Riverside Community Health Project

# Community Environment Project: Newcastle Recycling Champions

# Research Report

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EUROPEAN UNION Investing in Your Future European Regional Development Fund 2007-13

Newcastle Science City

Newcastle City Council

## Acknowledgements

This research would not have been possible without the Recycling Champions: Davie Bell, Lynne Blakey, Portia Muyambo, Abdallah Khamis, Degu Traiku, Mario Nollak, Jama Jama, Sirak Hagos, Mandy Shaw, Bren Riley, Birhane Kifle, Adam Salamba, Fatou Bah, Ebriham Fatty, Eva Lukofo, Joe Kamanga, Eniola Allen-Taylor, Olamide Salim, Farah Karyo, Mehari Estifanos, Sarah Hunter, Eva Krachnakova, Amanda Cavanagh, John Kossi Bakou, Maxwell Lorenzaccio, Laura Sproat, and Megan Johnson.

Thanks also to Anne Bonner and staff at Riverside Community Health Project; Gaby Kitoko and staff at African Caribbean Advice North East; and Jan Shimmin, Lee Sayer and Kate Coulthard at Newcastle City Council, Environmental Education and Enforcement section.

The wider project and the research element were funded by Newcastle Science City and Newcastle City Council.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Background

The Community Environment Project (CEP) was delivered by the Riverside Community Health Project (hereafter Riverside), June 2011 to April 2012, with its key aim *'The delivery of provision to encourage recycling within the most socially and economically deprived wards of Newcastle'*. CEP engaged with areas that house newly arrived communities, specifically Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) and migrant communities, namely Benwell, Newburn, Westgate, Byker and Walker. The research element of the project was budgeted for six days' time across this same period. This Research Report is intended to be read in conjunction with the broader Project Report.

CEP was delivered through Recycling Champions (RCs), identified by Riverside staff in the west end of Newcastle, and African Caribbean Advice North East (ACANE) staff in the east end. RCs volunteered their time, and in return were given training on:

- recycling, reuse and composting waste by staff from Newcastle City Council (NCC) Environmental Education and Enforcement section;
- giving public talks and other ways to promote recycling by Riverside staff;
- conducting a questionnaire survey by the researcher.

The RCs worked within their communities to raise awareness and understanding of waste and environmental issues, and to carry out a questionnaire survey as part of the research element of the Project, which was designed to work collaboratively with Riverside and the RCs in a participatory approach, adopting the key aims set out by Riverside:

- *to explore perceptions and behaviours around 'waste' issues;*
- *to understand barriers to recycling, reuse and composting among minority communities; and*
- *to identify successful approaches to increasing environmental awareness and improving recycling, reuse and composting behaviours*.

This collaborative approach led to a mixed methodology, which included quantitative and qualitative fieldwork: a questionnaire survey (designed by the researcher and RCs, with 226 responses); five focus groups with a total of 22 RCs, as well as Riverside staff; and two participant observation sessions at events organised through CEP.

**Quantitative Results**

The questionnaire results suggest that there is a good level of action taken on recycling, with over 50% of respondents recycling at least one material at least fortnightly, and only 12% not recycling. The majority recycle via the council collections. There is lower reuse behaviour, with 51% stating that they pass on materials for reuse only once a year or never, and very few people using civic amenity sites. The lowest levels of waste reduction activity were around composting, with 23% of respondents composting food and 28% garden waste.

This survey reached a diverse group in terms of ethnicity and length of residence, capturing higher numbers than is usual in market or council oriented surveys of people recently moved to the areas. This can be explained due to the nature of the survey design - namely that it was conducted by RCs themselves – and is a key success of the Project.

**Qualitative Analysis**

The key barrier to recycling, reusing and, especially, composting was lack of awareness regarding what, where and how to 'correctly' complete these tasks, as well as the ways in which to reduce waste more generally. There was a strong awareness among RCs and their communities that they *should* recycle, and a willingness and intention to do so. A common discussion point was the need for clearer and more detailed information.

The need for some translation of written materials, and the importance of interpreting verbal information, was raised at every focus group and participant observation session. The critical message from CEP was that more thought and resources should be given to reaching diverse communities – but that this does not need to be extensive and expensive, but targeted and delivered through local community groups and residents.

A range of broadly 'cultural and lifestyle' differences affecting waste behaviours emerged. The need to be organised and have a habit/routine around recycling was highlighted over and above environmental values. This was often discussed with regard to household roles, and was gendered differently across recycling and reuse activity.

Critically, no clear attitudes regarding waste reduction or environmental values can be directly attached to specific ethnic groups' cultural beliefs or practices. The key cultural factor that affected waste behaviours was that of mobility. Moving into an area was reported as affecting recycling, etc. behaviours in that every local authority area appears to have different services, which residents find confusing. Issues of mobility are interconnected with

lack of awareness, then, but should also be considered in terms of cultural background, since moving from another country (and often for reasons of seeking asylum) further impacts levels of awareness. Thus, it is important to note that the mobility factor can be more directly linked with people born outside England, and the Roma community in Newcastle. However, it is not limited to these groups.

The issue of 'class' position emerged in complex and contradictory ways. Many participants believed that society is geared to getting new things, and that people – paradoxically especially those in more deprived areas – have a 'pride around' not having second hand. While focus groups discussed passing on unwanted items to second hand/charity shops, they themselves rarely opt for reused items. Passing/reusing things within families was considered more acceptable, but among English born and migrant communities alike there was a presumption towards reuse for others, but new for themselves.

At the same time, participants identified social pressures to conform, and the sense that when everyone else puts their bin out for recycling in the street, '*you feel you have to as well or everyone will know that you're not doing your bit*'. However, this is undermined with exasperation at those who '*don't care about our place*', and RCs recounted instances of fly-tipping, and recycling bins being stolen and misused.

The cost of recycling, green waste collection and home composting bins was of great concern. People reported having no bins because they were missing when they moved in or were stolen at some point, and (complicated by the fact that people were largely unaware of the need to phone NCC helpline in order to get a replacement bin) could not or resented having to pay for new ones. Bulky waste collection was also a contentious cost. Prioritising budgets for rent/mortgage and everyday needs came well buying a new blue, brown or compost bin. With NCC's budgets being squeezed, this will continue to be a difficult issue: the research clearly found an inclination to use council provision where free and convenient.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

Given the short timescale of CEP, and the limited research element, recommendations offer a broad framework for future initiatives on waste reduction more than specific details. The key point is that the success of CEP should be built upon, to harness its momentum.

There is a clear need for <u>further waste awareness education</u>, in particular regarding the details of what can/cannot be recycled; where and how to best pass items over for reuse, including civic amenity sites; composting; and waste reduction in terms of consumption.

While CEP significantly improved awareness of the first of these, there is more to do around the rest, and RCs suggested several key approaches, including:

- translation;
- face-to-face delivery; and
- schools work.

Any education work would be best delivered through collaborative working, rather than a 'top down' approach. Partnership working can build trust for effective behavioural change among residents. Key successes of CEP were due to its collaborative approach, but it must be noted that community organisations are already stretched, and should be properly resourced if they are to deliver waste initiatives in partnership with NCC.

RCs identified several specific actions they would be keen to undertake:

- receive further training on more waste reduction issues;
- write a 'factsheet' for local communities, including translation where relevant;
- design posters, again with some element of translation;
- work in/with schools; and
- organise more 'community swap days'.

A longer term approach is also required. This is in part because of mobility issues in more marginalised communities, with constant movement of residents into these areas and thus always new people to learn the specific NCC recycling 'rules', and about local facilities for reuse such as civic amenity sites. It is also important to build more meaningful trust between local authority and residents.

There are significant financial challenges involved. The above measures could be a cost-effective way to effectively increase recycling, reuse and composting activity in more disadvantaged areas of Newcastle. The challenge will be to ensure that organisations and individuals are properly resourced and supported, through (no doubt) a variety of funding streams. A specific challenge for NCC is to find ways to minimise direct costs to individuals for waste collection/reduction services (particularly the cost of replacement bins, bulky and garden waste collections). Better awareness among communities should, in the long term, reduce use of bins for other purposes, for example. And explanation of the costs that exist, through RCs, can lower resentment towards them.

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# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Community Environment Project (CEP) was delivered by the Riverside Community Health Project (hereafter Riverside), June 2011 to April 2012, with its key aim *'The delivery of provision to encourage recycling within the most socially and economically deprived wards of Newcastle'*. In particular, CEP engaged with those areas that house newly arrived communities, specifically Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) and migrant communities, namely Benwell, Newburn, Westgate, Byker and Walker. The research element of the project was budgeted for six days' time across this same period. This Research Report is intended to be read in conjunction with the broader Project Report.

## 1.1 Project Background

Riverside is an established and well-networked charity in the west end of Newcastle with 25 years' expertise of community development, helping local people to identify and address issues that affect them, their communities and local environment. Riverside works with people from a wide range of minority ethnic migrant backgrounds, including Czech, Libyan, Slovakian, Romanian, Roma, Latvian, Bangladeshi, Chinese, and Afghan families, alongside more established BME and white communities, providing services to families with young children, older people, and young people. Riverside support people to bring about change in their own communities and improve their quality of life.

Recognising that the environment can play an important part in people's wellbeing, the central objective of CEP was to *'help inner city residents learn and understand how to effectively reduce, reuse, recycle or compost a variety of household waste, and be aware of broader sustainability issues'*. In addition to the benefit for all residents in terms of an improved and sustainable environment, CEP was conceived with the intention that the individual participants and organisations involved should also benefit in terms of increasing skills, confidence, knowledge and networking. In brief, the Project was delivered through Recycling Champions (RCs), individuals identified and approached by Riverside staff in the west end of Newcastle, and African Caribbean Advice North East (ACANE) staff in the east end. ACANE and Riverside have worked together in the past.

RCs volunteered their time, and in return were given training on:

- recycling, reuse and composting waste by staff from Newcastle City Council (NCC) Environmental Education and Enforcement section;
- giving public talks and other ways to promote recycling by Riverside staff;
- conducting a questionnaire survey by the researcher.

The RCs were then supported through CEP to work with their communities to raise awareness and understanding of waste and environmental issues, and to carry out a key element of the research.

This approach aimed to embed an understanding and appreciation of the value of minimal waste and maximum recycling. Riverside and ACANE drew upon their close links with diverse communities to recruit RCs, working with existing groups, eg. Roma women's group, Afghan community meetings, ESOL classes, as these activities provided access to a broad audience who already engage with community-based provision and services. Volunteer RCs were tasked with targeting isolated families and individuals through local knowledge of their neighbourhood, friendships, and networks. This was to ensure that subsequent awareness raising work by RCs focused on identified gaps in knowledge or activity, in order to complement NCC's on-going endeavours regarding raising awareness of waste minimisation, recycling and composting, largely delivered by the Environmental Education and Enforcement section.

### 1.2 Research

The research element involved working with Riverside and the RCs in a participatory approach, to capture the attitudes and understanding of different communities and neighbourhoods, and to identify particular gaps in knowledge and behaviours, around waste reduction, recycling, composting and other related environmental issues. It was also aligned to the broader Project in that it aimed to offer training to RCs to undertake research themselves, and to influence the process and progress of the research.

This report outlines the methodological approach in **Section 2**, which ultimately involved both quantitative and qualitative research, presenting the empirical data of the former in **Section 3** and offering analysis and discussion of all empirical material in **Section 4**. **Section 5** presents conclusions and recommendations.

# 2.0 METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the central methodological approach adopted, discusses the key participants in the research process, and details the quantitative and qualitative fieldwork conducted. The research was given ethical clearance by Northumbria University through its Research Ethics Committee process, prior to research starting. All analysis and reporting was anonymised, and data held in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

## 2.1 Collaborative Approach

From the outset, the research element of CEP adopted a 'bottom up' approach, working from a broadly 'participatory action research' paradigm (Kindon et al., 2007) which emphasises project and research participants taking ownership, where possible, of the process. This was both appropriate to the ways in which Riverside work generally, and also to address the difficult research ethics involved in academic research with local communities; to avoid extractive ways of working that result in research being 'done to' 'respondents', but rather working *in collaboration with* participants.

The research thus adopted the three key aims set out by Riverside for the CEP at its inception:

- to explore perceptions and behaviours around 'waste' issues;
- to understand barriers to recycling, reuse and composting among minority communities; and
- to identify successful approaches to increasing environmental awareness and improving recycling, reuse and composting behaviours.

It set out to involve Riverside staff and the RCs in shaping the direction of research. Throughout, a formative ongoing evaluation was important to ensure that the research was iterative, and remained responsive to participant organisation and individual needs and feedback: any approaches found to be unsuitable for particular communities were identified and activities reviewed and revised to maximise project impact. Thus, what was initially planned was reshaped in the light of logistical difficulties and reflective responses from Riverside staff and the RCs themselves (see **2.2** below).

An initial meeting was held with the CEP Development Worker, after which the researcher conducted a focus group (see **2.4** below) with nine members of staff at Riverside, to ascertain their opinions on the issues around 'waste' amongst the minority communities they work closely with through Riverside. From this initial meeting and focus group, it was decided to adopt a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, to better achieve the project's aims, collect both robust and detail-rich empirical data, and also fulfil Riverside's desire/need to evidence the wider Project's reach across minority communities. Staff felt that quantitative surveys would be more manageable for RCs to undertake, fitted better into their understandings of what a 'research project' involves, and would evidence reaching a higher number of individuals than if RCs tried to conduct interviews. It was also agreed that the researcher would hold focus groups with the RCs to get their feedback on verbal comments/opinions amongst questionnaire respondents not captured by the questionnaires, and attend one or two events held as part of CEP, adding a discursive element to the methods as outlined below (**2.4** and **2.5**).

Therefore, the methodologies adopted were both quantitative (questionnaire survey conducted by the RCs), and qualitative (focus groups with the RCs, and participant observation at two CEP events).

### 2.2 Working with Recycling Champions

A key element of CEP was to recruit, train and raise awareness of waste issues through a model involving 'Recycling Champions' (RCs), building on previously successful initiatives undertaken by Riverside. Volunteers across minority migrant, BME and local communities in the west and east ends of Newcastle were identified by Riverside and, at a slightly later stage in the project, ACANE: these were generally individuals who have some role as community leaders or recognised figures. This can be described as purposive sampling (Parfitt, 2005). These RCs participated in initial focus groups with the researcher:

- to gauge awareness and behaviours around waste minimisation, recycling, reuse and composting among RCs;
- to design the questionnaire together with them;
- to offer basic training on how to conduct a questionnaire survey; and
- to discuss how RCs could best identify key messages, recognise barriers, and highlight key suggestions to help build a robust approach to waste disposal and recycling across diverse communities.

RCs then received training through the wider CEP (see Project Report and **1.1** above) to deliver talks to their communities and raise awareness of waste issues. They then conducted the questionnaire survey, before communicating recycling, reuse and composting information to family, friends, neighbours and their local communities. While undertaking both these activities, they gathered key messages identified by their wider communities on the (real and perceived) barriers and (actual and potential) enablers to recycling etc.. These key messages were discussed in follow up focus groups with the RCs.

2.2.1 Key issues

Initially, 18 RCs began on the Project in the west end, but some of this group, and in particular one individual, raised issues with Riverside regarding recompense (in the form of vouchers) in return for their participation. They argued that, increasingly, market research and consultancy firms have offered such payments in return for respondents' time when conducting questionnaire surveys door-to-door and in public spaces (predominantly shopping areas), while NCC has also offered such 'rewards' at times for attendance at Civic Centre or other community events in the city centre. The researcher is also aware that such 'returns' are becoming more commonplace within academic research, as one way of addressing the ethics of 'giving back' to research participants (Pain and Kindon, 2007): ie. there is a need to recognise the broader marketization of research led by private consultancy firms, within which all research takes place.

