



Dog Fouling Campaign

Executive Summary

Due to the high volume of dog fouling complaints in Renfrewshire, a campaign to address dog fouling was drawn up and initially launched in four pilot areas. The areas were all densely populated, with a mixture of housing stock including tenement blocks, flats, terraced and four-in-a block houses. Whilst the volume of complaints were reasonably high, many residents had become accustomed to seeing dog fouling on pavements and grass, and over time, a culture of acceptance had developed.

The campaign used a mix of community engagement, education and promotion as well as targeted enforcement and utilised various techniques including leaflet drops, increased signage and warden patrols to highlight the importance of clearing up dog mess and 'any bin will do' for its disposal. The community was actively encouraged to report anyone flouting the law. The campaign yielded excellent results with an average 82% reduction in dog mess and 72% of local residents stating that they had noticed a decrease in dog fouling within the four pilot areas. There was a noticeable improvement in their cleanliness and appearance of the area. The approach is currently being extended across Renfrewshire with similar improvements expected.

The project won the Community Engagement Award at the Safer Communities Awards 2012.

Project Background and Aims

Dog fouling is one of the most common complaints from the public in Renfrewshire, with the Renfrewshire Wardens Service receiving over 300 complaints per year about dog fouling spoiling parks and streets. Despite attempts to reduce dog fouling by regular Warden patrols, ongoing clean-up campaigns and joint patrols with Strathclyde Police, the issue continued to be at the forefront of public concern.

The Dog Fouling Campaign was established in May 2011 as part of Clean Renfrewshire, an existing campaign from Renfrewshire Council, which aims to instill pride in local areas and deter people from breaking the law through littering, dumping illegally, spraying graffiti or allowing their dog to foul streets and parks.

The Dog Fouling Campaign is a key initiative within Renfrewshire Council Environmental Services' Service Improvement Plan. The key to the success of the campaign was community engagement, education and targeted enforcement action.

The objectives of the Dog Fouling Campaign were:

- To reduce dog fouling in the areas identified by the public;
- To promote the understanding that 'any bin will do' and responsible dog ownership;
- To enhance the profile of the Renfrewshire Wardens Service;
- To emphasise the need for the community to help Wardens by providing information; and
- To undertake focused patrols at times identified by the public.

In addition to the above objectives, the following outcome targets were set:

- To reduce the level of dog fouling post campaign by 50%; and
- To improve levels of community intelligence by 30 contacts per week post campaign.

Activities

Ten 'hotspot' areas were identified throughout Renfrewshire from analysis of previous complaints received from the public and elected members and Warden knowledge. Four of these areas were chosen to pilot the Dog Fouling Campaign. The proposals were presented at the relevant Local Area Committees to allow community feedback before implementation. Prior to the campaign starting, the pilot areas then underwent a visual inspection and 'poo count' before being cleaned by Renfrewshire Council StreetScene Services.

The Renfrewshire Warden Service carried out a leaflet drop to over 2400 homes, providing details of the campaign. The Wardens actively engaged with the local community through being on hand to raise awareness of the issues and advise them directly about the campaign. Each person spoken to was given a calling card which gave the bearer the details and information required to anonymously report anyone they knew flouting the laws relating to dog fouling. The information provided then allowed Wardens to carry out targeted patrols to coincide with habitual dog walking times. This enabled Wardens to be in the areas at the right time to witness offenders and issue fixed penalty notices and promote the campaign to other dog owners.

The campaign was further highlighted through the erection of 190 high profile 'no dog fouling' signs. These were affixed outside schools, play parks, on street furniture and by local businesses keen to show support. Furthermore, stickers were applied to litter bins advising that any bin can be used to dispose of bagged dog waste. Wardens, along with their mascot 'Buddy the Dog' visited a number of schools to highlight the issue of dog fouling amongst local young people.



The campaign was publicised on the Renfrewshire Community web pages and through Twitter. An advertorial was commissioned for the Renfrewshire Magazine on the work of the Warden Service. The campaign received extensive coverage in the following local papers:- the Gazette, the Paisley Daily Express and the Evening Times. It was also included in the 'Keep Scotland Beautiful' newsletter.

Impact

Each of the five objectives of the Dog Fouling Campaign were exceeded and the improvements in the cleanliness of Renfrewshire have been notable.

