



LARAC

GARDEN WASTE RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE GATHERING EXERCISE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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SOENECS
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The Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee (LARAC) appointed Social, Environmental and Economic Solutions (SOENECS) Ltd in March 2021 to undertake research into local authority garden waste collections and use the resultant analysis to inform responses to the government consultation on Consistency in Household and Business Recycling in England published 7th May 2021.

The SOENECS team of Dr David Greenfield, Natalie Ibbott and Lucy Hughes undertook three tasks to deliver the outputs required by LARAC:

1. created and circulated through LARAC, a questionnaire (incorporating 100 quantitative and qualitative questions),
2. accessed, reviewed all 311 local authority garden waste web pages, and
3. cleaned, summarised, and modelled the resultant data to determine the impact of moving to free garden waste collection services.

The methodology and results from these three tasks are summarised below, with a full explanation in the main report.

TASK 1: QUESTIONNAIRE

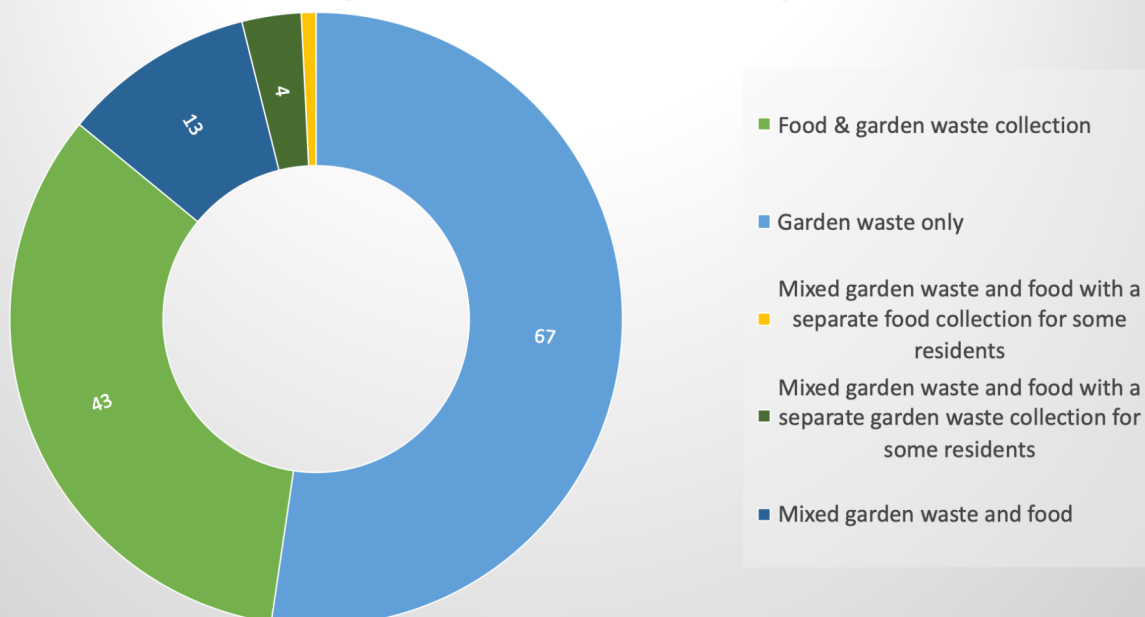
In total, 135 individual survey returns were made, including joint submissions from Kent Resource Partnership, Somerset Waste Partnership, Surrey Waste Partnership and Oxfordshire Waste Partnership. For the purposes of data modelling, 128 of the authorities' information was suitable for data modelling.

The questionnaire focused on the operational systems used by councils to collect green waste and food waste from households. The categories of questions asked included the following:

- service offered
- frequency of collection
- service provider
- participation rates
- container type
- service charge
- coverage rate
- staffing

Good information was received from authorities regarding calculating levels of charging with many setting the price based upon charges levied in neighbouring authorities.

Service configuration from the 128 Council responses



Comments on the quality of material collected were all positive and all those that provided information about waste composition are seeing minimal amounts of garden waste, in the residual stream.

The pie chart below shows the breakdown of service type of those that responded. there are five distinct categories of service offered by the 128 authorities. Of the 128 authorities, there is an approximate 50:50 split between those that are in-house and those contracted and 87 authorities, equivalent to 68% of respondees currently charge for collection.

TASK 2: WEBSITE SURVEY

A review of 311 councils' websites regarding garden waste schemes, food waste offerings and home composting information was conducted to determine what, if any charge they made for garden waste services. The table above shows the results.

