

metroSTOR Webinar Summary

Bulky Waste

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Guest Speaker: Bev Johnson, Caretaking Services Manager at L&Q

Bulky waste - defined as items essentially that are either too large, too heavy or the wrong composition to be accepted as part of the regular waste collection, including furniture, appliances, electronics, building materials, and outdoor equipment.

Impacts - substantial cost for disposal, increased fire risk, visual impact, additional fly-tipping and missed opportunities for upcycling, around 30% of all the bulky materials could have been reused and repurposed in some way.

L&Q, Beaumont Estate project in 2017 with 900 homes, predominantly social housing. In 2013, the costs for bulk removal were £3,000. By 2017 it was £12,000. The five caretakers on the estate were spending a lot of time taking bulk across the estate on flatbed trucks to a garage, storing it until the garage was full, and then calling the waste removal. obviously not safe and not a good use of their time, but there wasn't anything to stop the residents doing it. So working with the housing officer, local authority, local stakeholders, we decided on a six month campaign and we set out with five objectives:

- Increase residents' awareness and change their behaviour around bulk.
- Increase the amount of recycling and upcycling and other stakeholder involvement.
- Improve our efficiency in getting rid of bulk, reduce the costs.
- Reduce the amount of rubbish going to landfill.
- Find ways that we could inform a bulk rubbish strategy going forward.

So in the campaign there were lots of things that we did and it was resource intensive stuff:

- Door-knocked 900 homes, spoke to 38% of residents and gave out leaflets.
- Informed them about the impacts of bulk, the dangers, the vermin, the costs.
- Gave tips for recycling and upcycling and put posters up in all the block entrances.
- Told them about the fines for fly-tipping, and how to get rid of bulk responsibly.
- Relocated the CCTV and put fly-tipping signage where the hotspots were.
- Provided a hotline and email address for reporting fly-tipping anonymously.
- Involved the local authority enforcement officer for issuing FPN's to fly-tippers.
- Liaised with lots of upcycling projects locally for bikes, mattresses, even paint.
- Intense week of campaigning during the school holidays so everybody could see it.
- Newsletter, number of collections, tenancy breaches and warning letters issued.
- Worked with AnyJunk, the bulk disposal company, who collected within 24 hours.

The results were that we saw:

- A major decline in Flytipping.
- A 50% increase in recycling and upcycling
- Increased engagement from residents which also felt into other areas of the estate.
- Built up some really good relationships with local authority, local stakeholder leaders.
- Reduced the number of collections and the costs.
- A safer and more aesthetically pleasing estate
- Changing resident behaviour.

Particular challenges for people living in flats which we need to recognize:

- Anonymity, it's a shared facility. No one person really takes direct responsibility.
- Lack of space indoors.
- Residents don't really engage with the standard Council service.
- No secure collection point.

Design considerations:

Planning authorities are insisting on having a bulk store within new developments, so we're giving residents permission to put their bulk in a bulk store instead of getting rid of it themselves and everybody gets charged for that bulk. We're not interested in identifying who puts it there but it does mean that we can keep it secure, we can call the company to get rid of it very quickly, we've got a very good service level agreement with AnyJunk and they provide us with before and after pictures. Also in lots of the places that we're building we're not providing parking, so people don't necessarily have the opportunity to take their own rubbish to the tip, so for us in those circumstances it's a much better way of managing it.

We get involved at a very early stage of any new builds, looking at everything to do with the waste management, the bins, the bulk store. And they need to be attractive because otherwise people won't go in there. You know, they've got to have drainage, they've got to have been painted, have barriers on the walls. If it's within a bin store, we make sure it's caged so that it's safe, that they're well lit and well ventilated.

On older estates there may be buildings or rooms that you can repurpose as bulk stores, otherwise purpose-built structures can be installed. If the estate is not covered by caretaking staff you can use coded locks or even an online platform issuing one-time access codes for residents, with the added benefit of giving you usage data and the ability recharge individuals.

L&Q got value from the pilot project because it did change behaviour, it engaged residents more, they were able to educate some of the kids on the estate and it brought people together and they got engaged in wider things as well. It wasn't just a financial reward, there was a community reward too.

Question whether any Social Landlords have had powers delegated to them by their local authorities to take action against their tenants, issuing community protection warnings and notices?