it could be more subtle, that it brings about benefit for them such as having a cleaner place to live or a less smelly bin or bin store, which provides them with a motivation to recycle well. But also, motivation is around having confidence in the system. If they're going to put something in the recycling bin, being confident that it is going to be recycled. So, these guiding principles underpin all the elements of the flats recycling package, and I'm going to talk through them in a bit more detail, starting with the operational ones.

So the operational changes to improving recycling, again, we've got a few key principles around those, which are designing services to resolve residents problems, not service providers problems. Thinking about residents journey from what they decide to do within their homes, how they separate their waste, how they carry it to the bins where they dispose of it. Thinking about ease, knowledge and motivation when looking at locations for services and making sure those services are on residents journeys. Think about in-home infrastructure to make waste sorting easier for residents because recycling starts in the home and if it's not happening inside the home, it's not as likely to happen at the bins. And if existing bin areas can't be improved, then think about locating bins possibly somewhere else to break through the recycling ceiling that we've seen where bin areas are particularly grotty.

So, with those key principles in mind, we have six operational guidelines for successfully increasing recycling from flats. The first one, fairly straightforward, is collection of the six main dry, recyclable materials and food. That has an asterisk on it because at the time this was written, these were their requirements. We know that consistency may be changing some of these requirements in future, so these may change in time as well. But at the moment, certainly that the dry recycling service should collect paper, card, glass, food and drink cans, plastic bottles and mixed plastics. If you are making any changes, it's worth clarifying with your MRF what can be accepted to make sure that your communications are correct and also for the purpose of crews, effective training to make sure they know what is and isn't contamination. Also, if you are assessing estates and making plans, we know that food waste is going to be a requirement soon so it's worth including that in your planning and looking for space to see where you can locate those at the time.

The second approach is the co-location of rubbish, dry recycling and food bins. And this is around the ease, we need to make recycling just as easy for residents as getting rid of their rubbish. Closing chutes and situating rubbish and recycling bins next to one another so that each choice is equally easy, and people don't have to make different journeys to put recycling, if they have to walk past a rubbish bin to recycle, or if they have to walk past the recycling bins to put rubbish in. Making sure that that everything is in the same place, each choice is equally easy.

And then our third element is appropriate bins, including caddies and liners. So, for the dry recycling, we recommend reverse lock-lid bins to help reduce contamination so that people can't lift the lids up and with apertures that should be big enough to accept flattened boxes but not big bags of waste. So black bags full of waste, more difficult to put in there. It's important to note, I think, that looking at appropriate bins for dry recycling and rubbish doesn't always mean new ones. So, lids can be retrofitted to existing bins and bins can be refurbished, so part of your assessment process could be determining the condition of existing bins to save resources.

But we do also recommend looking at food waste housing units for food waste. The project that we ran in 2021 was obviously during COVID, and people had additional hygiene concerns around touching communal bins. So, we introduced pedal bin housing units for food waste so that people didn't actually have to touch the bins, they could use

the pedals to put that in. And again, housing units with apertures that allow food waste to go in, but not bags of rubbish to reduce the risk of contamination. So those are the external bins, but also internally, thinking about the journey for the resident. Look at what you can provide in the home. So that could be a reusable bag to help them store dry recycling. We've got a photo of that, the ones that we gave out there and providing indoor caddies and liners to people to encourage them to recycle their food waste.

And it's also useful to think when you're implementing these about what your policy is going to be for providing them further down the line. So, after the initial rollout, will you be able to provide liners either on demand or at libraries, signposting people where they can get future liners from? Also thinking about how you can replace caddies and reusable bags in future for new residents, for example, or after a certain amount of time. So with any new bins, it's always good to check with your operations team or contractor, to make sure that what you're proposing is compatible with their vehicle and operations as well.

