

An examination of a peer to peer education programme for recycling behaviour in Ireland

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From 2017 to 2018 the NGO VOICE with funding from the Department Of Climate Change Communication and the Environment and the Regional Waste Offices ran the Recycling Ambassador Programme (RAP).

Through the 'Behaviours and Barriers' survey, an opportunity arose to examine the impact of this peer to peer social marketing campaign on recycling behaviours across Ireland.



fig 1: New Recycling list and advertising poster for the Programme

A peer-to-peer education and outreach programme in combination with conventional advertising using the 'New Recycling List' was set up.



fig 2: Advertising poster for the Programme

Learning outcomes:

- Educate about the new recycling list
- Reduce confusion on items accepted
- Reduce contamination: "Clean, Empty, and Loose"

A distributed network of paid 'Recycling Ambassadors' was organised to present an interactive workshop to communities, businesses and events.

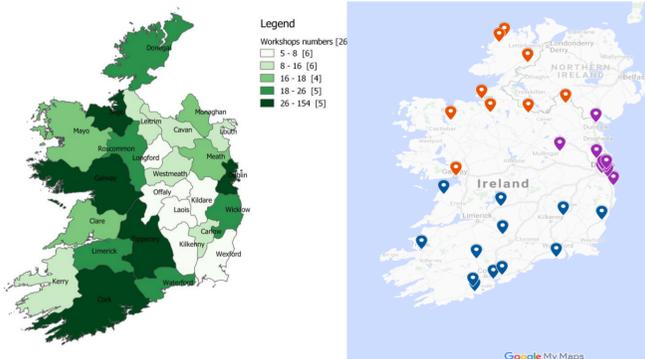


fig 3: Distribution of workshops and ambassadors across the country

Theory Of Planned Behaviour

A framework to explain behavioural change where there is a moral or social element is often used as a model for environmental behaviours:

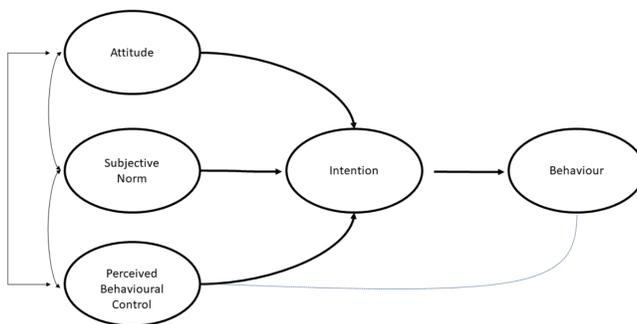


fig 4: The Theory of planned Behaviour, diagram after Ajzen¹

1. Attitude

- Interacting with materials in the workshop
- Engaging in the behaviour to increase the likelihood of continuing the behaviour²

2. Subjective norms

- Hosting workshops in the community meeting place
- Encouraging conversation in the community

3. Perceived Behavioural Control

- The programme structure provided attendees with personalised feedback on their questions about recycling³

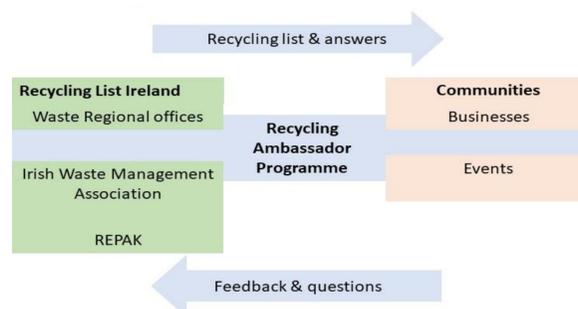


fig 5: Organisational structure and the iterative learning process

The Behaviours and Barriers Survey



fig 6: The survey

5,000 surveys issued (Nov'17 – Aug '18)

1,200 were digitised

Follow up surveys completed online (Oct'18-Jan'19)

A preliminary analysis of 85 pre and post paired responses using McNemar's test for significance of changes was conducted

Analysis of the learning outcomes

What would help you recycle more?

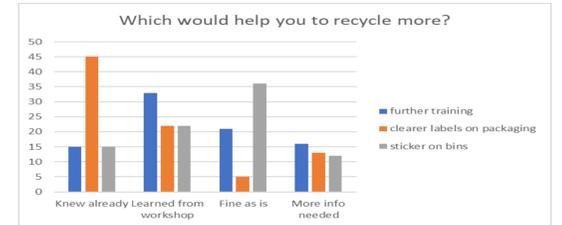


fig 7: Response to the question What would help you recycle more: Training on what I can recycle, Clearer labelling on packages, Sticker on bin explaining what you can recycle

Most of the respondents

- felt they had learnt from the workshop and didn't need more workshops. ($\chi^2 = 5.568, p < 0.05$)
- thought clearer labelling on the packages was and remains an issue, although a sizeable proportion learnt enough from the workshop to handle it themselves. ($\chi^2 = 9.087, p = 0.002 < 0.05$)
- thought stickers on the bins were fine as they were, although some learnt from the workshop how to read the stickers correctly ($\chi^2 = 10.338, p = 0.0013 < 0.05$)

How easy do you find it to recycle plastic bags

pre ↓ post →	Easy	Hard	Not Possit	totals
Easy	11	6	13	30
Hard	3	8	10	21
Not Possible	1	4	25	30
totals	15	18	48	81

Table 1: Response matrix pre and post responses to the question "How easy do you find it to recycle the following material Plastic Bags" ($\chi^2 = 17.486, p = 0.0416 < 0.05$).

- Change towards Not Possible for plastic bags, no matter their previous choices.

Barriers to recycling

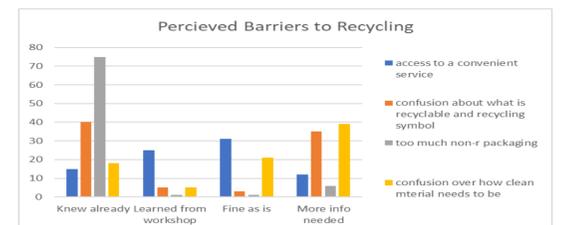


fig 8: Response to the question What would help you recycle more: Training on what I can recycle, Clearer labelling on packages, Sticker on bin explaining what you can recycle

- Most respondents were always of the opinion that there is too much non-recyclable material.
- A small minority thought that they needed more information on this topic ($\chi^2 = 54.131, p = 1.87475E-13 < 0.05$)

Discussion and future analysis

RAP appears to have been well received, the generally low endorsements for further training required would indicate attendees felt their learning needs were met. Some materials that may in the past have been confusing, e.g. plastic bags, are now generally perceived by most people as non recyclable.

For further details please contact : tad@voiceireland.org or www.voiceireland.org

References:

1. Ajzen, I. The Theory of Planned Behavior. *Organ. Behav. Hum. Decis. Process.* 50, 179–211 (1991). 2. Tonglet, M., Phillips, P. S. & Read, A. D. Using the Theory of Planned Behaviour to investigate the determinants of recycling behaviour: a case study from Brixworth, UK. *Resour. Conserv. Recycl.* 41, 191–214 (2004). 3. Timlett, R. E. & Williams, I. D. Public participation and recycling performance in England: A comparison of tools for behaviour change. *Resour. Conserv. Recycl.* 52, 622–634 (2008).