Riverside staff had been explicit with RC recruits regarding the role asked of them, and what they could expect to receive in return (skills and knowledge training, transport costs to and from meetings/training, refreshments, crèche facilities where necessary and any other out-of-pocket expenses). Riverside staff listened to the concerns raised, and contacted the funders to see whether such vouchers could be provided: the initial budget request for interpretation was proving unnecessary in practice (see **4.2**), and they asked to transfer this allocation of funds to thank people for their participation with vouchers. However, this was not possible, and vouchers could not be offered, and six of the west end group of RCs decided to withdraw from CEP. It is important to outline this situation here, since issues regarding financial situations emerged as a key theme throughout the research, and will be discussed in **4.4**. Four new RCs were then recruited in the west end, and six in the east end of Newcastle through ACANE. While some of these individuals queried the possibility of vouchers/rewards, all stayed with the Project.

### 2.3 Questionnaire Survey

A questionnaire (see Appendix I) and Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix II) were developed by the researcher together with ten RCs in the focus group session in Sept. 2011, and administered by the RCs between Sept. and the end of Dec. 2011. This was to gather 'baseline' data on recycling, reuse and composting behaviours, as well as prompt discussion between RCs and members of their local communities regarding what enabled them to and prevented them from reusing, recycling and composting waste. This first focus group, then, elicited RCs' opinions and perspectives on the key issues via group debate (see **2.4** below), through the activity of designing the questionnaire for the Project. Once the final draft was agreed amongst the group, the RCs were then trained in basic questionnaire survey skills by the researcher.

Each RC was tasked with completing 15 questionnaires with members of their communities, face-to-face, and to sample a cross section as broadly representative across their minority community as possible (older, middle aged and younger adults; men and women; people both in employment and not; etc). However, given the small numbers per RC, this cannot be described as a representative sampling strategy of the survey as a whole; rather this survey incorporated non-random sampling at the individual RC level and quota sampling at the broader, survey-wide level (Parfitt, 2005).

Unfortunately, given the limited scope of the research element of CEP, it was not possible to train RCs to input or analyse the quantitative data collected, and the researcher undertook basic statistical analysis, utilising SPSS and Excel software.

#### 2.3.1 Key issues

It must be recognised that there was inevitably a degree of sampling bias towards friends and family of the RCs. In such a participatory approach (involving multiple people conducting the questionnaire), where time is limited (due to short term nature of CEP and minimal element of funding within CEP), this was unavoidable.

It is also noted that, in surveys where there are perceived 'correct' civic behaviours understood across broader society (ie. people are aware that they *should* minimise waste, recycle and compost as a broader societal discourse), responses err towards over emphasising 'good' behaviours rather than truly reflecting 'bad' (see Barr et al., 2003).

Ultimately, 226 questionnaires were returned to the CEP Development Worker, from an ideal 420 (15 each per 28 RCs). This took longer than had been planned, and was difficult to manage in practice: it was not possible to control returns from so many individuals who were volunteers, with often busy and uncertain day to day lives, and other priorities. Originally, a second questionnaire survey had been intended (in discussion at the focus group with Riverside staff), to capture individuals' changes in recycling, reuse and composting habits after the RCs had raised awareness across communities at the local level. However, it was decided between researcher and Development Worker in Jan. 2012 to abandon a second questionnaire, due to:

- the challenging logistics of the first survey;
- the demands on RCs' time (given voluntarily) of CEP already; and
- the high probability that RCs would not be able to conduct the second questionnaire survey with the same individuals as the first survey, given the mobility and marginalised positions of their communities, alongside changes to personal circumstances that occur across time in any community which research cannot control for (Law, 2004).

Instead, research shifted to focus more carefully on the follow up qualitative research in Jan. and Feb. 2012, alongside participant observation on the Project.

### 2.4 Focus Groups

In order to capture more rich and explanatory data regarding perceptions and behaviours around recycling, reuse and composting, focus group interviews were undertaken. Focus groups are intended as informal 'conversations', which encourage and facilitate discussion (between researcher and participant/s, and participants with each other in the group setting) to better understand underlying reasons for opinions and behaviours (Hay, 2000; Valentine, 2005).

In all, five focus groups were held with a total of 22 RCs (see Appendix III). One focus group was conducted with RCHP staff at the start of the research, to gather their views on the central issues among the communities they work with: as staff they have everyday contact with minority communities and it was important to get a grounding of issues in the area to develop the methods. Two focus groups were then held, one each with RCs recruited from the west and east ends of Newcastle, to ask their own opinions and perceptions around

'waste', recycling, reuse and composting, and what the key barriers to such activities are for themselves as well as their communities. Two more focus groups were held with the RCs after they had completed the questionnaire survey, been given training on waste issues and gone on to cascade waste awareness among their communities, in Jan. and Feb. 2012. At these focus groups, the key messages regarding barrier and enablers to recycling, reuse and composting collected by RCs were discussed.

### 2.5 Participant Observation

Participant observation involved taking part in CEP events in order to better appreciate the processes and discourses surrounding the area of research interest (Cook, 2005). The researcher attended waste awareness training delivered by Newcastle City Council Environment Education and Enforcement staff to a group from Byker, as well as the Celebration event held at the Assembly Rooms towards the end of the Project (see Appendix III for details of participants).

All the qualitative data was coded and analysed using a grounded theory approach (Devine and Heath, 2009).

# 3.0 QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

This section of the Report contains descriptive statistics, intended to offer a broad overview of the recycling, reuse and composting behaviours among respondents: given the relatively small sample size, significance testing (statistical modelling of 'difference' across categories) was not possible; and given the tendencies to positive responses outlined in **2.3.1**, such testing was also considered inappropriate in this particular situation (see Parfitt, 2005).

The questionnaire surevy suggests that, overall, there is a good level of awareness around and action taken on recycling; much less awareness and behaviour with regards to the reuse of materials; and low levels of knowledge around composting, with fewer respondents composting either food or garden waste.

## 3.1 Respondent Profile

226 questionnaires were completed, with the breakdown of respondents as follows:

- 40% were male, 56% female;
- 48% have children, 42% do not have children;
- 48% were born overseas, 44% were born in the UK;
- 47% stated that English is not their first language, 46% said it is;
- 63% live in a house, 31% live in a flat.

It should be noted here that there was some debate between RCs when designing the questionnaire about questions 10 to 14 (see Appendix I), regarding collecting personal details and information on social categorisations. Asking people's ethnicity, length of residence, place of birth, English as first language or not, etc. can be highly sensitive and is often contested, especially among people from asylum seeking/refugee and other marginalised positions, eg. due to the cultural and social implications of such questions. It was agreed at the focus group and training with the researcher that questionnaire respondents should be offered the choice not to respond to any of those questions they felt uncomfortable giving information about. Thus there were null responses to some personal information questions, as shown in respondent profile figures above (eg. 4% respondents did not answer the question on gender). Throughout this section, 'no answer' responses are

presented with the data for clarity, as in each case null responses were less than 10% of total.

Figures 3.1 and 3.2 show (respectively) length of residence and ethnic background of the respondents across the survey. This survey reached a highly diverse respondent group in terms of ethnicity especially, and a broad range of individuals in terms of length of residence, capturing especially high numbers than is usual in more market or council oriented surveys of people recently moved to the areas. This can be explained due to the nature of the survey design - namely that it was conducted by RCs themselves – and should be considered a key success of the Project (as discussed in **4.7**).

Figure 3.3 highlights the residence of respondents by postcode areas. While the results show responses from people outside the official target areas of Newcastle Science City funders (as aligned to European Regional Development Fund priorities regarding 'residents living in disadvantaged areas'), it is important to recognise that this is also a function of the survey design: RCs did not prioritise individuals by postcode area, rather they approached people from their communities, more broadly understood by the RCs in terms of ethnicity and/or place of origin rather than by place of current residence. It was decided not to exclude individual responses from outside target postcodes, in line with the broader aims of CEP as set out at the start, but to consider all replies from the survey as conducted by the RCs – whom RCs consider to be relevant respondents is more critical to the research element of the Project than funders' stricter priorities.

Figure 3.1: Length of current residence of questionnaire respondents

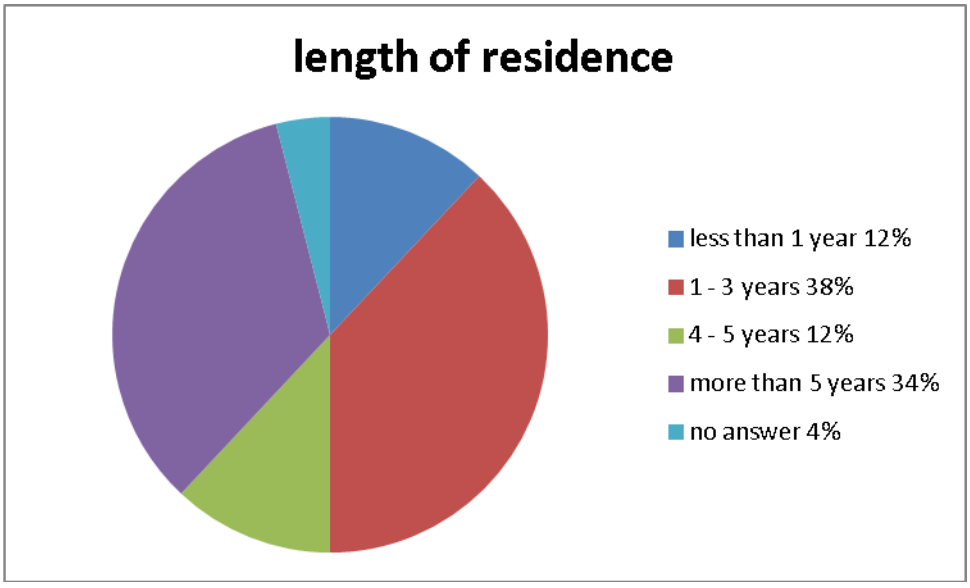


Figure 3.2: Respondents' ethnic background

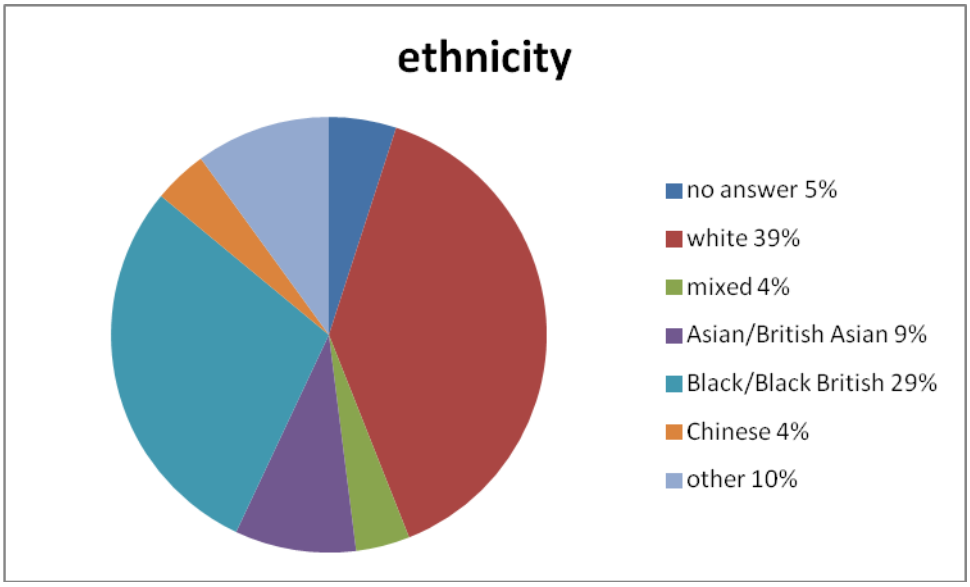
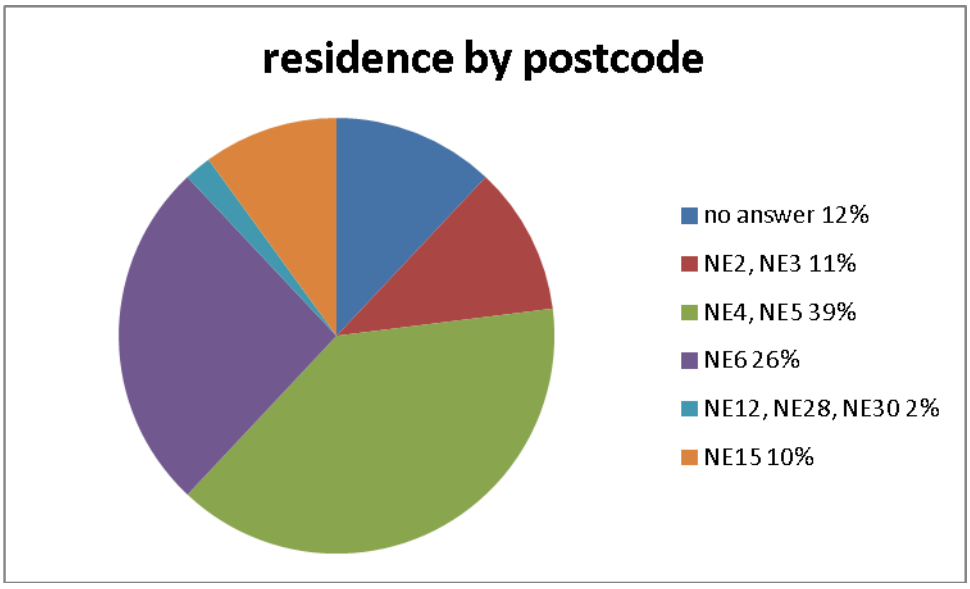



Figure 3.3: Respondents' residence by postcode



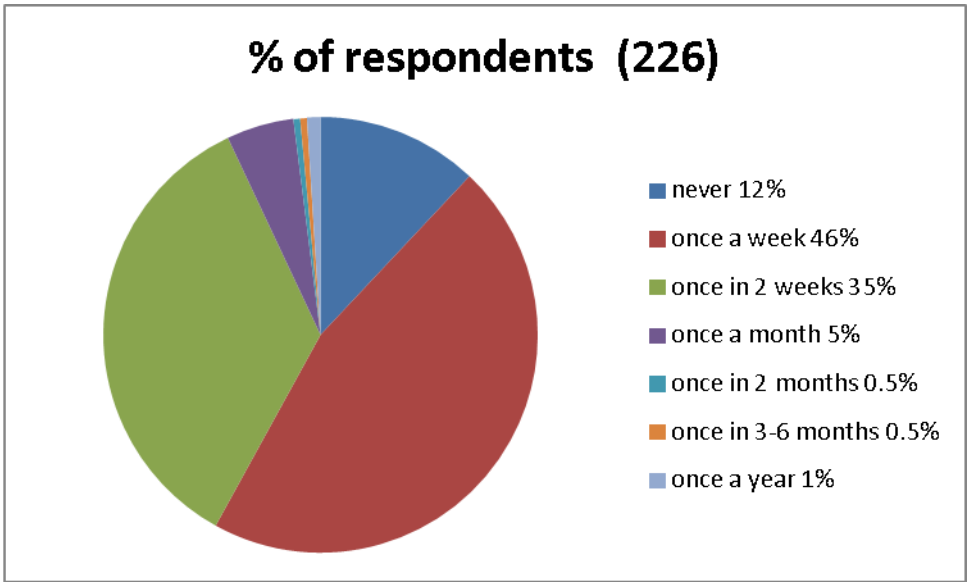

Postcodes were combined into larger areas for these results, namely:

- NE2, NE3 = Jesmond, Spital Tongues, Gosforth and Fawdon
- NE4, NE5 = Fenham, Westgate, Newcastle West
- NE6 = Walker, Byker
- NE12, NE28, NE30 = Killingworth, Wallsend, Battle Hill and North Shields ie North Tyneside residents
- NE15 = Throckley and Newburn

### 3.2 Recyling Rates and Behaviours

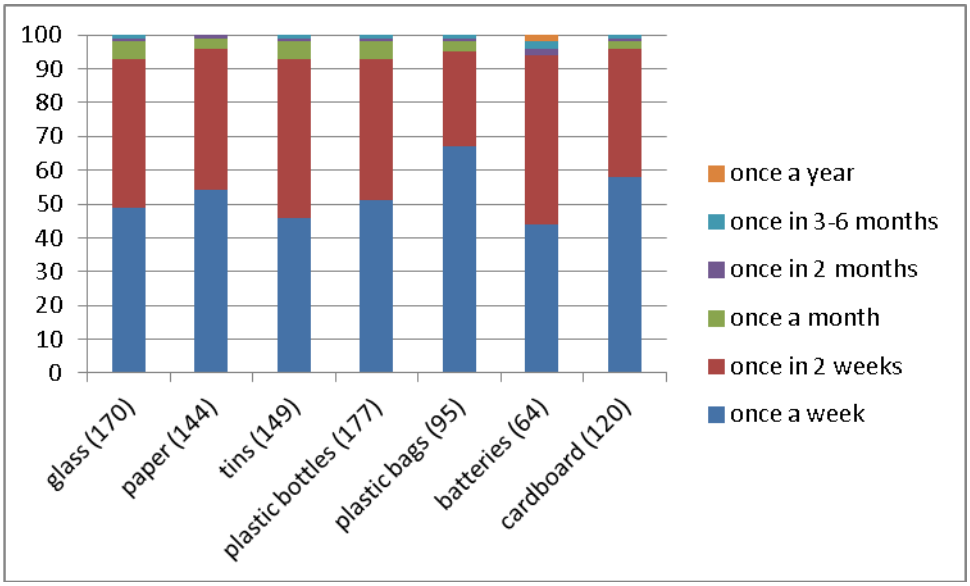
Figure 3.4 shows that the majority of respondents say that they recycle either once a week (46%) or once a fortnight (35%). This figure is higher than had been anticipated, possibly reflecting some 'intentional' responses rather than strictly behavioural activity (see **2.3.1** above). It is not possible to ascertain from this survey, due to its design, whether this 81% represents the majority of those households' glass, paper, tins, etc. being recycled – or one bottle and a few pieces of paper per week/fortnight, with the remainder in the bin. What this result does clearly show is a significant level of awareness and reported behaviour around recycling among the questionnaire respondents.