Prior to the campaign, the Renfrewshire Wardens Service carried out a visual assessment and dog 'poo count'. In each of the four hotspot areas the level was noted be in excess of 200. Approximately five weeks after the commencement of the campaign a second 'poo count' was undertaken. Across the four areas an 82% average reduction in dog fouling was

seen. The highest reduction was in Paisley South where the 'poo count' was found to be as low as six demonstrating a significant improvement to the cleanliness of the area.

The placement of stickers on bins alerting the public that any free standing litter bin could be utilised for the disposal of bagged dog waste was seen to increase the usage of bins in the areas in question. In some cases, the frequency of bin emptying had to be increased to accommodate disposal of bagged dog waste. Furthermore, due to the awareness raising of the anonymous reporting telephone number and email address, the number of reports of dog fouling increased dramatically with 300 residents reporting dog fouling incidents in the weeks following the launch and information is still being received on a daily basis.

A customer survey was used to gauge the feelings of local residents, with 240 individuals surveyed. The results show that the campaign was well received and produced a good customer reaction:

- 70% of respondents were aware that a dog campaign was running in the area;
- 86% of respondents felt that the campaign was worthwhile;
- 72% of respondents had noticed a decrease in dog fouling in the streets.

The targeted patrols which coincided with the times of habitual dog walking enabled Wardens to be in the areas at the right time to witness offenders. Consequently, 67 Fixed Penalty Notices were served and Wardens were also able to promote the campaign to other dog owners.

The cost for street cleaning (including dog fouling, littering, dumping illegally and spraying graffiti) in Renfrewshire is over £3 million every year. The Dog Fouling Campaign had a budget of £2000 for direct marketing costs. This cost demonstrates preventative spend as the promotion of responsible dog ownership will, in the long run, lead to a reduced level of dog fouling incidents and subsequently a reduced level of complaints needing to be responded to by the Wardens Service.

Monitoring and Evaluation

An evaluation was conducted five weeks after the initial launch of the project using a combination of qualitative and quantitative information. The success in each area was measured in a variety of ways including visual assessment of the area before and after the event, a bin usage assessment and a face to face customer survey. In addition, the level of community intelligence was monitored through community engagement by the Wardens Service.

Lessons Learnt and Sustainability

The initial challenge encountered was getting the public to assist the Service in identifying offenders within their communities. The amount of intelligence received has steadily increased to the extent that Wardens Service now receives information detailing alleged offenders within the community on a daily basis. As a result of the increase in intelligence received a new procedure was developed. Where an alleged offender is identified, a letter is sent directly to them advising them of the complaint made, the legal position and requesting their co-operation in addressing the matter. The complainer is asked to monitor the situation for two/three weeks and advise the Service if no improvements are noted. If further complaints are received foot patrols are carried out in the area. If the offender cannot be identified but it is believed that they live in a communal block or street a general information letter is sent to all residents advising that 'irresponsible dog owners are allowing dogs to foul up their area' and that their assistance is required in identifying the offender. This approach has the dual propose of supporting the community and highlighting to offenders that their neighbours are no longer tolerating their behaviour.

The lessons learnt during the pilot helped shape the roll out of the initiative to additional areas. The next phase of the campaign involved increasing community engagement, with residents themselves telling Wardens which areas and streets needed to be tackled.

The feedback from the community engagement at the Local Area Committees in May 2011 resulted in public demand to extend the Dog Fouling Campaign into other areas. As a result of this and early positive results the pilot study and evaluation were expedited in order to roll-out the campaign quicker and extend it further.

Due to the success of the pilot, the approach is currently being replicated throughout Renfrewshire engaging with the community and seeking similar improvements in the appearance of areas. Plans are also in place to replicate this type of project to tackle school litter in Renfrewshire. This will encourage parents and teachers to join forces to reduce the problem of littering in and around schools caused by schoolchildren.

Resources

Funding: Given the current financial climate, only minimal funding was made available for this project (£2,000 for marketing costs). All other resources sourced from existing budgets.

Partners: Renfrewshire Council Wardens Service, Renfrewshire Council StreetScene, Strathclyde Police, Local Area Committees.

Outcomes

National 9: We live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger.

12: We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations

Local The Dog Fouling Campaign supports the Clean Renfrewshire Campaign in helping to make Renfrewshire a greener place to live.

Practice Note Information

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SCSN Topic Areas: Environment Safety, Public Space Safety, Personal Safety.

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