

Sent to EqualityBranch@gov.wales for initial review on 21 June 2022.

Policy Aims and Intended Effects

Plastic, when well designed and necessary, can play an important role in our economy and daily lives. However, its use has become so widespread, people often place little or no value on it as a resource and so it is often disposed of after one use, is not recycled or is simply littered. This is particularly true of smaller items that cannot easily be picked up. These items often then enter our rivers and seas, washing onto our beaches. In 2018, research undertaken by the [European Commission](#) found that 80 to 85% of marine litter, measured by beach litter surveys, is plastic, with single-use plastic items representing 50% of the total marine litter.

The research found most littered products on European beaches were those associated with “on-the-go” food and drink packaging. As plastic can break down over time into smaller pieces it can make it difficult to identify its origin. Studies in Wales suggest single-use plastic litter is also prevalent in our local environment. For example, the [Welsh Government’s compositional analysis](#) of litter found plastic in 40% (by item count) of the total sample analysed. [Welsh beach](#) and [street cleanliness](#) surveys have also confirmed the presence of many of the items found by the European Commission’s research.

Tackling plastic pollution and the negative impact it has on our climate, environment, nature, health and well-being is a key priority for Welsh Ministers. We want Wales to become a nation where resource efficiency is part of our culture, where we recognise the value of our resources and reduce the quantity of waste that arises. Our vision is for a Wales free from litter, where we keep resources in use for as long as possible and avoid waste. Everyone has a role to play in tackling litter and the single-use culture.

Through the Single-Use Plastics Bill, we propose to make it an offence to supply or offer to supply (including for free) the following commonly littered and unnecessary disposable single-use plastic (SUP) products to a consumer in Wales. We believe this will help shift behaviours amongst both retailers and consumers towards more eco-friendly materials or reusable products.

- plates
- cutlery
- drinks stirrers
- drinking straws (including attached straws)
- cups made of polystyrene
- takeaway food containers made of polystyrene
- cup and takeaway food container lids made of polystyrene
- plastic-stemmed cotton buds
- sticks for balloons

- oxo-degradable products
- plastic single-use carrier bags (SUCBs)

The introduction of market restrictions on the availability of these unnecessary or problematic SUP products forms part of a package of wider measures being taken forward by the Welsh Government to reduce the negative impact littering, plastic pollution and climate change have on our environment and our health. We aim to spark a cultural change where unnecessary waste is prevented, and materials are thought of as resources rather than waste. The introduction of these restrictions is a first key step in our phased approach to shift away from our throwaway culture. By removing these products from the supply chain, we will prevent this pollution from occurring in the first place. It will encourage businesses to move towards making more reusable, more easily recyclable and less environmentally harmful alternatives.

The proposals will also help to increase consumer awareness of the harm SUP products have on the environment.

The Chief Medical Officer for Wales Annual Report, *Restoring our Health*, published June 2022 highlights that climate change is a pressing public health issue which will increasingly dominate our lives as it adversely affects the most basic health requirements: clean air, safe water, sufficient food, and adequate shelter. It affects the environment around us – the places where we live, work, learn and play – can have a profound impact on our health and well-being.

The report examines the need to prepare, mitigate and adapt for climate change in Wales. The people of Wales are central in making these changes by choosing to use alternatives such as wooden cutlery, paper straws, cups and plates. Switching to these widely used alternative products, that offer little change for most in consumer experience, will lead to long term environmental benefits and improved health although we acknowledge there may be short to medium term disruption for retailers and consumers, if suitable alternative products to those planned to be removed are not available at an affordable cost.

What impact will these proposals have on people with and sharing protected characteristics as described in the Equality Act 2010.

The Equalities Act 2010 places a General Equality Duty on Welsh Ministers to have ‘due regard’ to the need to:

- **Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;**
- **Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, which involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:**
 - **Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people who share a protected characteristic;**
 - **Take steps to meet the needs of people who share a protected characteristic that are different to those who do not. The steps involved in meeting the needs**

of disabled people that are different from the needs of people who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of their impairments;

- **Encourage people who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low; and**
- **Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, which involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.**

Consultation on proposals

A full public 12-week consultation began in July 2020 in relation to our proposals to ban certain single-use plastic products. A further focused and targeted 6-week evidence gathering engagement exercise was undertaken with stakeholders in 2022.