Eighty five of 311 councils (27%) of councils offer a free garden waste service, with 30 of these being mixed food and garden waste. Three councils have no reference to a garden waste service.

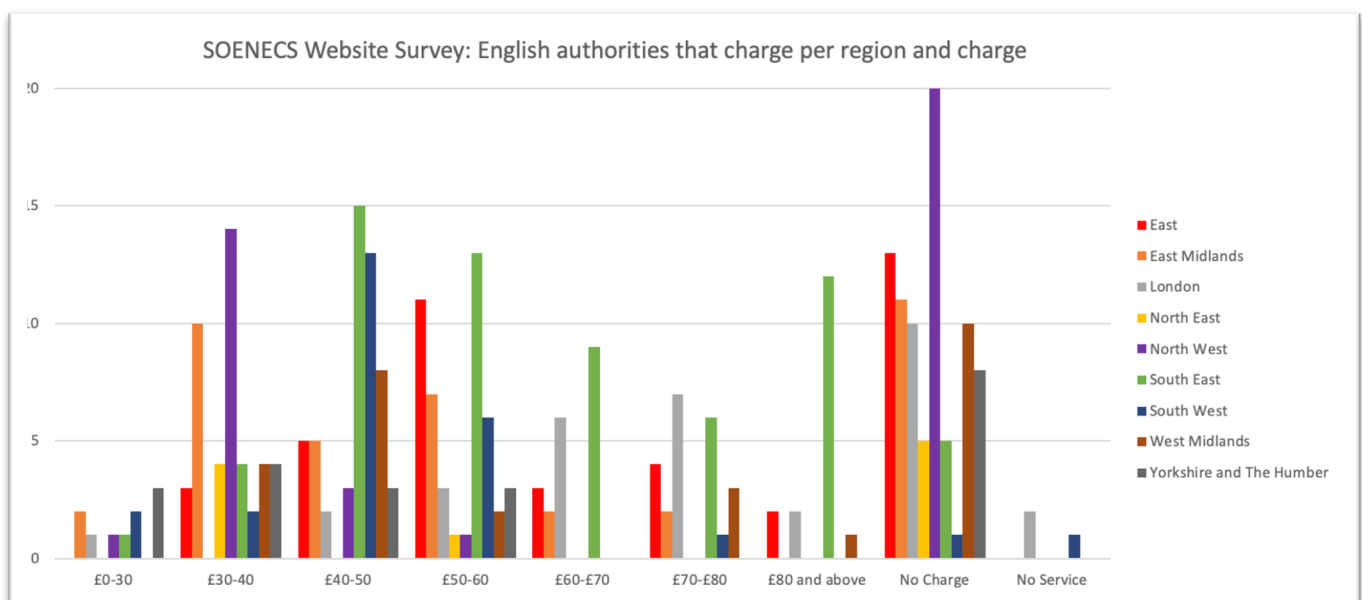
Of the 226 councils that do charge for the service, prices range from £12 to £116. At least 149 councils offer the option for a second bin, with 6 of these being of no charge. There is no regional bias in the charge that authorities levy on residents, with the possible exception of the

North West and West Midland's authorities, where the majority offer a free service or one that is under £40.

