

Appendix E - Inside the Head of Fly-tippers; Understanding Behaviour in Manchester (May 2019)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

As part of the Tidy Cities programme, Keep Britain Tidy and Manchester City Council have worked together to carry out in-depth qualitative research to better understand its waste compliance issues. The research aimed to gather insights to better understand the triggers and barriers to fly-tipping behaviour to inform the development of new interventions to prevent fly-tipping across Manchester.

The behavioural insights to come from the research are outlined in this report, along with recommendations on how these can be applied in the development of targeted interventions to change behaviour. Any interventions Manchester City Council select for trialling with Keep Britain Tidy will be robustly monitored and evaluated, with a view to scaling effective interventions for broader impact.

Methodology

Two focus groups were carried out with residents in the central Manchester area. Three respondents from each of the North, Central and South areas of the city were recruited to each focus group, and where possible, were recruited from fly-tipping hotspot locations, as identified by data provided by the council.

Respondents were screened using a recruitment survey to ensure that they met the criteria for the research before they were invited to participate. Participants must have:

- lived in the area for at least six months; and
- disposed of waste and/or unwanted items in a way that constitutes 'fly-tipping' over the past year (even if they did not understand this act as fly-tipping).

A total of 18 participants were recruited for the research (9 per focus group). These were ten female and eight male participants.

Each group lasted for 1.5 hours and as a thank you for their time, all participants received a cash gift of £40.

Results

Perceptions of Local Area as a Place to Live

The focus group participants were very positive about certain elements of their neighbourhoods, including the proximity to the city centre, access to local green space and the community spirit. Despite this, participants expressed dissatisfaction with the levels of crime, the cleanliness of their local area and antisocial behaviour.

Household Waste Management

Respondents reported a range of options that local people have for getting rid of items they no longer want or need. These ranged from official routes of disposal ("the tip" and the council's waste collection service) to unofficial routes (e.g. using

communal bins and the “scrap man”), along with ‘buy, sell, swap’ sites, donations to community projects, and fly-tipping!

Whilst “the tip” and the Council’s bulky waste collection service were cited as options for getting rid of items that residents no longer want or need, they were not widely used by the respondents. “The tip” was predominantly used on the infrequent occasions when respondents had a “big clear out”. Typically, this would include taking a “special trip” to the tip, to get rid of multiple/different items.

Whilst there was widespread awareness that the council operates a bulky waste collection service for residents, a small number of respondents in each group were unaware that residents could have one free collection of up to three items per year. Amongst those who were aware of the free element, there was some disagreement about the ‘terms and conditions’ of the service. For example, confusion over how many items would be collected free of charge, whether the free items had to be collected in one visit or whether there could be multiple free collections and whether there was an eligibility criteria.

A small number of respondents in each group said that they sometimes disposed of unwanted items in, or next to, communal bins in their neighbourhood. All respondents who did this knew that they shouldn’t, but they reconciled it with themselves by the fact that they perceived it would be collected as part of the routine emptying of the communal bins, and so this was a more responsible behaviour than leaving it somewhere where the council wouldn’t see it/pick it up.

All respondents had previously used scrap metal dealers/collectors and around half consistently left items for their collection. On some of these occasions, respondents didn’t see the collection of their waste item by the scrap dealers, they were just aware that the item they had left out had been removed. Other respondents had held on to waste items and upon hearing the scrap metal collector in their street (e.g. via their jingle or ‘tannoy’ message) had handed them over to the collectors.

Upon being asked what happens to the item or waste after the scrap metal collectors have taken it away, there was a unanimous response that they had never considered it. When probed, respondents overwhelmingly agreed that the responsibility for the item is now with the scrap metal collector, not themselves. When directly asked what happens to any element of their waste/item that they gave to the scrap metal collector, that cannot be weighed in, there was a unanimous opinion (and for a few, a realisation) that any non-valuable elements of the waste/item were not going to be disposed of via the correct channels.

