

RECYCLING IN SURREY 2021-22

Where it went. What it became. How to recycle more.



Contents

Introduction by Surrey Environment Partnership (SEP) Chair, Cllr Marisa Heath	3
Surrey recycles!	5
What went into Surrey's bins in 2021–22	10
What happens when it can't be recycled?	13
Recycling and rubbish around the county	17

Introduction



Recycling is a great way for residents to do something simple to help fight climate change, as the more material that is recycled the fewer resources are used to create new products.

We know that when residents are knowledgeable about and have confidence in the system that processes their recycling and rubbish, they want to recycle more. This report describes the recycling and rubbish produced in the county and what

we did with it in 2021-22. We hope that by being transparent about what happens to our recycling and rubbish, it encourages residents to recycle more and helps the planet.

The good news is that when it comes to recycling in Surrey, we're doing well. In 2021-22, 54.4% of the total waste produced was recycled, composted or reused, which puts Surrey in 3rd place out of 29 similar waste disposal authorities in England. And at 81.7%, most material that was recycled, composted or reused stayed in the UK to be turned into new products.

We're confident that Surrey's recycling was passed on to reputable organisations, whether at home or abroad, to be turned into new products. It's incredible that residents' food waste is being used to power homes, garden waste is helping new plants grow and plastic is being used to create clothing.

But sometimes material is found in recycling trucks that cannot actually be recycled, which could mean the whole truckload of material is rejected for recycling. Fortunately, in 2021-22 the amount of material not recycled for this reason fell by 624 tonnes, which is 71.2% less than the previous year.

Elsewhere in this report, residents can find simple tips and links to easy-to-use tools to help them put the right things in the right bins. This will help increase Surrey's recycling rate and reduce the impact on the planet at the same time.

You'll also find information about the overall amount of recycling and rubbish produced, what happened to Surrey's rubbish, how we compare to other local authorities and how the picture is changing over time.

We're rightly proud of what's happening with recycling and rubbish in Surrey and we're delighted with the efforts residents put into recycling as much as possible. But there's plenty more work to be done. Our partnership's aim is to manage Surrey's waste in the most efficient, effective, economical and sustainable manner. So we want to move up the recycling league table and, ultimately, to help the environment and fight climate change. We hope you can join us on this journey.

Cllr Marisa Heath

Surrey Environment Partnership Chair

Recycling in Surrey 2021-22 – at a glance

What happened to Surrey's waste



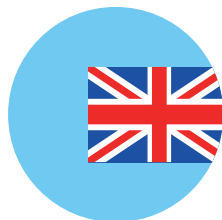
54.4%
RECYCLING RATE

🏆 3rd best of 29 similar councils



27.9%
TURNED INTO ENERGY

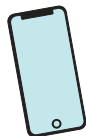
Only 15.1% of waste sent to landfill



89.7%
TREATED IN THE UK

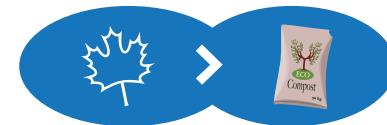
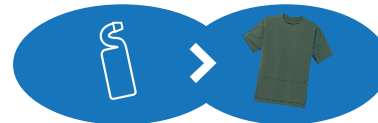
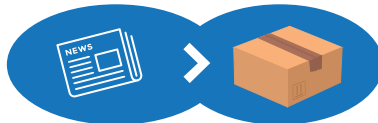
Only 10.3% of waste exported

Most people in Surrey help fight climate change by recycling. Do you?



Recycle more. Use the Surrey Recycles search tool at surreyep.org.uk or search for 'Surrey Recycles' in your app store.

Recycling creates new products



Surrey's waste in 2021-22



522,900
TONNES

of waste produced



431.7KG
WASTE PER PERSON

🏆 11th best of 29 similar councils

Compared to 2020-21



- ✓ Waste down by 3.7%
- ✓ Material in trucks rejected for recycling down by 72.1%
- ✓ Waste treated in UK up by 11.4 percentage points

Surrey recycles!

The stats that matter:

- > 3rd best recycler in England
- > 54.4% of waste was recycled
- > 81.7% of recycled or composted material turned into new products in the UK

Recycling is good for the planet and can help fight climate change as the more material that is turned into something new, the fewer resources are used to create and distribute new products.

And in Surrey, we're good at it! We are the 3rd highest performer of the 29 similar waste disposal authorities in England when it comes to the proportion of our waste that is recycled, composted or reused. And all our material is passed on to reputable organisations to be turned into new products.

Recycling is an easy way for residents to do their bit for the environment, but we know that lots of material that could be recycled is still going into rubbish bins. So, we've got plenty of tips and tricks for residents to help them recycle even more and push Surrey up the league table, helping the planet on the way.