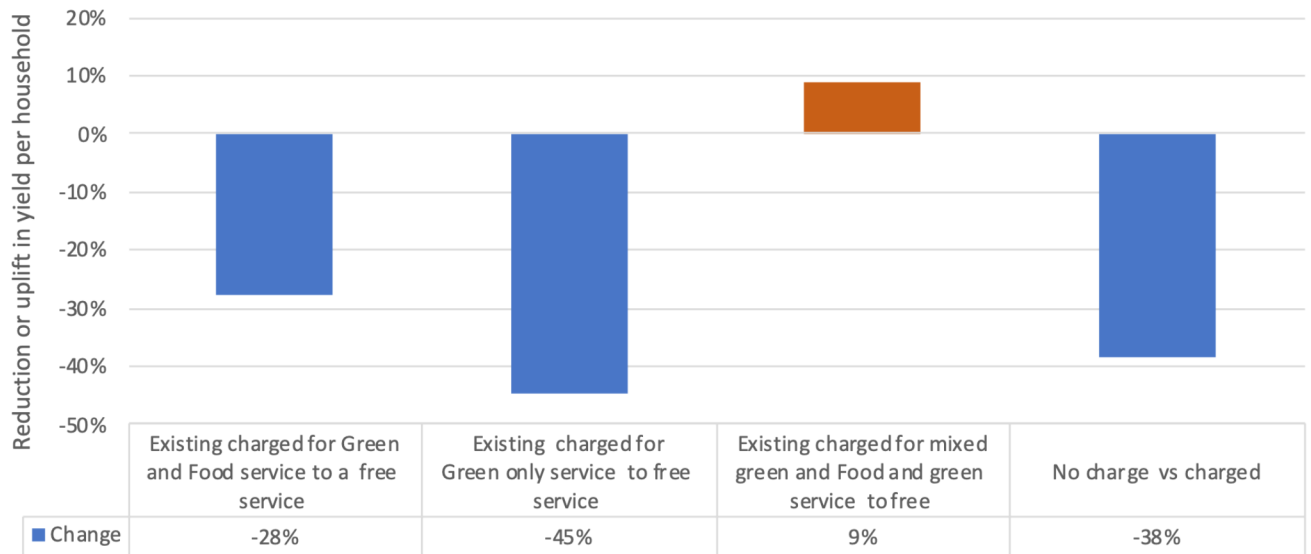
TASK 3: KEY SUMMATION FROM MODELLING

A review SOENECS used the data collected in the questionnaire, the website survey data, and existing data from WasteDataFlow and the local authority portal to model the impact of moving all authorities to a free and to a charged for garden service. This included determining the existing coverage rates, yield and charging mechanism for authorities. The modelling is reliant on the data available, for the free services it is very difficult to determine the yield as there are not that many authorities that capture participation rate. Therefore, where participation rate is calculated, an average figure has been used for the majority of councils that offer free collections.

An analysis of yield by service type compared to free and charged for services is shown in the table below, it is clear that authorities that charge for garden waste services are collecting 45% more kgs per household when compared to free. The difference in separate food and garden is an increase of 28% when charged for. If mixed, there is a reduction in yield for those authorities that charge, however, the sample size is small, so the difference is not fully representative.



Change in yield per hhld when moving from charged to free services



If all authorities across England move from their existing services and offer a free collection service, based upon the modelled good performance of 71% coverage, and collect 197 kg/household, then an extra 2.06 million tonnes of garden waste (excluding food) could be collected. This would result in a possible loss of a possible £629 million in income to local authorities from households. This loss of income does not include the extra capital, additional disposal costs and crew required to move from an average of 50% coverage to 71% coverage.

Our modelling suggests that if there was 40% coverage and a yield of 285kg/household for those that charge and for free services a coverage of 71% and a yield of 197 kg/household, authorities would collect 6.38m tonnes of garden waste for recycling.



KEY FACTS

The following statements highlight the key findings from the from the questionnaire (where the statement is from the questionnaire a (Q) is shown afterwards), the website survey (W) and the data modelling (DM).

There is an approximate 50:50 split between in-house and contracted. 58 authorities run an in-house service, with an additional 7 running a Teckal service, the remaining 70 are contracted out (Q)

87 authorities, equivalent to 68% of respondees, charge for collection. (Q)

The predominate choice of vehicle for collecting green waste, with 630 out of 659, is a dedicated RCV. (Q)

The most common collection receptacle is an all-brown wheeled bin of between 181 and 240 litres, followed by an all-green wheeled bin of the same size. The least common combination is an all-black reusable sack. (Q)

Of the 125 that responded, 53 do not have a winter break, whilst they majority of those that do, have a 1-week break, the next most popular is 3 weeks. (Q)

The 128 authorities combined collect over 1 million tonnes of (in various configurations), from over 5 million households, averaging 201kg collected per household. (Q & DM)

Twenty authorities have gone from a free service to a charged for service, with forty having multiple changes, some of these are highlighted in the case studies. (Q)

Of the 87 LA's that charge, the majority, 48, charge between £40-60 per year for a garden service, 43 do not charge and 23 charge less than £40, going as low as £12. The highest charge was £90 (Q)

Those LA's that charge have an estimated combined income of £102 million per annum. (DM)

85/311 (27%) of councils offer a free garden waste service, with 30 of these being mixed food and garden waste. Of the 226 councils that do charge for the service, prices range from £12 to £116. See graph below (W)

36 authorities offer a food waste collection, collecting 185,357 tonnes per annum. (DM)

On average those authorities that charge collect 355kg/household per annum, compared to those that don't, who collect 256kg/household. (DM)

On average those authorities that charge collect approximately 38% more material per household. (DM)

The majority of food waste services are managed in-house or by a waste management company with a 40% and 57% split, respectively. (Q)

A dedicated food vehicle is the predominate choice of vehicle used for this service, accounting for 36% of the total. (Q)

Driver + 2 is the most preferred quantity of crew members, utilised by 43% of responders. (Q)