



# Information for plastic straw users

#SingleUsePlasticsBan  
[zerowastescotland.org.uk/singleuseregulations](https://zerowastescotland.org.uk/singleuseregulations)  
@ZeroWasteScot



Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
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A background image showing a hand holding a glass with a straw and another hand gesturing. The glass is filled with a light-colored beverage and ice. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a restaurant or cafe setting.

**Straws are a vital accessibility aid for many people who rely on them to eat and drink independently.**

For this reason, as part of the single-use plastics restrictions, access is protected for those who need them. This quick guide sets out where and how to access single-use plastic straws.

## Introduction

The Scottish Government is taking steps to move Scotland towards a circular economy where items are kept in use for as long as possible. This includes taking actions to tackle our throwaway society and encourage businesses and individuals to opt for reusable alternatives as far as possible. However, the Scottish Government recognises that some items perform a vital function which cannot be easily replaced with a more sustainable alternative. This is particularly true for single-use plastic straws which are used as a vital accessibility aid for many people to eat and drink independently.

The Scottish Government has introduced the Environmental Protection (Single-Use Plastic Products) (Scotland) Regulations 2021 (the Regulations), which restrict the supply of single-use plastic straws in the course of a business.

There are exemptions included in the Regulations to enable single-use plastic straws to be supplied in certain cases for the purpose of enabling social inclusion and equal participation for people who rely on straws to eat and drink independently or if the straws are required for medical purposes.

The Regulations come into force from 1 June 2022, subject to the impact of the UK Internal Market Act 2020. Advice has been published to help businesses understand how single-use plastic straws should be supplied.

Businesses should continue to comply with the duty to make reasonable adjustments under the [Equality Act 2010](#).





## Accessing single-use plastic straws

The following places can still provide single-use plastic straws for those who need them to eat and drink independently:

- **Places serving food or drink** for immediate consumption, such as restaurants, canteens, clubs and cafes.
- **Pharmacies** which include registered pharmacies, online pharmacies or other distance selling methods.

In addition to the above, straws can continue to be supplied in the following premises:

- **Care homes, prisons, schools and premises for early learning and childcare, day care or childminding**

Furthermore, exemptions also apply where straws are for use for medical purposes or for use in the course of a support service which provides personal care or personal support.

This exemption means single-use plastic straws can be supplied to and provided by any person providing care giving or similar services outside of a formal care home setting. In addition, a carer (whether or not a professional) may purchase single-use plastic straws from a pharmacy.

Further details on the exemption can be found in the [Scottish Government's Regulatory Guidance](#).



## When asking for a straw

As a customer, when requesting a single-use plastic straw or a packet of straws you do not require proof that you need one.

Businesses are not permitted to proactively offer single-use plastic straws to customers, allow self-service or have them on display. However, customers who require a straw are entitled to request one. The communication card shown below may be used to help when asking for a straw but it is not mandatory to show this card or any other form of written evidence of exemption (such as letter from a doctor or the government).



Digital and print versions of the card can be downloaded via [www.zerowastepartners.org.uk/straws-exemption](http://www.zerowastepartners.org.uk/straws-exemption)

If you do not have access to a printer, you can access free or inexpensive printing services at your [local library](#) or [Citizens Advice Bureaux](#).



This toolkit was developed in partnership with disabled people and their organisations including:



Inclusion Scotland



Disability Equality  
Scotland



Birds of Paradise  
Theatre Company



Glasgow Disability  
Alliance

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