What happens when residents recycle?

Recycling is collected and taken to different locations to be recycled in a number of ways. Each material creates different new products, e.g., plastic might be turned into clothing, glass makes new glass and food waste is turned into electricity and fertiliser. Residents can find out more about what happens to recycling by visiting the SEP website.

We know that some residents may wonder whether what they put into their recycling bins is actually recycled. In Surrey, we can assure residents that all recycling is passed onto organisations that are permitted and regulated by the Environment Agency and provide details of the material's end destination to demonstrate the amount of it that was recycled. Representatives from Surrey County Council also carry out regular visits to the facilities to view the recycling processes.

In addition, to help reduce the resources used when transporting material to be recycled or composted, we aim to keep as much of it as possible in the UK. In 2021-22, 81.7% of recycling was recycled or composted in the UK.

Sometimes, however, it's not possible for material to be recycled in the UK. This can be because there isn't the demand in this country for the new product that is produced by the recycling process, or there aren't enough facilities in the UK to recycle the amount produced. When material goes abroad, it is sent to reputable organisations with world-leading facilities to be recycled. The top three non-UK destinations for Surrey's recycling were India, Turkey and Germany.

Is everything in residents' recycling bins recycled?

Unfortunately, not all of the material that is put in recycling bins by residents is suitable to be recycled; a small amount isn't. We call this contamination.

When too much material that can't be recycled is found in the back of a recycling collection vehicle, the whole load has to be rejected for recycling. A total of 241 tonnes of material was not recycled for this reason in 2021-22. This was a great result for Surrey because the amount of material rejected for recycling for this reason fell by 71.2% compared to the previous year.

Some material that can't be recycled also makes it further along through the recycling process. When this happens, it costs councils extra because it takes more resource to process the material. The amount of this type of contamination fell this year by 1.1 percentage points compared to the previous year.

This shows that Surrey residents are putting in extra effort to make sure they keep items that can't be recycled out of their recycling bins. It also shows how important it is to know before you throw, otherwise you could be harming Surrey's recycling rate and costing your council money.

The amount of material rejected for recycling in 2021-22 fell by 71.2% compared to the previous year.

How does Surrey compare nationally?



To measure Surrey's performance we look at the proportion of the total waste produced that was recycled, reused or composted.

In comparison with the other similar waste disposal authorities in England, Surrey recycled, composted or reused the 3rd highest proportion of its waste at 54.4% (see Figure 1).

