

LoveCleanStreets

“This use of technology can deliver real savings while encouraging people to take an active pride in their environment”¹
Boris Johnson,
 Mayor of London

Challenges

The maintenance of local environmental quality represents one of the most sensitive aspects of local government public service delivery.² A 2011 survey found that the appearance of a local area concerns people more than the quality of service provided by the NHS, traffic congestion or global warming, and that the level of public concern around local environmental quality has risen to 70 per cent of people in the UK in the past year.³

However, many local authorities tend to deliver local environmental services in inefficient and ineffective ways. Prior to the introduction of LoveCleanStreets in the London Borough of Lewisham, for instance, the average time taken to log a graffiti complaint and deploy a cleaning team to clear the problem was three days.⁴ Moreover, the local authority's complaints department was often unable to appropriately judge the size and scope of the environmental issue when issuing instructions to street cleaning staff, meaning that significant resources were sent to resolve a small environmental concern, causing significant waste.⁵

In 2010-2011, local authorities in England spent a total of £760 million on street cleansing.⁶ Yet there is concern that environmental services will be reduced in an era of budgetary restraint. In 2011, significant opposition to local authorities' plans to introduce fortnightly, rather than weekly, refuse collections this year led to intervention from the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Eric Pickles.⁷ A 2011 survey of local authorities found that 77 per cent of councils expect standards of street cleanliness to decline over the next year due to reduced budgets.⁸

Methods

In 2005, Nigel Tyrel, Head of Environment at the London Borough of Lewisham, launched LoveCleanStreets, an innovative online initiative to improve the process of reporting environmental concerns, such as fly-tipping, graffiti and street refuse, in the borough and involve local residents in the maintenance of the local environment.⁹

User co-design

At the heart of the initiative was the development of the *Love Lewisham* website, www.lovelewisham.org, where local citizens and public servants are actively involved in the reporting and resolution of environmental problems.

Citizens are able to upload a photograph of the problem to the website, along with additional comments and location, which is sent directly to environmental services. The street cleaning team is then able to send the appropriate resource, both in terms of manpower and equipment, to the exact location. A photo of the completed cleaning job is then uploaded to the website, notifying citizens that the issue has been resolved and the response time taken.

- 1 Johnson, B., in Evening Standard (2011), 'Boris Johnson launches grime-busting phone app', 11 March.
- 2 Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2005), *Achieving improvements in street cleansing and related services*, p. 1.
- 3 Keep Britain Tidy (2011), *Word on the Street Survey 2011*.
- 4 Prendiville, A. (2009), 'Love Lewisham', *improving stakeholder satisfaction in local government service: A case study of strategic public sector service innovation*, London College of Communication, University of the Arts London.
- 5 Katz, A. (2011), *Love Lewisham: A service analysis of public sector innovation*, Innovation Unit.
- 6 Department for Communities and Local Government (2011), *Local Authority Revenue Expenditure, England 2010-11: Statistical Release*, 17 February.
- 7 Department for Communities and Local Government (2011), 'Eric Pickles: £250m for councils to support weekly bin collections', News release, 30 September.
- 8 Association of Public Service Excellence (2011), *State of the market survey 2011: Local Authority street cleansing services*, p. 6.
- 9 Microsoft (2011), *Microsoft case studies: London Borough of Lewisham*.

“Encouraging local people to get involved and to report the problems they see will not only help councils to provide better street scene services but at the same time will build public support for their work. The adoption of smart solutions in this way will help keep London tidy and lead to cleaner, greener places.”¹⁶

Phil Barton, Chief Executive, Keep Britain Tidy

In addition, refuse collectors have been issued with camera phones during working hours, enabling them to report any environmental problems during their weekly rounds and ensuring that every street is surveyed at least once a week.¹⁰

A virtual service

LoveCleanStreets uses innovative technology to transform the way in which environmental services are reported in the borough. Users are able to report environmental issues to the website not only online but also via a mobile application that is accessible via all major mobile operating systems and via text or multimedia message.¹¹ To maximise usage, users are not required to create an account, which can hinder take-up, but can instead sign in using an existing social media account, including Twitter, Facebook, Google or Yahoo.¹² The website also includes a Live Map feature on which reports and actions appear in real time. This can be integrated into the local authority system to allow developers to create their own applications around it.¹³

Since 2005, LoveCleanStreets has migrated from the original Cam2Web application, which was developed in-house and provided on-premises, to a more comprehensive software solution developed by bbits, an external developer, and hosted in the cloud using Microsoft Windows Azure.¹⁴ By hosting the service in the cloud and using replicable software, Lewisham has made the service transferable for other public authorities and scaleable to higher user volumes at minimal extra cost.¹⁵

Expansion

Since 2005, LoveCleanStreets has attracted significant interest from a number of other public authorities. In March 2010, LoveCleanStreets was rolled out across London under the brand LoveCleanLondon (www.lovecleanlondon.org) after gaining support from Boris Johnson. The Mayor of London has since included the scheme in his 2011 Draft Municipal Strategy for London.¹⁷