Then moving on to number four, adequate collections. We do give a recommendation in our Flats Recycling Package Toolkit of a minimum 60 litres per week for dry recycling per household and a minimum of 10 litres for food waste. But this should be assessed on a case-by-case basis, as you might need to increase that if you've got estates with larger properties, for example, or where you know that it's an estate where people already recycle really well, you might need more capacity and that might be extra bins or it might be extra collections, depending on the space that you have. But making sure that there's enough capacity for people to be able to recycle, so that bins are not overflowing.

And then number five in the operations guidelines is clean and well-maintained bins and bin areas. The maintenance is really important in ensuring long-term success of the package and to make sure that the changes that you're making stay in place and people stay motivated to recycle. A clean and well-maintained bin area will contribute towards keeping people on board and make sure that the bins and stores are used as intended, and it should also make the operations easier if waste is managed well and it's not overflowing. So that could mean, for example, giving cleaners or caretakers spare keys so they can open the bin lids to put any large boxes in, because we know that's something that happens quite a lot, cardboard gets left by the bins, and that will help keep places looking clean, but also hazard-free. Over time, bin lids and locks might walk or get damaged, so it's important at the outset to make sure everyone is aware of who's responsible for the maintenance and replacement of bins and for the contractors to make sure that the crews are trained to ensure that new bins are put back correctly so the waste isn't left on the floor and that they have spare keys as well, just to make sure that everything runs smoothly.

And finally, on the operational side is monitoring. Consider how and when you will implement regular site visits to make sure that the package is working. A regular monitoring program can help solve issues before they become a problem. As part of our projects, we undertook monthly site visits to inspect bin areas to spot any issues of cleanliness or damaged bins, and to make sure that bins were being put back correctly. We've got a photo there of a recycling bin facing the wall so that no one can put anything in it. If these things are rectified quickly then they don't cause major issues. So, it's really important to have monitoring in place, but this can also be done by speaking to cleaners and resident's representatives to make sure the issues are flagged, or if there's any issues with fly tipping, for example.

So those are the key operational points, and I'm going to move on to the communications section. So again, we have some key principles around communications, and behavioural science tells us that changing ingrained habits, like how we get rid of waste at home, is challenging, and it's unlikely that information alone will change habitual behaviours. People might not take much notice of their everyday surroundings, and they might not be aware of existing infrastructure and information leaflets. But alongside positive changes to infrastructure, communications does play a really important role in increasing recycling and capture rates, so we need to disrupt existing journeys and make people aware of their services there.

Clear communication can increase knowledge and motivation, and having positive problem-solving messages can avoid recycling being portrayed as another obligation. So, let people know what problems the service is solving by showing people the benefits of using it for them. Starting with a big bang is great to disrupt it, but that interest also needs to be maintained, so communications should be strong and colourful and planned at intervals to maintain interest. And keeping it fresh and up to date is also important, so peeling stickers and faded signs don't speak of pride in a service from a council's point of view, so it's important to plan that in as well to make sure that messages are refreshed and renewed.

So there are four different communication elements in the flats recycling package. The first one is clear and visible signage on rubbish recycling bins and bin storage areas, and this is really about taking every opportunity to communicate, so clear communication to show what goes in each bin, giving people that knowledge as highlighted earlier, to be able to recycle correctly. So that means signage on the bins, signage above the bins, stickers on the bins, stickers on the apertures, giving people multiple opportunities to see messages. If there are other opportunities to communicate that you can take advantage of, like newsletters, managing agents' information, tenant packs, all of that is also great, really taking every opportunity to get the message to people because we know that people don't necessarily remember things that that they've been sent previously. They don't necessarily take notice of their surroundings on a day-to-day basis. Keeping the signage in good condition is really important, so the condition of signage as stickers should be included in your monitoring, bin stickers should be printed with UV-resistant ink and replaced regularly to stop fading. We've got some examples on this slide of some of the communications that we developed for our projects as well, so you can see that kind of eye-catching.