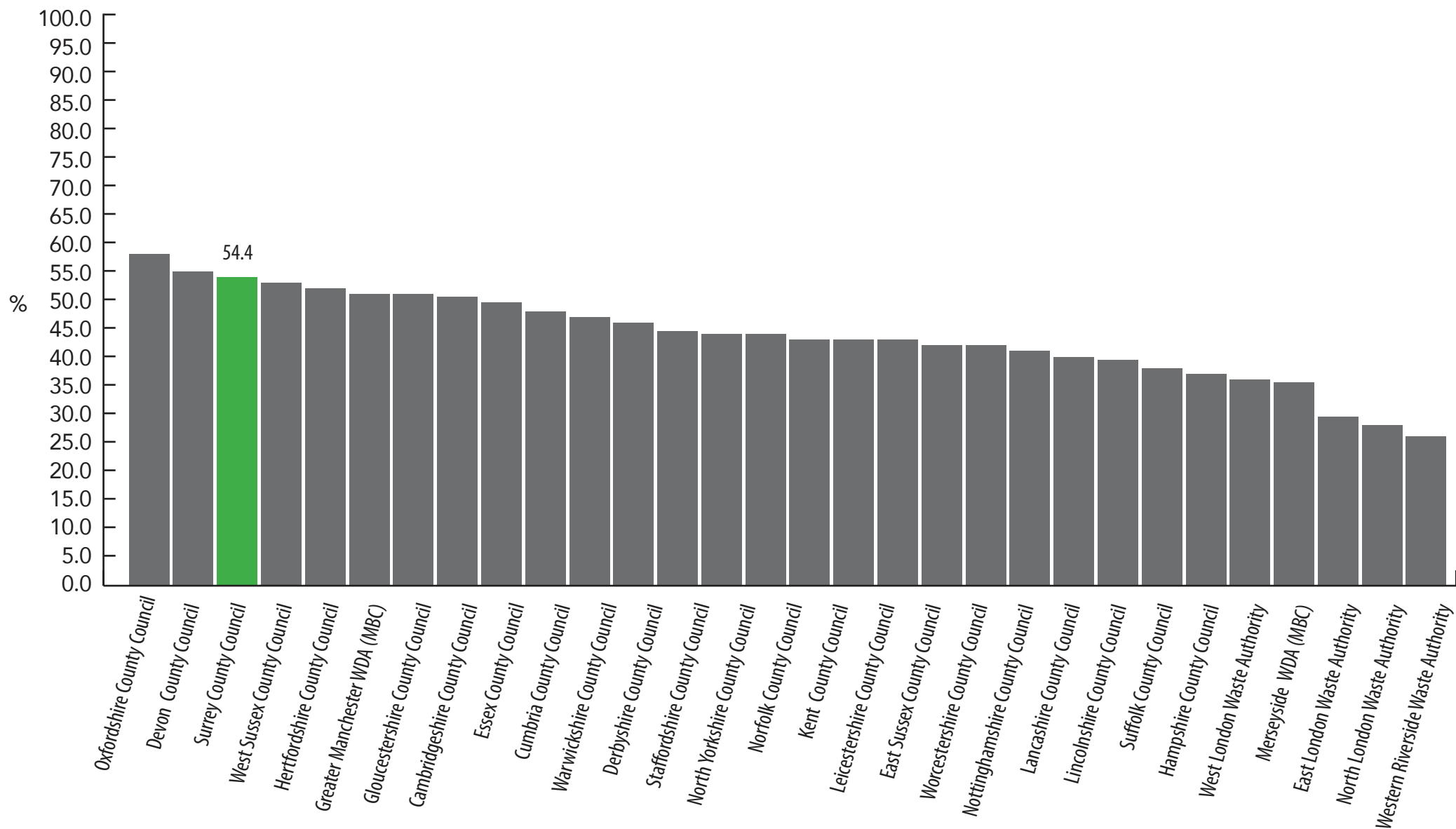


Figure 1: The percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling or composting – waste disposal authorities in England compared

How are recycling rates changing?



Surrey's recycling rate when SEP was formed in 2009 was 45.7%. Since then, we've seen a huge rise followed by a more recent plateau effect whereby the recycling rate has stagnated somewhat (see Figure 2), which has also been seen nationally. The rate in Surrey dropped by 0.7 percentage points in 2021-22 compared to the previous year but Surrey still performs highly against the England average of 44.1%.

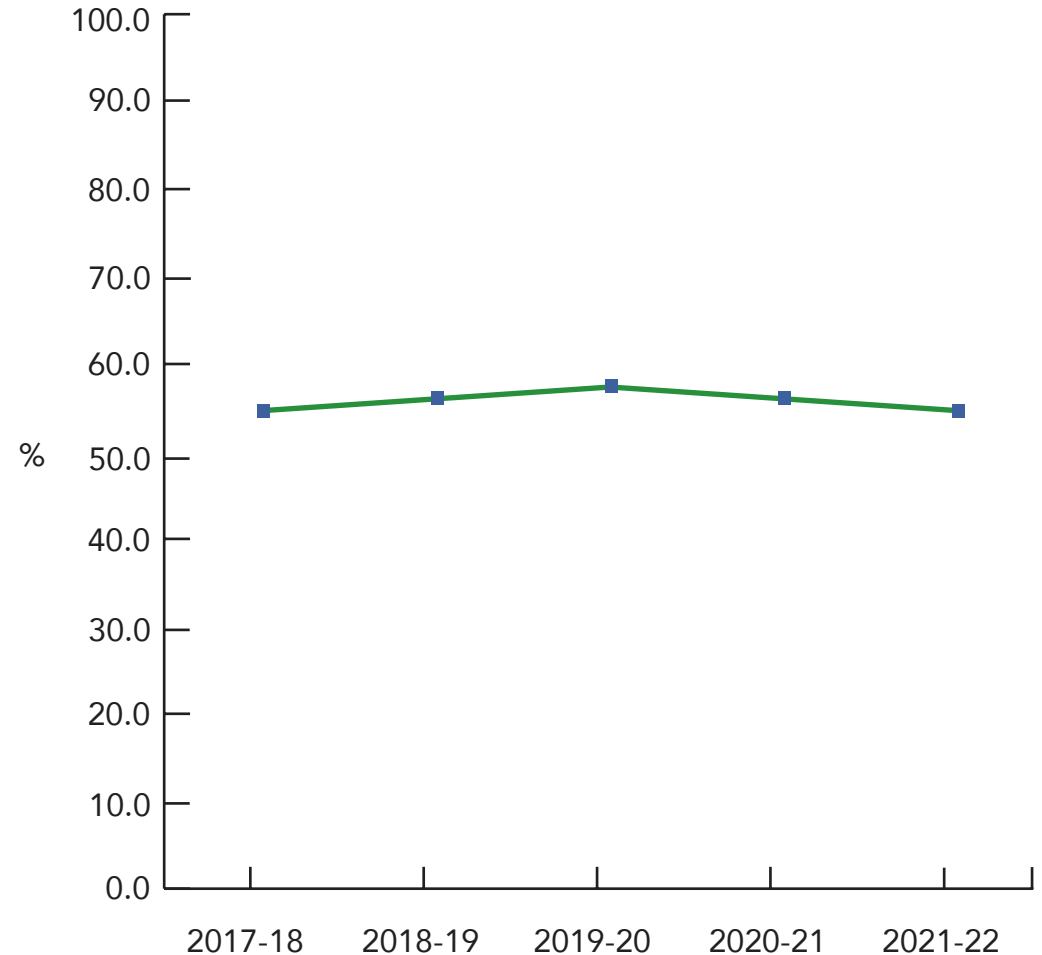
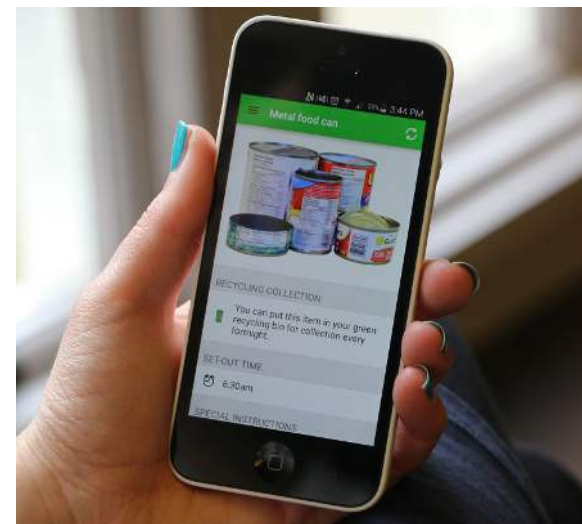