Figure 3.4: Recycling rates across questionnaire survey




However, breaking down recycling activity into different materials shows some differentiation across the responses. Figure 3.5 shows the numbers of individuals who state that they recycle a particular material (in brackets along the horizontal axis), with the vertical axis a percentage of that group in terms of frequency of recycling in general, not necessarily that particular material. Plastic bottles and glass are recycled by more people than plastic bags and batteries, which suggests areas where more waste awareness education/information may be targeted.

Figure 3.5: Recycling rates by material




It is clear that the majority of respondents recycle via the council collections - blue bins for individual households and communal bins for flats – with over 50% stating that they do so weekly, see Figures 3.6 and 3.7. (NB. It was clear from later focus group discussions that many RCs and respondents interpreted this question as asking how often individuals place items in the blue bins, not how often they are collected.)

Figure 3.6: Recycling behaviours as per method of recycling

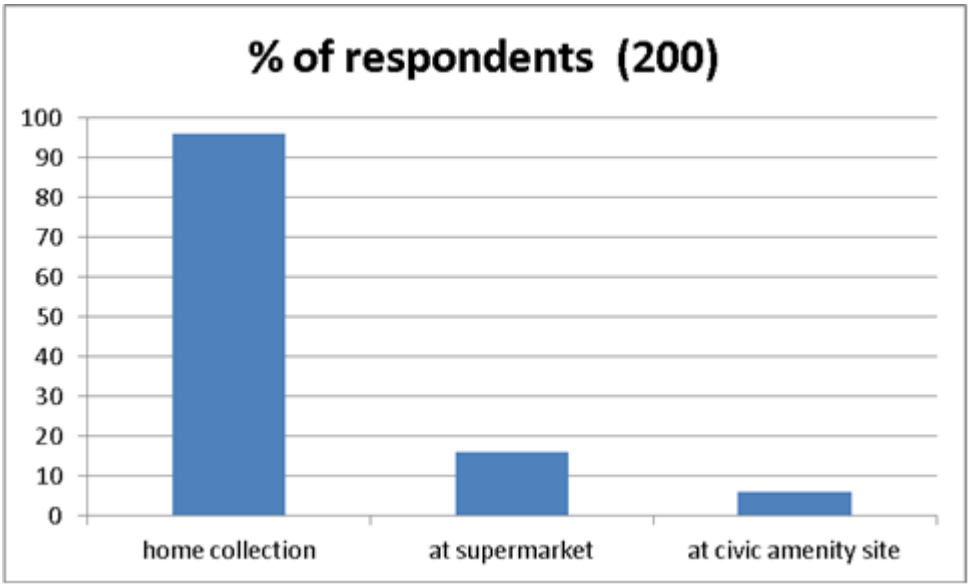
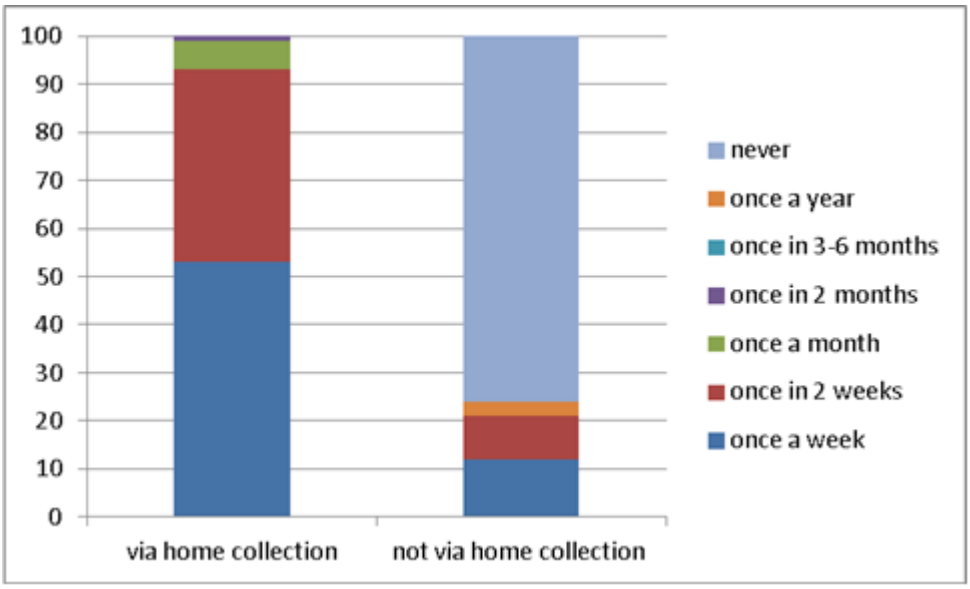
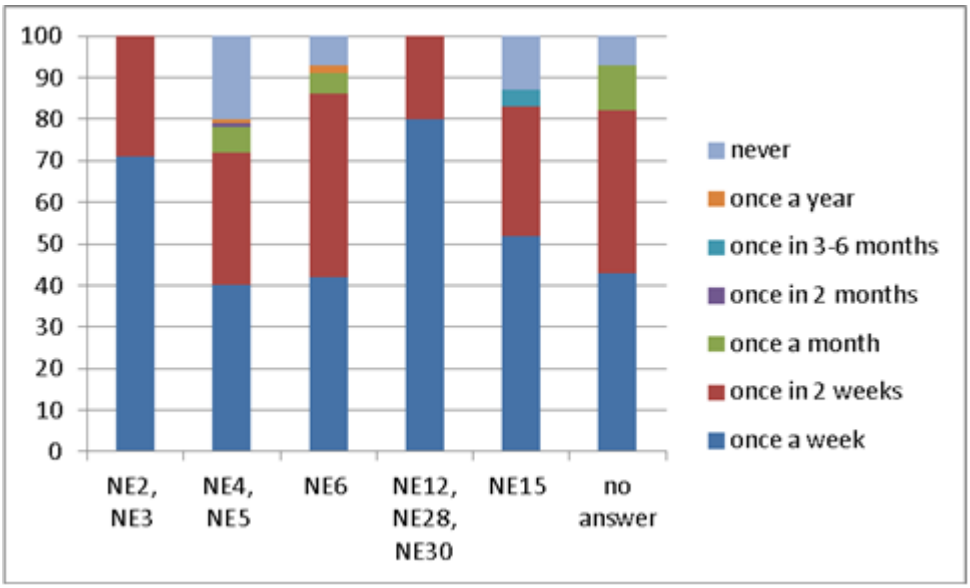


Figure 3.7: Recycling rates as per method of recycling




There is some difference across the areas surveyed, with highest recycling (every one or two weeks) reported in NE2, 3, 12, 28 and 30, and lowest in NE3 and 4 (see Figure 3.8). This may suggest areas for future targeted waste/recycling awareness education/information campaigns by local authorities and other funded projects through community organisations.

Figure 3.8: Recycling rates by postcode




100% people of Chinese backgrounds reported recycling at least every fortnight, while just over 50% who identified as 'other' ethnic category recycle this often (Figure 3.9). Most of the latter respondents identified further as Iranian or Romanian. This result can be interpreted as

due to the higher levels of both mobility and marginalisation among these groups, the latter especially, rather than any specific 'cultural difference'. In terms of gender, there was similar response from men and women (Figure 3.10) as to recycling activity. These issues are discussed further in **4.3**, drawing on the qualitative research.

Figure 3.9: Recycling rates by ethnicity

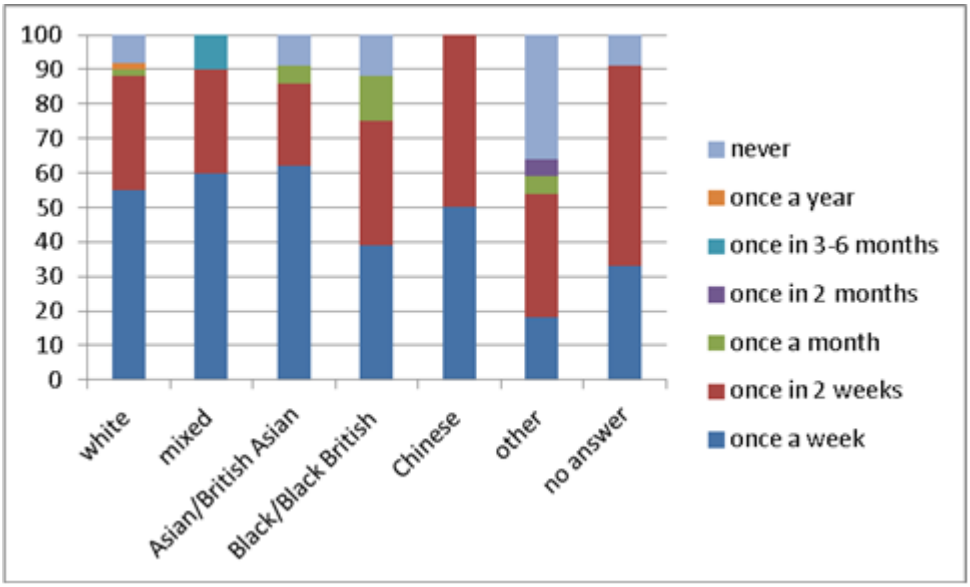
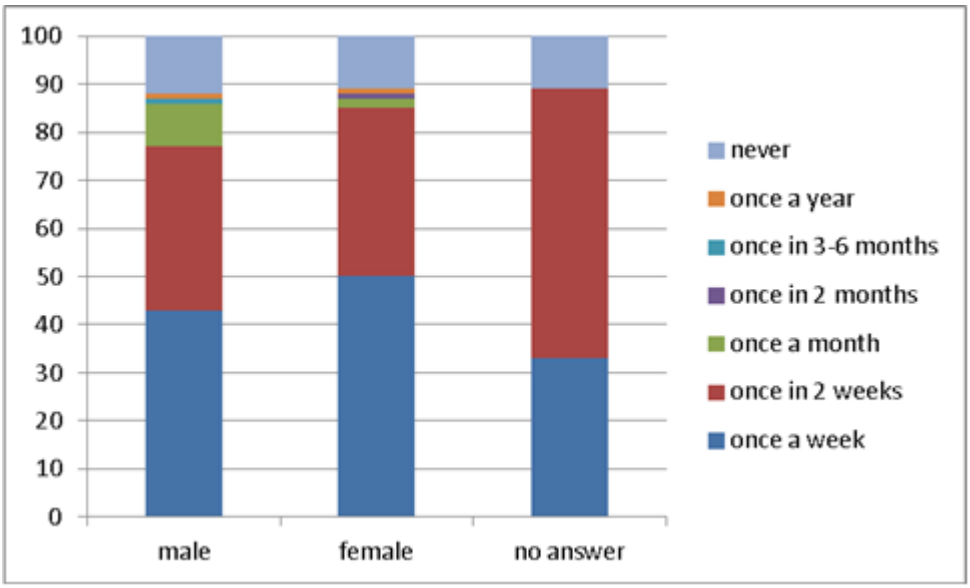



Figure 3.10: Recycling rates by gender




Results show more frequent recycling cycling activity among respondents with English as their first language (Figure 3.11) and those born in England (Figure 3.12), which is

unsurprising and corroborates issues regarding lack of waste awareness and language issues, rather than cultural attitudes to waste issues (see **4.1** and **4.2**).