And then the disruptive element that I mentioned, the service relaunch and disruptive communications, Re-launching your service can be effective to draw attention to existing facilities. We found at the end of our second project that there were residents who were not aware of their existing facilities, who had been engaged and started recycling since. These were different to the usual council branding so that people noticed them a bit more. The disruptive nature was, a few different things that we tried, we had a floor vinyls, there's a photo of one of those on the slide there, on the top left, big stickers on the floor to direct people to the facilities. We put up posters and we delivered leaflets, we did door knocking, and when we delivered the caddies and the food waste liners for people, we did a door knocking campaign at the same time so that we had the opportunity to talk to people. One sort of learning that we found from doing this as well, because we were running a trial, we launched all the services together initially, so the dry recycling and the food waste at the same time, but we would recommend staggering messages if possible, so that you're not communicating too many things at once.

So, a little bit more about communicating on the food services, we did try a slightly different method for the disruptive communication for food waste. So hopefully you can see on this slide that we delivered a postcard to people with a tea bag attached to it with their caddy, so that when they opened it they had the post card with their tea bag, which they can make themselves a cup of tea and then recycle the tea bag in that caddy. So, a little behavioural prompt to just kind of make people notice and encourage people to do that, because you're asking people to take part in a more involved process so you need to communicate very clearly what you're asking people to do and why it's food waste. And you might need to do this several times in different ways to give people notice that the service is coming in advance, and then give more detailed instructions.

We took the opportunity to engage with residents face to face when delivering caddies, so having the chance to have a conversation with people to explain the service, answer any questions and encourage people, and that can be really valuable in increasing engagement. Our research showed that people might not be aware of the benefits of food recycling, they may not know why they're being asked to do that. So that's a good thing to communicate to people, to provide motivation, to use the service and again, we took lots of opportunities to inform people with a postcard or a sticker on the food caddy and signage above and on the food waste bins and the apertures to make sure that it was very

clear where they should be taking their waste, where it had to go.

So, the ninth element of the package is ongoing communications. As I mentioned on the Guiding Principles slides, the communications shouldn't be seen as a one-off. To keep residents motivated and to address high resident turnover, it's good to plan a calendar of communication events, which might not be actual events, it could include those, but as a minimum we'd recommend a service leaflet delivered annually and you can look at extra communications opportunities like replacing posters, providing feedback and thank-you's by posters, and just keeping that motivation for people. You could also think about increasing engagement by making communication very locally focused, so including the name of the estate or blocks where people live to link their actions to the services, very specifically.

And then finally, the last element of the package is informing residents what they should do with bulky waste. So bulky waste is often an issue on estates, as I'm sure lots of people will know, dumping around bin stores can be an issue. Again, this element is around communicating what people can do to solve problems for them, so giving them the knowledge what to do. It could include signage in bin areas to inform people or information in service leaflet about what people should be doing with their bulky waste and also signposting them to free services like Freegle or local services where they can dispose of that bulky waste to try and discourage people from dumping it next to the bins.

So, in summary, and that was a very quick run through, but that's the Flats Recycling Package. The guidelines are based on the evidence from our projects and they were obviously in London, but we think they would be relevant for flats anywhere. There are a couple of key points that we would like to take away, before I go to that we do have all of the assets that we used on the communications for our projects are available on our website to download and amend so you can put your own logos on there. I will put a link to those in the slides as well, which I'm sure you will be able to see later. But just to save time and promote consistent communications, we do have those available for everyone to use.

So, a couple of key takeaways for the flats recycling package, as I said, they are based on the evidence in our projects. And really, I think, remember the knowledge ease and motivation- all three of them need to be in place to make recycling effective. And remember the importance of partnership working as well, so housing providers, building managers and waste collectors can work together to put these in place and maintain the standards. But challenges will remain, you know it's not going to solve all problems and improving flats recycling is very much a journey, not a destination. So, the improvements need to be monitored and maintained to stay effective, the regular cleaning, the checking of bins and the conditions is really important.