Reducing Single Use Plastics Consultation 2020

[The Reducing Single Use Plastics Consultation](#) contained proposals to ban SUP cutlery, plates, drinks stirrers, drinking straws, cotton buds, balloon sticks, expanded and extruded polystyrene cups, expanded and extruded polystyrene food containers and products made of oxo-degradable plastic. The consultation ran from 30 July 2020 to 22 October 2020. A bilingual consultation document was made available online, along with an “Easy Read” version. Respondents were provided with the option of responding to questions online, by submitting responses electronically to a designated electronic mailbox or in hard copy via the postal system.

As the consultation was undertaken during a period of national restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, face-to-face engagement sessions were unable to be held. Instead, several online meetings were held with different groups, this included representatives of the Youth Parliament, members of the Welsh Retail consortium, a local constituency community group and an online workshop with academics and other experts hosted by Environment Platform Wales.

Summary of Responses

A total of 3,581 [responses](#) were received. This comprised responses from protected characteristic groups including disabled people and a number of organised campaigns, including those coordinated by environmental Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), manufacturer/ producer representatives, a number of staff and customers of Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water and a combined response from members of the Chartered Institution of Waste Management.

There was overwhelming agreement through the consultation that the potential environmental and social benefits of our proposals outweighed potential impacts on people in Wales. However, concerns were raised from a number of people, including those who share a protected

characteristic, of the possible disproportionate negative impact of the proposed SUP bans and restrictions. These include:

- Some older and disabled groups rely on flexible plastic straws to eat and drink safely or independently, in a variety of settings.
- Some types of alternative items, such as glass or metal, could cause injury for some individuals who have conditions that cause tremors and spasms.
- Single use alternative straws do not provide the same flexibility/functionality as plastic straws and therefore are unlikely to be a suitable alternative item for people who are bedbound, those that cannot re-position themselves to drink from cups or tilt their head back, those with dexterity problems or painful conditions.
- Individuals who rely on straws to eat or drink would possibly require a number of straws on a daily basis; therefore purchasing straws made from other materials, that are more expensive, could impose additional costs to the user.
- Items sold that are suitable for re-use would require them to be cleaned/sterilised between each use creating inconvenience for the user.

Comments received providing further detail on the potential impact of a ban on SUP straws:

*'I am pleased to see that you recognise that banning Single-Use Flexible Plastic Straws will have an adverse impact on Disabled People. I don't feel that you have gone far enough in protecting us. Even since early 2018 it has become almost impossible to be provided with straws in restaurants, coffee shops and the wider hospitality industry. As you will see I am wholeheartedly against any form of restriction and certainly against a ban of 'Single-Use Flexible Plastic Straws'. **(Disability campaigner)***

*'Banning these items and asking disabled people, who already have a large number of extra expenses placed upon their budget, to buy reusable ones is extremely unfair. I know the idea has been put forth to have reusable items and only offer them if they are asked for, but this too comes with a raft of problems. Having able bodied people gate keeping these items, and only allowing people who they view to be "truly in need" to have them opens up a whole raft of discriminatory possibilities. Many disabilities, mine included, are invisible to most people. Being denied items we need can be a traumatic experience, it would certainly impact my mental health and put me off going to similar places in the future. Accessibility is already a huge problem in our society, banning single use plastics would only exacerbate this problem. As I said at the start I do support the banning of single use plastics, mainly in packaging, but as more than 1 in 4 people in Wales live with some form of disability, I really hope you consider how this decision might impact us'. **(Disabled person)***

*'I do not support the banning of single use plastic items that are most commonly used by (and incidentally invented for) disabled people; namely straws. I completely understand the need to reduce single use plastic waste but these items are often essential for disabled people to eat and drink safely. Not all reusable options are a suitable for everyone due to allergies, the inability to position correctly, danger of injury, or the expense. **(Individual)***

‘Even something as simple as re-useable cups and straws will have potential hygiene issues in hospital or other healthcare settings. We suggest separate Welsh Government consultation across the health and social care system to establish suitable alternatives that will not compromise patient care and ensure a safe and hygienic environment’ (Public Health Practitioner – Policy Public Health Wales)

Other comments received related to the need to provide clarity to retailers and customers regarding proposed exemptions, and the need to ensure any guidance issued to support these proposals should also be made available in languages other than English and Welsh given the multi-national nature of the hospitality and catering sectors.

In developing the Single-use Plastics Bill, we have taken account of the feedback provided in relation to supporting the need of protected characteristic groups. In addition, we have facilitated additional discussions with the health and social care sector, and a range of protected characteristic groups to ensure we have better understood individual requirements and feedback to the consultation. There are a number of exemptions included in the Single-use Plastics Bill to ensure continued availability and accessibility of relevant products.