Figure 3.11 Recycling rates by English language

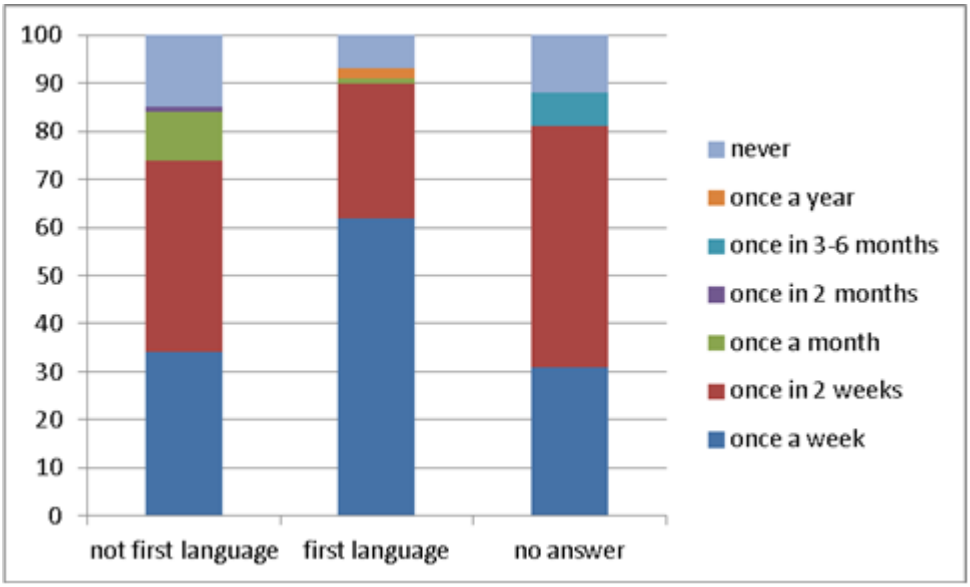
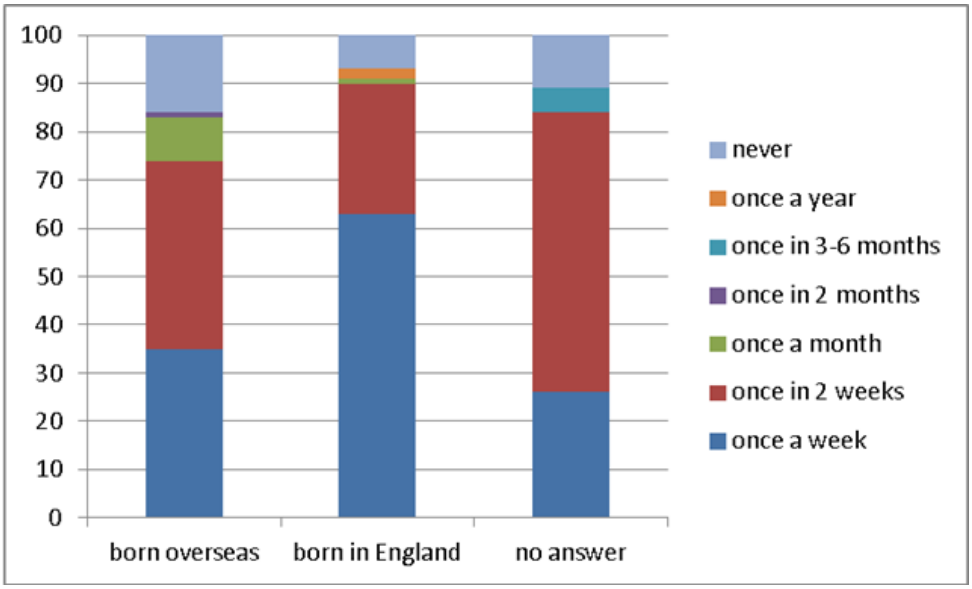
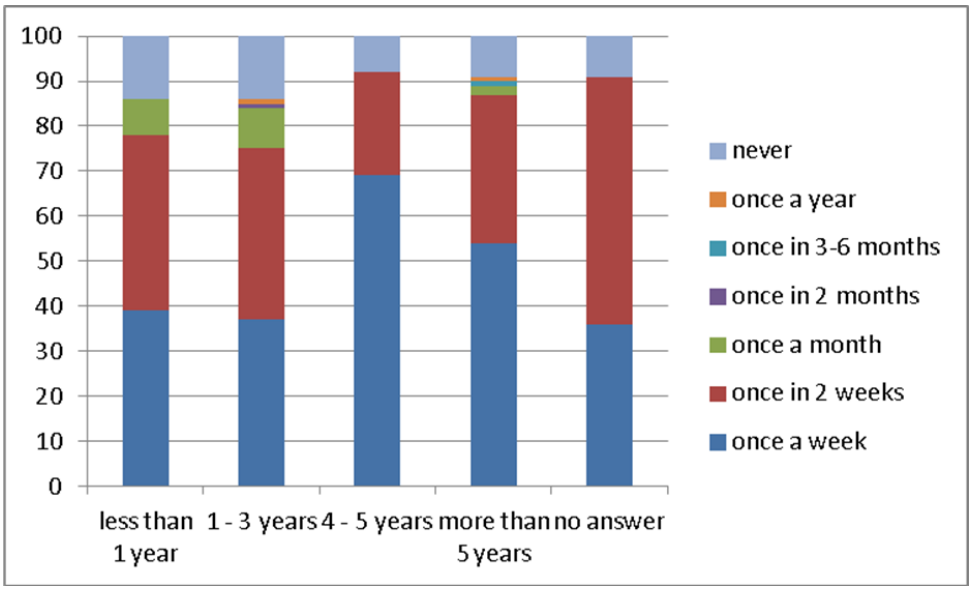



Figure 3.12: Recycling rates by place of birth



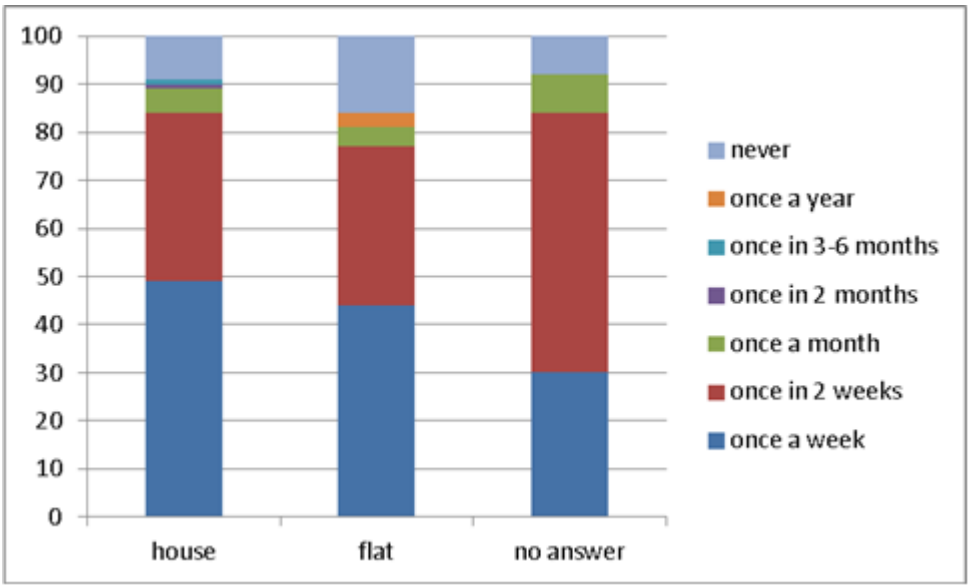

Recycling behaviour by length of residence resulted in perhaps the most surprising results (Figure 3.13). Taking the recycling rate of at least every two weeks, it is those residents who have lived in the area for 4-5 years who report highest rates (over 90%), and those living in the area less than one year recycling marginally more than those who have lived there 1-3 years. This anomaly could not be explained by RCs in later focus groups.

Figure 3.13: Recycling rates by length of residence




Recycling is undertaken more by people living in houses than in flats (Figure 3.14), which is commonly reported among waste behaviour surveys and unsurprisingly a result of spatial issues and everyday logistics for individual residents (see Bulkeley and Askins, 2009). This is discussed further in **4.6**.

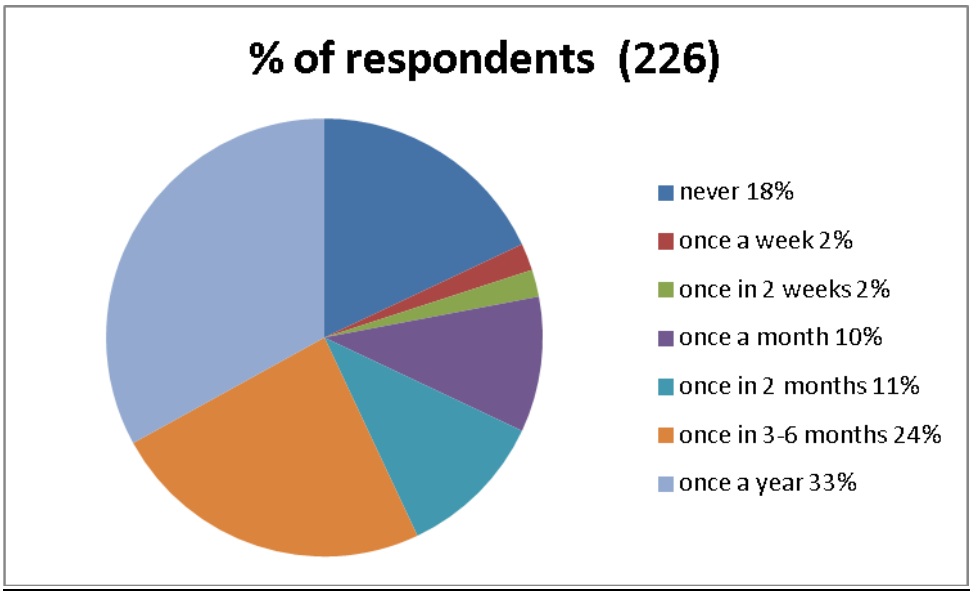
Figure 3.14: Recycling rates by type of residence



### 3.3 Reuse Rates and Behaviours

Reuse activity was reported as far less frequent than recycling across the survey, with a slight majority (51%) stating that they pass on materials for reuse only once a year or never (Figure 3.15). This should be of some concern to NCC, given that reuse comes above recycling in terms of best environmental practice in the 'waste hierarchy'.

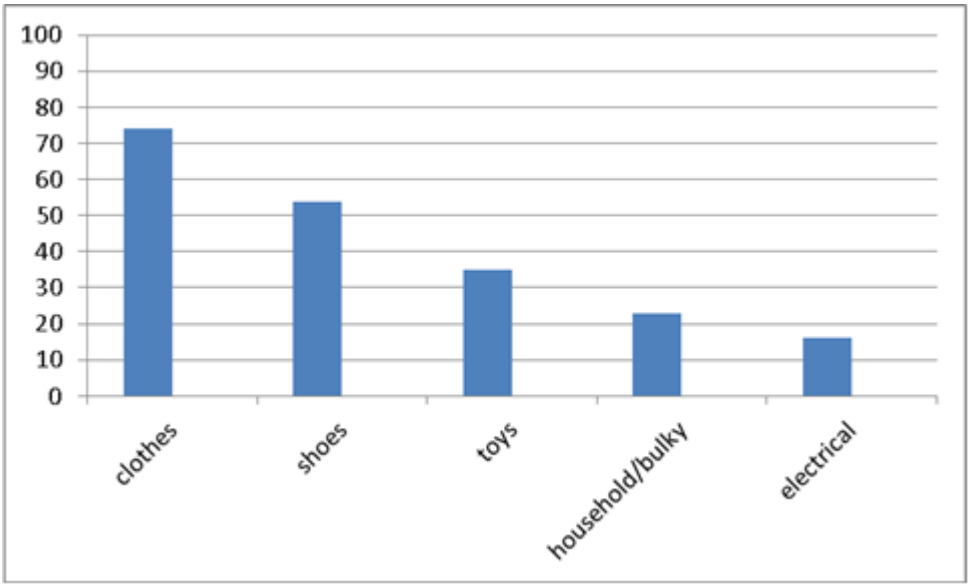
Figure 3.15: Reuse rates across questionnaire survey




Clothes and shoes were the most common materials given for reuse: Figure 3.16 shows the percentages of people who pass on different materials for reuse, but due to the design of the questionnaire this data cannot be broken down into frequency for each different material – thus over 70% of respondents say that they pass clothes on for reuse, but this may be only once a year.

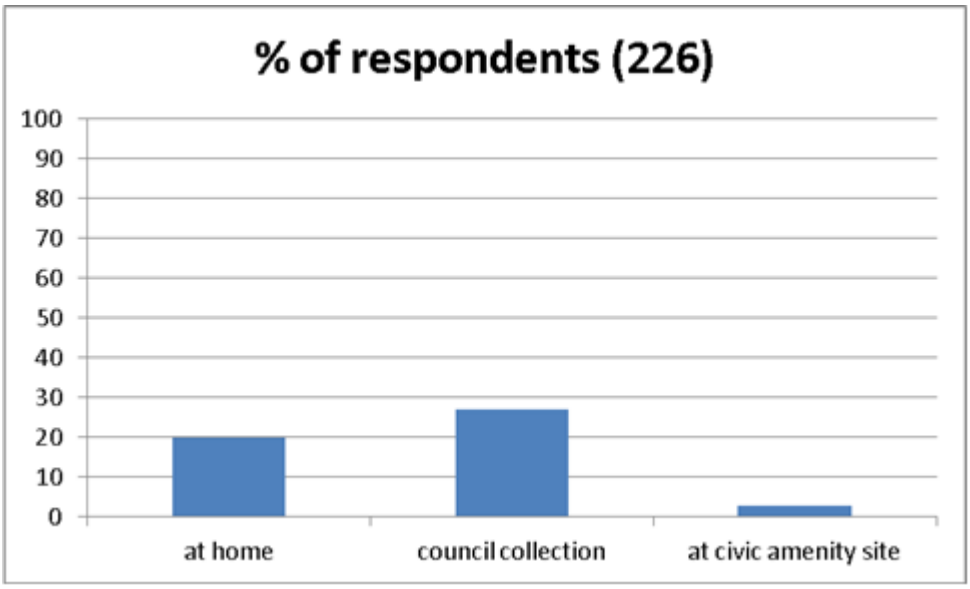
The low percentage of respondents passing electrical items for reuse is of particular concern, given the UK government's WEEE Directive. Of course, broken electrical goods would not be considered for reuse, but it was clear in early focus groups that there was almost complete lack of knowledge regarding the recycling of electrical components. Indeed, at the questionnaire design stage, RCs decided to try and capture what people do with electrical goods under 'reuse' category, since they are not recyclable in the blue bin thus RCs did not identify these items as being recycleable.

Figure 3.16: Reuse rates by material



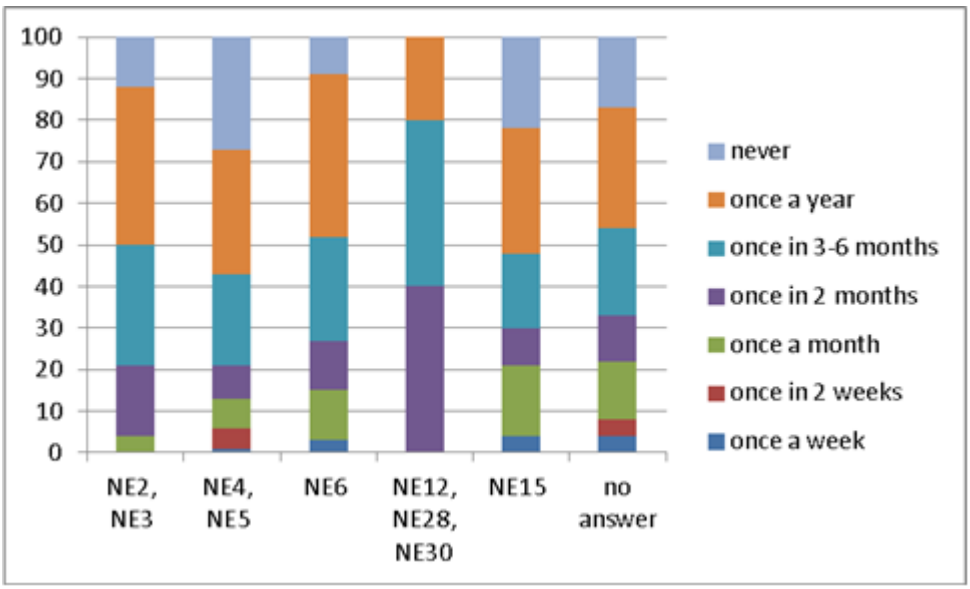

The low figures for electrical items and household/bulky waste should be interpreted in conjunction with the methods utilised for reuse, in particular the results regarding use of civic amentiy sites, which clearly show a very low uptake of these facilities (Figure 3.17: 'at home' represents informal reuse: taking items to charity shops, passing on to friends and family, filling bags for school collections etc; 'council collection' constitutes bulky waste collection arranged with NCC). In later discussions, RCs reported that the majority of people they spoke with had previously put broken electrical items 'in the rubbish bin', and very few knew that civic amenity sites existed, while those who did know of them were unsure how to access them and/or did not have transport to do so. These issues are discussed in **4.1**.

Figure 3.17: Reuse rates as per method of reuse



Overall, more people undertake reuse activity in NE12, 28 and 30 and least in NE4 and 5. This may suggest areas for future targeted waste/recycling awareness education/information campaigns by local authorities and other funded projects through community organisations.

Figure 3.18: Reuse rates by postcode area




70% of people from 'mixed' ethnic backgrounds reuse materials never or only once a year, the lowest reuse activity reported in the survey by ethnic group (Figure 3.19). The Chinese participants reuse the most, though it should be remembered that they constitute only 4% of the questionnaire respondents, thus it is difficult to extrapolate such figures to make any 'conclusions' as to activity by ethnic categories from this. The 'white' ethnic group reported the next highest levels of reuse activity.

In terms of gender, there is more of a split regarding reuse activity than in recycling behaviour (Figure 3.20), with more women undertaking reuse than men, more frequently, by some margin. This may be linked to dominant patriarchal structures in society, with women still constructed as/expected to take responsibility for 'domestic' and especially 'caring' roles in most cultures: while recycling was discussed in more spatial and technical terms in the focus groups, reuse – in particular clothes and shoes and toys – was understood as linked to family, children and domestic roles (see **4.3**).

