

Improving Waste Management through Innovative Learning



Project Partnership

The West Midlands Regional Improvement & Efficiency Partnership (WM RIEP) is the lead change agent for local government efficiency in the region. We are working on a number of projects offering to support the delivery of efficiencies and cost savings in waste management services. One such project we are supporting is the **Planit-WASTE** learning programme.

pixelfountain is an innovative learning solutions company that takes tough subjects and problems and creates transformational experiences. We deliver workshops and programmes using innovative learning-simulations to improve the performance of organisations, partnerships and teams.

Project Summary

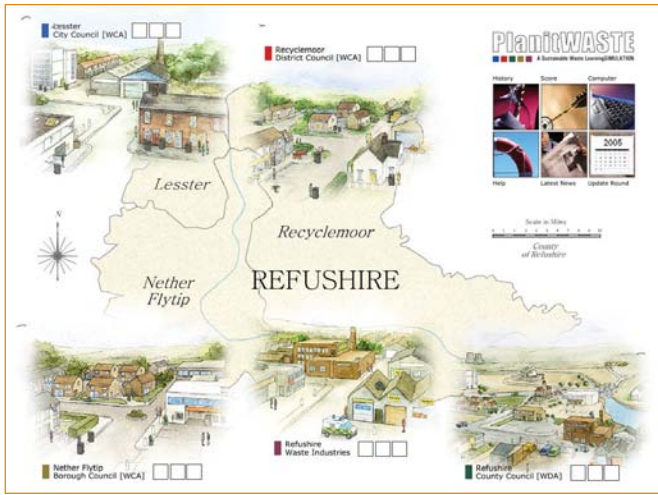
With all local authorities facing stringent targets for increasing the volume of waste that can be recycled and reducing the amount that goes to landfill sites, many are working together to work on long-term strategies to achieve the targets. To help support this process WM RIEP engaged pixelfountain to deliver a programme of workshops using its Planit-WASTE learning-simulation.

Planit-WASTE utilises an innovative learning-simulation at the heart of an interactive workshop. It raises awareness of the serious waste management problems facing local areas in the West Midlands over the next 5-15 years. It achieves this by immersing delegates in a virtual world where they can explore different possibilities.

Overall, the programme focuses on improving long-term decision-making and partnership building particularly between Local Authorities, Waste Collection Authorities (WCA), Waste Disposal Authorities (WDA) and other key stakeholders. It encourages joined-up, strategic thinking that focuses on improving their sustainable waste management strategy. Crucially, the workshop and learning-simulation will be linked to the Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme (LATs) and focus on improved performance for Local authorities.

In addition to the learning-simulation, the workshop begins with a presentation, followed by a 'pub quiz' to get delegates up to speed and working together, and after the learning-simulation the delegates consider how to put theory into practice by means of Action Planning.





Efficiency Drivers

The decision to support this project was made after assessing the impact of the Planit-WASTE programme in other regions where it has been cited in Audit Commission reports. The programme will result in efficiency savings by reducing costly mistakes. It will achieve this by:

- Improving understanding of sustainable waste management
- Improving decision making and understanding the needs of the community
- Enabling sharing of the knowledge and learning within partnerships and authorities

“Impressive & thought provoking simulation”

WM RIEP is sponsoring the project and the outcomes will be:

- Improving the understanding of local decision makers about the growing waste problem
- Improving decision-making and problem solving in waste management issues
- Encouraging a partnership approach to tackling waste management issues
- Improving (where necessary) local waste strategies and their implementation

Role of Regional Improvement & Efficiency Partnership

The WM RIEP funded the programme to enable partnerships to benefit from this innovative learning programme. The WM RIEP project-managed, coordinated the recruitment of the project, and attended a number of the sessions. The workshop programme was completed by May 2007.

Evaluation of the exercises

All of the 3 exercises within the workshop were scored highly by the delegates, and across the four workshops they averaged 8.4 out of 10. The learning-simulation was ranked the highest, being scored very good or excellent by the majority of delegates. Many delegates mentioned this part of the workshop as the thing they liked most about the workshop.

Learning improvement and ROI

The delegates were asked to judge their understanding on 3 dimensions: Waste Management, Needs of the Community, and finally Decision Making. They scored their understanding in before and after terms, and from this the learning improvement percentage is derived. An average 25% learning improvement from the four workshops is a significant gain to the capability of the 54 delegates. The delegates, who were in key roles, will improve waste management decision-making in the West Midlands. Therefore, the project has achieved a lot in four workshops and as such represents excellent value for money.