Figure 2: The percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling or composting in Surrey – over the last five years

What can residents do to help Surrey climb the league table and help the environment?

SEP's tips to help Surrey residents recycle as much as possible:

- > Use the Surrey Recycles search tool or app to find out which things go in which bins. It can also help you find ways to reduce, reuse and repair your waste.
- > Look out for the printed guides to your bins that are sent to all households in Surrey annually between October and December. Keep yours somewhere safe so that everyone in your house can use it.
- > Test your knowledge by playing our online Recycle Right game.
- > Check what you can recycle separately. Food and garden waste, small electricals, batteries and textiles are collected separately in most areas of Surrey – they don't go in your recycling bin.
- > Empty, rinse and dry food and drink packaging as moisture and grease can ruin cardboard and paper.
- > Place all items loose in your recycling bin – nothing in bags, sacks or bin liners please.
- > Keep nappies, black bags and food out of your recycling bin.



What went into Surrey's bins in 2021–22

The stats that matter:

- > 522,900 tonnes of recycling and rubbish produced in total, down by 3.1%
- > 11th place of 29 for recycling and rubbish produced per person (431.7kg)
- > 54.4% recycled, 27.9% turned into energy, 15.1% sent to landfill
- > 89.7% of recycling and rubbish stayed in the UK

The less recycling and rubbish that is produced, the better it is for the environment as it means that fewer resources are used to create and distribute products. And the more we recycle, the better it is as recycled material is used, instead of new resources, to create new products.



What happens when residents throw things away?

In Surrey, district or borough councils collect residents' recycling and rubbish. It is the responsibility of Surrey County Council to dispose of it. Most material collected in Surrey in 2021-22 was recycled, composted or reused (54.4%). Of all the material collected from residents in 2021-22, 43% of it was put into rubbish bins with 27.9% sent to an energy from waste facility and 15.1% to landfill. More detail on what happens to rubbish can be found on page 13 of this report.

89.7% of recycling and rubbish was recycled or treated in the UK, which is an increase of 11.4 percentage points on the previous year. This means that fewer resources were used and emissions generated from transporting waste over borders.

How does Surrey compare nationally?

To know how Surrey performs, we look at the amount of recycling and rubbish produced per person in the county.

Surrey comes 11th out of 29 similar waste disposal authorities in England for recycling and rubbish per person (see Figure 3). Each resident produced an average of 431.7kg of recycling and rubbish. In total, 522,900 tonnes were produced in Surrey.