I'd like to finish just with a little bit of feedback from one of our residents on one of the projects we've got a quote from there, which sums up the flats recycling package and what it aims to do. The changes have been really helpful and everything used to go into the general bin, but the changes have motivated me to recycle more, which is obviously what we were aiming for, that is a quote from one of the residents. I think that sort of sums up why the package worked. We do have a range of resources on ReLondon's website that are free to all to use. We have the reports from both of the projects that I've mentioned and the toolkit which I've just run through. The toolkit has lots of other documents attached to it, like site assessment plan templates and implementation templates that you can use as well.

We also have planning advice for new flatted properties on our website to work with developers, we have a download of all the communications assets, as I mentioned, and we also have a cost benefit analysis tool which you can use to plan the costs and the relative benefits of implementing the changes recommended in the flats recycling package as well. So hopefully the links on the slides will, feel free to go and have a look at any of those. If you do have any queries about any of our work or about what ReLondon does, we would be very happy to speak to anyone and our contact details are on that. So, I will hand back to Nigel.



### *Nigel Deacon*

That's fantastic, Liz. There's so much packed into those slides and your presentation and I really appreciate that. There's a couple of bits I wanted to sort of underline really, the ease of use is just so important. Drilling into the full reports, which everybody will be very able to do from your website, I notice that recycling rates across those four estates varied a lot, I think between 17 and 30%, and often in my experience it's because there's some underlying issues around accessibility or capacity that require a deeper investment and a deeper look at what the problems actually are.

You've touched on it already, but the bin store that's tucked away out of sight, its enclosed, people don't feel safe going there, it's not clean, you know, things like that. And then, a bit like this picture here, areas that are exposed to fly-tipping, unauthorized use by people from surrounding properties or nearby shops and that sort of thing, which very quickly lead to overflowing bins and missed collections. How exactly do we get to grips with some of those more challenging issues? I had a couple of thoughts, one of those was that, as you've mentioned, making it accessible. And I think sometimes you've got to go beyond what you might expect and make it super-accessible, even if it's really front-of-house and quite prominent and might need some screening to make it look nice.

But convenience is just so important, and like you said, making it as easy for them to recycle, if not more so, than disposing of refuse. One of the things we find is taking that concept around the food waste housings a bit further and reducing the need for the residents to touch the bins, like this image here, putting even the larger bins inside housings with the bin lid open, and then using apertures of different sizes to actually control and reduce the contamination of recycling. And you've touched on the bulk waste strategy. I think it's really important and something which we'll probably come back to again in the future, then excluding unauthorized use, so if there's shops nearby or houses that shouldn't be used in the communal service, you might have to look at controlling that in some way.

And then the other was, again going back to the motivation, and it's probably fair to say this is a bit of a holy grail for the waste and recycling teams, something we'd love to do, but quite challenging to implement in a big way. Pay as you throw or save as you throw, will people actually benefit financially by recycling? The infrastructure needed to do that, I think, is pretty extensive and it doesn't seem to be appearing on the near horizon in the UK as far as I can see.

But I did want to just share one initiative which I think could be a very simple way of doing this, and this is the Litterlotto App, lots of people will be aware of this for reducing littering on streets, but they're about to launch an extension of this for recycling, meaning that people recycling, taking a picture of their recycling being put into the correct bin actually enters them into the lottery and there's spot prizes and some reasonable jackpots. And as a local authority or landlord, you can actually contribute to that, so that within a geofenced area you can actually increase the benefits available for residents in your neighbourhood.

And then the third thing, which is to flag our next event, Behaviour Change for Communal Recycling. Livvy Drake is going to be joining us from Sustainable Sidekicks, she's actually on the call today, it's on 20th April, look out for our communications on this for a focused session on behaviour change, delving into the barriers and motivations to recycling and contamination behaviours, and some actions that you can take away to apply in your own neighbourhoods.

So with that, I think we're looking at the question and answer session and we've got some great questions there coming through. I think some have been answered as we've been going through, but Liz we had a couple about chutes; you mentioned that chutes were being closed. Have you got any other information on that in terms of the business case or how a resistance from residents was overcome please?



