

Fact Sheet Take away cups hot drinks



“In the UK it is estimated that we use 7 million disposable coffee cups every day.”

Why are take away cups a problem?

Coffee culture is huge across Greater Manchester and we're all busier than ever. Put those two facts together, and it adds up to 7 million disposable coffee cups used once and thrown away every single day in the UK. That's 2.5 billion every year.

Most take away hot drink cups are made of a fibre-based composite, and so that they don't absorb the liquid from your coffee (or tea) they usually have a lining on the inside made of plastic making them hard to recycle. This is the same for cold drinks too.

Get ready for new legislation.

From 1st October 2023, new laws come into force in England. This means you **must not supply** certain types of single-use expanded and extruded polystyrene cups. If your business is using these types of cups, it's essential to shift to more sustainable choices. Our advice is to follow the principles of the waste hierarchy.



Recyclable versus recycled

It can sometimes be tricky to navigate the world of products claiming to be 'green, compostable, recyclable and plastic-free'. New products are entering the market all the time, and lots of these are just not as green or sustainable as they claim to be. The fact that a product has the word recyclable or compostable stamped on it

doesn't mean that it is easily or widely recycled or that it will get composted. The recycling and composting world is complicated. It's limited by the current infrastructure, lack of end markets and by the incredibly complex and different types of plastics and bio-plastics there are.

And what about compostable?

There are a lot of compostable products on the market, that claim to be a great option for the environment. This simply is not the case. Compostable coffee cups can't go in the paper and card recycling, and they will still harm the environment if they end up as litter. This because compostable cups need specialist composting services to help them break down. These types of facilities are not widely available in the UK.

So, whilst it may seem more sustainable to buy in 100% compostable products, most of these items don't get recycled or composted and can have a higher carbon

footprint than plastic ones. In Greater Manchester residents cannot put compostable items in their food and garden 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. Always reduce first and go with reusable options where possible.

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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
We sell reusable take away cups and offer a discount to our customers who use them.	 Green. A great sustainable choice.	As a general rule reusable is always a better option than disposable. Buy in some reusable cups to sell and find ways to encourage your customers to keep using them (see section below).
We offer reusable take away cups to customers on a deposit return scheme.	 Green. A great sustainable choice.	Good job! Could your business offer a deposit return scheme like the Manchester Christmas markets do every year? PlasticFreeGM are looking into how we can make reusable schemes easier across the city-region.

We stock disposable take away cups made from card with a plastic lining. For example, the hot drinks takeaway cups found commonly at fast food restaurants. If you're unsure what the products you stock are made from, check the box or ask the supplier.



Amber.
Doing well but room for improvement.

Due to the plastic lining these cups cannot go in the normal paper and card recycling. However, there are dedicated services that will collect these cups and make sure they get recycled, like Simply Cups.

If you use these cups make sure you have a dedicated cup recycling service in place. They can be a really good option if you are in a closed loop environment like festivals or within individual buildings and have this service in place.

From **2024**, a mandatory takeback requirement for fibre-based composite cups will be introduced under the new Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging.

This means that sellers of filled fibre-based composite cups that employ 10 or more staff will be required to have a dedicated separate collection in place, making the recycling of these cups easier and a better choice for the environment.

We stock disposable take away cups made with an aqueous lining that say they are plastic free, compostable and recyclable.



Red.
Not a good choice for the planet.

These cups are new to the market and very little research is known about them. They are not accepted in the paper and card recycling at home and require specialist recycling and composting services. Always check with your waste collection provider what types of products they will accept.

We stock disposable polystyrene take away cups e.g. expanded polystyrene 'foam' cups.



Red.
Not a good choice for the planet.

One to avoid. These cups 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.

Moving to reusable options. Hints and tips.

By far the most sustainable thing to do is move towards reusable drink cups. The added 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 cup has more impact than offering a discount for customers who bring a reusable cup. It also flips the view of what is normal. Those who bring a reusable cup aren't exceptional (or weird). It's the people who don't have their own reusable cup that need to catch up.

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

Take away lids

If you're using a disposable take away hot drinks cup, you'll need a lid to go with it. If we're honest, there aren't any good options available. This highlights how important it is to move beyond disposables and shift towards reusable in the longer term.

Coffee cup recycling services

Due to the plastic lining these cups cannot go in the normal paper and card recycling. However, there are some companies that will collect these types of disposable drinks cups and make sure they get recycled, like Simply Cups. If you use these cups make sure you have a dedicated cup recycling service in place. They are really good option if you are in a closed loop environment like festivals or within individual buildings and

have this service in place. From 2024, a mandatory takeback requirement for fibre-based composite cups will be introduced under the new Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging. This means that sellers of filled fibre-based composite cups that employ 10 or more staff will be required to have a dedicated separate collection in place, making them a better choice for the environment.

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. 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.

