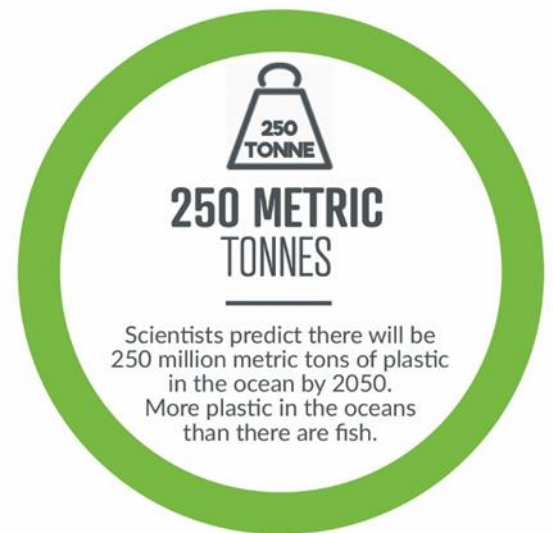


Fact Sheet Take-away food containers



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

Food, glorious food.

Greater Manchester has a thriving street food scene, not to mention more than a few takeaways. While the huge diversity and quality of food on offer around Greater Manchester is certainly something to be celebrated, it’s no surprise that as a city-region we go through a serious number of take-away food containers each year. The mountain of packaging that comes with take-away packaging including a whole load of single-use plastic, is something we need to act on.

In reality there are no great options for food-safe disposables, as there is little, or no on-the-go food packaging collected for recycling in the UK.

The best option is to reduce the amount of single-use packaging your businesses uses, ban disposables for eating in and help customers to switch to reusable. Below is a run-down of some of the options available for take-away food containers and how they rank in terms of planet friendliness.



Get ready for new legislation

From 1st October 2023, new laws come into force in England. This means you must not supply ready-to-consume food and drink in polystyrene containers. This includes in polystyrene cups. There is also a ban on the supply of single-use plastic plates, trays and bowls to members of the public (exemptions apply). Make sure you use up old stock before this date and swap to one of our sustainable alternatives below.



How to coax your customers towards reusable options?

By far the most sustainable thing to do is move towards reusable take-away food containers and reduce the number of single-use containers you use. The bonus is that it will save your business money! So, here's some ideas for helping your customers to go reusable.

Charge for disposables. Research has shown that adding a charge for the use of a disposable container has more impact than offering a discount for customers who bring their own reusable container. It also flips the view of what is normal. Those who bring a reusable food container aren't exceptional or weird. It's the people who don't have their own Tupperware that need to catch up.

Offer a discount to customers who bring their own reusable food container. If you feel that charging extra for the use of disposable take-away container could alienate your customers, at least make sure you are offering a discount to customers who do bring their own. Set the discount at a rate that makes it attractive. If you offer a bigger discount, you might even gain some extra customers!

Shout about it! Bringing your own reusable container to the take-away is still quite a new thing, and customers are still a bit nervous. Put a sign in your window and put some posts on your social media to let customers know that they are welcome to bring their own container and that they'll be rewarded with a discount!

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	Our rating	Things to consider
<p>We are reducing the amount of single-use packaging we use. We have banned disposables for eating in and are encouraging our customers to bring their own reusable take-away food containers and offer a discount to those who do.</p>	 <p>Green. A great sustainable choice.</p>	<p>Great job. Keep up the good work!</p> <p>Reducing the amount of single-use packaging your businesses uses, and helping customers to switch from disposable to reusable, is a really sustainable choice.</p> <p>Could you also sell reusable take-away food containers and charge extra for disposables? Or rent reusable takeaway containers to your customers on a deposit return scheme?</p>

We use Kraft card and paperboard takeaway food containers with a removable greaseproof paper liner.

Look for products that are FSC or PEFC certified.



Amber.
Doing well but room for improvement.

Where single-use is unavoidable, these products tend to have a lower carbon footprint than many of the alternatives and can generally be recycled in the paper and card stream as long as they are not heavily contaminated with food residue (just remove the liner first!)

Always check with your waste contractor what can go in your recycling service.

We use aluminium foil takeaway food containers with a cardboard lid.



Amber.
Doing well but room for improvement.

Foil is widely recycled as long as it is not heavily contaminated with food residue. It can go in residents' mixed recycling bin at home, or a dry mixed recycling service operated for businesses (just give it a rinse first!)

The cardboard lid is very likely to have a plastic film lining and still has to go in general waste.

We use 'Bagasse' sugar cane based takeaway food packaging.

The carbon footprint of Bagasse can vary greatly. Try to look for products that use renewable energy in the manufacturing process like Vegware.



Amber.
Room for improvement.
Could you move to one of the more sustainable choices above?

Bagasse products require commercial composting so even if the product states it can be recycled or composted, in reality, this is often not the case. Always check with your waste contractor what can go in your recycling.

In Greater Manchester, compostable packaging cannot be put in residents' food and garden bins at home.

We use Kraft card and paperboard takeaway food containers with a non-film grease/moisture barrier.

Look for products that are FSC or PEFC certified.



Amber.
Room for improvement.
Could you move to one of the more sustainable choices above?

Card and paperboard containers that are coated with a non-film grease/moisture barrier or aqueous (water based) food grade barrier are not easily recycled, especially as they are likely to be heavily contaminated with food residue. They will just end up contaminating the recycling stream and should be placed in the general waste bin. Always check with your waste contractor what can go in your recycling service.

We use Kraft cardboard take-away food containers with a PE/PET/PLA lining.



Amber.
Room for improvement.
Could you move to one of the more sustainable choices above?

It's important to pick your product carefully. Take-away containers that are made of card are very likely to have a plastic film lining. Meaning they have a higher carbon footprint and cannot be put in the paper and card recycling or composted. So, they'll have to go to general waste.

We use mixed material takeaway food containers and packaging. For example, a standard sandwich packet. This is a cardboard container with a plastic film window.



Red.
Not a good choice for the planet.

Whenever a disposable packet or container is made of more than one material, it instantly gets trickier to recycle. For your business or your customers to recycle this packaging, they need to separate the plastic film from the cardboard part. Packaging with a PLA window makes no real sense as PLA is an expensive material that is unlikely to be composted.

We use single-use plastic takeaway food containers. Usually clear or black plastic, sturdy and sometimes labelled as microwave safe. Made of polypropylene (PP), nonexpanded polystyrene (PS), or polyethylene triphosphate (PET).



Red.
Not a good choice for the planet.

One to avoid. If plastic take-away food containers end up as litter, they degrade over time into smaller and smaller bits called micro-plastics. These get into soil, water systems, wildlife, and our bodies, causing untold harm. These types of plastic containers cannot currently be recycled in residents' home recycling bins.

While some customers do keep sturdier containers to use for storing leftovers, as a business you won't know whether they are kept and reused or go straight in the bin. Try switching to an amber or green choice soon. Please also see - Factsheet: Plastic plates, trays and bowls.

We use expanded polystyrene foam take-away food containers.



Red.
Not a good choice for the planet.

These items will be banned in England from October 2023. Make sure you are not hoarding stocks and move to one of the more sustainable options above.

Tell people you have made a change

Now is the time to make a change and switch to some of the sustainable behaviours we have listed in this factsheet. Make sure you put up a sign or tweet about it. Remember to include #PlasticFreeGM and @GMGreenCity in your tweets so we can retweet you.