Waste Management
Customer Feedback Report
2019

Household Waste Recycling Centre Customer Satisfaction Surveys and Mystery Shopping

Produced by
Kent County Council
Waste Management
Kent County Council is responsible for the operation of 18 Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs), across the county. This service is provided through a number of Contractors who are responsible for their management and running of the day-to-day service.

KCC are committed to ensuring that customers are placed at the heart of our services. In order to ensure that we are meeting the needs of our customers through the HWRC service, Waste Management (WM) use feedback tools; Customer Satisfaction Surveys and Mystery Shopping, to understand the experiences of our customers and levels of satisfaction with the service they receive. WM collects this customer feedback through third-party contractors so that results are unbiased and give an objective view of the HWRC service.

This feedback is integral to WM, in helping us to work with our contractors to make improvements and see when we are performing well. The results collected, and feedback gathered is shared with our customers, so that you can understand how this data is used.

We value your comments and suggestions and thank you for providing us with your feedback. We will work, as far as is possible, to use these to improve your services.

This report details the high-level results for 2019 for Customer Satisfaction Surveys and Mystery Shopping.

It is worth noting that KCC commenced charging for the disposal or certain ‘non-household’ wastes on 3rd June 2019 (namely soil, rubble, hardcore and plasterboard). As such, questions regarding this policy were included in October Customer Satisfaction Surveys and as part of the mystery shopping questionnaire post policy commencement.
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Customer Satisfaction Surveys

Waste Management undertake customer satisfaction surveys twice a year across all of its HWRCs.

DJS Research carries these out onsite, face-to-face with customers. DJS Research is responsible for undertaking all fieldwork and analysing the results and feedback. This ensures that all feedback is as objective as possible.

Feedback was gathered at two seasonal sample points in April (3,627) and October (3,653) to allow for seasonality in results and gain an overall picture of the service. In total, 7,280 surveys were undertaken in 2019 (approximately 400 surveys per HWRC). Surveys were undertaken across a cross-section of days and times to include weekdays and weekends.

Customers were surveyed on exit / after using the HWRCs, and asked to feedback on their experience for that particular visit.

A range of aspects were tested in the surveys, as follows;

- **Customer Profile** – frequency of use, queuing times, materials disposed of/recycled
- **General satisfaction levels** – including queuing times, ease of access to recycling points, site layout, entry into the site, site signage and site cleanliness.
- **Staff satisfaction levels** – were the customers offered help from site staff and satisfaction levels with staff visibility, staff politeness, staff knowledge and staff presentation.
- **Policy knowledge and understanding** - Do customers know about the different policies regarding charges for soil, rubble, hardcore, plasterboard and the vehicle voucher scheme.
- **Suggested improvements** – were there any improvements that customers would like to see at the sites.

Data is also collected to monitor who our customers are and where they are coming from. All of this data is important because it helps to understand any changes that could be made to the service and helps tell us the best way to communicate with our customers.
### Customer Satisfaction Survey Key findings

- Overall satisfaction with the HWRC service is high at almost 98%.
- A third of customers visit a HWRC once a month (33%), with a further 32% of customers stating they visit a site every 3 months or less frequently.
- 88% of customers did not have to queue to enter the HWRC on their visit.
- 95% of customers stated that the current opening hours suited their needs.
- The majority of customers are visiting the HWRC to dispose of general household waste (23%) closely followed by garden waste (20%) and wood & timber (14%).
- 85% of customers on the vehicle voucher scheme were ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with the application process.
- The most common suggestion for improvement to sites was ‘remove the charges for certain materials (i.e soil, rubble, hardcore and plasterboard), ‘improved signage’ and ‘bigger site’. 60% of customers were unable to suggest how the service could be improved and only 7% of customers thought charges for non-household waste should be removed.
1. Customer Profile

a) ‘How often do you visit a HWRC?’

The graph below shows that the majority of customers surveyed visit a HWRC once a month or more (64%). 33% of customers stated that they visit a site every 3 months or less frequently.

![Visit Frequency Graph]

b) ‘How long did you queue for today?’

88% of customers did not have to queue to enter the HWRC (compared with 84% in 2018). A small number of customers (2%) queued for 10 minutes or more.
c) ‘The normal opening hours for the Centre are 8am until 4:30pm on Monday to Saturday, and 9am until 4pm on Sunday. Do these times suit your needs?’

