

**Charity & Recycling Credit Beneficiary Consultation
Summary of responses**

Question 1

Recent Merseyside Waste Composition Analysis shows that some 4 - 5 % of household residual waste is textile material, the majority of which is recyclable.

What do you consider to be the barriers and opportunities to encouraging greater recycling of textile waste material from Merseyside's households?

- Respondent 1 Economic Factors; - determining how & when people feel the need to buy new and therefore have no further need for existing goods.
Lack of knowledge: - people are aware of recycling in respect of biodegradable products, plastic and paper but have very little information on textiles.
general apathy regarding recycling as an issue.
- Respondent 2 Lack of information
Cost / charges
Travel / distance to recycle centres.
- Respondent 3 Lack of awareness - what can / can't go in grey bin
Logistics - can be bulky and heavy - so what non-car owners do?
Condition - suitable for rags only?
Charity shops - all say 'don't leave outside when shut' - and running recycling schemes myself I agree BUT they should give details of what TO do when shut!
- Respondent 4 Before answering this question it would be necessary to have a feeling for what has gone before in terms of behavioural change and encouragement., otherwise it's really empty speculation.
- What proportion of textile waste is still left in the household bins – compared to the overall quantity?
- Has there been any publicity encouraging the recycling of *all* textile waste – as opposed to that element that is in good condition.
- If people are bombarded with a plethora of different bags – supposedly charity schemes, but which have proved bogus, is that an element in their reluctance to separate their textile waste.
- Are facilities available for separate collection. If the technology is such that very low grade textile waste can now be recycled, it still needs to be collected separately to avoid contamination.
Barriers other than public perception would be financial.
- Respondent 5 Apart from charities and some businesses, kerbside collection is a little ad hoc. Residents would probably respond better to a council (or private-sector) endorsed kerbside collection service that is regular and reliable.

In the absence of good transport, people struggle to carry textiles to collection banks.
Perception of charitable good vs. 'money making' by the Council.
- Respondent 6 Barriers
It is likely to be **lack of awareness / education** on the part of the householder as to knowing what they can do with textiles. They probably consider them to be of low value (be it monetary or environmentally/socially) resulting in them being thrown away. Those that have realised the monetary value are now making use of this by taking them to the 'cash for clothes' businesses that are springing up.
Those that would normally donate for social (charitable) or environmental reasons at kerbside, may **lack confidence** due to the high number of bogus collections, which is now a highly organised crime. Due to theft at the kerbside, some charities have ceased these types of collections and encourage householders to drop them off at the shops. This only works well, if the shops are located close by and have easy access.

Opportunities
Increase awareness / education – produce a map of drop off points e.g. banks at recycling centres, charity shops e.g. <http://www.recap.co.uk/reducing-waste/donate-to-charity>
Provide information to householders on how to check whether the kerbside collections are genuine, and encourage them to report thefts using the Charity Retail Associations (CRA) reporting tool on their website.
- Respondent 7 **Barriers**
1. Education, raising the awareness of the benefits to the environment in terms of saving energy, water, and raw materials. Many households do not consider their cast off clothing as “good enough” where in reality it may be quite acceptable to those who cannot afford new clothing or items can be recycled into other lives such as mattress filling, insulation products etc.
2. Insufficient bring sites to make recycling easy and convenient

Opportunities

1. Media campaigns and road shows to raise the profile of clothing reuse and recycling. We have a dedicated Press Office to support Local Authorities and a purpose built exhibition unit.
2. Highlighting the benefit of UK used clothing, of which approximately 80% of collections provide good quality clothing at a price people abroad can afford and the remaining 20% can be recycled into various products.

Working with well known charities motivates residents to donate clothing which supports many charities on the ground financially. It also fits in well with the Big Society message, where the benefits are ploughed back into the local community.

Respondent 8

In our view, the barriers are:

1. knowledge - understanding what items can be recycled and where to send them
2. lack of time - the public are looking for easy and convenient ways to donate

In our view the opportunities are:

1. education - understanding the benefits of recycling
2. convenience - making it easy to donate from the door step / in the community
3. making it a habit - regular reminders to recycle

Respondent 9

Publicity - general public need to be made aware of the fact that charities can get money from recycling textiles.
Time taken to receive payment.

