



## WIN Focus 10: Moving to a four day working week

This document has been compiled to provide a brief overview of the ideas around moving waste and/or recycling collections from the standard Monday to Friday week to a four day week system. A number of authorities have made such changes to their services in recent years and this document brings together guidance and advice for councils who may be considering or actively looking at this way of working.

The information here links to and has been compiled as a result of the November 2010 WIN case study from Daventry District Council which can be found [here](#). Daventry moved from five, to four day working, optimising collection rounds and saving in the region of £250,000 per year.

Four-day working has become a real option for authorities with a responsibility for waste collection in a bid to reduce costs and improve efficiency. There are a number of benefits to be realised including:

- Reduction in rounds with associated savings
- 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
- More efficient use of vehicles
- Increased levels of 'productive' time\*
- Crew can be available on the 'spare' day for any emergencies, for example during adverse weather conditions when collections have to be suspended due to snow etc, crews can catch up
- Monday is usually the day dropped, thus eliminating the requirement for Bank Holiday working. This automatically removes the cost of having to pay overtime rates and granting additional leave
- Improved use of resources, for example crews can be brought in on the 'spare' day (subject to overtime payment) to undertake training such as Health & Safety etc.
- Better work-life balance for crews who have a long weekend every week
- Provides an opportunity to review and re-route rounds to achieve maximum efficiency and productivity



The change in round sizes, and therefore vehicle requirements, can result in large cost savings for an authority, but there are many options and considerations to take into account as discussed below.

\*'Productive' time is the time that a crew actually spends collecting from households, loading collection vehicles and driving between properties on the round. All other time (e.g. driving to and from rounds, unloading vehicles etc.), although essential to the overall task, is termed 'unproductive' time.

### Four day service vs. the rolling week

There are different options for four day working the main being a 'true' four day week, whereby one day a week (usually a Monday) is dropped, primarily to overcome the issues surrounding Bank Holiday Mondays – although Christmas and Easter which both have two Bank Holidays in the week will still require cover.

The second option is to operate collections over a staggered, 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. Operating collections on a rolling week does not necessarily overcome the Bank Holiday issue, but has other benefits for example:

- crews may rotate the day they take off
- vehicles can be used more efficiently with improved maintenance programme
- often crews are more willing to provide short-notice cover

Both the 'simple' four day working model and the rolling week allow you to get more work out of your vehicles – known as "sweating your assets". Through the simple model, vehicles are used for more hours a day and therefore fewer rounds are needed to fulfil the requirements of the service. For a rolling week, five crews for example, only need four vehicles to carry out a whole week's work; meaning that a spare vehicle is available every day of the week, which can either displace the spare provision or be used to make collections.

### An opportunity to rebalance rounds

Moving to a four day week presents the opportunity to change and rebalance collection rounds to ensure that the service is operating as efficiently as possible by maximising 'productive time'\*. It is often at this point that authorities consider route optimisation/re-zoning, a service efficiency 'healthcheck' or even a more detailed productivity analysis (of which changes to the working week could just be one small part) – see WIN's ['More for Less'](#) guidance for more information on productivity analysis and the complexities of rebalancing rounds. It also includes



information for contracted out services.

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In rural authority areas for example, where property density tends to be much lower, waste collection rounds can be largely made up of travelling time. It is therefore possible to gain efficiencies by keeping vehicles out for one longer day (capacity permitting) rather than breaking the route into smaller rounds over more days. This means fewer tip journeys and fewer under capacity collections, therefore reducing overall mileage across the service.

It may also prove an appropriate time to introduce other service changes which can all be factored in, usually with minimal additional disruption for crews and residents, such as:

- Adding additional materials
- Changing container types
- Introducing/tightening up policies such as no side waste, closed lid, AWC (see WIN's [Waste Policy Checklist](#) for a full list of policy considerations)
- GPS tracking and in-cab PDAs to facilitate better communication between crews, depot, staff to improve the linkages and efficiency of back office and frontline services.

## Considerations

A change in working practices needs to be planned, consulted on and carefully implemented. Of course, if you are planning to implement other changes at the same time, then this will require an even greater level of consideration.

It is essential to manage the decision making process well, in particular, having very good evidence and not just covering, but actively planning to manage, all potential concerns. You will also need to demonstrate to Members that implementation will go smoothly – ensuring you show them that excellent communications and contingency plans will be in place.

Get key people involved from the beginning and make sure your evidence is good. Be sure to communicate:

- Potential savings;
- Any investment costs;
- Reputation, operational and other risks supported by a risk management plan.



There are a number of issues that will be common to most authorities:

- **Ensure your proposed working hours match facility opening times.** A longer working day will only work if MRFs, transfer stations and disposal/treatment facilities can receive waste at times that suit your new working hours. Ensure that this is a preliminary discussion.
- **Allow enough time to redesign rounds.** Collection rounds will need to be re-designed to accommodate the new length of day. This can be a complex process and you may need to buy in expertise or software to assist you in doing this. You will also need to ensure crews have enough time to learn new rounds.
- **Consultation with crews.** Longer working hours can be difficult for some crews and may not suit everyone. Operational staff at any level may be resistant to change, possibly with good reason as change might mean extra stress or work, in particular if things are not planned carefully. Careful planning, taking concerns seriously and reassuring staff not just with words but action and effective communication is essential. At the beginning of the process at Daventry District Council, crews were given questionnaires and asked to vote for their favoured new way of working. 85% voted for a four day week which was significant in moving towards the changes – this proved to be a massive advantage for implementation.

When seeking to make changes to contractual terms and conditions (i.e. changing working hours) the consent of employees and/or their representatives will generally be required. Obtaining this will involve formal consultation with the workforce's representatives, leading to negotiation. You can ensure you have the right skills by bringing in HR support with experience of negotiation with Trades Unions. This might have to be sourced externally if you feel this is not available in-house or within the HR departments of partnership authorities who you may be able to borrow from.

- **Communication to residents** needs to be clear and timely to avoid potential confusion and annoyance (resulting in an impact on the service such as reduced set out rates/participation) and allow enough time to answer any questions they may have. You also need to consider that if starting the day earlier, you will need to ask residents to set out containers earlier which may not be acceptable and could result in an increase in missed bins. See the [WIN](#) and [WRAP](#) websites for communications guidance and resources to help you get the right message to your residents.
- **Allow for an increase in tonnage.** Ensuring that any re-routing takes full account of any additional material that vehicles may collect because the pass rate has increased (i.e. the number of households collected from on the round has gone up) as this has an impact on the number of tip visits needed each day and could result in vehicles being overloaded to



avoid making a small final tip.

- **Make allowances for increased maintenance** – working longer days, vehicles may need to have a more attentive and regular maintenance programme.

#### Councils that are currently working a four day week include:

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council  
Bolsover District Council  
Bradford Metropolitan Borough Council  
Bromsgrove District Council  
Bury Metropolitan Borough Council  
Charnwood Borough Council  
Coventry City Council  
Harborough District Council  
Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council  
Horsham District Council  
Leicester City Council  
London Borough of Redbridge  
Middlesbrough Borough Council  
North West Leicestershire District Council

Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council  
Plymouth City Council  
Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council  
Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council  
Rossendale Borough Council  
Salford City Council  
Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council  
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council  
Stroud District Council  
Wakefield Metropolitan District Council  
Warrington Borough Council  
Wellingborough Borough Council  
Worcester City Council

#### Sources

Daventry District Council

Four day foresight – CIWM magazine article, July 2009

WIN – More for Less, guidance for local authorities on saving money in waste & recycling services. March 2010.