Use of the scrap metal collector was very well regarded in terms of its ease of use, convenience, frequency to which collections were made in the local area and the fact that they didn’t need to pay for collection. There were perceived to be no downsides to using this service at all and aside from one person (who had had a realisation that the scrap metal collectors were most likely not disposing of any non-valuable elements of the waste via the correct channels) all respondents cited that they would use this service again in the future.

Respondents cited ways in which they could be made more aware about the services provided by the local council that could reduce fly-tipping, i.e. the bulky waste collection service and the household waste and recycling centres and/or how usage of these services could be maximised. Suggestions included advertising the services via the following:

- Facebook feeds – both the Council’s own page and neighbourhood ‘community’ pages.
- Hangers and/or stickers on wheeled bins
- Side of refuse collection trucks
- Fridge magnets
- Bin collection calendar
- Food waste bags (caddy liners) provided by the council

Fly-tipping Behaviours and Drivers

All 15 focus group participants had fly-tipped unwanted items or waste over the past year, as this was a requirement for participation in the research. The most common fly-tipping behaviour amongst participants was leaving a large item from their household outside in a public place for someone else who might like it for free.

The research identified the following drivers of fly-tipping:

- There is a lack of understanding of fly-tipping
While the term was widely recognised by the focus group participants, and was spontaneously cited by them during the discussions, there was a clear lack of awareness of what constitutes ‘fly-tipping’ and many participants had been fly-tipping without realising it or that it was wrong. When asked to identify incidences of fly-tipping from photographs, participants tended to choose large-scale, messy and uncontained piles of rubble or house clearance waste, such as incidences typically undertaken by tradespeople. Dumped mattresses were also generally recognised as fly-tipping by participants. Participants did not identify ‘black bags’, garden waste, leaving items by the communal bins, single items such as furniture or electrical appliances and charity donations as fly-tipping.
- There is an expectation that fly-tipped items will be collected quickly and without repercussions

Alongside previous Keep Britain Tidy research¹, there is evidence to suggest that this is a major driver of fly-tipping. Items that participants had put out (fly-tipped) were typically removed quite quickly (i.e. within a day or two). This contributed to perceptions that their behaviour did not cause harm and it was therefore seen as a viable way to get rid of unwanted items quickly and for free. Keep Britain Tidy research indicates that this may drive further fly-tipping because people can learn to rely on it as a means for getting rid of their unwanted items.

¹ *Inside the Head of Fly-tippers*, Keep Britain Tidy, 2017; *Understanding and Tackling Fly-tipping in London*, Keep Britain Tidy, 2018.

- There is a lack of understanding about the impacts of fly-tipping (and waste service systems)

Keep Britain Tidy research² shows that household fly-tipping is seen as low-impact and residents struggle to understand the cost impacts and implications for the broader community. The consequences and broader impacts of fly-tipping are very rarely explained to residents, leading to a gap in understanding that residents tend to fill with their own narratives.

- Fly-tipping is often motivated (or excused) by a perception of ‘helping someone out’

Many participants said that they leave items out for other residents and scrap dealers who might like them free of charge because they believed that other people could make good use of the items. Several participants said that they did not know who took the items they had left out, meaning that the Council may be collecting their items without them realising this. This links with a lack of understanding about the impacts of fly-tipping.

Reporting Incidents of Fly-tipping

The vast majority of respondents had never reported acts of fly-tipping (like those seen in the 20 photographs used in the focus groups). Respondents would only consider reporting an incident of fly-tipping, if it was hyper-local to them (near to their home, something they see when out and about in their neighbourhood) and/or hadn't been removed within a few days of them first becoming aware of it.

Householder's Duty of Care

Typically, participants had never considered who was legally responsible for items that had been fly-tipped. When pushed, there was a mixed response regarding where the responsibilities lie. Around half said that it would be the responsibility of the person or company taking the waste away and the other half said that it would be the responsibility of the householder. No one responded that it would be both the responsibility of the person/company and the householder.