### *Liz Horsfield*

Yes, there was on the second project I mentioned, there were a couple of estates where there were chutes and I did see in the chat a question about whether they were high or low rise, I think five storeys was the highest there, and in terms of the business case that was all agreed with the estates team that we were working with for that local authority. There was some resistance from residents, but the local authority did decide to go ahead and the chutes were closed on both of those estates. We didn't get much pushback once it was done, so there weren't really in those instances many complaints. There's probably more to say on that from another colleague that I work with who's done more of that in a previous Borough and I think dealing with resistance from residents, I think there's sort of an argument that if things can be transported into a flat, then they can be transported out again in the same way. So, if shopping, food, packaging can get into the into the property, it can be taken down to the bins in the same way. So, the requirement for the chute is not necessarily there, I think some of the resistance from residents is that the bins are not accessible to them because they can't use the chutes, but actually if they are getting the packaging to their flat, they can get it to the bins as well. There was one instance on one of the estates where we did reopen one of the chutes, which is actually not in the high-rise property, it was a ground level chute on the back of a bin store and that was because one of the residents had wheelchair access to the chute on that site, so that was a particular case. I think, you know, there's always got to be some case by case and dealings with those. But on the whole, we would still recommend that that chutes are closed, because we know that the co-location just means that it's equally easy for people to recycle and dispose of their rubbish and if the chutes open and you're asking people to make that extra journey, which they don't have to do with the rubbish.

### *Nigel Deacon*

Yeah, that's really helpful thank you, there's a few questions about chutes, we might come back to that on a future event. There's a question from Lizzie on the lack of space for bins where you've got an older infrastructure, maybe only set up for refuse or more frequent collections, can you give us some advice on that.

### *Liz Horsfield*

I think again it's case by case in terms of what facilities you've got and what space you've got. One of the estates that we worked on for the second project had enclosed bin stores and in one of them there just wasn't space to put enough recycling capacity in the big reverse-lid bins, and we actually ended up modifying some smaller 240 litre bins so that we could fit enough capacity in there. The other thing that we ended up doing in that case, we didn't fully co-locate all the bins, we had the food waste housing units placed outside the bin stores, close to them but outside. And again, sometimes it may be that those stores are just not the best place to have those facilities and it may be that you need some hard-standing elsewhere to put them instead and to make them more accessible for people.

I think I saw a comment in the chat around lighting and night-time and that is a really important thing. And the one that I'm thinking of in particular is a bin store with no windows, with automatic lighting that didn't come on until you were fairly well inside, which is not an environment that people want to go and explore the back of, very often. So, it's hard to break through that ceiling if the design is really poor, which again, I've seen in the comments someone's mentioned the planning guidance, it's really important to be working with developers to make sure that that those bin stores are not designed in a way that discourages people from using them.

### *Nigel Deacon*

Yeah. Yeah, that's excellent. We're not going to be able to answer all these today, but we'll try and do so afterwards. But there was one about whether you had issues around odour around the food waste bins or vermin, and how was that managed, did you have a cleaning routine as well?

*Liz Horsfield*

Yeah, so we did put in additional cleaning for the food waste bins because obviously that is important. I mean, there's a couple of ways of dealing with it, if the bins are lined then that also can help cut down on the odours, so if the big external bins are lined and replaced, then that can help. But yes, regular cleaning, especially when it's hot, is important. This wasn't something that we did on this project, but I am aware of some authorities that have instigated bin swapping and washing on a very regular basis, so taking the bins out and taking them back to be washed on a weekly or fortnightly basis and swapping them out to keep them clean because it is really important. If they get really smelly, and as you say, attract vermin, that people are going to be discouraged. So making sure that that's planned in, so you know when those bins are going to be cleaned or swapped.

*Nigel Deacon*

Yeah, yeah, that's good. There's one question from Lizzie on costings, am I right in thinking that within the toolkit there is some guidance on that?