Figure 3.19: Reuse rates by ethnicity

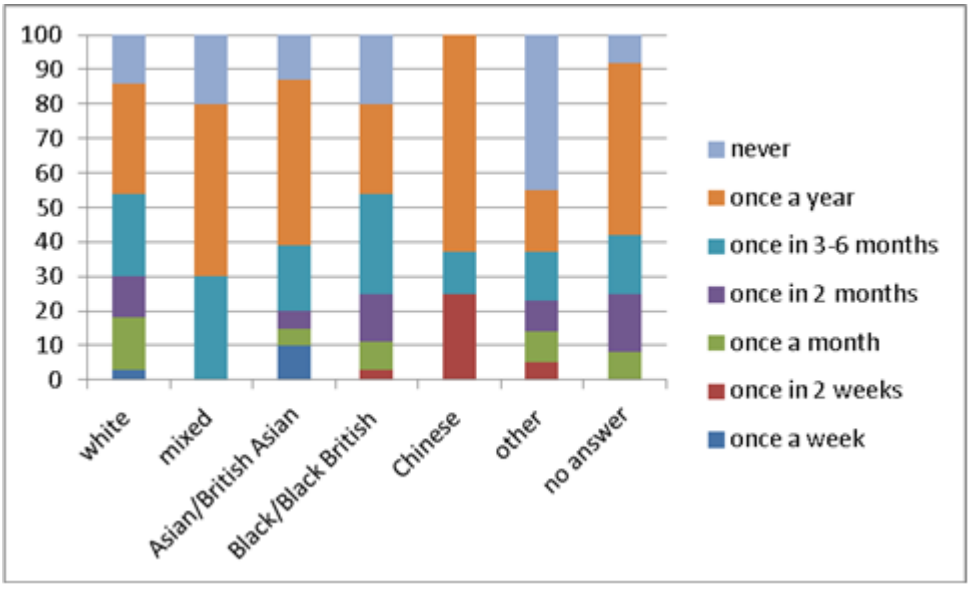
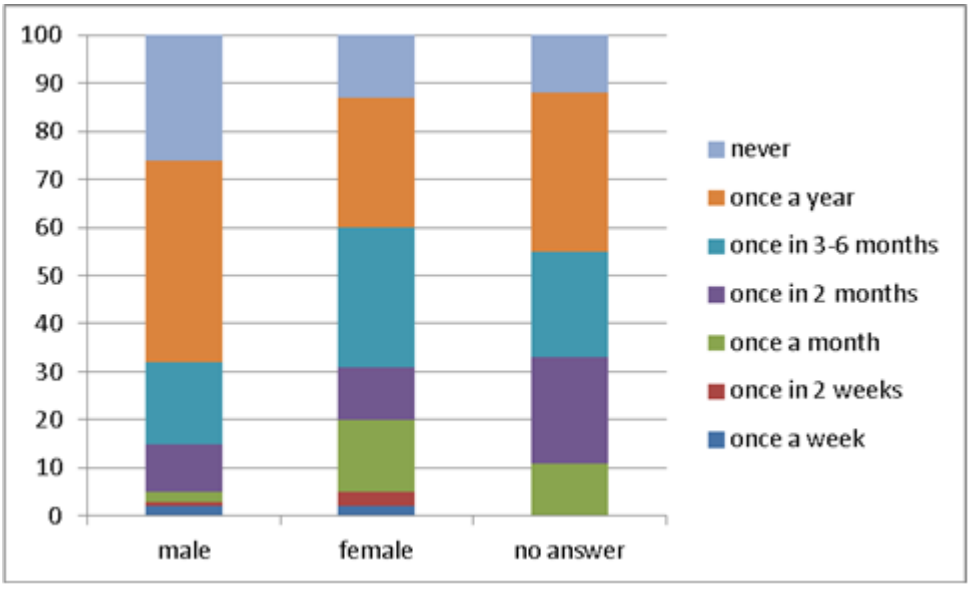



Figure 3.20: Reuse rates by gender



Reuse rates differ little between those respondents with English as first language and those for whom it is not their first language (Figure 3.21), with the latter slightly lower in percentage of respondents, but with some of this group reuse activity was more frequent. This may be due to these respondents giving items to newcomers within (their own) migrant communities whose first language is not English – giving to people who are new to the area and the country, and in greatest need at that time. These results are mirrored regarding reuse activity by place of birth (Figure 3.22), presumably for similar reasons.

Figure 3.21: Reuse rates by English language

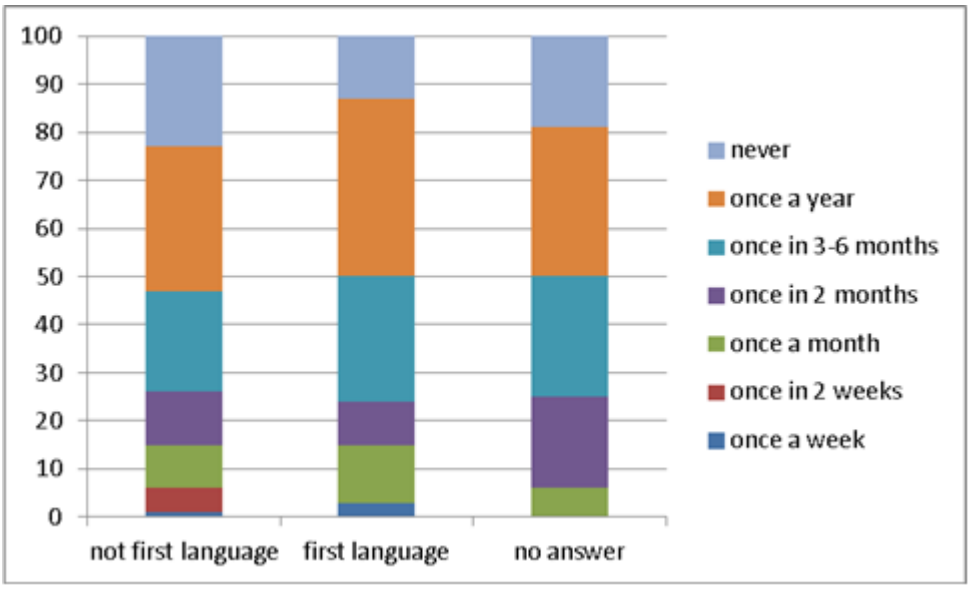
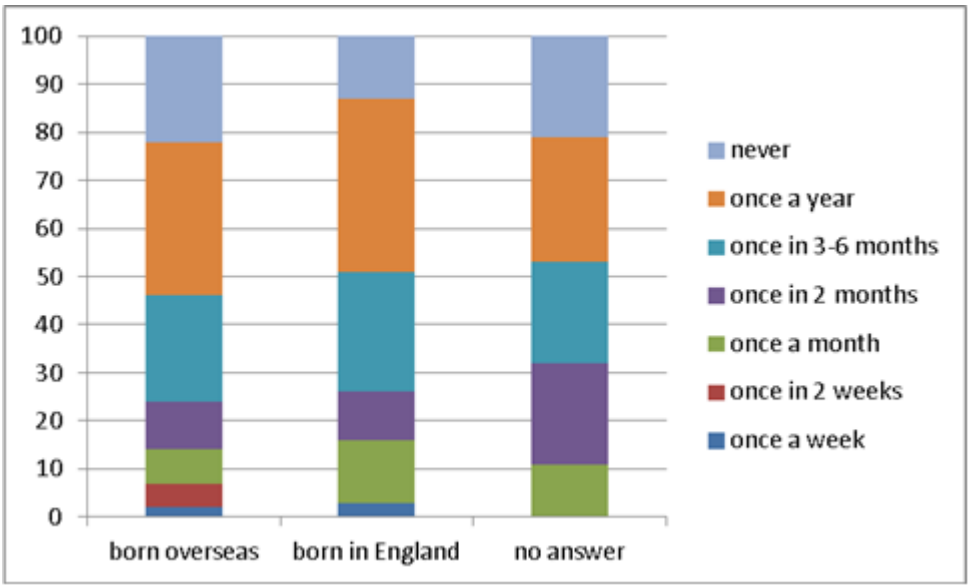
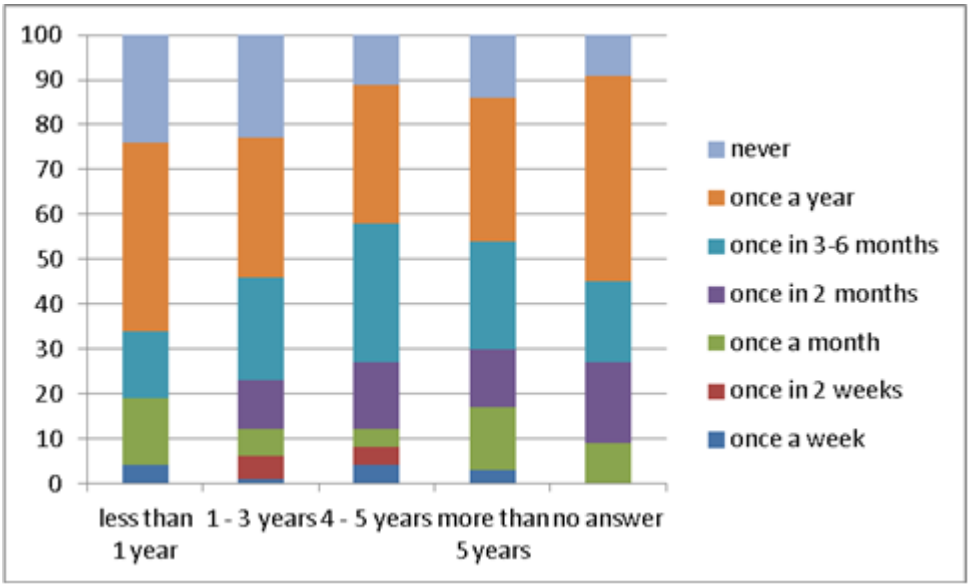



Figure 3.22: Reuse rates by place of birth



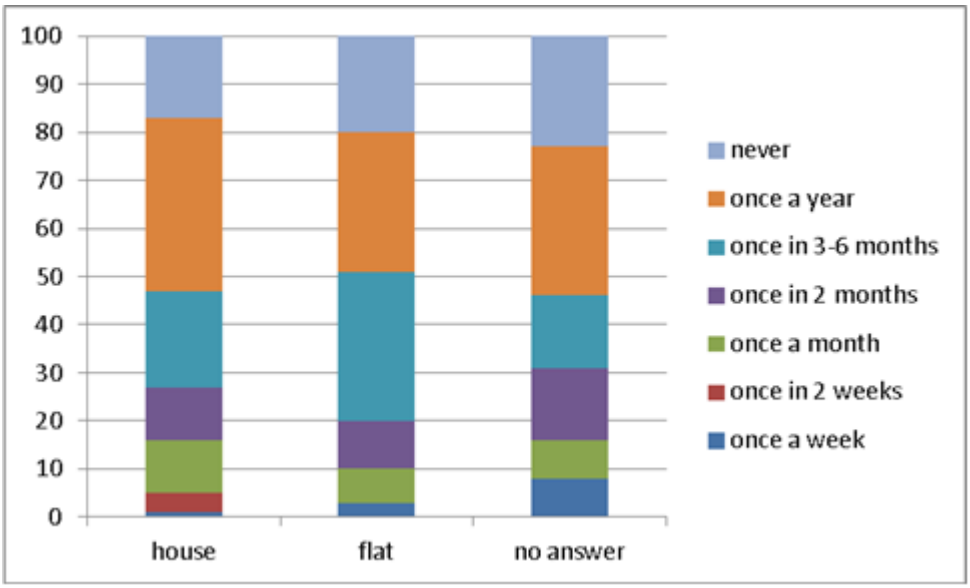
Again surprisingly, results for reuse activity by length of residence in an area show that respondents living in a place for 4-5 years are most likely to pass material for reuse (Figure 3.23), above people resident for more than 5 years. Those people resident less than one year, more expectedly, pass items on for reuse least often. It is important to note that respondents born overseas should not be conflated with respondents new to an area.

Figure 3.23: Reuse rates by length of residence




The survey found less difference in reuse activity across residents in houses and flats than was evident in recycling behaviour (Figure 3.24): reuse was slightly higher among people in houses, but within the lower reuse activity across the survey as a whole.

Figure 3.24: Reuse rates by type of residence



### 3.4 Composting Rates and Behaviours

Composting food and garden materials was reported to be much lower than both recycling and reuse behaviours. 53 (23%) of respondents reported that they compost food, of these:

- 21 (40%) do not compost at home (at allottments) and 32 (60%) compost at home;
- 36 (68%) live in a house and 17 (32%) live in a flat.

These figures equate to 24% of overall respondents living in a house and 25% of those living in a flat. While composting activity was lower than recycling and reuse, the results were nevertheless higher than expected at the start of research – especially the latter figure – and can be explained through the use of allottments.

64 (28%) of respondents stated that they compost garden materials, of these:

- 47 (73%) compost via council collection and 17 (27%) not via collection (either at home or allottment);
- 55 (86%) live in a house and 9 (14%) live in a flat.

This is 38% of overall respondents living in a house and 12% of those living in a flat, also higher than expected.

It is important to note that not all respondents who compost garden material also compost food (above), but there was a high level of overlap. Figures 3.25 to 3.34 offer some breakdown of this data. On the whole, there are some differential trends across most categories (ethnicity, area and length of residence, English as first/not first language etc.), but with these smaller numbers of composting overall, it is not appropriate to make any claims regarding difference. Therefore these sets of results are only presented here visually. The key interpretation of this Report is that levels of awareness around and activity regarding composting were far lower across the questionnaire survey than recycling and reuse. This was supported in focus groups, in which there was a clear lack of engagement with the subject due to it not being even considered by many. Given the high levels of organic material sent to landfill (according to Defra (2012), around 30% of the total local authority collected waste in England and Wales is food, garden and other biodegradable waste), this is an area in which significant work can be focussed by NCC and other funded projects.

