

# Fact Sheet Drinking Straws

“It is estimated that we use 4.7 billion plastic straws in the UK every year.”

**4.7 BILLION  
PLASTIC STRAWS**

That's the estimated  
amount of plastic straws  
we use in England every  
year.

## Helping you to make sustainable choices

Because of their small size, single use drinking straws are more likely to end up as litter, polluting our streets and rivers. Every time waste is moved from one place to another, small items can escape. Straws can fall out of holes in bin bags or from the top of bags that are too full.

The most sustainable thing you can do is not use any type of straw. Single use plastic straws are now banned in the UK, but you can keep a small stock for anyone that needs one. This could be someone with a disability who would struggle to pick up a drink.

### Manchester Paper Bee Straw

The Manchester paper bee straw is made from 100% paper, a teeny bit of water-based glue, and printed with water-based inks. You can purchase these straws exclusively from local catering supplier Stephenson's. Before you place an order sign the Plastic Free GM pledge. To order visit [Stephenson's website](#).



## Sustainability rating Red, amber, green

### Green:

A great sustainable choice.  
Good work.



### Amber:

Doing well but room for improvement.  
Move towards a green choice.



### Red:

Not a good choice for the planet.  
Move to an amber choice.  
Or even better a green choice.



## Making sustainable choices

### Your choice

We don't use drinking straws in any of our drinks. But we have a small stock under the bar for anyone who might need one, like someone with a disability who might struggle to pick up their drink.

### Our rating

Green. A great sustainable choice.



### To consider

The most sustainable thing you can do, is not use any straws. That way there is nothing to throw away or recycle in the first place! It will save you money on your waste and recycling bill too.

### Your choice

We have replaced disposable drinking straws with reusable straws that we wash and re-use again and again.

### Our rating

Green. A great sustainable choice.



### To consider

Switching to any kind of reusable option is generally always more sustainable. It will save you money on your waste and recycling bill too.

### Your choice

We stock paper straws that are 100% compostable. The packaging says 100% compostable and shows the British Standard EN13432.

### Our rating

Amber. Doing well but room for improvement.



### To consider

Not a bad choice if you're using disposables. But do you have a service in place for compostable waste? Paper straws might be accepted in your paper and cardboard recycling. Always check with your waste disposal contractor what can go in your recycling bin.

### Your choice

We stock paper straws that are FSC paper certified.

### Our rating

Amber. Doing well but room for improvement



### To consider

Not a bad choice if you are using disposables. Always check with your waste disposal contractor what can go in your recycling bins. Many recycling companies only want dry clean paper and card in the recycling.

### Your choice

We stock PLA drinking straws that look and feel like plastic.

### Our rating

Red. Not a good choice for the planet.



### To consider

PLA causes more problems than it solves, and it is not the eco choice it's been advertised as. PLA straws aren't widely recycled and can only break down under certain conditions in a commercial composting facility. Tests have shown that it will not break down in a marine environment.

## A note on compostable items and packaging

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In Greater Manchester residents cannot put compostable items in the food and garden recycling bin at home. If you want to know why visit the [Recycle for Greater Manchester website](#).

A lot of commercial composting services cannot accept compostable items and packaging either. Always check with your waste disposal contractor what can go in each of your recycling bins.

## When and how to offer straws to customers

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If you still use disposable straws, below are simple changes you can make to reduce the number of straws you use.

### Your choice

We put a straw in every drink, or we keep our drinking straws on the front of the bar/counter so customers can help themselves.

### Things to consider

Don't put a straw in any drink. Keep straws out of sight and wait for the customer to ask. Or ask the customer if they want a straw.

## Tell people you have made a change

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Scientists predict that there will be 250 million metric tonnes of plastic in the ocean by 2050. That's more plastic in the ocean than fish!

Now is the time to make a change and switch to some of the sustainable drinking straw behaviours we have listed in this factsheet.

Make sure you put up a sign or tweet about it. Tell your customer what change you have made and why. This will let your customers know that you are making a positive shift to help the environment in Greater Manchester. Remember to include #PlasticFreeGM and @GMGreenCity in your tweets so we can retweet you.