*Liz Horsfield*

So we have a cost benefit analysis tool, there are no costings on what we did within the project because it was a trial project and sort of not really fully representative of what it would be within a Borough because of all the additional monitoring and things that we did. But we have this cost benefit tool where you can put in your requirements and it has built into it the average price of bins and also the kind of the expected yield and the benefits, the carbon benefits as well of implementing recycling so that the cost saving of diverting tonnages from residuals to recycling and the carbon benefit of that. So that is a tool that you can use. Again, that's on our website and that's free to use, so you can get an idea of the the capital costs of doing that, including the signage and the stickers and the benefits of it as well. So, at the moment that is set up for London Boroughs, it is possible to use it if you're outside London, you would need your own tonnage data to make it work correctly. But if people want to use it and have any questions about it, then do feel free to drop me a line.

*Nigel Deacon*

That's really helpful. Thank you for that. One question from Larry I was going to pick out on your experience with engaging community champions; is that something you did as part of this?

*Liz Horsfield*

Not specifically with community champions. So again, because we are not ourselves, the local authority and we were working with partners, some of the partners and some of the Boroughs that we work with do have community champions. We worked very closely with tenants and residents, association representatives and our estates. So, when we were doing the planning stages, we met with them all and had discussions with them. We'll discuss the changes with them because actually they were really helpful in encouraging residents to take part in the services. So one of them in particular on one of the estates was really, really keen for all of this to happen and helped out with deliveries and putting posters up, but also feeding back issues was a really important part of that. So where there were issues with, you know, bin lids breaking, etc., or overflows, they would also get in touch and flag those as well. And so I think having those relationships is really important. I think someone's mentioned in the chat also about the importance of engaging with housing providers, which absolutely, they have to be brought into this to make it work because it's likely that their staff will be responsible for a lot of the cleaning and picking up the cardboard and making sure that those issues are dealt with. So yeah, absolutely. Working in partnership and agreeing those roles at the outset is really important.

*Nigel Deacon*

Yeah, completely agree. So powerful, isn't it, to have everybody on board with this from the landlord, whether it's a council or a housing association or private landlord and indeed the residents, I think. Well, that's drawn near to our time. Anybody want to come in with any questions. I haven't left you lot space, Adrian?

*Adrian*

Yeah, great. Thank you. Really, really interesting. I used to live in West Sussex where the recycling all went in the same thing. So everything, plastic, cardboard, cans went straight to the recycling centre, put on the conveyor belt and 100% of it was recycled. Is there any plans for that in this area? I'm in Buckinghamshire.

*Liz Horsfield*

I don't know the details of the system in your area, I'm afraid. I know there are a lot of authorities in London that have that system. The authorities that we were working with, Lambeth, they have a co-mingled system. So everything can go in the same bin and goes to the recycling centre. But there is a move from the collection packaging reforms, the consistency agenda, which is due out in the next few weeks. The Government are moving towards Twin Stream or multi stream as a preference rather than fully co-mingled because of the quality. So, I don't what will happen in your area, it's unlikely that people will be moving to fully co-mingled systems, though I think.

*Adrian*

Right. It's just it's probably easier for a tenant carry two bags down, one goes in recycling, one goes in general waste, end of, rather than having to sort into umpteen different compartments, you know, that's going to put them off.

*Liz Horsfield*

Yeah. I mean, it's done in different ways in different authorities. As I said in Lambeth where we were doing that project, everything can go in the same bin. There are other authorities that operate a twin stream system where paper and card is separate and they can be very successful and the contamination can be lower as well. So, you know, I appreciate storage can be an issue but if the information is good and people have the capacity in their homes to do it, it can work. But I think that's out of my control, and Defra will be giving their guidance on that shortly on what they would like everyone to do.

*Nigel Deacon*

Thank you, Adrian. Great point. I think we need to look at ways that if it carries on going down the path I think the government intend in more segregation, that we make it easier for people living in flats with a limited availability of space, that we make that process easier.