	Newcastle	Stafford	Black Country	Walsall	Average
Learning improvement stated by delegates					
Waste Management	35%	21%	26%	22%	26%
Needs of the Community	23%	19%	18%	22%	21%
Decision Making	41%	26%	26%	20%	28%
Average	33%	22%	23%	21%	25%
Exercise Evaluation (Content, Engagement, Presentation, Relevance)					
Opening Quiz	7.7	8.8	8.1	7.6	8.1
learning-simulation	8.4	9.3	8.9	8.6	8.8
Action Planning	7.7	9.2	7.9	8.8	8.4
Average	7.9	9.1	8.3	8.3	8.4

Long Term Feedback

The post project feedback was very important to find out if the training had a long-term impact. Much of the feedback from the interviews with local co-coordinators shows that Planit-Waste has had a significant long-term impact on the waste partnerships, in changing the way individuals and organisations think and work. The most successful workshop in the West Midlands was Newcastle under Lyme which had twenty-five delegates compared with six in the Staffordshire workshop. So there is a strong correlation between delegate numbers and long term impact of the project.

Increased awareness(understanding/interest) of waste management

- 100% of local coordinators say that the workshop increased awareness of waste management within their waste partnership

All local coordinators agree that the workshop increased awareness of waste management, in particular in giving delegates an understanding of the whole waste management picture and how all the parts relate to each other.

The main audience for the training was local councillors, who often have view of waste management that is restricted to problems that arise in their ward. The workshop gave them an appreciation of the wider waste picture and of the complexity of waste management decision-making.

Newcastle under Lyme anticipated problems with getting their new Waste Strategy through the Scrutiny Committee. However, the report was accepted unanimously. The Planit-Waste workshop was part of the early meetings and it helped a lot in getting key decision makers to understand the issues.

“Impact/need for community consultation. The real meaning of inaction, the councillors realised ‘doing nothing’ doesn’t help anyone.”

Walsall Borough Council

Improved decision making

- 50% of local coordinators say that the workshop improved decision making

The workshop focused on giving delegates a chance to make decision over a 20 year period for a virtual community. This provides a safe environment where decision-making is risk free and delegates can experiment with ideas and interactions. Some of coordinators said that the workshop has improved long term decision making, with Newcastle citing the decision of their Scrutiny Committee to approve their Waste Strategy.

“It made the councillors more aware of the waste issues and helped them make informed decisions – sometimes different from their original opinions.”

Walsall Borough Council

Strengthened working relationships and partnership working

- 75% of local co-ordinators say that the workshop strengthened working relationships and partnership working

Workshops included delegates from waste collection and disposal roles, with a large number of local councillors. This provided a great opportunity for improving working relationships and partnership working. The local coordinator in Staffordshire County Council said that the workshop strengthened the relationship between one of the collection authorities and the disposal authority. In the Black Country the workshop helped foster understanding between the district councils and strengthen working relationships.

“Working with our colleagues at the council and also our neighbours Stoke-on-Trent we now have a greater understanding about their needs and problems.”

Newcastle Under Lyme

“The working party we created this May produced a report, which all parties in the council agreed to.”

Newcastle Under Lyme

Increased importance of joined up thinking

- 75% of local co-ordinators say that the workshop increased importance of joined up thinking

The workshops aid joined up thinking. Seeing the decisions in a chain of causality provides perspective. It reduces the chance that the decision might result in a perverse outcome and increases the chances of identifying win wins. A good example of this is in Newcastle where the workshop helped improve the procurement of their waste collection vehicle fleet, the procurement is now done more strategically thinking about the entire fleet within the context of their long term needs.

“Made members more aware of the problems. Helped to overcome another brick in the wall.”
Staffordshire County Council

“It raised awareness and helped people come up with strategic solutions.” **Black Country**

Contribution towards improved recycling targets

All the authorities have improved their recycling rates since having the workshop. Even though it is difficult to quantify the contribution that Planit-Waste made to the recycling rates, it is clear from the feedback that Planit-Waste did have a positive impact. Some of the local coordinators say that the workshop contributed towards improved recycling targets others that they believe it will have an impact long term.

“Yes, we are now embracing the new recycling targets”

Newcastle Under Lyme

“Yes. It made a contribution overall on meeting targets but difficult to quantify.”

Staffordshire County Council

“It helped the councillors understand the Agendas and our collection systems, which include weekly collection with reduced sized bins to promote recycling.”

Walsall Borough Council

Contribution of Planit-Waste towards meeting the challenges of the local, regional and national Waste Agendas?

- 100% of local co-ordinators say that the workshop contributed towards meeting the challenges of the local, regional and national Waste Agendas

Local coordinators say that the workshop helped raise awareness of local, regional and national agendas, particularly LATS and recycling agendas.

Long-term evaluation of the project supports the findings from the initial feedback and we believe that the authorities have provided good examples of how the project has improved their working practices. The project has built understanding, partnerships and developed a more long-term and joined-up view of waste management. Indeed, one Local Authority identifies the workshops as having depoliticised waste management ensuring cross party support for the new Waste Strategy, ensuring efficiencies and improved performance.

Transferability

There are no technical reasons why the programme could not be expanded. The programme is based on a successful programme in the North West funded via WRAP and Defra. The learning-simulation itself has also been used in a number of national events.

Delegates were asked, “Do you think additional training of this sort would help you and your colleagues?” 93% of delegates responded positively (1 responded not at this stage and 2 deemed the question not applicable). Some delegates identified Councillors as an important target audience.

Contact

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