Figure 3.25: Composting food by postcode area

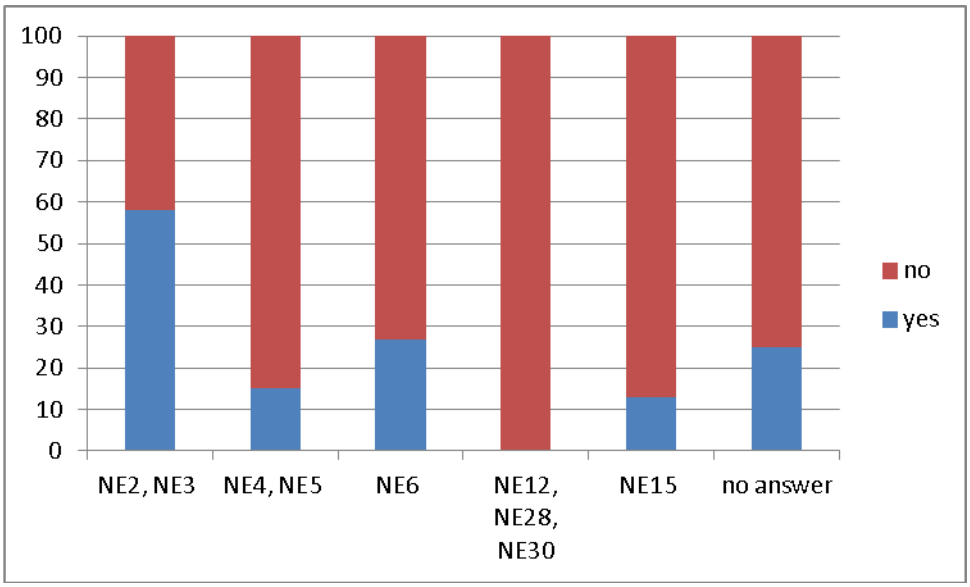



Figure 3.26: Composting garden material by postcode area

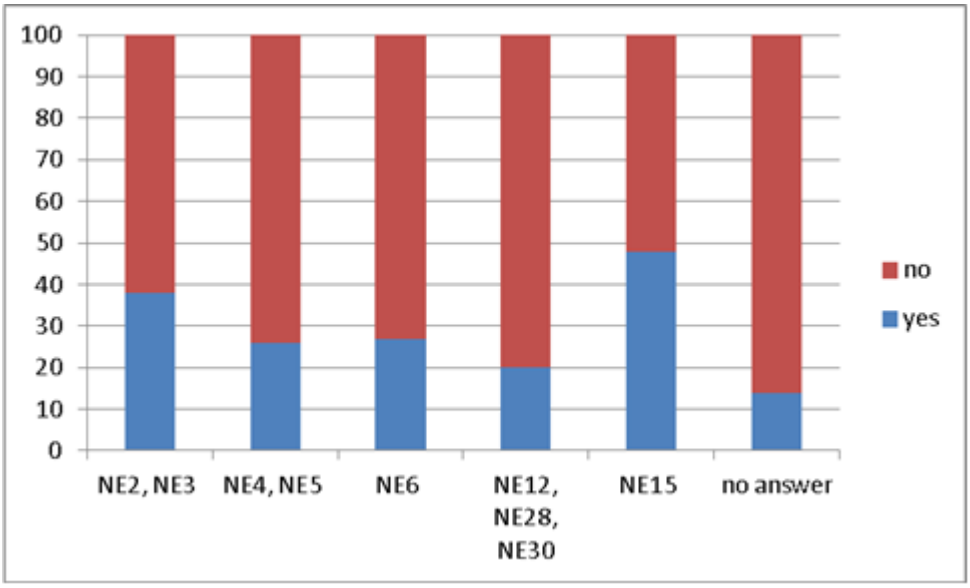


Figure 3.27: Composting food by ethnicity

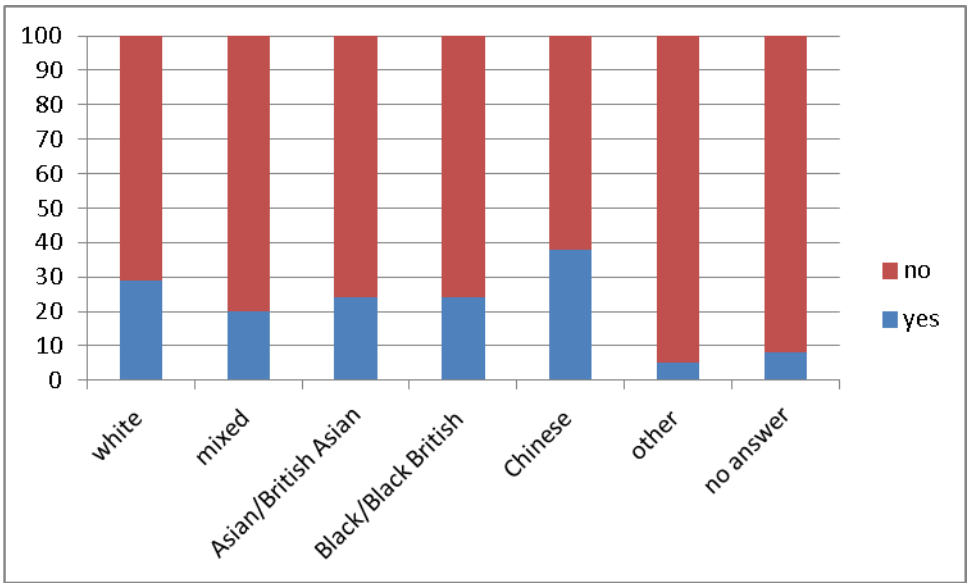



Figure 3.28: Composting garden material by ethnicity

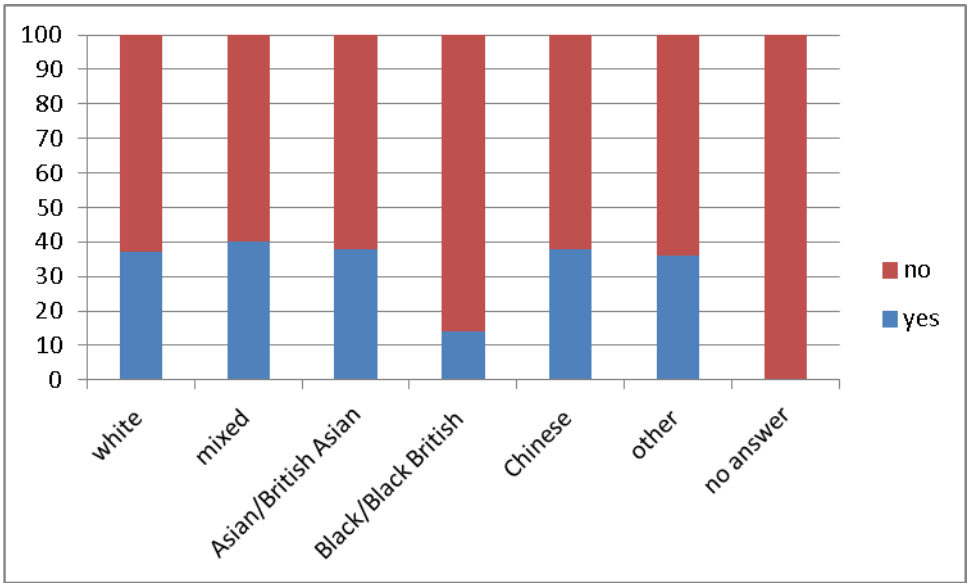


Figure 3.29: Composting food by English language

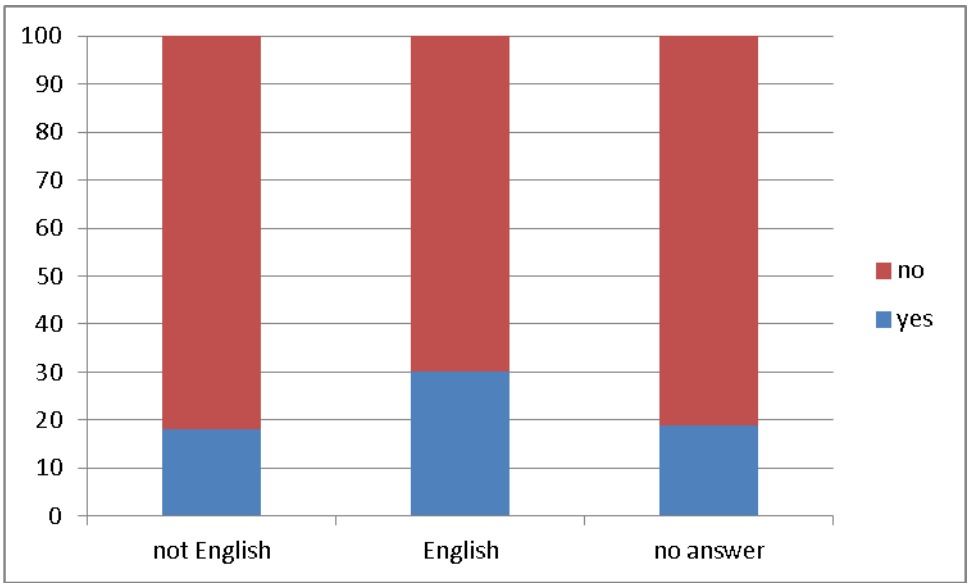



Figure 3.30: Composting garden material by English language

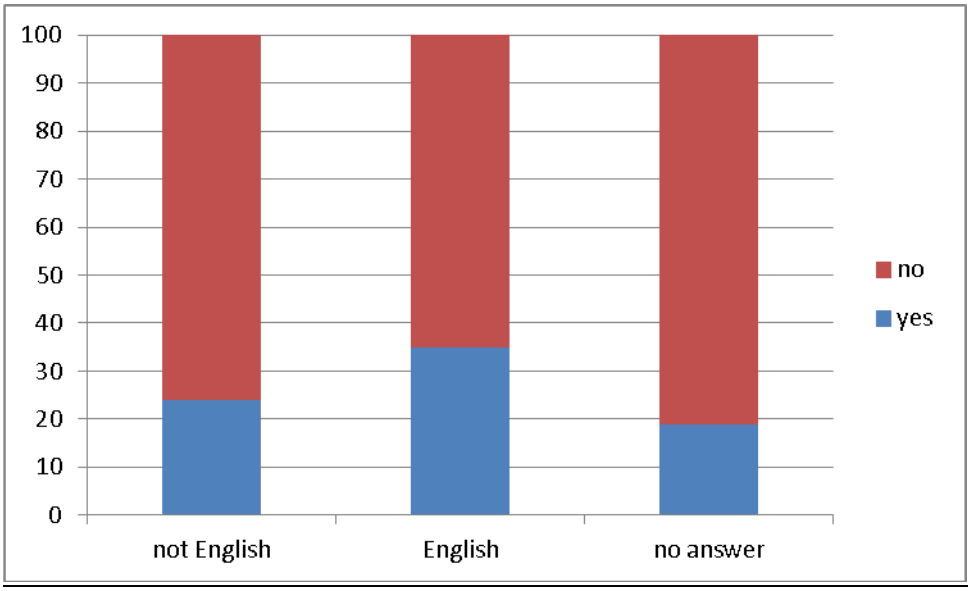


Figure 3.31: Composting food by place of birth

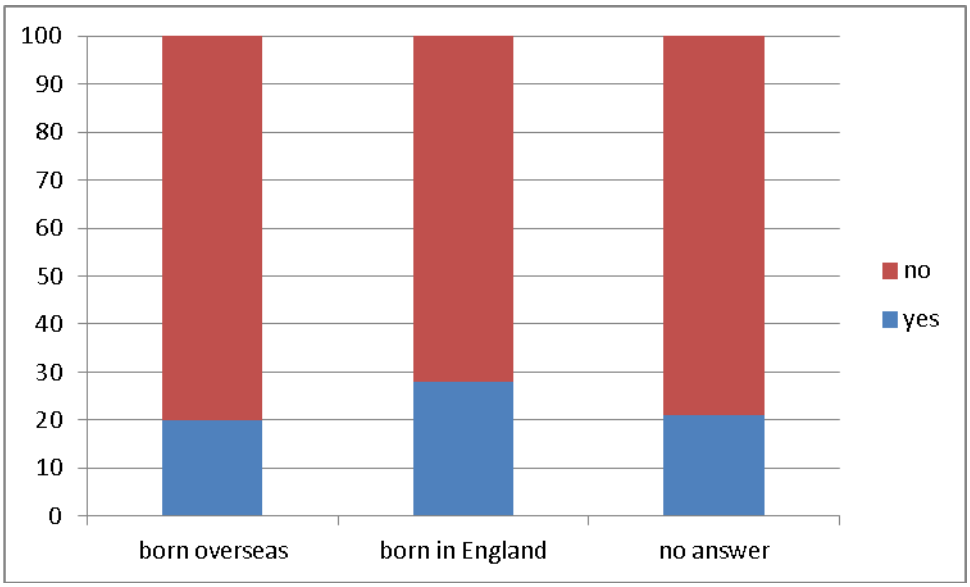



Figure 3.32: Composting garden material by place of birth

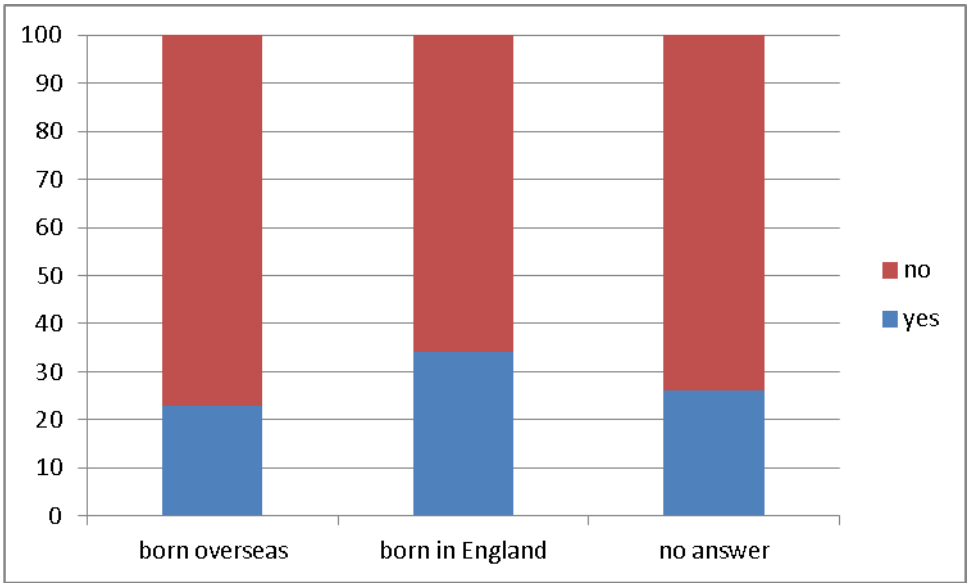


Figure 3.33: Composting food by length of residence

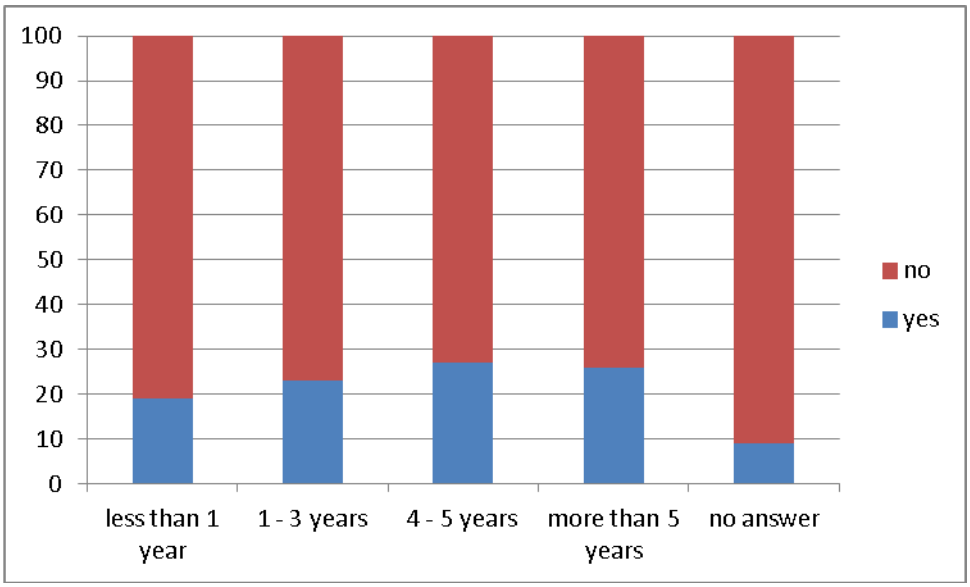
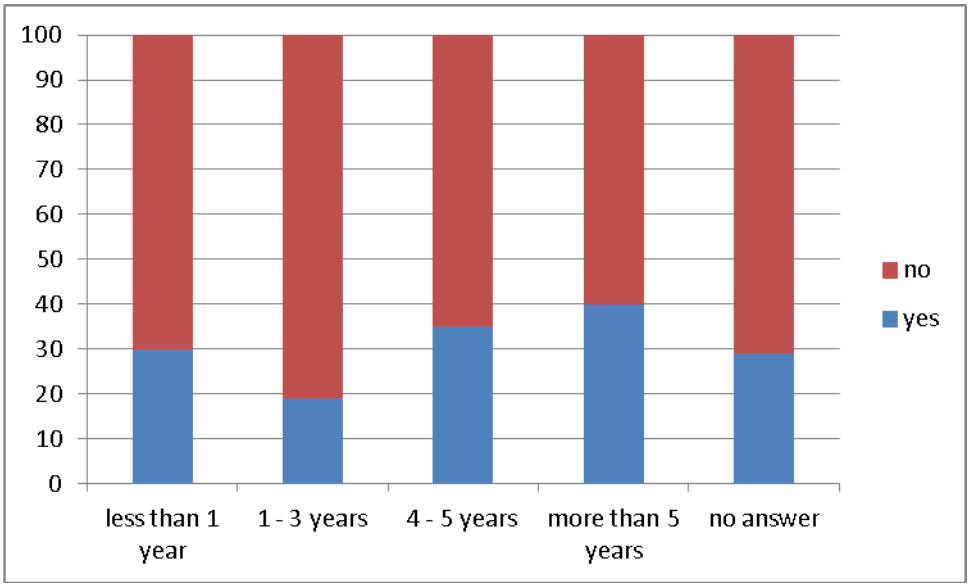



Figure 3.34: Composting garden material by length of residence



### 3.5 Barriers and Enablers to Recycling/Reuse/Composting

Questions 8 and 9 of the survey were deliberately left open ended, to stimulate discussion between RCs and respondents where possible. 101 of the 262 respondents directly answered these questions, a high response rate for this kind of qualitative question in an otherwise 'tick box' questionnaire (Parfitt, 2005). The written answers are summarised in Boxes 3.1 and 3.2 below, and the issues raised are discussed in the following section, alongside broader qualitative data.

