



Straws toolkit

Information for businesses

#SingleUsePlasticsBan
zerowastescotland.org.uk/singleuseregulations
@ZeroWasteScot



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

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 cafe or restaurant setting.

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

This toolkit containing training resources and information is intended to help businesses understand how single-use plastic straws should be supplied following the implementation of a market restriction.

Introduction

The Scottish Government has introduced the Environmental Protection (Single-use Plastic Products) (Scotland) Regulations 2021 which, from the 1 June 2022, make it an offence to supply, in the course of business, single-use plastic straws to an end user.

The Scottish Government recognises that single-use plastic straws are a vital accessibility aid for many people to eat and drink independently. Exemptions have been included in the Regulations to ensure that people who need single-use plastic straws are able to access them. This toolkit is intended to help businesses understand how single-use plastic straws should be supplied.

Guidance

The Scottish Government has produced guidance to accompany the implementation of the Regulations. This fully explains the Regulations, including the exemptions that apply for single-use plastic straws.

The United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020 affects the application of the Regulations.

The Regulations will not apply to any products which are produced or first imported into another part of the UK, and which can be lawfully supplied in that part of the UK. See [paragraphs 8 and 9 of the guidance](#) for further information.

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



Exemptions

The Regulations do not restrict the manufacture of single-use plastic straws, only the supply of straws to end-users in the course of business. This means businesses and premises covered by the exemption can purchase single-use plastic straws from a wholesaler or manufacturer so they can provide them to a customer as described below.

A summary of the exemptions is provided below.

Catering establishments

Where a single-use plastic straw is requested, catering establishments may provide it to customer alongside food or drinks.

Catering establishments means restaurants, canteens, clubs, pubs and cafes or similar establishments which supply food or drink that is ready for consumption without further preparation. This can include vehicles or fixed and mobile stalls.

If single-use plastic straws are provided by catering establishments they must:

- Keep straws in a place where customers cannot help themselves or where the straws are not visible to customers.
- Not offer or provide the straws unless the customer has requested them.

Where a single-use plastic straw is requested, catering establishments will still be able to provide it to a customer alongside drinks or food.

It is important to note that customers do not need to provide proof of need when requesting straws as this may prevent access for those who need them.

Pharmacies

Single-use plastic straws can be purchased by those that need them, or on behalf of someone that needs them.

The exemption applies to a retail pharmacy business, at a registered pharmacy with a physical premises, online or through another distance selling arrangement.

There is not a requirement for customers to provide proof of need when purchasing plastic straws.

If the single-use plastic straws are supplied at a registered pharmacy, the pharmacy must:

- keep them in a place which is not visible or accessible to customers, such as behind the counter;
- not offer or provide single-use plastic straws unless the customer has requested them.

Single-use plastic straws must not be advertised to customers by the pharmacy.

Single-use plastic straws which are medical devices, or for medical purposes may still be offered or provided to customers who have not requested them. This exception is to enable pharmacy staff to still recommend the use of straws to customers for medical purposes.



Care homes, prisons or other places of detention, schools, and premises for early learning and childcare, day care or childminding.

Single-use plastic straws can be purchased by these establishments and supplied to individuals using these facilities who require them.

Other usage exemptions for single-use plastic straws

Furthermore, the following uses are also subject to an exemption and so single-use plastic straws can be provided where they are:

- A medical device which is approved under the Medical Devices Regulations 2002.
- For use for medical purposes.
- For use in the course of a support service which provides personal care or personal support.

- Packaging, such as straws used to package granular medicines. This does not include straws which are attached to packaging, such as single-use plastic straws attached to drinks cartons. These are subject to the restriction.



Why alternatives to single-use plastic straws are not suitable.

Alternatives to single-use plastic straws may not be suitable for those that rely on straws to eat and drink independently. For example, paper straws fall apart quickly and are not strong enough when sucking is problematic, reusable straws need to be washed which can be a task which many people with disabilities already struggle with, and metal straws are hard and inflexible making them awkward to use and potentially unsafe in some circumstances.

Plastic straws which bend are flexible and positionable which is one of the most important aspects for people with mobility limitations.

Providing single-use plastic straws, in line with the exemptions, will support independent living, social inclusion and equal participation for people who need them to eat or drink.

The table on the next page highlights the risks associated with some of the alternatives to single-use plastic straws.



STRAW RISK TABLE

	 Choking hazard	 Injury risk	 Requires cleaning	 More expensive	 Not safe at high temp.	 Not flexible	 Fall apart quickly	 Allergy risk*
Bendy single-use plastic								
Non-flexible single-use plastic						✓		
Metal		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Glass		✓	✓	✓		✓		
Silicone			✓	✓		✓		✓
Acrylic		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Paper	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	
Pasta	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Biobased plastic				✓				✓

*This is not an exhaustive list of potential allergens. It is always advisable to check specific allergy risks associated with any kind of straw.

Training for businesses

Catering establishments

An exemption is included in the Regulations to ensure that those who need plastic straws can access them.

The following training should be applied to catering establishments, such as restaurants, canteens, clubs and cafes, if they supply food and drink that is ready for consumption without further preparation. This can include vehicles or fixed and mobile stalls.

Where a single-use plastic straw is requested, catering establishments will still be able to provide it to a customer alongside drinks or food. When providing single-use plastic straws, catering establishments must:

- Not offer or provide them unless requested;
- Keep straws in a place where customers cannot help themselves and where the straws are not visible to customers.

It is important to note that customers do not need to provide proof of need when requesting straws as this may prevent access for those who need them.