Targeted engagement in 2022

Following the closure of the full consultation in October 2020, the UK Government introduced the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020 (UKIMA). Our proposals to introduce these bans were put on hold at that time while we considered the impact UKIMA may have on our ability to deliver our Programme for Government commitment to legislate in this area.

During this period discussions with stakeholders continued on the items consulted on in 2020, and the additional products respondents to the consultation requested to be included in future proposals. This included engaging with:

- Protected characteristic groups, individuals and representatives,
- Children and young people, including representative organisations
- Non-government environmental organisations,
- Representatives from the education sector,
- Representative from the health sector (both primary and secondary),
- Representatives from the agriculture sector
- Manufacturing organisations
- Retailer organisations

The purpose of this targeted engagement was to obtain further evidence regarding the suitability of alternative products to those products proposed to be banned in our 2020 consultation, the potential impacts to protected characteristic groups, and how those impacts could be mitigated. Also, to discuss the inclusion of additional products, requested by

respondents during the 2020 consultation, the potential impacts of these products and whether any exemptions would be required to mitigate these impacts.

Responses to targeted engagement

Evidence gathered during the targeted engagement supports the information received in the full consultation. In general, respondents considered there were suitable non plastic alternative products already on the market for most of the items proposed in the bans, such as paper or cardboard cotton buds, plates and balloon sticks, and wooden cutlery and drink stirrers. There are paper /cardboard or other types of plastic cups and food containers available.

Respondents agreed that for most individuals, a ban on SUP straws would result in their decision to use alternative straws such as metal, paper, glass, silicone, acrylic, pasta/rice, bamboo, and other biodegradable materials. However, respondents were concerned that, for some of the population, especially younger, older or disabled people, alternative single-use drinking straws were not suitable for a number of reasons, which aligns with the feedback received in the 2020 consultation as set out [here](#).

Additional items to be included in our proposals

During the 2020 consultation respondents identified a number of additional products they wanted action taken on. Feedback from the 2020 consultation and continued discussions with stakeholders during engagement in 2022, have assisted us in further forming our policy in this area to include single use plastic cup and takeaway food container lids and single use carrier bags (SUCBs) to our proposals.

SUCBs

Whilst the usage of SUCBs has decreased significantly since the introduction of [The Single Use Carrier Bags Charge \(Wales\) Regulations 2010](#) (mainly as supermarkets no longer provide them at the checkout), they are still used extensively in the clothing retail sector and amongst small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs). Including SUCBs in our proposals is consistent with wider Welsh Government aims to phase out single use items and reduce the use of resources.

We propose to include SUCBs that are currently captured by the charge (those equal to or less than 49 microns in thickness and which meet the definitions of size in the current charging regulations) will be banned. This will not include thicker gauge plastic bags currently used by supermarkets as these are considered “bags for life”. It will also not include thinner gauge plastic bags such as nappy sacks, dog poo bags or bags typically used for takeaway delivery.

The carrier bag charge regulations include exemptions, including those for health and food safety reasons. Some of these exemptions will be retained.

Cup and takeaway food container lids and oxo-degradable products

Although included in our proposals, the bans on oxo-degradable plastic products and cup and takeaway food container lids made of polystyrene, will not come into force at the same time as all other items in our proposals.

We are proposing delaying the commencement date for these items to enable further engagement with the affected sectors, and to allow more time for those affected sectors to adapt. Impact assessments for these items will be completed in due course.

Exemptions to mitigate impacts

Drinking Straws

We recognise for some disabled people or those with accessibility needs, flexible plastic drinking straws are a necessity so they can eat and drink safely and independently. Our proposals include exemptions to protect access to single-use plastic straws for those who need them. Once the ban is in force, single-use plastic straws will be available for purchase at pharmacies, given on request, for example at hospitality or catering premises or provided for medical reasons.

- **Pharmacies** (including on-line) - are able to buy single-use plastic straws from manufacturers or wholesalers so individuals who need them, or someone on their behalf, can purchase them for use at home or elsewhere.
- **Premises providing food or drink** - catering businesses, such as cafes, restaurants and pubs will still be able to buy single-use plastic straws from manufacturers or wholesalers to give to someone who require them to eat and drink independently, or someone requesting a straw on their behalf. It is important to note that customers do not need to provide proof of need when requesting straws.
- **Medical purposes** - Health professionals are able to supply single-use plastic straws where required, this includes for use in hospitals and other medical settings.

