

CLAHRC Research Summary

Local action to address littering & fly tipping: in the UK



A Very Rapid Review of the Evidence by NIHR NWC CLAHRC's Public Health Theme

Context

Littered environments are not only visually unappealing but they are associated with lower levels of community & personal well-being. Litter is 'most commonly assumed to include materials, often associated with smoking, eating & drinking, that are improperly discarded & left by...the public; or are spilt during business operations' (House of Commons Library, 2017).

Fly tipping is the 'illegal disposal of household, industrial, commercial or other controlled waste without a waste management licence. The waste can be liquid or solid' (House of Commons Library, 2018).

The aim of the review

The review focused on local initiatives that address littering & fly tipping especially in communities blighted by these problems. The review examined what factors contribute to littering

& identified specific anti-littering initiatives.

The review supports the Neighbourhood Resilience Programme currently being implemented in nine disadvantaged neighbourhoods across the North West Coast.

What we did

Rapid searches were conducted using the Web of Science databases, the University of Liverpool's library database & the Google Scholar search engine to identify relevant literature sources. A range of academic & 'grey' policy literature was reviewed.

A pragmatic approach was adopted: we were not aiming at a comprehensive review due to time & resource limitations. Instead we aimed to be systematic in the sense of being transparent about what we did & how we did it.

How did we involve people?

Residents & other local partners

identified the need for this review. The review will contribute to local discussions about tackling litter & fly tipping.

What we found and what does this mean?

A number of factors contribute to a greater propensity of the individual to litter. These are:

- i) *Personal* norms, behaviours & a sense of responsibility i.e. people's ingrained beliefs, habits & attitudes towards littering, & sense of personal & social responsibility.
- ii) *Environmental context* e.g. the condition of the environment; the quality & accessibility of the 'binrastructure'; the ease & convenience of litter disposal.
- iii) *Social factors* e.g. the influence of social networks & prevalence of social approval/disapproval.
- iv) *Enforcement, penalties & benefits* e.g. enforcement officers, fines & incentivising people not to litter.



Interventions

Anti-littering interventions have traditionally focused on two main approaches: i) Public education campaigns & ii) Public authorities introducing penalties or laws to penalise those who litter or fly tip (i.e. deterrent & enforcement approaches).

Systems thinking

However, a 'systems thinking' approach suggests joining up policies on waste with those promoting environmental awareness & behaviours, to all agents from corporations & governments down to individuals.

Local anti-littering initiatives

Free neighbourhood skips

In Walsall, the Council are discussing provision of free skips in each of its 20 electoral wards for bulky household items. This would be for a trial period at a cost of £1,840 per day.

Social inclusion initiative

Boston Council set up 'Operation Fly Swat,' a project that tackles fly tipping & rehabilitates offenders. Working with partners including the local prison, offenders are placed with the 'Council's Fly Swat team to help provide vocational experience & increase the Council's ability to detect & clear up fly tipping incidents.'

'On-the-go' recycling

In Leeds, the #LeedsByExample

project is addressing the lack of 'on-the-go' recycling by setting up a range of recycling options in consumer hubs around the city centre. This is a partnership of the charity Hubbub, Leeds City Council & recycling compliance scheme Ecosurety.

Community-led action

Residents of East Haven in Angus were involved in Scotland's first community-led litter summit. Residents have produced a community litter prevention action plan that links into the Council's anti-litter strategy.

Charity collection points

Birmingham City Council has turned street bins into charity collection points. The more waste that is deposited will result in more money being donated to charity by the scheme's sponsors.

Active community intervention

Leithers Don't Litter is a proactive anti-litter action group based in Edinburgh. It undertakes PR campaigns, litter education with schools & runs an 'adopt a street' scheme.

'Novelty' approaches - ballot bins

Ballot bins have been used to tackle littering, by encouraging people to 'stop & think'. Bins have a double slot where waste can be deposited allowing the public to vote with their rubbish, usually for humorous topics such as 'Messi or Ronaldo?'

References & further reading

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What is CLAHRC NWC?

The NIHR Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health Research & Care, North West Coast is a partnership between universities, NHS, Councils, other stakeholders & the public.

For the full report on which this summary is based contact:

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