Action plan for catering establishments

Providing single-use plastic straws, in line with the exemption, will support social inclusion and equal participation for people who need straws to eat and drink independently. It is recommended that catering establishments consider the following:

1. Stocking suitable single-use plastic straws.

Although the Regulations will mean that you can only give out single-use plastic straws out on request, they are a vital accessibility aid for many people who require these straws to eat and drink independently. Other types of straw may not be suitable. You should consider maintaining a stock of single-use plastic straws and restocking these as needed to support social inclusion and equal participation for those who require straws.

2. Stocking single-use plastic straws which are suitable for the food and drinks you serve.

When purchasing straws, it is important that you think about the drinks and relevant foods that you serve and whether the straws that you provide are suitable for these.

- a. Make sure that straws reach the bottom of the glasses and other relevant containers you use. You can always cut straws to size if they are too long for smaller glasses.
- b. Bendy plastic straws are flexible and positionable which is one of the most important aspects for people with mobility limitations.
- c. Some bio-based plastics can be made from raw materials, such as shellfish, which can pose an allergy risk.

3. Ensuring that all staff know where to find your stock of single-use plastic straws.

Under the Regulations, straws must be kept out of sight and reach of customers and you can only provide them on request. Straws should therefore be kept somewhere that is easy for staff to access, and all staff should know where this is.

4. Training your staff. It is important that those who request single-use plastic straws should be provided with one without having to provide justification of their need for one. Staff should be trained to:

- a. Ensure that straws are stored out of sight and reach of customers, in line with the Regulations
- b. Provide plastic straws on request, without asking for justification or proof of need
- c. Understand that some straws users may have a visual or a hearing impairment, impaired speech; learning disability or communication support need which may make requesting a straw more challenging. Some people may choose to carry a digital or downloadable card to help them request a straw. Staff should be aware of this, but should understand a card is not required for receiving a straw.

5. Disposing of single-use plastic straws appropriately.

Single-use plastic straws should be disposed of in the residual waste bin after use, as unfortunately their size means that they are not generally recycled.

Training for businesses

Pharmacies

An exemption is included in the Regulations to ensure that those who need plastic straws can access them. Many people rely on straws to eat and drink independently or for medical purposes, and other options such as paper or reusable straws are not always suitable or safe.

Single-use plastic straws can be purchased from retail pharmacy businesses by those who need them, or on behalf of someone that needs them. There is not a requirement for customers to provide proof of need when requesting straws. The pharmacy must:

- keep the straws in a place which is not visible or accessible to customers, such as behind the counter;
- not offer or provide single-use plastic straws unless the customer has requested them.



Single-use plastic straws must not be advertised to customers by the pharmacy.

Action plan for pharmacies

Providing single-use plastic straws, in line with the exemption, will support independent living, social inclusion and equal participation for people who need them. It is recommended that retail pharmacy businesses consider the following:

1. Stocking of single-use plastic straws.

Although the Regulations will mean that you should only be providing single-use plastic straws on request, they are a vital accessibility aid for many people who require them to eat and drink independently. Other types of straw may not be suitable. You should consider maintaining a stock of single-use plastic straws, and restocking these as needed to support independent living, social inclusion and equal participation.

2. Stock straws which are suitable.

Bendy plastic straws are flexible and positionable which is one of the most important aspects for people with mobility limitations.

Some bio-based plastics can be made from raw materials, such as shellfish, which can pose an allergy risk.

3. Ensuring that all staff know where to find your stock of single-use plastic straws.

Under the Regulations, straws must be kept out of sight and reach of customers, and you can only provide them on request. The straws should therefore be kept somewhere that is easy for staff to access, and all staff should know where this is.

4. Training your staff.

It is important that those who request single-use plastic straws should be provided with one without having to provide justification of their need for one.



Staff should be trained to:

- a.** Ensure that straws are stored out of sight and reach of customers, in line with the Regulations
- b.** Provide single-use plastic straws on request, without asking for justification or proof of need. Staff should be aware that customers may be purchasing on behalf of someone else.
- c.** Understand that straws which are medical devices or for use for medical purposes may still be offered to customers who have not requested them.
- d.** Understand that some straws users may have a visual or a hearing impairment, impaired speech; learning disability or communication support need which may make requesting a straw more challenging. Some people may choose to carry a digital or printed card to help them request a straw. Staff should be aware of this, but should understand a card is not required to purchase straws.

Support services for personal care or personal support

An exemption is provided in the Regulations to ensure that single-use plastic straws can be provided for use as part of support service which provides personal care or personal support. This includes support by a local authority, health body or company for example. Many people rely on plastic straws to eat and drink independently or for medical purposes, and other options such as paper or reusable straws are not always suitable or safe.

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 professional) may purchase single-use plastic straws from a pharmacy. There is no requirements for customers to provide proof of need when requesting straws.

Action plan for support services

It is recommended that providers of personal care or personal support consider the following:

1. Ensure that you know where to access single-use plastic straws, if someone that you support requires these.

Wholesalers and manufacturers will be able to sell single-use plastic straws for use in support services which provide personal care or personal support. Pharmacies are able to stock single-use plastic straws for purchase, to ensure that these are available to those that need them. If visiting a catering establishment, those establishments are able to supply single-use plastic straws, together with food and drink for immediate consumption, on request.

2. Dispose of single-use plastic straws appropriately.

Single-use plastic straws should be disposed of in the residual waste bin after use, as unfortunately their size means that they are not generally recycled.

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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