By taking an approach that is consistent with other parts of the UK, the exemption provides clarity for people on how to access single-use plastic straws wherever they are located. It also provides clarity and consistency for businesses.

Attached Straws

Straws attached to food or drink cartons or juice pouches are included in the ban for SUP straws, subject to the following exemption:

- for medical purposes (this means straws will remain for the purposes of preventative medicine, medical diagnosis, medical research and the provision of medical care and treatment by a health professional or under the direction of a health professional).

This is to ensure that nutritional diet supplements, that are sometimes provided to people who are not eating properly and are administered via a carton with an attached plastic straw, remain available. It also ensures that other drinks (e.g. fruit juices) which would come in cartons with attached plastic straws would still be captured by the ban.

How will the proposal promote equality?

The proposed bans will apply to all individuals who use these products, except for those individuals in protected characteristic groups who rely on these products to eat and drink safely and independently. The exemptions we propose to include will support independent living, social inclusion and equal participation for people in protected characteristic groups who require them.

The detrimental impacts of pollution and climate change on the environment and human health are evident and have been well documented. A [Public Health Wales](#) report highlights the importance of the climate change impact on the health and well-being of the population of Wales, specifically the negative impacts on more vulnerable and disadvantaged groups who could be disproportionately affected, including children and young people; older adults; disabled people and individuals with long-term health conditions, and people living on a low income. Also, some places and buildings – especially where patients and vulnerable people, live, or visit – may be affected to a greater extent by extreme weather events.

Our proposals will have a significant positive impact on this issue by immediately reducing the amount of single use plastic items littered and a long-term positive impact of reducing the amount of plastic polluting the environment, contributing to climate change. Our proposals will also provide cleaner green and natural spaces like beaches, forests, parks and countryside which has the potential benefit of improving mental and physical well-being as people enjoy their local environment more, which can also lead to greater social cohesion as people socialise and interact more with others in their community.

Protected Groups

Through evidence received in our full public consultation [Reducing single use plastics](#) in 2020 and continued targeted engagement in 2022, we have identified the following groups will be impacted by our proposals:

- **Children and young people (age)**
- **Older people (age)**
- **Disabled people (and their carers)**

- **Pregnancy and maternity**
- **Race**

- **People on low income**

What are the possible impacts on people in protected groups and those living in low-income households and how will you mitigate for these?

Impacts on Children and Young People

Positive Impact

Through engagement with children and young people it is clear they understand the positive impact their actions and decisions have on plastic pollution. They show enthusiasm at the ability to become more sustainable and ethical and they demonstrate an understanding of the impact their choices and values have on their environment and communities, by choosing to use readily available alternatives to plastics or non-single use items. Engaging on these issues is empowering for children and young people and helps them to also understand how these proposals will impact other groups such as young and older people or disabled people. As well as engaging with our proposals they have also provided several suggestions to take further action, such as food packaging and cigarette butts. Also suggesting constructive ways in which to engage further with them on this issue through social media etc.

Tackling our over-use of single-use plastics is an issue which has been championed by many young people. There are many children and young people led campaigns to fight plastic waste. They have organised several campaigns, including the [Welsh Youth Parliament's report](#) on littering and plastic waste. Our proposals aim to build on this. We want to change consumer behaviour towards using fewer single use items and enhance our global reputation as an exemplar in recycling.

[Natural Super Kids reports](#) tackling plastic pollution will also positively affect their health as children are much more vulnerable to adverse health effects caused by environmental toxins like plastic. They are still developing – their gut, immune system, brain and reproductive systems are still under construction. This makes them more prone to the negative impacts of plastic exposure.

Also, these proposals will meet the requirement [in The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), specifically Article 31 and Article 24, by reducing air pollution and providing cleaner green and natural spaces like beaches, forests, parks and the countryside for walking, learning, running, cycling, and playing.

Climate change has been identified as one of the biggest threats facing our future generations; implementing these proposals will have a direct positive impact on protecting our environment, health and well-being in the short term and for future generations.

Negative Impacts

Through direct engagement with children and young people, disabled people and their representatives, we have identified there will be a minor impact on children and young people regarding our proposal to ban SUP straws. For most children and young people, there are suitable alternative straws readily available on the market, although during consultation with children and young people they raised some concern regarding the functionality of paper straws, which may get soggy and become a choking hazard. This situation is expected to improve as manufacturers continue innovating to meet the growing demand for more sustainable straw solutions.