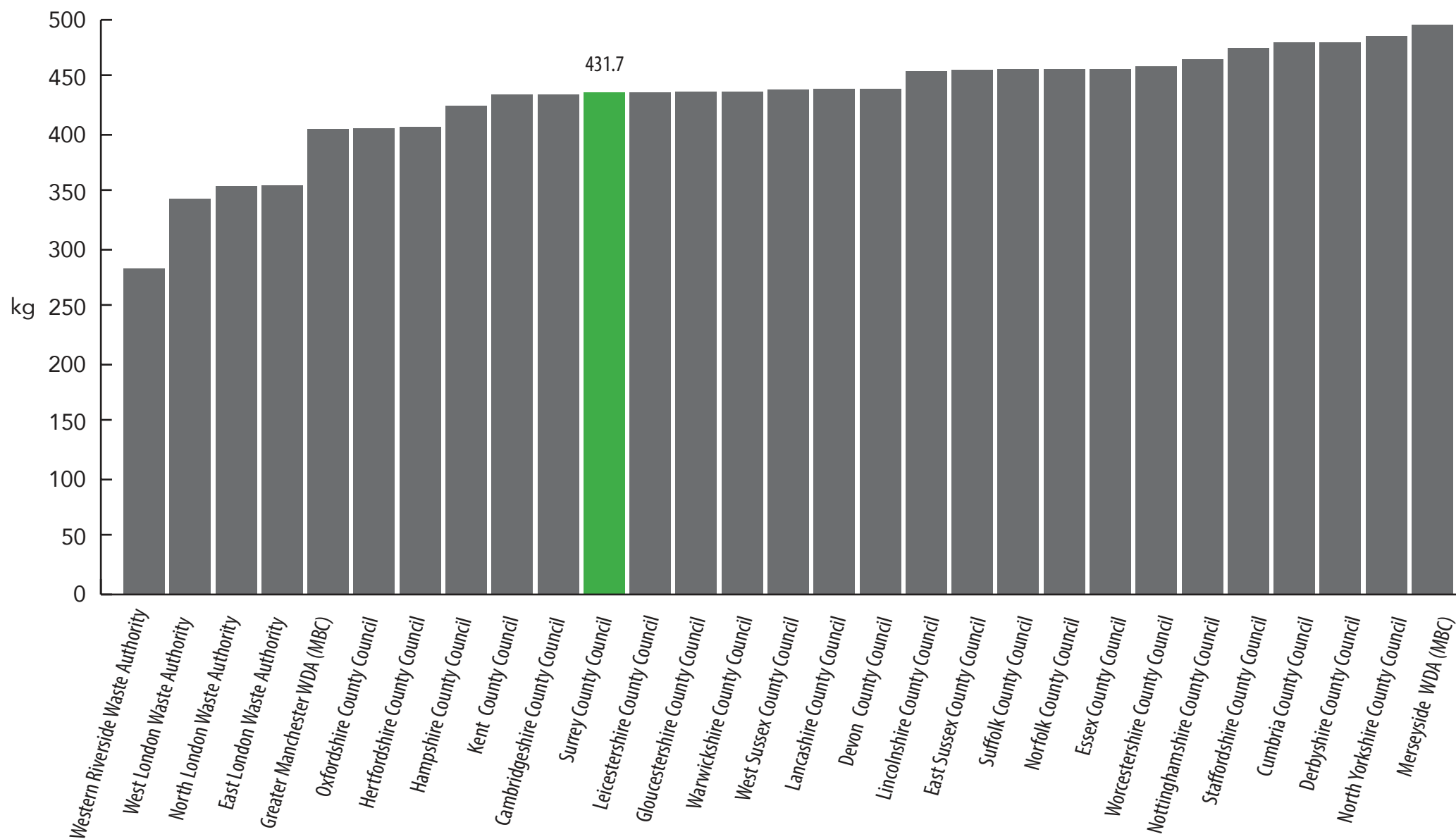


Figure 3: The amount of collected household waste per person (kg) – waste disposal authorities in England compared

How are recycling and rubbish tonnages changing?



Compared to the previous year, which saw a rise in the amount of recycling and rubbish produced per person that was attributed to the effects of the pandemic, there was a reduction in 2021-22 by 16.5kg per person (3.1%). This is similar but slightly higher than the pre-COVID period, likely because not all people returned to office working (see Figure 4).

