

Innovative Partnership Transforms Soft Plastics into Sustainable Seating for New Green Spaces

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[Tesco](#), [Veolia](#), [Groundwork](#) and [NHSPS](#) have joined forces to recycle soft plastics into outdoor furniture for upcoming social prescribing green spaces. Since 2019, NHSPS has delivered 100 hubs and gardens across the country with the aim to promote community wellbeing and connectivity through nature-centric environments.

Over 6 tonnes of soft plastics (or 155,500 individual soft plastics) were donated by Tesco and transformed into a sustainable 100% recycled plastic lumber, Smartawood™. This lumber was accredited by BBA with a life expectancy of 120 years, requires little maintenance and is designed not to rot or rust. Overall, this process resulted in approximately 15.5 kg of CO2 savings.

The first beneficiary of this collaboration is John Scott Health Centre. The London health and care facility has seen its green space revitalised to give areas for community engagement and social prescribing activities. This space is a part of a bigger scope; further projects are planned at: Maghull Health Centre, Merseyside; Goscote Hospice, Walsall; Shaw House, St Austell and Whitby Community Hospital.

John Scott Health Centre, the first purpose-built health centre in Britain, was once home to an active gardening group which lost its space to a pop-up vaccination centre during the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, NHSPS has reinstated the garden area, making it a welcoming and usable area with decking and accessible picnic tables.

Dr. Min Rodriguez, Head of Social Impact at NHSPS, said: “We are proud to see the continuous

development of our Social Prescribing programme. This collaboration highlights the potential of innovative partnerships to not only create vibrant spaces for public benefit but also to drive positive change in healthcare and environmental sustainability. And it's particularly especial that we are repurposing soft plastics instead of increasing waste."

Tony McElroy, Tesco Head of Campaigns, said: "It's fantastic to see the soft plastic that our customers are returning being turned into something new that will benefit communities and help give young people a stronger start in life. It's still our absolute priority to remove and reduce as much plastic as possible and make sure everything we use is recycled and kept out of the environment."

Adam Wylie, Managing Director – Commercial, at Veolia said "It's great to be working on this unique project which brings together three of our partners: Tesco, one of our most innovative partnerships that is bolstering the circular economy; with the NHS in providing energy, decarbonisation and resource management solutions; and Groundwork as our charity partner and with whom we have delivered ambitious social value campaigns across the country to support the local communities we serve every day.

"Utilising recycled materials in green spaces and collaborating across private and public bodies to deliver these social prescribing gardens is a testament to how we can and must all work together to deliver ecological transformation."

Dr Mareeni Raymond, GP Principal, said: "The Heron Practice is a Greener Practice Silver award winning team who recognise the importance of reducing health inequalities and improving health outcomes by being outdoors, having cleaner air and taking part in activities for mental and physical health. We have been so pleased to support patients through social prescribing and volunteer-led community activities including meditation, exercise and now, a patient and staff gardening group.

"Watching a derelict wasted space become transformed into a haven of flowers and edible plants has been positive for our team and we look forward to nurturing the space, connecting communities and enjoying home grown plant-based food as part of our continuing journey as a practice."

Graham Duxbury, Groundwork's UK Chief Executive, said: "This is a great example of innovative thinking to minimise plastic waste while improving much needed open spaces in local communities. We're proud to be playing our part in delivering this project with the sustainable design expertise and nature-based solutions brought by our Landscape Architects, and look forward to seeing the benefits it brings to communities and the environment."

NHSPS' is no stranger to sustainable initiatives, 32.8% of its non-clinical waste is recycled and 99% of its waste is diverted from landfill. In addition to that, giving new life to waste is a priority for NHSPS which is what happens with 100% of its paper and electrical waste.