Respondent 10

The barriers include; 1. too much competition, 2. rag merchants taking our business, 3. the credit crunch.
In general, the ease of putting textiles in a household bin rather than the hassle of keeping the items until collection can be arranged.
The opportunities include; 1. donors realise that we are a great cause and they wish to support us.

Question 2

MWDA aim to get more textile material out of the household bin to reduce the amount that is sent to landfill. Your organisation can help play a key part in this whilst benefiting from the income from sale of textiles.

How could MWDA best help you to incentivise the process of reducing textiles in the household bin and ensuring higher levels of re-use and recycling?

Some examples of the types of incentives that you *may* consider of value could include:

- a single "textile recycling" fund that organisations could apply to for specific schemes
- changes to the MWDA recycling credit payment system
- support with partnerships or collaborative working with other groups and charities to increase the range of textiles available for re-use and recycling whilst making efficient use of resources, thereby reducing your costs and providing

Respondent 1

Let people know that by sending their unwanted textiles to organisations such as charity shops not only are they helping the environment, they are also helping the charity.
The recycling fund sounds like a good idea. I would need further information on the workings of it before making an informed comment.
In relation to the possible increase the range of textiles for re-use consideration should be given to the textiles that are incorporated in furniture and associated products. Lots of furniture is not recycled but organisations such as ours do exist and have facilities to re-use discarded furniture.

Respondent 2

No response.

Respondent 3

All the above would help! Can't easily think of anything else.

Respondent 4

I refer to my response to Q1

It seems to me that a lot of textiles are already extracted by a variety of legitimate or otherwise organisations including, obviously, charity shops.
I would suggest that what is left is largely un-usable and would end up in the waste stream anyway.
Therefore behavioural change is what is needed to get households to put knackered clothing into separate bags for collection. If there really is a market for these unre-usable textiles, the collection authority should be able to make an income from them that offsets the cost of collecting them as a separate stream on kerbside.
This all goes to pot however if the relevant authority has gone down a co-mingled stream, because contaminated clothing will almost certainly be worthless.

As a general point regarding the question I think that with the high price of textiles at the moment, credits should be withdrawn from any organisation collecting textiles for sale or export on the basis that they do not need it as an incentive. This will make more money available for legitimate enterprises who are trying to find a way to get more material recycled and for incentivising LA's to collect the worn out clothes that currently go in the bin.

Persuading the public to wash clothes for recycling, even when they are not going to be re-used, might be a sticking point, as will getting over the embarrassment factor. People really don't like their old faded underwear to be exposed to scrutiny.

Respondent 5 All the points raised above and:
- residents undersanding exactly what happens to their recycled textiles.

Respondent 6 All charities wish to increase their level of donations, including textiles. This could be supported by the LA by assisting with promotion and awareness about charity shops and the type of items they will accept.

Events like 'donation days' could be planned in community areas with charity partners (in supermarket / school car parks etc.) to encourage donations, possible linked with education about re-use / recycling in general.

Respondent 8 At present, MWDA pay us recycling credits on all sources of stock donation. We are happy with this level of coverage and would not propose any changes.
We are currently working with Elmbridge Borough Council in a pilot trial on kerbside collections. This is cost neutral for the Council as they are taking the credits for the costs that they are incurring in collections and marketing etc.

We have also worked recently with Birmingham University 'In Waste Deep' campaign to encourage students to recycle at the end of term. Opportunities to link up with these types of organisations provide a benefit both ways.

Respondent 9 All of the above.

Respondent 10 Note - the current MWDA recycling credit scheme works very well now.
We are extremely happy with the service we receive from both our collectors and the service MWDA provides, but would always look for ways to generate more funds.

Question 3

MWDA wants to clearly understand the opportunities and challenges facing the sector in order to help support charitable organisations and community groups to recycle more textile materials.

What are the challenges your organisation currently faces in terms of collecting, receiving and recycling more household textile materials?

Respondent 1 The challenges we face mainly concern that lack of space we have to store textiles before we can get them collected and recycled, this is only an issue for our management team.
We could secure more income if MWDA took the opportunity to include furniture within its recycling policy.

Respondent 2 We don't collect household textile materials for recycling.

Respondent 3 We only do tiny amounts anyway at our swap days and these go to Recyclertex if not taken by people on the day.

Respondent 4 I refer my response to question 1.

Respondent 5 Resources - cost, equipment / infrastructure, storage and human resources.
Potential kerbside collection vs. bring bank collection locations (often restricted).