Box 3.1: Responses to "What stops you from recycling, reusing and composting?"

Don't have blue bin x 17
Bin has been stolen x 2
Don't have black caddy x 3
No communal bin x 6
Lack of space in blue bin – share with other flats
Don't have brown bin x 21
Don't have compost bin x 5
Lack of knowledge x 15
    electrical goods especially x 3
    composting especially x 5
Too complicated
I never heard of recycling before this questionnaire x 2
Lack of space x 5
Lack of garden for composting x 11
Lack of time x 7
Lack of money
Neighbours use my bin for their compost
Food smell x 2
Aesthetic (don't like look)
Never thought about doing this
Sometimes I forget

Box 3.2: Responses to "What would help you to recycle, reuse and compost?"

Free blue bin x 17
New black caddy x 2
Give me brown bin and organic collection x 15
Free compost bin x 9
Better access to and more communal bins x 7
Knowledge/information/education x 26
- better directions on the bins x 3
- location posters
- more information on giving unwanted stuff to people in need
- regular reminders
- help on how to get a blue bin x 3
- information in my language x 3
- awareness workshop re composting x 5
- make it simpler, it is too fussy (eg. all plastic, all cardboard)
- confusing (especially packaging) x 2

Provide facilities indoors, must be easy to walk to/mobility issues
Convenience x 4
More regular recycle bin collection
Change in tenancy rules
Microchip bins
Don't use communal area for recycling bins

# 4.0 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The key themes emerging from the qualitative research are considered here with regard to the research questions outlined in **2.1**, namely:

- to explore perceptions and behaviours around 'waste' issues;
- to understand barriers to recycling, reuse and composting among minority communities; and
- to identify successful approaches to increasing environmental awareness and improving recycling, reuse and composting behaviours.

This discussion draws on all the focus group and participant observation data, as well as the two open questions in the Questionnaire survey (8 and 9: see Appendix I and **3.5** above)

## 4.1 Lack of Awareness

The key barrier to recycling, reusing and, especially, composting across the research was lack of awareness regarding what, where and how to 'correctly' complete these tasks, as well as the ways in which to reduce waste more generally. This was evident across the first three focus groups. Encouragingly, knowledge around recycling in particular, and reuse to a lesser degree, clearly increased among RCs in the fourth and fifth focus groups, once they had received waste awareness training. The RCs reported that the individuals that they had cascaded this training to had themselves raised lack of knowledge as a key barrier to why they had previously recycled the more 'obvious' items via council collection, but not '*as many things there are that you can recycle … I really didn't know!*'

Critically, within this general lack of awareness regarding what, where and how to recycle, was a dominant awareness among RCs and their communities that they *should* recycle, and a willingness and intention to do so. Most participants showed a level of understanding that recycling is good environmental practice, even if they were less aware as to how to do so and the reasons why. There was very little knowledge that NCC operated a telephone helpline for environmental/waste issues, what the number was or where to find it, when it was open or what you could ask for help and advice with.

A common discussion point was the need for clearer and more detailed information. Many questions – both from RCs themselves and then from members of their communities to the RCs when they were giving talks to them - were around what can and can't go in the blue recycling bins or what can or can't be taken elsewhere. There was much confusion around batteries and tetrapack cartons. RCs suggested that the stickers provided on blue bins, while good in terms of being visual aids, were not large enough, too simplistic, and are often worn off by weather and use/being outside. In particular, there was much debate around the need for more face to face information as being more effective: RCs stated that they learnt much from their own training from NCC Environmental Education and Enforcement staff, and were able to pass this on, and that what is most useful in face-to-face sessions is having the ability to ask questions to better understand exactly what goes in the blue bins.

The RCs also reported that having awareness of where the blue bins are taken, and what happens to recyclables, enables a better understanding of the process as a whole and is a good motivator to continued recycling behaviour. A very common comment was that, once RCs had been given training, they started to '*feel guilty if I don't recycle – I can't put those things in the bin now*'. Several people agreed that they had begun to take things out of rubbish bins (paper, glass, tins etc. that other people had put there, or they themselves had binned for convenience), and put out for recycling because '*now I know better!*' Some individuals specifically made links between good environmental practice in the UK and wider global environmental issues. For those born in England, this was a moral issues aligned to notions of global citizenship and 'doing the right thing' for the planet as a whole, while for those born overseas there was often a more personal connection made to responsibilities to others elsewhere.

What is very encouraging is that RCs on the whole were keen to learn even more. There was some disappointment that CEP was short term, and their own training covered mostly recycling, with some information about reuse (especially re. electrical goods, with mention of civic amenity sites) and energy efficiency. They were enthusiastic to know more about other options for goods not collected in the blue bins, and there remained some misunderstanding/ confusion around electrical goods especially computers, what to do with light bulbs, and larger 'bulky waste'. Some in the staff focus group were aware of the WEEE directive (and local organisation ACORN who recondition and recycle electricals), others not; none of the RCs knew of these before their own training, and reported that their wider communities were equally unaware of what to do with such items.

Underlying earlier focus group debates were uncertainties around what is meant by recycling and reusing, or rather the overlap across these. For some, reuse is a form of recycling, for others there is a clear difference with recycling involving some processing and a re-use but in a different format. Reuse was generally discussed as a better option, but most believed that wider society is less likely to value reuse as previous generations did (grandparents and parents were often mentioned). RCs and participants at CEP events considered this to be due to living in a more 'throwaway society', with an abundance of cheap clothes, shoes, household goods available. Surprisingly, the current recession appeared to have no impact on this point. If anything, there was greater consensus across the research participants in a 'pride' attached to having new (though cheap) clothes/belongings: this emerged particularly as a 'class' issue attached, paradoxically, to being 'working class' (see also **4.3** regarding socio-economic position and 'environmental values').

There were very low levels of awareness and use of civic amenity sites. Earlier focus groups with RCs, and especially the session in which the questionnaire was designed, highlighted that few had ever heard of or used their local 'tip' (the term 'civic amenity site' was never used). Interestingly, these few were a mix of British and non-British born, and from both white and African Caribbean ethnic backgrounds. These individuals were uncertain as to the range of materials that could be taken to these sites, or the 'rules' on who could access them, when and how. All had found out about the sites by word-of-mouth, and used them rarely (see Askins & Bulkeley, 2005a for previous study on civic amenity sites in Newcastle).

Composting was obviously difficult for many of the RCs to discuss, as they knew little about this form of waste reduction. The few who did were long term, white British residents: this aspect of waste was the only one where there was some distinction between ethnic and cultural groups. In particular, there were two women at one of the training events (participant observation session one: white ethnicity, born in the area) who discussed their grandfathers having allotments, and thus their knowledge of composting, with both women taking food and plant materials round to these allotments for composting.

RCs all agreed that it is important that education around waste issues should (and at times does) '*start with the kids in schools*' – they reported that they, and others in their communities, are being educated about recycling and reuse, and wider environmental issues, by their children bringing home messages from sessions at school: '*The kids come home and nag their parents to do recycling and lower energy use and all that … be more environmentally aware*'. This was considered a good thing for the future and to be encouraged. However, many RCs and CEP event participants queried why onus/focus

appeared to always be around residential recycling etc., while commercial properties appeared to be omitted from education and encouragement on waste issues: as one man in the west end stated: '*businesses and shops and all of those things in this area, I know people who run businesses and they need to be doing all this recycling too*'.

### 4.2 Language Issues

The need for some translation of written materials, and the importance of interpreting verbal information came up at every focus group and participant observation session. The key message from CEP was that more thought and resources should be given to reaching diverse communities – but that this does not need to be extensive and expensive, but targeted and delivered through local community groups and residents.

The first issue to cover here is that, while requirement was made in the budget for interpretation and translation costs, because of the way in which information was cascaded through a model of local RCs, this funding was actually not required for this particular project (as mentioned in **2.2.1**). That is, RCs recruited all spoke English (except one from the Roma community, who had an interpreter at one focus group and the Celebration Event). Rather, once the RCs had designed the questionnaire with the researcher, they agreed that, instead of having the questionnaire translated into a range of different languages for them to go and undertake the survey, it would be easier and more effective for them to take it out in English and verbally translate and explain to respondents what the questions were asking. One key reason for this was the difficulty of translating key concepts such as 'recycle' and 'reuse' and 'compost' into certain languages: some RCs said that there were no words or even short phrases that existed in their languages, so they would prefer to explain what these concepts meant in the context of completing the questionnaire with local people.

Indeed, this situation itself was only one example in which language issues were central within the research, and RCs were adamant, especially in the later focus groups, that information around waste does need to be provided in more diverse ways. They identified a twofold approach. First, that minimal information on 'the basics' in different languages should be provided on leaflets, NCC webpages, adverts etc.; second, that this should be supported with face-to-face local community engagement. Moreover, RCs felt that this would be most effective using a model similar to the CEP: asking local residents to translate materials, since they are better aware of local nuances and subtleties of languages used in the area rather than external 'experts'; and promoting face-to-face waste awareness through local

community groups and services, via people known and trusted in local communities. (This latter point relates also to **4.5** below).

### 4.3 Cultural and Lifestyle Issues

A range of broadly 'cultural and lifestyle' differences affecting waste behaviours emerged through the qualitative fieldwork, although this research was not extensive or in depth enough to make any significant claims here. People mentioned factors such as size of family, size and type of housing (house or communal flats), and level of employment (full time, part time, unemployed) as particularly influencing how recycling etc. may be/not fitted into lifestyle, with issues around time discussed as often more important than whatever individuals' environmental value systems may be. That is, and especially in the participant observation sessions, people talked about the need to be organised and have a habit or routine around recycling far more than whether it fitted with any environmental concerns they had.

This point about habit/routine, in particular, was often discussed with regard to household roles, and was interestingly gendered differently across recycling and reuse activity. RCs, and the people in their communities they cascaded training to, appeared to think about recycling in more 'technical' terms - sorting different materials, placing in different parts of the bin. This activity seemed to almost always be one individual's task in a household (their responsibility), and not aligned to either a male nor female role, but dependent upon specific relationships and household dynamics: people said things such as '*my partner does that*' or '*that's my job, they wouldn't do it*', linking to everyday routines. One particular example is of a father who, since becoming a RC, has made recycling an evening activity he does together with his son, part bonding and part chore. However, reuse (passing materials on to be reused), was predominantly discussed as a woman's role, especially regarding clothes, household items and children's toys, attached to dominant understandings of these as aligned to a 'caring' or 'nurturing' side of domestic activity. This is supported by the quantitative data.

Critically, there were no clear attitudes regarding waste reduction or environmental values that could be directly attached to specific ethnic groups' cultural beliefs or practices: as already stated, what was very clear across most research participants was the desire to recycle, reuse etc. once people began to be more aware. The key cultural factor that specifically affected waste behaviours was that of mobility. Moving into an area was reported

as affecting recycling, etc. behaviours in several ways, particularly in that every local authority area appears to have different services around recycling, which everyone commented on! Different coloured and different designs of bins, use of large bags rather than bins, different materials collected in different parts of bins, different materials collected per se, different rules around separation, and so on. Everyone believed this to be confusing, even moving from Sunderland or Gateshead, and many people mentioned '*my friend in another part of the country, they have … … different to us*'.

Such issues around mobility are interconnected with lack of awareness, of course, but should also be considered in terms of cultural background, since moving from another country (and often for reasons of seeking asylum) further impacts levels of awareness. Thus, it is important to note that the mobility factor can be more directly linked with people born outside England, and the Roma community in Newcastle. However, it is not limited to these groups.

There was some debate at the Riverside staff focus group around environmental 'values': people agreed that, in general middle class individuals know more about and value environmentalism, they thought this was less to do with income level and more to do with having greater experience of the world. In particular, that a combination of education beyond 'A' level and overseas travelling broadens horizons and opens people up to seeing the impact of waste issues elsewhere. Indeed, across all qualitative research there was a dominant view that waste reduction – and reuse in particular - is more of a 'middle class thing'. This was attributed to middle classes having the time, and not having other more pressing concerns: there was some sense that participants, living in more deprived areas, had more important issues to deal with than recycling regularly.

However, the issue of 'class' position emerged in complex and contradictory ways across the research. Many participants believed that society is generally geared to getting new things, and that people – paradoxically especially those in more deprived areas – have a 'pride around' not having second hand clothes (as mentioned in **2.1**). While most focus groups discussed a willingness and some passing on of unwanted items to second hand/charity shops, via school collections for fundraising especially, they themselves felt that, with much clothing and other household items being cheap, there is a '*pride around what we have*'. Passing/reusing things within families was considered more acceptable, but among English born and migrant communities alike there was a presumption towards reuse for others, but new for themselves. This raises questions regarding the usual waste hierarchy message, that reduction in consumption comes above reuse.

Furthermore, linked to notions of 'pride', the point also made that friends, family and neighbours – especially in working class areas - can influence you to recycle and reuse, through social pressures to conform. Eg. when everyone else puts their bin out for recycling in the street, '*you feel you have to as well or everyone will know that you're not doing your bit*'. Likewise, two young women from the east end discussed at length how they keep the small squares between their houses clean and tidy and 'there's a pride in our street', even to the extent that they have chained a green wheelie bin to a lamppost to act as a public bin (stating that they tried and failed to get NCC to provide a public bin for their street, see **4.5**) and take turns unhooking it and emptying it at nearby communal rubbish bins. At the same time, there was often exasperation at those across the west and east ends who 'don't care about our place, they don't care about our community', with many RCs recounting instances of fly-tipping, wheelie and recycling bins being regularly stolen, communal bins being misused and even, on occasion, set alight.

### 4.4 Financial Issues

Socio-economic (class) position was crucially interlinked with another central theme that emerged from the research. The cost of the provision of recycling, green waste collection and home composting bins, *to individual residents*, was of concern in every focus group. Commonly, people mentioned having no bins because they were missing when they moved in or stolen at some point, and (complicated by the fact that people were largely unaware of the need to phone NCC helpline in order to get a replacement bin) then could not or resented having to pay for new ones. Bulky waste collection was an even more contentious cost. Prioritising budgets for rent/mortgage, food, clothing and everyday needs for families came well above any consideration of buying a new blue, brown or compost bin. Quite clearly, with NCC's budgets being squeezed, this will continue to be a difficult issue: people in the questionnaire survey clearly show the inclination to and use of council services around recycling, and the qualitative research shows that this is specifically as long as it is free (and convenient, see **4.6**).

Costs for the collection of bulky items were viewed with similar concern among majority of RCs and CEP event participants. Most agreed that the dumping of larger waste items is wrong – '*it looks bad for us in the area and is a hazard*' – but there was significant disagreement about whether more people would recycle or dump with/without cost of collection. Some believed that in more deprived areas, people would be more likely to dump

rather than pay for collection, but others that if there were no charge then people would dump more items to be collected rather than using them for longer or giving them away.

