

Local opticians group becomes first in UK to launch contact lens recycling scheme

Written by Luke

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The Valli Group of Opticians has become the first company in the UK to offer a contact lens recycling scheme and it has come at just the right time for Holmfirth's Rosalyn Raine.

Rosalyn decided to embark on a #plasticfreeweek in January but couldn't find anywhere to recycle her contact lenses.

She said: "A set of daily contact lenses arrived by post during my plastic free week. It felt like a small fail in the week but turned out to be just the thing I needed to find a better solution for disposing of the plastic and foil. The contact lens itself can't be accepted in household recycling bins and whilst the plastic contact lens packs are an accepted material, because they are very small, they are filtered out when they get to the recycling centres."



"I went online and found TerraCycle who have a national lens recycling scheme with a particular lens brand in the USA. I contacted them to find out if there was a UK scheme – but was told

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there wasn't one. So, I decided to keep all my lens packaging and hope that a retailer would set up a scheme soon. I contacted lots of high street and online retailers and forwarded a lot of TerraCycle posts on Facebook.

“So, I was utterly delighted, in April, when the first optician to adopt the scheme in the UK was one local to me! The moment I saw Valli Optician's announcement I booked an appointment for a contact lens check. I received great service from all the team at Valli Opticians Honley practice and the piece de resistance for me was that my three months of saved up lens packaging was the first to be dropped off for recycling in that shop!

“I think it's massively important for local businesses to supply environmentally friendly services. For consumers to make 'easy swaps' it has to be convenient and Valli are doing that. Simply take your contact lens packaging in next time you have an appointment or are near one of their high street branches.”

Contact lens wearers can drop off their used contact lenses, top foil and blister packs in special boxes at Valli Opticians' 14 practices across Yorkshire, Merseyside, Lancashire, Greater Manchester, Cheshire and Hull.

The Zero Waste Boxes are a paid for solution from recycling company TerraCycle, which specialises in typically hard to recycle waste. Contact lenses, top foil and blister packs are a mix of complex materials which cannot be recycled by the mainstream UK council kerbside infrastructure. When the boxes are full Valli Opticians send them back to TerraCycle who separate and then recycle the different materials which are then used to create new products such as durable outdoor furniture.

Rachel Valli, co-founder and Head of Marketing for Valli Opticians, said: “We launched the contact lens recycling scheme in our 14 optician's practices in April and already it has had a great reception. For years, contact lens wearers have struggled to find ways to dispose of their lenses ethically without having to send them to landfill. It's shocking that over eight million tonnes of plastic rubbish end up in the world's oceans every year.

“We're pleased that we are able to do our bit to help reduce plastic waste and to help contact lenses wearers do theirs by introducing this scheme. Everyone is welcome to drop off their

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contact lens waste in one of the special Zero Waste Boxes in our 14 practices across the North of England – you don't have to be one of our patients. Together, let's reduce the amount of contact lenses sent to landfill!"

To find your nearest Valli Opticians practice click here: <https://www.valliopticians.co.uk/practices>

Solution bottles and cardboard packaging are not accepted in the contact lens recycling boxes.

Rosalyn Raine works in business analysis and runs an online boutique – Mama's Secret Little Boutique – selling Spanish riding boots and vintage scarves. Her plastic free week inspired her to commit to three plastic free measures:

1. She doesn't buy anything to eat or drink in plastic. This includes fresh produce, food on the go and her dog's (five year-old pug, Monkey) food packaging too!
2. Not using products in plastic packaging in the bathroom – such as shampoo, shower gels etc.
3. Promoting the plastic free message.

You can contact Rosalyn and read all about her plastic free journey at www.mamassecretlittleboutique.co.uk/book

For further information and interview requests please contact Melanie Hill at marketing@valliopticians.co.uk or
call 07527 847423.