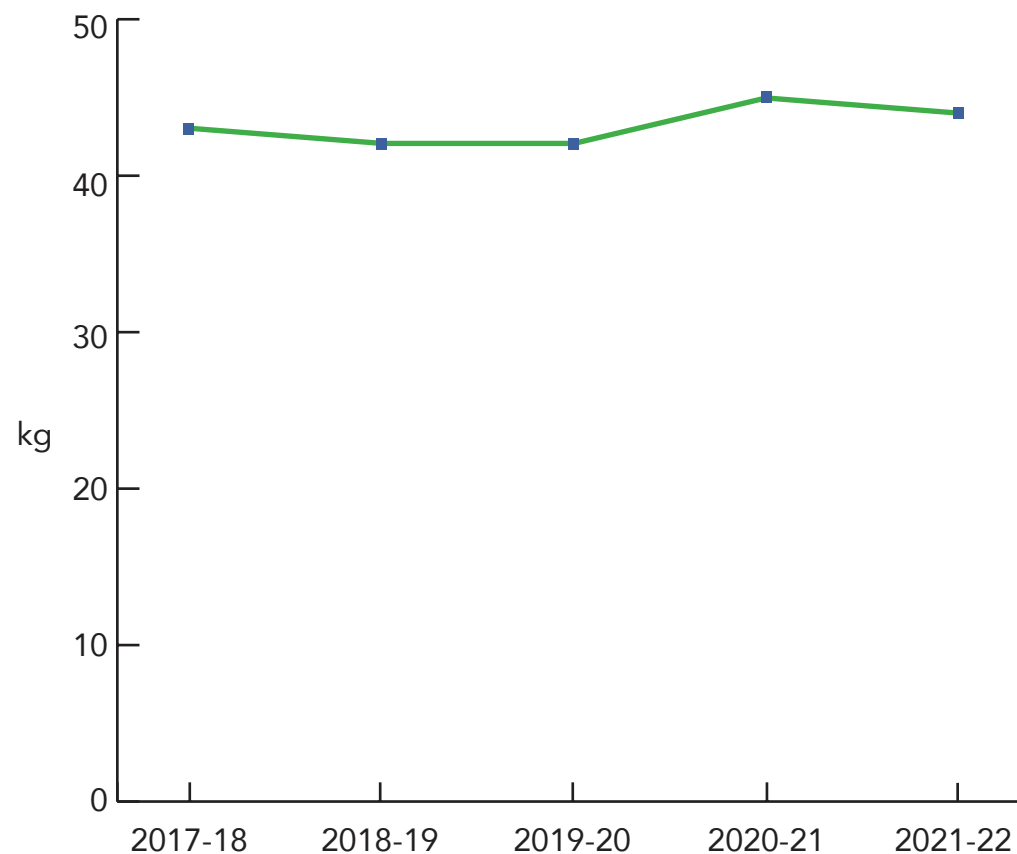


Figure 4: The amount of collected household waste per person in Surrey (kg) – over the last five years

What happens when it can't be recycled?

The stats that matter:

- > 98.8% of rubbish treated in the UK
- > 27.9% of material thrown away, all of which was rubbish, turned into electricity

While it would be preferable that everything that was thrown away was recycled, technology and systems do not yet exist that would enable this to happen. Instead, the best thing for the environment is to focus on reducing the amount of rubbish produced in the first place, treating as much of it as we can in the UK and turning as much of it as possible into electricity.

What happens when residents put things into their rubbish bins?

When residents put items into rubbish bins in Surrey, they are collected by a local crew. It is then either turned into electricity or sent to landfill.

Of all the material collected from residents in 2021-22, 43% of it was put into rubbish bins with 27.9% sent to an energy from waste facility either in the UK or EU. These facilities are highly regulated and emissions from the plant are strictly controlled to ensure they do not cause harm to the environment or human health. Heat produced by burning the rubbish is used to raise steam, which in turn drives a turbine and generator to produce electricity. The electricity is fed into the local or National Grid and the resultant ash is used in construction projects.



Some rubbish is also sent to landfill. This is either because the material is unsuitable for incineration, e.g., bulky waste, or because a suitable energy from waste plant was unavailable, e.g., due to maintenance shutdown.

99.8% of rubbish was treated in the UK in 2021-22, which went up by 30.6 percentage points compared to 2020-21. As with the previous year, all of the rubbish that was sent to landfill stayed in the UK. Most rubbish was treated in the south of England with the top destinations being Kent, Essex and Surrey.

How does Surrey compare nationally?

Of all the material collected from residents in 2021-22, 43% of it was put into rubbish bins with 15.1% sent to landfill in the UK. Surrey ranks 23rd out of 29 similar waste disposal authorities in England authorities in the total amount of rubbish it sent to landfill (see Figure 5).