Discussions with groups representing disabled people of all ages confirm flexible plastic straws are essential for some individuals to enable them to eat and drink safely and independently, therefore removing them would cause an additional caring burden on young people who are carers, or young people who are recipients of care. Information from [Carers Trust Wales](#), details there are around 30,000 young carers in Wales with Wales having the highest percentage per capita of young carers in comparison with the other UK nations. The exemptions we have included for SUP straws will mitigate this impact.

The ban on SUP straws also includes straws attached to drink containers, such as juice cartons or pouches typically used by children. The intention of the ban is to encourage a switch to environmentally friendly alternatives or re-usable items. Retailers have responded to this and are making changes to produce plastic free products. Several major brands such as Ribena and Capri Sun have already replaced their attached plastic straws with paper straws. Therefore, there will only be a minor negative impact based mostly around the choice of drinks cartons/pouches currently available on the market.

Young children may be more likely to use balloon sticks and may be impacted by a ban on this item. However, retailers have responded to the proposals to ban plastic sticks and affordable, recyclable, eco-friendly cardboard alternatives to plastic balloon sticks are now available on the market.

Our consultation did not identify any negative impacts for children and young people relating to other items in our proposals. It was considered that suitable alternative non plastic or non-single use items were readily available on the market for these items.

Impacts on Older People

Positive Impact

The introduction of these proposals will have a significant positive impact by immediately reducing the amount of single use plastic items littered, and a long-term positive impact of reducing the amount of plastic in the environment. This will improve the quality of green and blue spaces people can access and enjoy, which has the potential benefit of improving mental and physical well-being as people enjoy their local community more. Older adults' wellbeing is strongly linked to the residential environment, where the older population generally spends more time than the younger population due to, for instance, retirement or increasingly limited mobility.

Tackling the problem of litter and plastic pollution, delivering improvements to the environment will improve individuals' own health and well-being, as well as that of their families and wider community. We expect the environmental outcomes delivered by our proposals to impact positively on the health outcomes of the population generally, including older people. Tackling plastic pollution will provide better air quality which is likely to benefit older people – [Public Health Wales](#) notes that “It is well-documented that different people are affected in different ways by air pollution exposure; for example, children, older people and those with chronic lung or heart conditions are considered more vulnerable to the effects of air pollution exposure”.

Negative Impacts

Through consultation we have identified the proposed ban on SUP straws will have a minor negative impact on older people. There are a number of suitable alternative single-use and non-single use products on the market.

Any negative impact on older people, who rely on the flexibility of plastic straws to eat and drink safely and independently, especially if they also have ill health or a medical condition, will be mitigated by the inclusion of exemptions in our proposals.

Our consultation did not identify any negative impacts for older people relating to proposed bans on other products. It was considered that suitable alternative non plastic items were readily available on the market for these items.

Race and ethnicity

[A survey of Welsh small business behaviors for 2019](#), shows the business population structure for Wales in 2019 was dominated by Small and Medium Size Enterprises (SMEs) (0 to 249 employees) which account for more than 99% of the business population in Wales. Minority ethnic group led (MEG-led) businesses are those having a person from an ethnic minority in sole control of the business or having a management team with at least half of its members from ethnic minority groups. Overall, one and a half percent of SME employers in Wales were MEG-led based. The portion is lowest for micro businesses (1.2%) and highest for medium sized businesses (3.4%).

Our preliminary research indicated a ban or restriction in supply of products in our proposals may have a low or moderate impact on businesses in Wales. There will be transition costs

(sourcing non plastic products), stakeholder engagement revealed that overall impacts for businesses are likely to be small if non-plastic products are a comparable cost and where these products represent a relatively small proportion of business costs as a whole.

Therefore, there may be a low negative impact for ethnic minority people who are business owners, in the short term while businesses adapt to the introduction of these proposals, although feedback from our consultations show a large number of consumers have already changed their buying habits, as they consider more carefully how their purchases may negatively affect the environment.

Ethnic minority business owners may also be concerned regarding accessing guidance on the implementation of the proposals, in a language other than English. The intention of the guidance is to provide information which will ensure there is clarity for enforcing officers, suppliers, retailers and members of the public. It will be published and available to all citizens in a range of formats and languages to ensure it is accessible to all.

