



EWWR good practices and case studies

1. Details of Action:

EWWR Organiser: Belfast City Council
Country/Region: Northern Ireland (UK)
Name of nominated project developer: Welcome Organisation
Name of nominated actions: **Eco Faith's Coats for Belfast's homeless appeal**
Place: Belfast City
Town: Belfast
Region: Northern Ireland
Country: Northern Ireland (UK)
Website: www.belfastcity.gov.uk/waste
Nominee **category**: NGO
Dates of action: 19th – 27th November 2011

2. Please select the theme(s) highlighted in the action:

- Too Much Waste
- Better Consumption
- Better Production
- A Life for Products
- Less Waste thrown Away

3. Type of Action

- Action open to general public
- Action open to a target group
- Action based on the production of communication tools
- Other, please specify:

4. Please give a detailed and precise description of the action



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Eco Faith's Coats for Belfast's homeless appeal

Background

The Welcome Organisation is a homeless charity based in Belfast city centre. It has been working in Belfast for over 16 years to address the needs of people who are homeless or rough sleeping in the city. A range of support services, are delivered 365 days a year and include ; A Homeless Persons Drop-in Centre and Support Services, Day and Night Street Outreach and Crisis Accommodation for females.

It prides itself on its realistic and non-judgemental attitude which enables the Organisation to work with some of the most vulnerable and marginalised in society. All of The Welcome Organisations services, which are direct access and available to males and females aged 18+ years of age offer practical assistance such as clothing, food and showering facilities, health information and access to medical care.

The Homeless Persons Drop-in Centre was accessed by 963 individuals during 2010, this equated to approximately 24,000 visits. In 2011, partially due to the economic climate, the Welcome Organisation has seen a 30% increase on the number of people coming to it for support. The Welcome Organisation is heavily dependent upon the goodwill and support of the community and individuals for financial donations, gifts of clothing and toiletries etc - all of which make such an impact on the day to day lives of the hundreds of people who access services every year.

Action

Working closely with Belfast City Council's Waste Management service, we invited all Belfast's faith groups to help gather old Winter coats for the homeless. The charity was really low on clothing due to the amount of businesses offering money for public donations meaning that most people were choosing to take their old clothes to these shops rather than donate in charity clothing banks. During the first meeting with Belfast City Council, the Welcome Organisation had stated that the EWWR project was 'an answer to a prayer'.

There was a high response with 19 churches of various faiths and beliefs working together to collect over 2,200 coats equating to approximately 2 tonne of textiles. All the coats were passed onto the Welcome Organisation which distributed them directly to the homeless community in Belfast. This not only helps a worthwhile cause at a difficult time of the year, but it allows all these coats a longer lifespan and puts them to good use.

In addition, new relationships were built between faith groups from different backgrounds which is very important when moving on from Belfast's politically divided past. As all community backgrounds were working together for a common goal, a real sense of achievement was gained. All of the faith groups that took part are interested in taking part in an on-going Belfast City Council's Eco-Faith project. This will involve a series of integrated waste reduction activities which will further help build and improve relationships between different communities in Belfast.

Result

As a result of the collection, the Welcome Organisation has gone from having virtually no clothing stock to having enough stock to last them through the 2011/ 2012 period. They were also able to donate any surplus stock to other local homeless charities who were suffering from lack of resources. Most of the representatives from the faith groups have stated that they will continue to support the Welcome Organisation throughout the year as their chosen charity. Over 2 tonne of textile waste has been given an extended lifespan while Belfast's vulnerable homeless society has been supported through harsh Winter conditions.



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Explain how the action motivated its public/target audience, as well as the number of participants

Target Audience

The coat collection was targeted at faith groups across Belfast to encourage them to work together for a good cause, despite the troublesome political history of Belfast. Belfast city council were keen to work with faith groups as this audience had not been targeted for any EWWR project in Europe before. It was hoped that by building new relationships with Belfast faith groups, an ongoing Eco-Faith project would be launched that would focus on waste management projects throughout the year. Belfast City Council's promotion and education team realised the potential of working with faith groups due to the large number of people in congregations across the city. By tapping into this category, a valuable method of communication could be used in an ongoing basis to help manage waste better.

How did the action motivate its target audience?

Faith groups enjoy working with charities both at local and global levels as it helps people or causes that are in most need. In the run up to Christmas people enjoying giving to charity and the coat collection which involved church groups motivated many people, since local homeless people were the ones who would benefit. Due to the harsh conditions of Winter 2010, people were aware of the great need for Winter coats for local homeless people. Over 2200 coats were collected by around 2000 people from all faith backgrounds.

Number of participants

Coats collection for the homeless – it is estimated that around 2000 people were directly involved in this project through 19 different faith groups, although it is very difficult to know since entire congregations participated. After the EWWR, many of the participants continued to collect and donate which will have a long lasting and sustainable benefit for the charity.