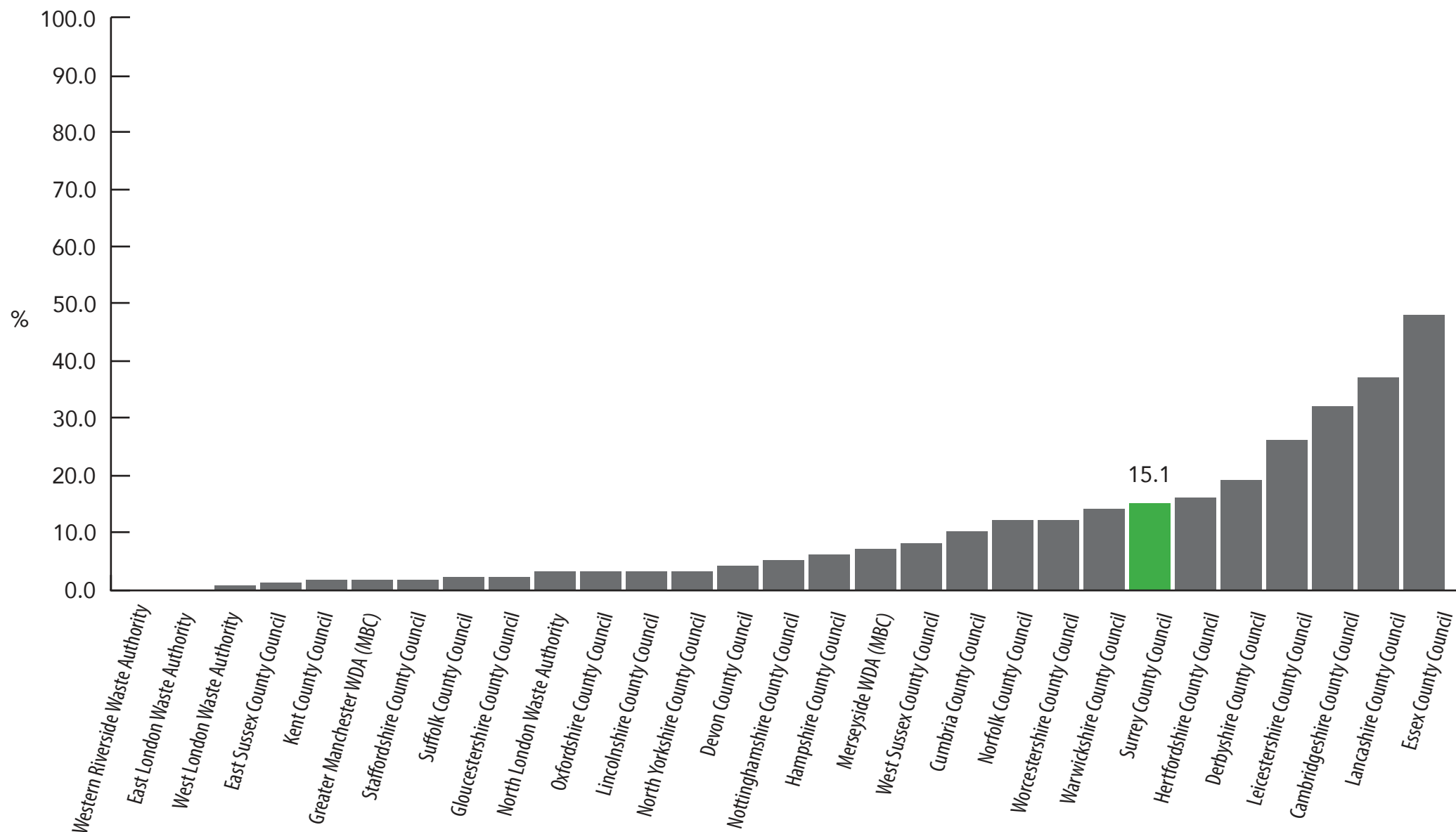


Figure 5: The percentage of municipal waste sent to landfill – waste disposal authorities in England compared

How are landfill rates changing?



While all efforts are made to keep the amount of rubbish sent to landfill at an absolute minimum, the rates can vary for a variety of reasons. In 2021-22, the proportion of rubbish that was sent to landfill increased because one of the main energy from waste facilities that Surrey sends its rubbish to had a long, unplanned shutdown for technical reasons. This meant there was no other option but to send it to landfill.