*Michael*

Hello yes, just really to emphasize the point I made earlier around planning and the importance of planning for new developments, specifically, I know all local authorities are stretched with resources and what have you, but if there can be sort of watertight planning guidance around this sort of thing, it will save in the medium and longer term. I've seen a lot of developments go up with just, you know, very lacking in thought from an operational waste point of view. Developers are coming around to it. But it helps to have that encouragement of some guidance that they need to stick to and that will be objected to if they don't follow that guidance. Yeah, just emphasizing that point, I guess. Thanks, Liz. Thanks a lot for the presentation.

*Liz Horsfield*

Thank you. Absolutely agree. I think within the slides, there is a link to the work that we did with the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, which I think you referred to in the chat of someone did the supplementary planning document which provides guidance for developers.

*Michael*

I always sort of hold that up as an example to other authorities too. If I can squeeze in some of that detail, I think it's an exemplar sort of planning guidance document, certainly.

*Nigel Deacon*

Yeah, it's a fantastic piece of work. Yeah, yeah. Completely agree. Victoria?

*Victoria*

I have put my question on the chat, but just very quickly, it was following on from the earlier one and it's really in relation to contamination. And in this particular area where residents are required to clean their pots and tins and stuff before they be recycled, is that complied with and how do you tackle that, too? I find that can be quite a barrier.

*Liz Horsfield*

Yes, they are. So all of the waste or the recycling from that Borough goes to a MRF so they're asked to clean, to rinse and dry everything before they put it in their recycling. I would say it's complied with to varying extent. Contamination was still higher than we would like it to be, certainly higher than kerbside rounds. But the contamination, I don't think it's in terms of those kinds of issues, not necessarily different from people living in flats to people living in kerbside. The contamination tended to be non-target, plastic film, polystyrene, rubbish, general stuff rather than having non-washed-out containers. I think it is difficult because you've got so much information to put on a leaflet and I think that's how we try to communicate that again through the service leaflet asking people to make sure that things are clean and dry. We didn't do anything extra specifically around the issue.

*Katrina*

So obviously a lot of the focus of convenience is around estates and things being in the heart of estates. But are there any plans to open it up, say, to such as community gardens and supermarkets to make it also more accessible and open up more sites for people in the community. For example, going to your local community garden to dispose of food waste, go into the supermarket to dispose of your cardboard or your cans or excess packaging that you may even leave after you've done your shop, so that you're not taking home all that packaging and everything in the first place.

*Liz Horsfield*

That's not something that I am aware of any particular plans for, that's unfortunately outside the scope of the work that we do in ReLondon on flats. I know there are lots and lots of community gardens around the country and more and more springing up, and there may be community composting schemes in some of those, but unfortunately, it's not something that I know very much about so I probably can't give you a very helpful answer on that. Certainly, the plastic take-back is in the majority of supermarkets now, I think, so you can take your flexible plastics to them, including local ones like the co-op around the corner for me and that's in advance of plastic film collections being mandated by government in a few years' time. Again, it's down to individual local authorities and organizations if they have separate recycling banks at the moment, and some have more than others, so that might be something to pick up with your local authority.

*Nigel Deacon*

That's a very good question and thanks for that. I think the food waste is likely to be required from every household, isn't it, directly? So communal drop-offs for food scraps are probably not going to be a big thing, but waste electricals, textiles and glass, the things that are not necessarily collected from every household, I think definitely there's going to be a space for communal collection points for those. As you know, some councils provide them and some don't. Some have taken them away because of the levels of contamination and flytipping. And I think, again, that's something we're going to come back to, and talk to some of the councils of have made it work well and some of the others who are struggling, and we'll see if we can uncover some ideas around that.

And so I think that brings us to the end of this session, and I would like to say a very big thank you to Liz and everybody that's joined. It's been for me incredibly enlightening, and I hope you've all found it so. We will work our way through the questions between us and come up with some more responses to the questions that we didn't manage to get to, and a recording and transcript, etc will be available and will be sent to you.