Disabled people

Positive impacts

The introduction of these proposals will have a positive impact on individuals, especially disabled people, by tackling plastic pollution and climate change which has a negative impact on the health and well-being of the population of Wales

Negative Impacts

Impairments and learning disabilities can make it harder for people to carry out daily activities which are often taken for granted. The [Well-being of Wales 2021](#) report, which provides insight on the state of the nation and the progress that's being made against the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 well-being goals, provides the following data:

- The employment rate among disabled adults aged 16 to 64 (46.7% in the year ending March 2021) remains lower than among those who are not disabled.
- The proportion of people with a limiting long-standing illness or disability living in a household in material deprivation remained at 21% in 2019-20 but is twice as high as for those who are not disabled (9%).
- The disability pay gap in Wales was 9.9% in 2018. This means that disabled people in Wales earned, on average, 9.9% less per hour than non-disabled people.
- A slightly higher proportion of employed disabled people work in industries told to close in the early stage of the pandemic compared to non-disabled employees (17% compared to 15%).

This information demonstrates that individuals, who have a limiting long standing illness or disability, may already be socially and financially disadvantaged. [Life costs you £583 more on average a month if you're a disabled person. Families of disabled children on average, face](#)

extra costs of £581 a month. For almost a quarter (24%) of families with disabled children, extra costs amount to over £1,000 a month.

Concerns raised during engagement with stakeholders were primarily related to the suitability and cost of alternative products. It was highlighted that some individuals may need to use a number of straws a day which could become a financial burden if alternative re-usable or non-re-usable alternatives had to be purchased at a higher cost. The inclusion of exemptions for SUP straws ensures low-income families who relied on these products are not further financially impacted.

Our consultation did not identify any negative impacts for disabled people relating to proposed bans on other items. It was considered that suitable alternative non plastic items were readily available on the market for these items.

Pregnancy and Maternity

Microplastics, plastic pieces smaller than 5 mm, have become increasingly prevalent in the natural world, and studies published in the last three years, including several from 2020, shows that they've contaminated not only the ocean and where we live, but the air, our food, and even our bodies.

Positive Impact

A growing body of [research](#) shows that plastic is invading our bodies through the air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we consume. A new study has now shown that microplastic are even present inside human placentas, posing a potential risk to fetal health and development.

The microplastics likely entered the mothers' bodies through food ingestion or through respiration, and then translocated into the placentas. While further research needs to be done on the subject, it is believed that these microplastics could disrupt immunity mechanisms in babies.

The introduction of our proposals will have a significant positive impact by immediately reducing the amount of single-use plastic products littered, and a long-term positive impact of reducing the amount of plastic in the environment. This will reduce the negative impact littering, plastic pollution and climate change have on our environment and our health and well-being and will provide the most basic health requirements: clean air and safe water.

Low Income Households

We define a person to be living in relative income poverty if they live in a household where the total household income from all sources is less than 60% of the average UK household income. Statistics in the [Relative income poverty: April 2019 to March 2020 report](#) relate to relative income poverty in Wales after housing costs such as mortgage interest payments/rent, water rates and structural house insurance were paid.

It reports that nearly a quarter of all people in Wales (23%) were living in relative income poverty (after housing costs) between 2017 and 2020. Children are the most likely to be in relative poverty (31% of children compared to 18% of pensioners). Between 2017 and 2020, 22% of working-age adults in Wales were living in relative income poverty.

In the report, in line with the Equality Act, (which uses the medical model of disability in line with the Equality Act, namely disabled people) disabled people are identified as those who report any physical or mental health condition or illness that are expected to last 12 months or more, and which limit their ability to carry out day-to-day activities a little, or a lot. Living with a person who has a disability makes relative income poverty more likely for children and working age people. In the latest period (2017-18 to 2019-20):

- 38% of children who lived in a family where there was someone with a “disability” were in relative income poverty compared with 26% of those in families where no-one was disabled
- for working-age adults, 31% who lived in a family where there was someone with a disability were in relative income poverty compared with 18% of those in families where no-one was disabled.

The report has identified that adults or children living in a household with a disabled person are already likely to be financially disadvantaged. Therefore, ensuring low-cost plastic straws remain available of those who rely on them has a positive impact on this group.

Households in deprived areas

We expect our proposals, through reducing plastic pollution and littering solutions which reduce flood risk (e.g. agroforestry, improved soil health) and increased access to the countryside, to positively influence the physical environment and therefore this measure of deprivation may be improved.

What if any, barriers do people who share protected characteristics face? Can these barriers be reduced, removed, mitigated?