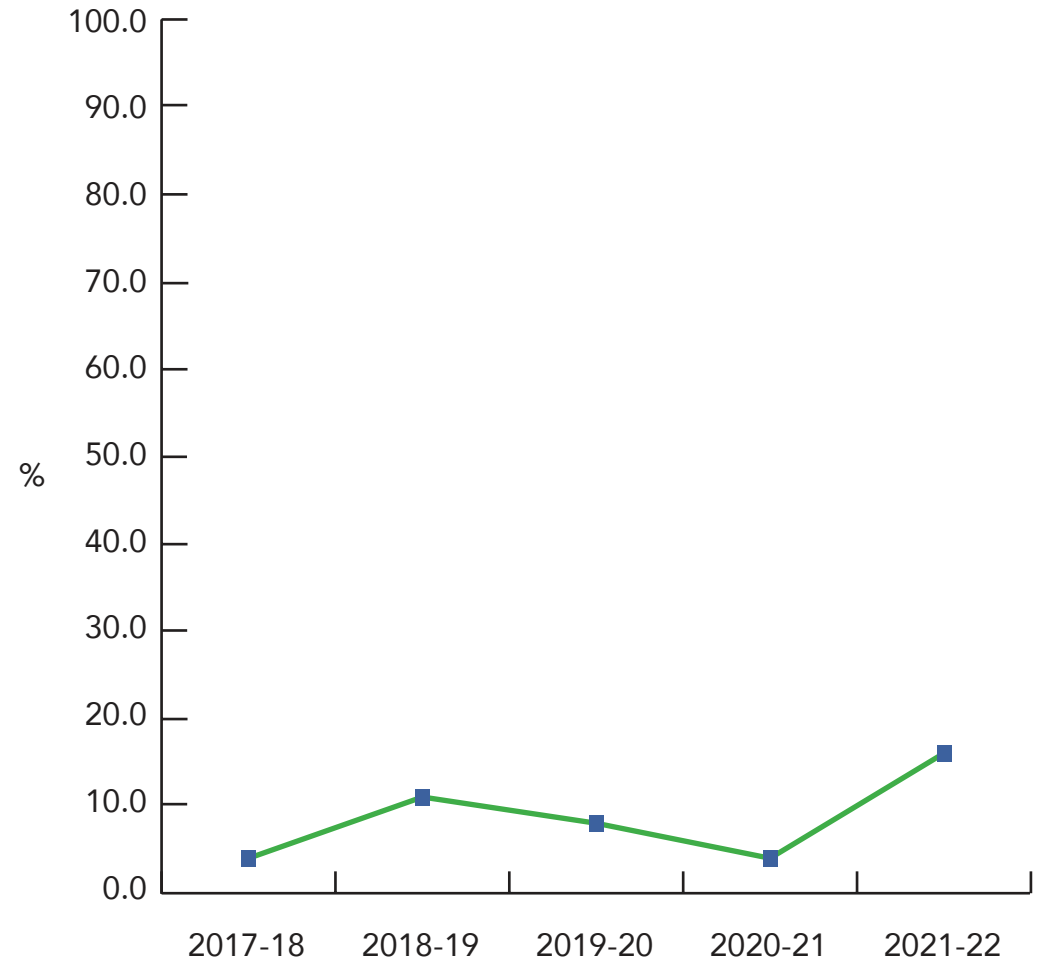


Figure 6: The percentage of municipal waste sent to landfill in Surrey – over the last five years

Can less rubbish be produced?

Absolutely! We know that a lot of material that goes in rubbish bins can be recycled. But even if you're recycling as much as you can, there are still some other ways you can reduce what you throw away. Repair broken items, buy sustainable products that can be used more than once, do a waste audit, avoid single-use items, upcycle old items or use other recycling services to recycle items that your council can't.

In June 2023, SEP will be launching a free scheme available to all Surrey residents to help them reduce waste. The scheme, Rethink Waste, will provide weekly tips and guidance on different ways to reduce waste to everyone who signs up. The more that residents engage with the scheme, the more points they can win and donate to a charity or local school, or use to win prizes. Keep an eye on SEP's website and social media channels for more details.

You can find tips on how to reduce waste by visiting surreyep.org.uk



Recycling and rubbish around the county

Table 1: Waste collection authorities in Surrey in 2021–22 – compared

District or borough council	Recycling and rubbish produced per person (kg)	Proportion recycled, composted or reused (%)	Proportion of recycling recycled in the UK (%)
Elmbridge Borough Council	377.0	51.3	71.5
Epsom and Ewell Borough Council	370.8	54.3	60.8
Guildford Borough Council	376.5	59.3	85.5
Mole Valley District Council	378.3	54.2	71.0
Reigate and Banstead Borough Council	367.4	55.6	98.1
Runnymede Borough Council	328.3	49.6	72.4
Spelthorne Borough Council	354.3	46.4	70.9
Surrey Heath Borough Council	352.0	59.2	73.8
Tandridge District Council	383.7	59.9	85.2
Waverley Borough Council	364.9	58.9	75.3
Woking Borough Council	341.3	51.5	72.8