A high majority of customers surveyed, 95%, stated that the current opening hours suited their needs (compared with 92% in 2018)

d) ‘What type(s) of waste are you recycling/ disposing of today?’

Many customers are disposing of different types of waste on each visit however; 23% were disposing of general household waste, 20% of customers were disposing of garden waste and 14% were disposing of wood and timber.

These results show little change since 2018 in the items that customers are taking to the HWRCs. General household rubbish and garden waste are still the most frequently disposed of items.

Furthermore, customers were asked if they had disposed of ‘hardcore waste’ as part of their visit to the HWRC. With reference to this type of waste being subject to a charge for disposal from 3rd June 2019, results showed that in 2019, 7% stated they disposed of ‘hardcore waste’ compared with 10% in 2018. When this 2019 figure is broken down by survey ‘wave’, 12% of respondents stated they disposed of ‘hardcore waste’ in April and 2% in October.
2. General satisfaction levels

Customers are asked to rank their satisfaction levels regarding a number of aspects. These rankings are from 1 to 5, with 5 being ‘very satisfied’ and 1 being ‘very dissatisfied’.

Customers are also asked to rate their overall satisfaction with their visit, on the same scale.

a) Satisfaction with site aspects

Overall, satisfaction remains high on all counts, particularly in terms of queue times, site signage and the ease of access to the various recycling and disposal points on site, similar to 2018.

b) ‘Overall, how satisfied were you with your visit to the HWRC today’.
The overall satisfaction level across the network is high; **98% of customers stated they were either ‘Satisfied’ or ‘Very Satisfied’** (compared with 99% in 2018).

**b) Reasons for satisfaction**

Customers were asked to give reasons for their rating for overall satisfaction. Although the majority of customers couldn’t give a particular reason, below are some examples of those that did comment;
3. Staff assistance and satisfaction levels

a) ‘Were you offered any assistance on your visit today?’

- 19% of customers were **offered** assistance and **needed** it
- 13% of customers were **offered** assistance but **did not need** any
- 67% of customers were **not offered** assistance, but **did not need** any
- 1% of customers were **not offered** assistance but **needed** it

**Please note:** It is not a requirement for site staff to assist every customer (and indeed, at many of the bigger sites this would not be possible). What we are testing is whether there are people requiring help that did not receive it for one reason or another. This is tested in further detail in the mystery shopping programme (See Page 13).

b) Site staff Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied</th>
<th>Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Very dissatisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff Helpfulness</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Presentation</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Knowledge</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Politeness</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety On Site</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visibility of Site Staff</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*very dissatisfied is included as an option, however there were no respondents that chose this for any category.

Customers were also asked to rate their satisfaction with the site staff (on the 1-5 scale) looking at aspects of behaviour, presentation and professionalism. Overall satisfaction remains high on all counts, particularly in terms of visibility of staff, staff presentation & safety on site.
4. Policy knowledge and understanding

a) Operating Policies

Customers were asked if they were aware of a number of the operating policies that are in place at the HWRCs. These policies are in place to limit the amount of trade waste that is disposed of at our sites illegally, to help reduce demand on site and space on site.

- 55% of customers surveyed were aware of the trailer size restrictions (compared with 41% in 2018)
- 42% of customers surveyed knew there was a charge for soil, rubble and hardcore and plasterboard.
- 54% of customers surveyed were aware that there is a disposal charge of £2.50 per tyre up to 5 tyres (compared with 21% in 2018).

Of all customers surveyed, **25% were not aware of any of these policies.**

It is important that KCC communicate these policies with their customers effectively. KCC will ensure that customers are able to access this information in a suitable way when they need it.

b) The Vehicle Voucher Scheme

KCC operate a vehicle voucher scheme for commercial type and over-height vehicles to access the HWRC's.

Of those customers surveyed, 1% had vouchers for their vehicle with **85% of these customers stating they were either ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with the vehicle voucher application process** (compared with 80% in 2018).