Although exemptions for straws will ensure they remain available on request to those individuals who require them, the change in how they are accessed, has the potential to impact on disabled people in a variety of ways, including:

- Loss of independence associated with reduced availability of straws as hospitality environments become less inclusive and accessible to individuals who require straws.

- Stigmatisation and unnecessary medicalisation attached to potential routes to accessing straws under an exemption.

Disability was judged to be a motivating factor in 11% of hate crimes recorded in Wales in 2019-20. Feedback from disabled people and representative groups stress they care about the environment and want to do their part, and they do not want to suffer discrimination and negative attitudes for continuing to use items they rely on for caring for themselves or to stay safe.

We will work closely with businesses, manufacturers, those enforcing the bans and protected characteristic groups to develop comprehensive guidance to support the implementation of the bans. The intention is to provide information, published in a number of formats, which will ensure there is clarity for enforcing officers, suppliers, retailers and members of the public.

The delivery of these bans and publication of guidance will be further supported by awareness raising to ensure everyone is aware of the need for some items to remain available to individuals who rely on them. It will also explain how we expect these products to be accessible and provide retailers specific guidance on this.

The policy is not specifically intended to tackle prejudice and promote understanding between people who share a protected characteristic. However, based on the overwhelming level of support for the introduction of the proposals and our proposed exemptions in relation to straws, we do not believe the introduction of these proposals would cause friction between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

While implementing these proposals will have a direct positive impact on protecting our environment for future generations, we believe that including these exemptions, to reduce the impact these proposals will have on protected characteristic groups, strikes the right balance between reducing environmental impact while protecting the rights of people who still require these products. Including exemptions to the proposals will ensure the proposals are not discriminatory or otherwise unlawful under the Equality Act and it is unlikely the policy will have a discriminatory effect. Nevertheless, the Welsh Government will monitor the delivery of the proposals and remain alert to new evidence suggesting that discrimination or other prohibited conduct is, or could be, occurring and take appropriate action to prevent this happening.

Record of Impacts by protected characteristic:

Protected characteristic or group	What are the positive or negative impacts of the proposal?	Reasons for your decision (including evidence)	How will you mitigate Impacts?
Age (Older people)	<u>Negative Impact</u> Older people may be impacted by	Through one-to-one targeted engagement and consultation with users we	Providing single-use plastic straws, in line with exemptions for

	<p>the removal of flexible plastic straws</p> <p><u>Positive Impact</u> Older people are particularly vulnerable to air pollution, our proposals are expected to improve the environment including air quality.</p>	<p>have identified that older people, who are more likely to suffer from medical conditions and ill health, may be more likely to be impacted by market restrictions on plastic straws. They may require the flexibility plastic straws can provide so that they can eat and drink safely or independently, in a variety of settings.</p> <p>Evidence provided in a Public Health Wales report highlights the importance of the climate change impact on the health and well-being of the population of Wales</p>	<p>medical/healthcare needs, will support independent living, social inclusion and equal participation for people who need them to eat or drink safely and independently, or if the straws are required for medical purposes.</p> <p>The introduction of these proposals will reduce air pollution and provide cleaner green and natural spaces like beaches, forests, parks and the countryside by walking, running, cycling, doing conservation work and playing</p>
<p>Disability (adults and children)</p>	<p><u>Negative Impact</u> Disabled people may be impacted by the removal of flexible plastic straws</p> <p><u>Positive Impact</u> Disabled people are particularly vulnerable to air pollution, our proposals are</p>	<p>Through one-to-one targeted engagement and consultation with users we have identified that, disabled people, may be more likely to be impacted by market restrictions on plastic straws. They may require the flexibility plastic straws can provide so that they can eat and drink safely or independently, in a variety of settings.</p> <p>Evidence provided in a Public Health Wales report highlights the importance of the climate change impact on the health and</p>	<p>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 safely and independently, or if the straws are required for medical purposes.</p> <p>The introduction of these proposals will reduce air pollution and provide cleaner green and natural</p>