5. Please explain why you have decided to nominate this action for a EWWR Award, following the main criteria listed here below

- 1) visibility and communicational aspects
- 2) good practice, originality and exemplarity
- 3) quality of content and focus on waste prevention,
- 4) European reproducibility
- 5) follow-up in long-term and lasting impact



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- **Visibility and Communicational Aspects**

A letter was sent out to each faith group across Belfast to ensure that as many different faith and beliefs as possible were represented in the project. The letter outlined the challenges that the Welcome Organisation were facing in the onset of Winter and provided information on the work of the charity. A letter was chosen as this is the most appropriate method of communication with this type of group. As each faith group has a designated outreach officer, this is who the letter was addressed to. The uptake for the project was very high with 19 separate faith groups taking part. Each participating group received a poster that was displayed on the building's notice board, an announcement detailing the project was announced to the congregation over a series of weeks and the project was also publicised in each faith group's weekly bulletin/ pamphlet.

When all of the coats had been collected, a thank you letter was written to each group detailing the amount of coats that had been collected. A press release was also included in the letter which was publicised by many of the groups in their bulletin. As a result, each of the faith groups are interested in subsequent waste projects that will make this launch project very a very sustainable benchmark. It is also worth noting that after our letters had been sent that a national campaign was launched on 'Daybreak TV' that promoted a very similar project throughout the UK – Coats for Homeless proving the need to support homeless people over the Winter period.

- **Good practice, originality and exemplarity**

For this project it was important that the waste action supported a local charity. After the harsh Winter of 2010/2011, collecting coats for Belfast's homeless seemed like an obvious choice. Working alongside Belfast City Council, we were able to reach out to local faith groups that hadn't previously been involved with The Welcome Organisation. As all of the coats were distributed directly by the charity's outreach team, we ensured that the coats were given to the people that needed them the most. Many people who donated were happy to know that their unwanted clothing was going directly to a local charity who was receiving ALL of the benefit instead of a proportion. The project was original as we had never conducted a project with Belfast City Council or local faith groups before. It was a great method for involving all types of faiths and beliefs for a common good cause. In addition, there have been very few, if any EWWR projects that worked with this type of group before which we recognised as being an excellent untapped resource. The fact that all of the faith groups are interested in ongoing waste related projects speaks for itself and we are looking forward to building on the relationships that have been created through this initial EWWR/ Eco- Faith project to help develop Belfast's bright future.

- **Quality of content and focus on waste prevention**

This project resulted in the collection of over 2 tonnes of textile waste that was given an extended/ new lease of life. The response we received from the local faith groups was huge with many people donating coats that were going to be recycled/ disposed of at landfill. All of the feedback that we received was very supportive as people understood the practicalities of the waste project. i.e. - the direct need for old coats by the local homeless people. They also stated that it was important for them to know where their old clothes were ending up as many local clothing charity schemes were confusing to them. As this project was run prior to the Christmas period, the generosity of people was heightened. The fact that each group is interested in subsequent work through Belfast City Council's Eco Faith programme makes the quality and sustainability aspect of this project very high.

- **European Reproducibility**

The coats collection for the homeless was particularly significant in that it encouraged different faith communities to work together for a common goal. Many large cities across Europe have a problem with homelessness so the project would be really relevant across Europe. There are also homeless charities across Europe that would work with local council waste departments. Many of the issues that we addressed in our projects are global so replication would be highly effective when tackling the problems. We would be happy to provide a template or a plan to other European cities that would be interested.

- **Follow up in long term and lasting impact**

The coat collection acted as the launch of a long-term partnership with faith groups in Belfast called Eco-Faith, in which Belfast City Council will work to encourage better resource management in faith organisations. Approximately 2000 people took part in the project who will be indirectly communicated with throughout the Eco Faith project which will greatly improve our communications with this new audience. By involving faith groups across the city, many adults who have perhaps been more difficult to reach will be communicated with which will improve waste reduction aims. In addition, most of the groups that took part in the project have continued to support the charity through on going donations at the Welcome Organisation drop in centre. The long term impact of the project has been very high and additional follow up projects will be delivered with enthusiasm.



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6. Please provide us with photos, videos, weblinks or any other material that would help the jury to better understand the EWWR action.



Winter Coats for the Homeless

In the autumn last year, St George's took part in a *Coats for the Homeless* project organised by the Health and Environmental Services of Belfast City Council as part of European Week for Waste Reduction. Our attention was drawn to this Eco-Faith project partly because the coats were to be donated to the Welcome Organisation which St George's supports all the year round, partly because the City Council were offering to collect the garments from the church and take them up to the Welcome Centre on our behalf and partly because last year's experience of severe winter weather reminded us of the vulnerability of the homeless and rough sleepers in our city.

The response from St George's was tremendous and we asked the City Council on two occasions to collect coats and all the other useful garments etc which many of you brought in. When Naomi Palmer, who coordinated the project, wrote a letter of thanks, she was able to inform us that over 2,200 winter coats had been collected from 18 separate church organisations and the Welcome Centre has been able to supply other local homeless charities too. While supporting this worthwhile cause, approximately 2 tonnes of waste has been diverted from landfill.

14