Interestingly, there was almost complete lack in the early focus groups of any discussion linking costs to residents of waste and recycling collections paid through their council tax, or that such taxes could rise if fly-tipping clean up costs, for example, were to rise significantly. RCs had a better understanding of the financial dynamics after their training, and appeared to see such financial incentives to recycling, etc. (keeping costs to NCC and therefore council tax down) as an important driver to local residents.

### 4.5 Lack of Trust Regarding Local Services

There was a general mistrust of local services, and NCC in particular, across the qualitative research. This was particularly linked to financial concerns and a perception that residents in more deprived areas are 'ignored'.

On the financial side, most agreed that auditing recycling and/or rubbish collections via chips or weighing could be counteractive, due to some reported local (as well as national) scaremongering and fears of being fined if too there is much in your rubbish bin or the wrong materials in the recycling bin. Moreover, there was tension surrounding costs to individual residents of having to buy new/replace blue and brown bins, and pay for bulky waste collection (**4.4** above) when CEP event participants and wider community members who had been engaged through RCs felt that many of their broader concerns were often unaddressed by NCC, or that (other) local council services bypassed or ignored residents in more disadvantaged areas. The example mentioned most often was when rubbish and recycling bins were not emptied, sometimes allegedly for weeks on end, leading to a discourse of '*why should we do what 'they' want when we don't get what 'we' want*'. Another point of contention was inconsistent relationships with wardens of shared social housing: some RCs/event participants reported that wardens in their areas were helpful and supportive around environmental concerns, others that wardens were obstructive.

There was further debate among RCs, especially in the later focus groups, around how media representations reiterate such negative perspectives of local authorities. RCs generally believed that councils are '*doing their best but always get bad press*': that the 'them and us' set up in the media, among more working class neighbourhoods in particular, detract from waste reduction initiatives. As such, monitoring of any kind was considered too

much 'big brotherness' when not enough support and help is given where needed. This tension was evident when a new scheme proposed by NCC towards the end of CEP timeframe, for annual payments to have garden waste collected, was announced. The research found that financial issues vis-à-vis lack of trust of local authorities will be a key challenge in waste reduction for NCC, but the positive to take from CEP is that, once RCs were on board and been trained by NCC staff, they began to argue the case for the local council among their local communities.

The issue of reinstating weekly rubbish collections had been in the national and local news just prior to CEP, and came up in discussion in most focus groups and at participant observation events. In general, there was consensus that there is no need to bring back weekly collections for rubbish: participants said that they may not have liked it at first but had got used to it, and RCs were clear that, once they and local communities had learnt of the benefits of recycling, and knew what to do, collecting rubbish more frequently '*gives out the wrong message to us*'.

Relevant in this section, but only emerging at the end of the research, is some uncertainty and anxieties amongst RCs and communities in the east end, Byker specifically, surrounding what will happen with the imminent reorganisation of the provision of services through a new partnership between NCC and residents in social housing in Byker.

### 4.6 Local Environment and Spatial Challenges

A further key theme in the qualitative fieldwork was that of physical environment, most specifically in terms of access and convenience. Several members of focus groups lived in flats and they, as well as the RCs more widely, reported lower uptake of recycling amongst tenants in such housing. This was due to physical difficulties in getting materials to communal bins, alongside the misuse of these facilities for fly-tipping. Space was thus a central concern, regarding type of residence: even those in houses said that there was often not enough space to store recycling in small kitchens or yards. One person repeatedly raised the issue of planning and a lack of 'joined up thinking', giving the example of how an area of local council housing had recently had their kitchens redone, without any thought to building in space for recycling such as separate bins for different materials – they knew of a German example where this is done. Others felt that taking bins in and out of their properties was at least inconvenient and, for some, difficult, due to physical layouts of properties, roads and

collection points. No one seemed aware that they could contact the NCC helpline on this point.

Furthermore, not having a large enough garden was a contentious issue regarding not being offered brown bins for garden waste.

### 4.7 Benefits of Recycling Champion Approach

CEP was particularly successful in engaging with those groups and individuals usually considered to be 'hard to reach', because of its method of working through well-established community organisations (Riverside and ACANE), and particularly in utilising a model of RCs, who were members of local 'hard to reach' communities themselves. As mentioned in **3.1**, the high levels of diversity in terms of ethnic background, length of residence in the areas and people with English as a second language are attributable to this way of working. Response rates from these groups in questionnaire surveys undertaken by academic researchers, market researchers or council-led surveys are commonly far lower. RCs who live in, understand the cultural nuances and speak the languages of the communities they are working with are critical in both the research element of this Project, as well as cascading the waste awareness messages through CEP. As a result, they were able to quickly and effectively engage with some of the most difficult to reach families whose cultures and languages differed from majority society across Newcastle.

While not a direct research aim, it should be noted here that the individual benefits gained by RCs through knowledge, skills and confidence building on the Project, observably increased their engagement with environmental and waste issues to deeper, more meaningful levels. Most positively, the majority reported they would continue to act as unofficial RCs after CEP, passing on their knowledge and also keen to find out and do more themselves. The Development Worker, Riverside and ACANE staff worked closely with the RCs throughout, and it was this level of support that enabled successful knowledge transfer. Such support was time-consuming for the Development Worker, but important for an effective Project; it also could not have worked if levels of trust had not been built up between Riverside and ACANE and their local communities across years. RCs clearly stated in early and ending focus groups that they would not have taken on such a position (with no remuneration, especially) if they did not know they would receive help and support, and if there was '*nothing in it for me … I have enjoyed it because I know it is good thing to do for environment but I have learned skills to tell other people and organize my thoughts and knowledge*'.

A further benefit may, in the longer term, be in building trust between NCC and local residents. RCs, through training with Environmental Education and Enforcement staff, could put faces to the local authority in a positive light, and in the latter focus groups were more likely to challenge the 'us versus them' tension mentioned in **4.5**. However, this finding is tentative, and further partnership initiatives would be required to build on this.

# 5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the short timescale of CEP, and the limited research element, these recommendations offer a broad framework for future initiatives on waste reduction rather than specific details. The key point to make here is that the success of CEP should be built upon, as soon as possible, to harness its momentum.

## 5.1 Waste Awareness Education

There is a clear need for further education work. RCs identified many gaps in knowledge, among themselves and wider communities, in particular regarding:

- the details of what can/cannot be recycled;
- where and how to best pass items over for reuse, including civic amenity sites;
- composting; and
- waste reduction in terms of consumption.

While CEP significantly improved awareness of the first of these, the RCs believed there is more to do especially around the rest, and suggested several key approaches.

### 5.1.1 Translation

RCs were unequivocal that some written information should be translated into a variety of languages: key messages rather than all details, and targeted rather than extensive. They stated that they, or members of their communities, would be best placed to do so. This would require some level of resources from NCC and/or external funders, and coordination and support through, ideally, local community organisations. Visual imagery was also considered important. Translation should be incorporated into (some) materials distributed by NCC to relevant/targeted areas, as well as on webpages.

### 5.1.2 Face-to-face delivery

For any written information to be effective, though, it should be delivered via face-to-face communication whenever possible. This enables questions to be asked and details around recycling to be clarified, and highlighted especially with regard to composting (see Askins &

Bulkeley, 2005b on this issue). Participants were convinced that personal contact is the best enabler and motivator for waste reduction. Dropping information through letterboxes appears to have minimal impact: engagement requires conversation (also Askins & Bulkeley, 2005c). This should be undertaken by local residents in a RC model where possible, due to interpretation capabilities, knowledge of local issues and communities.

5.1.2 Schools work

Education of children was considered crucial for the future. While outside the remit of CEP, RCs consistently raised this issue. Supported initiatives that enable RCs/local residents to undertake such work (trained by and perhaps alongside NCC staff) could be extremely productive on a range of levels, including wider community cohesion.

**5.2 Collaborative Working**

CEP training sessions enabled NCC staff and residents from marginalised and migrant communities to share and exchange views and information on issues and concerns regarding barriers to waste minimization, recycling and composting, grounded in everyday realities of living in specific neighbourhoods and communities. This should continue.

Given the realities of local authority budgets and staffing levels, and the importance of building trust for effective behavioural change among residents, waste education initiatives should not be through a top-down model. Key successes of CEP were due to its collaborative approach. NCC could work well through local community organisations such as Riverside and ACANE, who have established contacts on the ground. However, such organisations are already stretched, and must be properly resourced if they are to deliver waste initiatives in partnership with NCC education work. RCs identified several specific actions they would be keen to undertake in such a collaborative model, supported and coordinated through community organisations:

- receive further training on more waste reduction issues;
- write a 'factsheet' for local communities, including translation where relevant;
- design posters, again with some element of translation;
- work in/with schools;

- organise more 'community swap days'[1].

Some autonomy of the design of information (in line with translation) should be passed over to local community groups, with less focus on the 'branding' of NCC. This would help to further break down resistance among those in the west and east end who have deeper mistrust of local authority. One idea was to involve schools in poster/information design.

### 5.3 Longer Term Approaches

Critically, both education work and collaborative working should be on-going and long term. This is in part because of mobility issues in more marginalised communities, with constant movement of residents into areas needing to learn the specific NCC recycling 'rules', and about local facilities for reuse.. It is also important to build more meaningful trust between local authority and residents. With education best delivered through a RC-type model, requiring collaborative working (above), the trust built between local organisations, RCs and NCC can be filtered through to local residents over time. What is clearly detrimental to take up of waste reduction messages is lack of consistent engagement.

### 5.4 Financial Challenges

These recommendations must be framed within current economic 'austerity', for residents individually, the community organisations who work with them, and NCC itself. This report recommends awareness raising delivered in collaborative ways as it emerged strongly through the research: however, this approach can also be a cost-effective way to meaningfully and effectively increase recycling, reuse and composting activity in more disadvantaged areas of Newcastle. Better awareness among communities should, in the long term, reduce use of bins for other purposes, for example. The challenge will be to ensure that organisations and individuals are properly resourced and supported, through (no doubt) a variety of funding streams. This is easier said than done. NCC should try to find ways to minimise direct costs to individuals for waste collection/reduction services (particularly the cost of replacement bins, bulky and garden waste collections). And explanation of the costs that exist, through RCs, can lower resentment towards them.

[1] Riverside organised a successful 'Community Swap Day' as part of the broader Project, which was not evaluated as part of the research.

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# APPENDIX I:

# QUESTIONNAIRE

# RIVERSIDE RECYCLING QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Please circle any of the things below that you **RECYCLE**:

GLASS BOTTLES/JARS

PAPER

TINS

PLASTIC BOTTLES

PLASTIC BAGS


BATTERIES


CARDBOARD

LIGHT BULBS

Please say if you recycle anything else -

2. Please circle **HOW OFTEN** you recycle any of these things:
   - Never
   - Once a week
   - Once in 2 weeks
   - Once a month
   - Once in 2 months
   - Once in 3 – 6 months
   - Once a year

3. Please circle **WHERE** you recycle any of these things:

AT HOME


THE SUPERMARKET

THE CIVIC AMENITY SITE (TIP)

Please say if anywhere else -

4. Please circle any of the things below that you GIVE TO other people or places to be **REUSED**:

CLOTHES

SHOES

TOYS

HOUSEHOLD/BULKY

ELECTRICAL

5. Please circle **HOW OFTEN** you give things away:

- Never
- Once a week
- Once in 2 weeks
- Once a month
- Once in 2 months
- Once in 3 – 6 months
- Once a year

6. Please circle if you COMPOST:

FOOD

GARDEN PLANTS/GRASS

7. Please circle **WHERE** you compost any of these things:

AT HOME

COUNCIL COLLECTION

THE CIVIC AMENITY SITE (TIP)

Please say if anywhere else –

8. Please tell us what stops you from recycling, reusing and composting things:

9. Please tell us what would help you to recycle, reuse and compost things:

10. Please circle where you live: In a house In a flat

11. Please circle: I am a man I am a woman
I have children I do not have children
I was born overseas I was born in this country
English is not my first language English is my first language

12. My postcode is:

13. I have lived in this area for:

- Less than one year
- 1 – 3 years
- 4 – 5 years
- More than 5 years

14. Please circle your ethnic background:

White – *British, Irish, any other white background*

Mixed – *White and Black Caribbean, White and Black African, White and Asian, any other mixed background*

Asian or British Asian – *Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, any other Asian background*

Black or Black British – *Caribbean, African, any other Black background*

Chinese

Any other ethnic background

# APPENDIX II:

# PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

# FOR QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

**School of Built and Natural Environment**
**GEOGRAPHY AND ENVIRONMENT**

*Information sheet for Questionnaire respondents*

**Community Environment Project – Recycling Champions**

Ben Chisanga, Riverside Community Health Project:
ben@riversidechp.co.uk
0191 226 0754 ext 206

Kye Askins, Northumbria University:
kye.askins@northumbria.ac.uk
0191 227 3743

This project is to find out what people do about waste and recycling – so we are carrying out a short questionnaire.

This asks you questions about where you put paper, food, glass, plastic and other household things when you have finished with them.

What we find out will be reported to:

- Riverside Community Health Project and people who have been involved in the project
- Newcastle City Council
- people who work in universities and are interested in this subject.

Please contact Ben or Kye, if:

- you have any questions or comments about the project
- you wish to withdraw your responses from the research
- you would like to see the information you have given to the research.

All answers you give will be handled under the Data Protection Act which means that:

- paper copies of questionnaires will be kept in locked rooms
- no names will be used in any reports
- computer files will be stored on a password-protected computer.

Thank-you for taking part in this study.

# APPENDIX III:

# DETAILS OF QUALITATIVE METHODS

Focus Group 1: RCHP staff

6th Sept. 2011: 9 participants, mixed ages, 2 men, 7 women, various ethnicities majority white.

Focus Group 2: West end RCs

16th Sept. 2011: 10 participants, mixed ages, 6 men, 4 women, various ethnicities majority BME.

Focus Group 3: East End RCs

7th Oct. 2011: 3 participants, all similar age (25-35), all men, all BME.

Participant Observation 1: East End 'Young Mothers' waste awareness training

6th Nov. 2011: 6 participants, all similar age (20-30), all women, all white.

Focus Group 4: West end RCs

6th Jan. 2012: 11 participants, mixed ages, 4 men, 7 women, various ethnicities.

Focus Group 5: East end RCs

6th Feb. 2012: 8 participants, similar ages (across 25-45), 5 men, 3 women, majority BME.

Participant Observation 2: Celebration event

2nd March 2012: 80 participants, diverse ages, gender and ethnicities.

*NB. Some RCs were able to come to both Focus groups in their area; others only to one.*

# APPENDIX IV:

# PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

# FOR FOCUS GROUPS

**School of Built and Natural Environment**
**GEOGRAPHY AND ENVIRONMENT**

*Consent sheet for Focus Group participants*

**Community Environment Project – Recycling Champions**

Ben Chisanga, Riverside Community Health Project:
ben@riversidechp.co.uk
0191 226 0754 ext 206

Kye Askins, Northumbria University:
kye.askins@northumbria.ac.uk
0191 227 3743

This project is to find out what people do about waste and recycling – so we are carrying out some group interviews to find out what you think. We want to hear where you and other people in your communities put paper, food, glass, plastic and other household things when you have finished with them. We also want your advice on how to design a questionnaire for the project, for the Recycling Champions to complete with their friends, family and neighbours.

What we find out will be reported to:

- Riverside Community Health Project and people who have been involved in the project
- Newcastle City Council
- people who work in universities and are interested in this subject.

Please contact Ben or Kye, if:

- you have any questions or comments about the project
- you wish to withdraw your responses from the research
- you would like to see the information you have given to the research.

All answers you give will be handled under the Data Protection Act which means that:

- paper copies of questionnaires will be kept in locked rooms
- no names will be used in any reports
- computer files will be stored on a password-protected computer.

I agree to taking part in this research project:

Name ……..

Signed ……

Date ……

Thank-you for taking part in this study.