	expected to improve the environment including air quality.	well-being of the population of Wales	spaces like beaches, forests, parks and the countryside by walking, running, cycling, doing conservation work and playing.
Children and Younger People	<p>Children and young people who are carers for family members may be particularly impacted by the removal of plastic straws</p> <p><u>Positive Impact</u></p> <p>Children and young people are particularly vulnerable to air pollution, our proposals are expected to improve the environment including air quality.</p>	<p>Information from Carers Trust Wales details there are around 30,000 young carers in Wales, with Wales having the highest percentage per capita of young carers in comparison with the other UK nations.</p> <p>Evidence provided in a Public Health Wales report highlights the importance of the climate change impact on the health and well-being of the population of Wales.</p>	<p>Providing single-use plastic straws, in line with exemptions for medical/healthcare needs will support independent living, social inclusion and equal participation for people who need them to eat or drink safely and independently, or if the straws are required for medical purposes.</p> <p>The introduction of these proposals will reduce air pollution and provide cleaner green and natural spaces like beaches, forests, parks and the countryside by walking, running, cycling, doing conservation work and playing.</p>
Gender Reassignment (the act of transitioning and Transgender people)	No specific positive or negative impacts have been identified.		We will monitor the delivery of the proposals and remain alert to new evidence suggesting any negative impacts, discrimination or other prohibited conduct is, or could be, occurring and take appropriate action to prevent this happening.

Pregnancy and maternity	<u>Positive Impact</u> Plastic pollution can result in health risks to babies.	A growing body of research shows that plastic is not only filling the world’s oceans and wilderness regions, but also invading our bodies through the air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we consume. And now, a new study has shown that microplastics — tiny plastic particles smaller than 5 mm but bigger than 1 micron — are even present inside human placentas, posing a potential risk to fetal health and development.	The introduction of our proposals will have a significant positive impact by immediately reducing the amount of single use plastic items littered, and a long-term positive impact of reducing the amount of plastic in the environment. This will reduce the negative impact littering, plastic pollution and climate change have on our environment and our health and well-being and will provide the most basic health requirements: clean air and safe water.
Race (include different ethnic minorities, Gypsies and Travellers and Migrants, Asylum seekers and Refugees)	<u>Negative Impact</u> There may be a low negative impact for ethnic minority people who are business owners, in the short term while businesses adapt to the introduction of these proposals	Feedback through consultation.	Guidance on the implementation of the proposals will be available to all citizens in a range of formats and languages to ensure it is accessible to all.
Religion, belief and non-belief	No specific positive or negative impacts have been identified.		We will monitor the delivery of the proposals and remain alert to new evidence suggesting any negative impacts, discrimination or other prohibited conduct is, or could be, occurring and take appropriate action to prevent this happening.

Sex/Gender	No specific positive or negative impacts have been identified.		We will monitor the delivery of the proposals and remain alert to new evidence suggesting any negative impacts, discrimination or other prohibited conduct is, or could be, occurring and take appropriate action to prevent this happening.
Sexual orientation (Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual)	No specific positive or negative impacts have been identified.		We will monitor the delivery of the proposals and remain alert to new evidence suggesting any negative impacts, discrimination or other prohibited conduct is, or could be, occurring and take appropriate action to prevent this happening.
Marriage and civil partnership	No specific positive or negative impacts have been identified.		We will monitor the delivery of the proposals and remain alert to new evidence suggesting any negative impacts, discrimination or other prohibited conduct is, or could be, occurring and take appropriate action to prevent this happening.

Low-income households	<u>Negative Impact</u> Living with a disabled person makes relative income poverty more likely for children and working age people.	The Relative income poverty: April 2019 to March 2020 report relates to relative income poverty in Wales. Living with a disabled person makes relative income poverty more likely for children and working age people.	Ensuring low-cost plastic straws remain available for those who rely on them has a positive impact on this group.
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		The report has identified that adults or children living in a household with a disabled person is already likely to be financially disadvantaged.	
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Human Rights and UN Conventions

Do you think that this policy will have a positive or negative impact on people's human rights? (Please refer to point 1.4 of the EIA Guidance for further information about Human Rights and the UN Conventions).

Human Rights	What are the positive or negative impacts of the proposal?	Reasons for your decision (including evidence)	How will you mitigate negative Impacts?
Human Rights	No negative impacts identified	These proposals include exemptions to ensure our proposed bans do not impact upon any of the articles in the Human Rights Act.	Guidance will be issued to support the implementation of the proposals. The intention is to provide information which will ensure there is clarity for enforcing officers, suppliers, retailers and members of the public. It will be published and available to all citizens in a range of formats to ensure it is accessible to all.

EU/EEA and Swiss Citizens' Rights

There is no identified impact as a similar EU Directive has been proposed/implemented in the EU27 countries. The proposed legislation will not treat Swiss/EU Citizens differently from UK residents.