None of the respondents had ever asked the person/company they had hired to take away waste for their waste carrier registration licence (or checked that they have one), what they will do with the waste, for a receipt or for paperwork showing what will happen to the waste. Respondents said that they would identify whether or not a supplier was a ‘proper business’ before using them (and that if it was a proper business, they would automatically assume everything would be in order). However, they would do this very quickly, without any thorough checks, by simply make a snap judgement based on where the person/company was advertising, whether or not they had a website and whether or not they had a logo or phone number on their van.

Respondents felt that an email conversation with the trader, a receipt for the money paid, or any paperwork containing the company's logo was enough to cover them in the event that their waste was disposed of illegally. That is, these items would act as evidence that the householder paid the person/company to take the items away,

² *Inside the Head of Fly-tippers*, Keep Britain Tidy, 2017; *Understanding and Tackling Fly-tipping in London*, Keep Britain Tidy, 2018.

showing that they weren't the last people to handle the waste and therefore in their minds freeing them of any responsibility for its illegal disposal.

Only one respondent already knew that householders need to check that those removing any waste from their homes are registered waste carriers, and that if a waste carrier licence wasn't in place, it would be illegal for the person/company to take their waste away. Respondents were surprised to learn this was the case and felt uneasy about any potential repercussions.

Respondents were asked how local residents might be made more aware of their Duty of Care. Responses were varied, with no single response more predominant than the others. Suggestions included advertising via the following:

- Local broadcast media (radio and television)
- Manchester Evening News
- Social media
- Side of refuse collection trucks
- Tags/hangers and/or stickers on wheeled bins
- Annual council tax bill/letter
- Information pack for new tenants.
- The promotion of registered waste carriers.

Enforcement

Respondents were asked if they or someone they knew had ever been caught leaving an unwanted item or rubbish in a public place, and if so, what were the outcomes. None of the respondents had been caught fly-tipping themselves, but two cited examples of people they knew who had.

There were mixed views on whether enforcement works, with around half strongly in favour of hitting offenders in the pocket and the other half suggesting that the fine is not a deterrent due to its low value and it potentially being cheaper than the price of legitimate removal costs, for some fly-tips.

There was a high level of awareness that Manchester City Council could and do issue warning letters to fly-tippers and equally that fly-tippers could be traced via investigations of the fly-tipped waste. However, there was widespread agreement that fly-tippers were savvy about it and knew not to leave any documents that could trace the waste back to them. Respondents perceived that fly-tippers were highly unlikely to be caught in the act or be traced afterwards and that warning letters were not a deterrent and so wouldn't help to solve the problem.

Solutions

Respondents were informed that they had been invited to the discussion because when they were asked by researchers, they said that they had previously done something that can be classed as fly-tipping. There was widespread agreement among the participants that they did not know that these behaviours constituted fly-tipping, but in some cases, they were aware that it was a behaviour they shouldn't really be doing.

In terms of what would make it easier for people to do the right thing, typical suggestions were focussed on enhancing bin capacity (and less on changing behaviour), whether that was via reinstating larger wheeled bins, more frequent

collections, or via bins that compress waste. However, there was a suggestion that bin capacity could be improved if residents were better at recycling their waste, although a few respondents cited confusion over what can and cannot be recycled as part of the doorstep scheme.

Based on the findings of the research, Keep Britain Tidy has eight main recommendations for tackling household fly-tipping across Manchester:

1. Use values-based communications that give residents clear explanations of why responsible waste management is important and reinforce personal responsibility for waste
2. Use appropriate images when communicating about fly-tipping
3. Trial 'crime scene investigation tape' to address expectations that items will be collected quickly and without repercussions
4. Support residents to manage their household waste more effectively, including reducing the amount of waste they generate in the first place
5. Undertake user journey mapping to identify further potential improvements to services, including the bulky waste service
6. Trial an approach to promote the bulky waste collection service, including the 'free element' of the scheme (e.g. via bin tags/hangers and/or stickers on bins)
7. Consider trialling an extended service to collect large items and household waste to offer residents a legitimate direct competitor to 'man with a van' or the 'Facebook Fly-tipper'. Consider trialling /implementing a series of suggested practical recommendations to support wider work to reduce fly-tip