Respondent 6 Due to theft at the kerbside, these collections are ceasing to be profitable, so charities are actively seeking new opportunities to source textiles.
Charities have the capacity to take in higher volumes. Householders often don't realise that we can accept textiles that are not fit for re-use, as we send them for ragging. Householders tend to put these poorer quality textiles in the bin. Helping to raise this awareness, may see more diversion from landfill.

Respondent 7

1. Huge and sometimes unscrupulous competition driven by the high value of clothing resulting in many cases of bogus or even illegal collections which damages public confidence and escape the Data Waste Flow recording.
2. Theft particularly from door to door collections is now accepted by the Police Authorities as Organised Crime. We have contracted Smartwater to deal with the incident of theft nationally.
3. Co-mingled textiles have no market value due to the contamination from other waste streams and whilst it is accepted that it is common practice and economic it is a definite barrier to increased recovery of textiles.

Issues surrounding licensing for collections are confusing and difficult to control at Authority level. We are working with WRAP to provide a form of Guidance to Local Authorities with best practice including clarification of the issue of permits to collect door to door.

Respondent 8 1. increase in bag theft from outside homes
2. apathy - so many donation bags are coming in through the doorsteps, that householders do not know who is genuine or not, and opt out of participation
3. the trend towards local authorities working with commercial collectors for kerbside collections

Respondent 9 Storage of rags - waiting for collections by rag merchant.
Publicity - see previous answer.

Respondent 10 1. Rag merchants and others stealing our bags of donations (left outside for collection)
2. Competition - lots of organisations and others jumping on the band wagon, not all legitimate.

Question 4

Any other information.

MWDA would be grateful for any comments or ideas you may have as to how the organisation can best develop a strategy to help incentivise further household textile recycling across Merseyside. Please feel free to make any additional comments here.

Respondent 1 As above.

Respondent 2 No response

Respondent 3 Our Waste Action Group is, of course, voluntary - we are a voluntary sector organisations - and we meet REGULARLY every 2nd month and ON REQUEST on the months in-between - and allowing for holidays, part-time staff etc., this survey has come to us with a) 18 staff hours to do it in and b) the week after the WAG meeting. PLEASE STOP AND THINK about the voluntary sector - THREE MONTHS MINIMUM for any similar!!

Respondent 4 No response

Respondent 5 Possible cash incentives and schools (Bags to Schools)
More swap day interventions.
Flexibility about collection bank locations.
Better communication to residents / service users about what the credits are / mean - not just council making money.

Respondent 6 RECAP (Recycling in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Partnership) research showed that those throwing away most textiles tended to be in a particular socio-demographic group. They have tried targeting this group and encouraging them to "Wear It, Love It, Share It" events organised by the Council and attended by various charities selling donated textiles. It may be worth chatting with them on their experience / successes.

Respondent 7 We are an established and financially secure company which has experienced the peaks and troughs of the market place over the last 20 years and has maintained our collections efficiently even in difficult trading times. The present market is in the boom phase, whereby other collectors (many new and inexperienced) are offering high incentives which we believe is not sustainable. Previous experience shows that these new operators tend to disappear when textile markets crash leaving uncollected clothing at collection sites. We believe that a long term healthy relationship with textile recycling experts can provide a long term sustainable and profitable platform giving confidence to householders that a transparent and open scheme providing best practice is provided by their local authority.

Respondent 8 Our research suggests that people are not really incentivised to recycle more – this is firstly about convenience to donate and secondly an affiliation to a particular cause. From a council perspective, these bogus collectors are unlikely to be providing you with any collection figures, therefore, you are likely to be understating your recycling performance. We are working closely with the Charity Retail Association, Institute of Fundraising and National Fraud Investigation Bureau to record all known incidents of bag theft etc and all details of bogus collectors. Making people aware of these types of incidents, how to spot a genuine charity bag etc through local council magazines, websites etc will help to raise awareness. In case you are interested in the legislation and guidelines behind this, please refer to www.institute-of-fundraising.org.uk/codes_and_regulations/charityfraudandscams

Respondent 9 Publicity - as previous.
The public generally are unaware of what charities can do with rags. They think we may take in clothes we can resell. Rags are a great boost to our cause.

Respondent 10 Cheaper council tax / reduction for recycling