



WIN case study November 2010: Efficient working – Daventry District Council moves to four day week waste collections and saves £250k pa!

Case study focus

Four-day working has become a real option for waste collection authorities in a bid to reduce costs and improve efficiency. Since November 2009, kerbside waste and recycling collections in Daventry District have been taking place over four days a week to make the service more cost-effective to the taxpayer. Although crews continue to work a 37-hour week, collections no longer take place on Mondays, including bank holidays, which has reduced costs by approximately £250,000 and freed up additional time for scheduled vehicle maintenance. This case study explains the range of benefits it has produced, along with some of the challenges faced.

- Mondays available for vehicle maintenance, making life easier for workshop and operations
- Better work/life balance for staff



Key efficiencies and summary of outcomes

- Reduction in rounds from eight to seven with efficiency savings of £250,000 per annum which are ongoing
- More efficient use of vehicles
- Crews available one day a week for emergencies, catch up and training – (paid at overtime rates)



Background and drivers

As with all councils, Daventry was under pressure to make savings across the board and this scheme was one such money saving idea that was devised. At the same time, a vehicle tracking system was installed which revealed spare time available on the rounds and consequently the opportunity for an increase in productivity presented itself.

Aside from the obvious efficiency savings to be gained, Daventry faced a number of issues which are common to most WCAs:

Bank Holiday collection arrangements

Staff at Daventry have always worked Bank Holidays Mondays but with this came the costs of overtime payments plus granting of additional leave.

Vehicle maintenance programmes

Vehicles were constantly in use which led to the council having to 'struggle' with fewer vehicles when maintenance was required.

Catch up

On some occasions, such as when hit by severe weather, a back-log of collections built up with a knock-on effect to subsequent days.

How does a four day week work and what are the options?

The idea of a four-day week may sound

straightforward but this is not the case as there is more than one option to consider.

Some authorities choose to only operate collections over four days, usually Tuesday to Friday. Others operate a staggered or a rolling week; this means that the collections are made over five or more days but crews only work a maximum of four (longer) days each.

Daventry chose the former and decided to run Tuesday to Friday collections to eliminate Bank Holiday Monday working. This was more attractive to the crews on the basis that the new way of working would give them Saturday, Sunday and Monday off every week.

What were the challenges?

There are a number of challenges that come with such a significant change in working arrangements, both initially and ongoing.

Operational

To accommodate longer working days, rounds had to be re-routed and optimised. Daventry used a system called RouteSmart which they loaned from Northamptonshire Waste Partnership. Even with the software, they still found that the expert local knowledge of crew members proved invaluable in fine tuning the routes – to take



into account anomalies on the ground that were not highlighted by RouteSmart. Although in the first instance this generated a substantial amount of work and day changes for residents, in the long run there was an opportunity to create a new balanced set of collection rounds and improve the efficiency of the service.

Due to the later finishes, some crews can occasionally struggle to make the last tip time of the day in unforeseen circumstances such as a vehicle breakdown, however this has been overcome in the main by changing facilities.

To reflect the day changes and longer working days, all route risk assessments had to be revisited.

Personnel

Not surprisingly, there were some HR challenges associated with working longer days including ensuring crews take their allotted, longer breaks. By making three of the four collection days 10 hours long, crews were required to take a 45 minute break as opposed to just 30 minutes. This time had to therefore be worked into the rounds.

Consideration also has to be given to the fact that crews would now be carrying out more collections during the hours of darkness, especially in winter.

At the beginning of the process, crews were given questionnaires and asked to vote for their favoured new way of working. 85% voted for a 4 day week which was significant in working towards the changes – this proved to be a massive advantage for implementation.

A range of benefits...

Daventry has reaped the rewards from taking the initiative to move to a new way of working. The main benefits have been:

- Reduction in rounds from eight to seven - generating efficiency savings of £250,000
- Collections can be made with fewer vehicles than the number required for five-day working by extending working hours.
- Substantial fuel savings resulting in reduced CO2 emissions – saving 40 tonnes per year across the whole collection service.
- More efficient use of vehicles
- Drivers can be available on a Monday for any emergencies (paid at overtime rates). For example during adverse weather conditions in early 2010 when collections had to be suspended due to



snow, the crews caught up on the Monday.

- Improved use of resources, with Mondays now available for crews to undertake training such as Health & Safety (subject to overtime payment).
- Choosing to operate a Tuesday to Friday working week meant that there would no longer be a requirement for Bank Holiday working. This automatically removed the cost of having to pay staff overtime, along with the subsequent need to grant additional leave. For staff there was an added bonus in relation to work/life balance, as they could now enjoy bank holiday Mondays with their families.

- Improved efficiency as a result of being able to make an additional tip per day and therefore making more balanced and up to capacity collections.
- Mondays are free to undertake maintenance of the vehicles. Operationally this has made life much easier. By working just a seven hour day on a Friday, the workshop can have the vehicles by early afternoon on through to Tuesday morning.

"It seems that the four-day week has been a win-win-win situation – the Council, residents and workforce have all benefited."

Jo Gilford, Corporate Manager

Consultation as the key to success...

Both staff and UNISON were fully involved in the initiative. In excess of 50 Terms and Conditions were changed, with the crews being involved at all stages in the development, implementation and review of the new regime.

The reduction in rounds was due to a number of dynamics:

- The ability to save time due to being able to collect from more properties on each round. This reduces the time taken to travel to and from the depot across the fleet as a whole with seven vehicles carrying out the work that previously required eight.

The crews were supportive of the new working week from the start and involved in its development which significantly reduced objections and in fact brought about a positive attitude to the changes. The drivers also assisted in the route optimisation process, thus gaining ownership of the rounds.

The longer working hours had to be agreeable with the reception facilities for all materials and disposal/treatment facilities.



Efficiency savings

Total savings achieved are around **£250,000** (per year). This was reached through:

- Not having to pay staff Bank Holiday Monday overtime and granting leave.
- Elimination of one round

N.b The Routesmart system was bought by the Northamptonshire Waste Partnerships four years ago for another project. Daventry borrowed and kept the system and pay the annual renewal fees, which are approximately £30k.

Lessons learned and advice for authorities looking at four day working

- Ensure, as with any change in service, that there is sufficient planning and suitable lead time prior to roll-out.
- Consult with staff and unions from a very early stage and involve them fully in the process, asking the crews opinion

- Choose the right time of year to implement longer days. Daventry made the changes in November and in hindsight would have chosen Spring or Summer when the mornings and evenings are lighter. All crews had new elements to their rounds which in lighter conditions would have resulted in fewer missed bins. Despite this missed bins totalled just 140 compared to the usual 30 per month.
- Finally, design and follow through a good, strict implementation plan, ensuring that all target dates are achieved.

For more information about four day working... see the WIN Focus document – [‘Moving to a four day working week’](#)

Links and Contacts

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