

A BRIEF EVALUATION OF PILOT HOUSEHOLD INCENTIVE SCHEMES

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SUMMARY: In this work the primary data from the schemes is visited and standardised for comparison. It was found that some of the schemes caused significant increases in recycling, and that most of the schemes that had data six months later showed the increases were maintained. Incentives and/or feedback was found to be much more effective on an individual household basis. Community strength appears to be able to enhance any kind of scheme, and without it community-based schemes will not succeed. Schools schemes' successes depend strongly on champions and/or community spirit. Prize draw schemes are usually not effective at all for immediate increases in participation or tonnages collected, although one such scheme that focused on contamination was able to show significant improvements.

1. INTRODUCTION

(This paper was invited at short notice and only an abbreviated paper could be prepared; the work will shortly be published within a fuller context in a journal article.)

In 2005/6 DEFRA funded over 50 incentives projects proposed by local authorities to increase recycling performances. Initial timescales were very tight and initial reporting was done by the authorities, who used a variety of data types and analysis methods.

Householders greatly prefer feedback or incentives on an individual basis, i.e. rewarding households in blocks of flats together is less effective. Almost all of the voucher schemes involving house-by-house feedback were clearly effective, regardless of the incentive.

It seems that the incentive itself may not even be important; in several cases the feedback seemed equally important (at an individual level). In one case (Hampshire), a scheme of incentives for improved contamination levels was paralleled in a separate scheme which did not offer an actual incentive – and got the same excellent results.

Community-based, charity-based and schools schemes have successes very dependent on the strength of community identity or activity, or a champion. Without this they may not be successful – which makes planning difficult and results patchy. Similarly, any scheme can be

enhanced with interaction from a strong community, so if authorities have any kind of drive taking place it could be enhanced if they involve strong community groups in some way.

There were many additional corollary benefits such as increased awareness, education, publicity. However, this report has focused on quantitative quantities. Several authorities stated that the attitudinal surveys they took gave results contradicting measured results e.g. number of householders participating. These were not seen as quantitatively useful except where used before and after a pilot in a comparative fashion.

Although the results indicate that incentives schemes of different types will be successful in different areas, it is important not to leave the impression that they cannot be used in a blanket fashion effectively.

For example, any scheme involving rewards to individual households which are redeemable in a supermarket could be very successful in all parts of a town. Households already performing very well will be less likely to improve, but otherwise no effort will be wasted. If local community groups were involved on the side, the impact would be enhanced where they are strong.

In summary, incentives schemes can be very effective, but must incorporate the lessons learned here to be successful. These guidelines have been determined by the failure of some schemes which did not incorporate all of them; they are clear lessons for the future.