

Painting a rosy picture for recycling

20 September 2023



A pioneering paint re-use shop at the Guildford community recycling centre (CRC), operated on behalf of **Surrey County Council**, launched in 2021 has successfully diverted over 15,500 litres of reusable paint from disposal, raising over £2,000 for **Macmillan Cancer Support** and supporting community projects through the **Surrey Probation Service**.

An estimated 55 million litres of paint are wasted in the UK annually, enough to fill 22 Olympic swimming pools. In autumn 2021, the team at SUEZ, who operate 15 community recycling centres (CRC) on behalf of Surrey County Council, set out to address this problem locally with a circular economy initiative to divert useable paint away from disposal.

To address this issue at the local level, the team at SUEZ opened a paint re-use shop in Guildford where tins of reusable, water-based paint brought to the recycling centre are set aside for residents to have for free, with a suggested donation to Macmillan Cancer Support. In 2023, the team was able to divert even more paint away from disposal by partnering with the Staines Probation Office, providing free paint for use in community projects – up to 200 litres at a time.

Now, nearly two years into operation, the paint shop has diverted over 15,500 litres of paint away from disposal,

raised over £2000 for Macmillan and supported more than five community projects through the probation service.

The paint re-use shop offers an eco-friendly alternative to disposal, contributing to charitable causes and supporting meaningful rehabilitation for individuals on probation. The initiative also aligns economic efficiency with environmental responsibility by generating cost savings for Surrey County Council.

Natalie Bramhall, Cabinet Member for Property and Waste said: “This programme has been a huge success over the last two years and helped divert a significant amount of waste from landfill. To be recognised and shortlisted for a National Recycling Award is great to hear.”

Gareth Swain, Regional Manager for SUEZ recycling and recovery UK said: “When we opened the paint re-use shop in late 2021, we set out to reduce the need for disposal and demand for new paint production by transforming waste paint into a community resource. We are incredibly proud of how the project has grown through the partnership with the probation service and we are honoured to be recognized by this year’s National Recycling Awards.”

Peter Nicholls, Placement Coordinator for the Staines Probation Office of HM Prison & Probation Service said: “The paint donations from SUEZ have made such a difference to all corners of our community, from Scouting to Schools, charities, and homes for vulnerable people in Surrey to name just a few. The projects that we have completed did not have funding for supplies. It is important work and important for our role in rehabilitating and educating people on probation.”