Details of all of HWRC operating policies are available on the kent.gov website; [https://www.kent.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/9717/HWRC-operating-policies.pdf](https://www.kent.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/9717/HWRC-operating-policies.pdf)
5. Suggested Improvements

In general, very few suggestions for improvements were made, however of the customers who did, the most common are detailed in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestion for Improvement</th>
<th>% of Customers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remove charges for certain materials</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve signage</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bigger sites</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longer opening hours</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to/from site</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff to be more helpful</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shorter queues / traffic control</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking control / parking marshal</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More recycling containers / plastic recycling</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know, or no suggestion</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mystery Shopping

In December 2015, KCC WM procured Newlann LTD to undertake Mystery Shopping across its network of 18 HWRCs.

As part of this contract, four Mystery Shops are undertaken at each HWRC every month and each ‘shop’ assesses five areas of the service;

- **Entering the facility** - E.g. Is the HWRC open when it should be. How long is the queue?

- **Facility standards** - E.g. This includes both site and staff presentation. Is the site tidy? Are the site staff wearing correct uniforms and easily identifiable?

- **Operating policy adherence** - E.g. Are site policies and rules being enforced, for example are staff checking commercial waste is not being disposed of. Are staff ensuring that children remain in vehicles?

- **Customer service** - E.g. How friendly are colleagues and are they available to help?

Each area is awarded a percentage score and a further overall percentage score is then given.

There is also an option for assessors to ask an enquiry question to test the knowledge of HWRC site staff concerning a particular topic, e.g. material restrictions and charges. An enquiry question is asked at two ‘shops’ per month at each site.
1. Individual Service Area Results

a) Entering the Facility

Entering the facility looks at aspects like how long shoppers are waiting, and for those who are waiting more than 10 minutes, whether or not there is effective queue management in place. Sites are also scored on how well vehicles entering the facility are being monitored for adherence to site operating policies.

The scores for entering the facility drop slightly in April and May, this is attributed to the sites being busier during this period. This is especially the case in 2019, as sites were busier in the months leading up to the charging policy coming into force (3rd June 2019). In addition to this, it is understood that a larger volume of garden waste is received into sites. It is important however, that where it is safe to do so, staff manage the queue effectively and let customers know the reason they are waiting.

b) Facility Standards

Facility standards looks at both staff presentation (are staff recognisable, and wearing the correct uniform), and site standards (cleanliness and a safe environment being maintained for customers). The results below suggest that standards are generally very high.
c) Operating Policy Adherence
Operating policy adherence assesses whether or not the sites are being operated in accordance with HWRC policies. The importance of enforcing these policies is paramount to ensure the sites are being operated legally and safely. As we would expect to see, sites consistently score 99%-100% in this area which shows that sites are being managed safely.

d) Customer Service

It is expected that site staff will, where possible, proactively offer help to customers when they can and if not, they are engaged in other site related activities.
e) Enquiry

Enquiry questions are asked during two ‘shops’ each month. These are based upon real-life queries and cover a number of topics for example; vehicle access, paint disposal, charging for materials and how to dispose of certain materials.

Whilst in general sites score high in regard to customer enquiries, results do tend to fluctuate. WM is working hard with its contractors to ensure site staff have the most up to date information and training. It is important that site operatives are able to help customers with any questions they may have or direct them to the correct place, or person to ascertain further details.
2. Overall Results

The graph below shows the average overall score for each assessed service area for 2019;

The results show that overall the service is performing very well at 97%. This is consistent with the findings in 2018. Results are particularly high (100%) with regards to ‘Operating Policy adherence’ which shows that sites are being managed safely and inline with policy decisions.

However, as detailed in the outcomes for individual service areas, the results also show that some minor improvements could be made to improve the scorings in certain areas, especially regarding customer enquiries.
For any additional information, please visit https://www.kent.gov.uk/waste. Alternatively, you can contact the Waste Management Team by phone on: **03000 417373** or email WasteSupport@kent.gov.uk.

You can also provide feedback in an online customer satisfaction survey, found at https://www.kent.gov.uk/waste go to the ‘Find your nearest Household Waste Recycling Centre’ page, and a survey can be found at the bottom of the page by clicking the ‘**give us your feedback**’ option.

It should be noted there was a change of contractor at a number of the household waste recycling centres: CSKL took over the management and operations of Maidstone, Swanley and Dartford in July 2020.