In addition, Lewisham has received interest from a number of international quarters, including Jamaica, the United States and China, looking to replicate the scheme.¹⁸

Outcomes

Improved service

The introduction of LoveCleanStreets has had a dramatic effect on the efficiency and effectiveness of environmental services in Lewisham. While previously it took three days to remove graffiti, it now takes less than one day after a report is lodged. Similarly, 70 per cent of rubbish that is dumped illegally is removed within a day. Overall, the clean-up rate has improved by 87 per cent since 2005.¹⁹

In addition, the newfound responsiveness of the service has actually reduced the number of environmental crimes, such as graffiti and fly tipping, by deterring those committing them in the first place. For example, the amount of graffiti in the borough fell by 73 per cent between 2006 and 2010, from 26,311 metres of graffiti to 7,222 metres.²⁰

10 EURIM (2008), *How to Achieve Citizen-Centric Service Delivery: Let the People Speak*, Transforming Government Dialogues.

11 Microsoft (2011), *Microsoft case studies: London Borough of Lewisham*.

12 Government Business Awards (2010), Environmental Innovation Award, News release.

13 Ibid.

14 Prendiville, A. (2009), 'Love Lewisham', *improving stakeholder satisfaction in local government service: A case study of strategic public sector service innovation*, London College of Communication, University of the Arts London.

15 Microsoft (2011), *Microsoft case studies: London Borough of Lewisham*.

16 Government Business Awards (2010), Environmental Innovation Award, News release: <http://gbawards.governmentbusiness.co.uk/awards-categories/3-awards-category-one/94-environmental-innovation-award>

17 Johnson, B., in *Evening Standard* (2011), 'Boris Johnson launches grime-busting phone app', 11 March; London Borough of Bexley (2011), Street Services Review Contract Scrutiny Sub-group, 'Love Clean Streets' Scheme, 4 January.

18 London Borough of Bexley (2011), Street Services Review Contract Scrutiny Sub-group, 'Love Clean Streets' Scheme, 4 January.

19 Microsoft (2011), *Microsoft case studies: London Borough of Lewisham*.

20 *The Daily Telegraph* (2011), 'Microsoft can help expand and broaden your services', 2 August.

**“I’m still using the excellent Love Lewisham site, a wonderful interactive resource for generally improving the neighbourhood”²⁸
Lewisham resident**

Service satisfaction

LoveCleanStreets has had a marked effect on public perceptions of environmental services themselves. Since the scheme was introduced in 2005, the proportion of residents rating the street cleaning service as “good” or “excellent” has risen by 18 per cent.²¹ Complaints about casework performance have also fallen by 21 per cent.²²

In addition, citizens’ involvement in the scheme has increased substantially. The number of issues reported to Lewisham’s environmental services through the site increased from 1,140 in 2003 to 6,500 in 2007.²³ In 2011, the council undertakes between 300 and 400 rubbish removal jobs per week, the equivalent of 15,600 - 20,800 annually.²⁴ The number of page views for the LoveCleanLondon website has grown by 10-15 per cent monthly since its launch in March 2010.²⁵

In 2009, the Audit Commission’s One Place independent assessment awarded the London Borough of Lewisham a Green Flag for “exceptional performance or innovation that others can learn from” in “community engagement and empowerment of local people”.²⁶ This was followed in 2010 with an Environmental Innovation Award at the Government Business Awards, specifically for the Love Lewisham initiative.²⁷

Savings

By streamlining of the reporting process, LoveCleanStreets has enabled Lewisham Council to realise substantial efficiency savings at minimal extra cost. The website reporting procedure costs the council just £1.10, compared to £5.10 for a complaint made by phone.²⁹

In addition, better allocation of resources and reduced demand has helped Lewisham make wider savings in the environment budget. According to Nigel Tyrel: “By monitoring waste more efficiently, Lewisham Council generated an extra £20,000 of income in 2010. In 2011, our aim is to generate a further £100,000.”³⁰

21 Audit Commission (2009), *Better information, better decisions, better services: Selecting services to be delivered electronically*, p. 17.

22 Microsoft (2011), *Microsoft case studies: London Borough of Lewisham*.

23 Prendiville, A. (2009), ‘Love Lewisham’, *improving stakeholder satisfaction in local government service: A case study of strategic public sector service innovation*, London College of Communication, University of the Arts London.

24 Microsoft (2011), *Microsoft case studies: London Borough of Lewisham*.

25 Ibid.

26 Audit Commission (2009), *One Place area assessment: Lewisham*, p. 4.

27 Government Business Awards (2010), Environmental Innovation Award, News release.

28 Quoted in Gibson, A. (2010), *Local by social: How local authorities can use social media to achieve more for less*, Improvement & Development Agency (IDeA) and the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA).

29 Microsoft (2011), *Microsoft case studies: London Borough of Lewisham*.

30 Tyrel, N. (2011), quoted in Microsoft (2011), *Microsoft case studies: London Borough of Lewisham*.