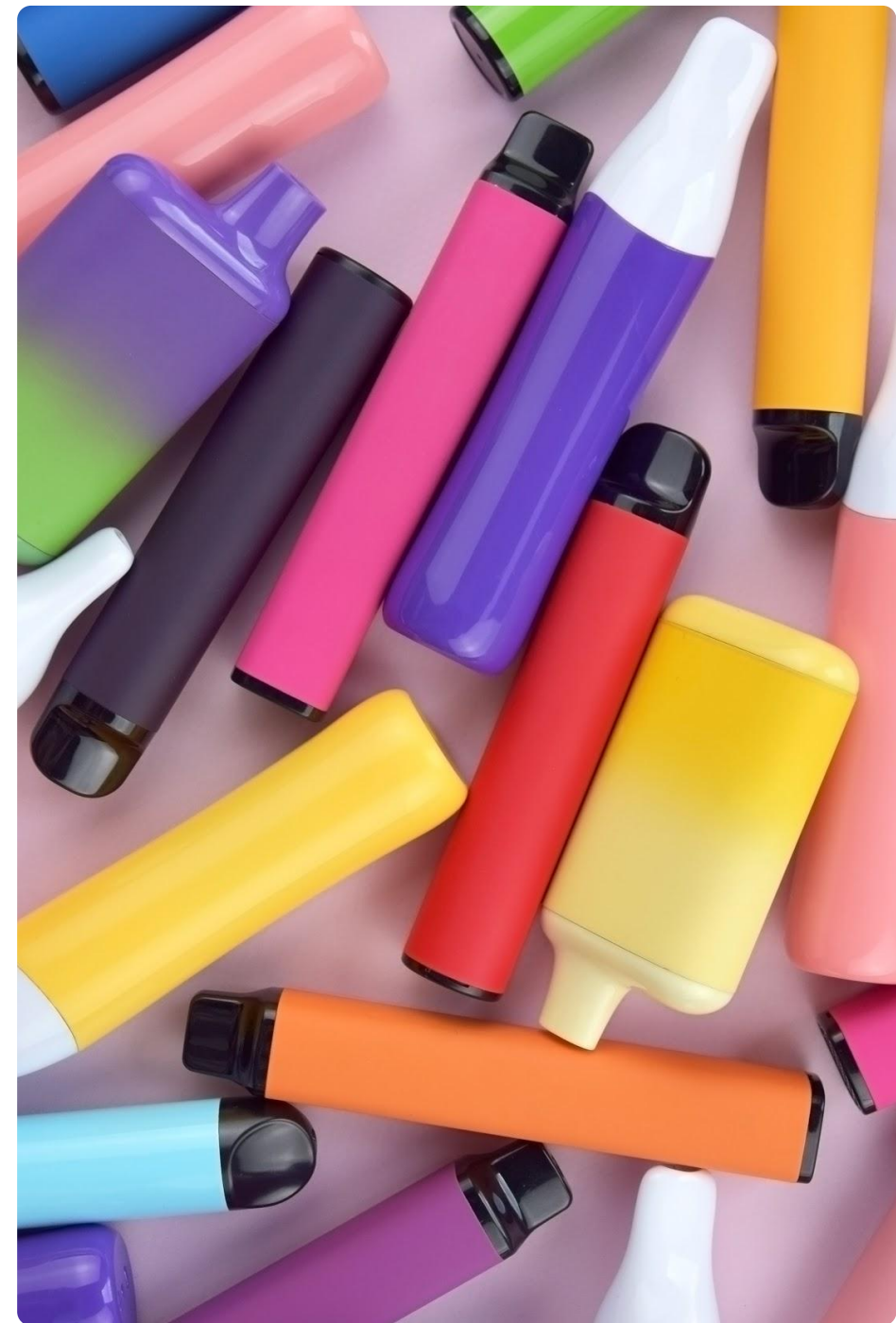




Industry briefing

Vapes: briefing for producers, retailers and councils

June 2026



Contents

3 key takeaways

E-waste and the issue of vapes

Vape producer responsibilities

Vape retailer and distributor responsibilities

PCS Balancing System (PBS)

Guidance for local authorities

Government updates

Who is Material Focus?

3 key takeaways

Vape responsibilities

3 key takeaways



Producers, importers, and trade bodies

Vape producers have a legal responsibility to finance the costs of collection, treatment, recovery, and environmentally sound disposal of old vapes.



Retailers and distributors

Vape sellers and distributors have a legal responsibility to take back customers' old vapes for recycling - and to tell their customers that they offer this.



Consumers

Consumers need to know that they should always recycle rather than bin or litter their old vapes.

E-waste and the issue of vapes



E-waste is one of the fastest growing sources of waste in the world.

What is electrical waste?

Electrical waste/ e-waste is also known as **Waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE)**.

- Most e-waste contains toxic chemicals and is classified as **hazardous waste**
- If not handled properly at end-of-life they pose a **major threat to the environment**, human health, society, and costs the UK economy through losing precious resources
- Recovering materials like **steel, aluminium, copper, gold, silver, lithium** and plastics means that we **reduce demand for new materials** that come from mining and drilling and therefore protects land and sea environments

E-waste is one of the fastest growing sources of waste in the world - and in the UK.

- 103,000 tonnes of e-waste are thrown away each year by households
- We have 880 million old electricals stashed away in UK homes

Binning vapes adds to e-waste. **Anything with a plug, battery, or cable (including vapes) should always be recycled** at a minimum and should never be binned.

Laws requiring producers and retailers to finance and support collection and recycling of electrical and portable battery products at end-of-life have been in place in the UK since 2007.

Source: [*Material Focus research*](#)

Vapes facts and figures

The UK public are now **buying 9.4 million vapes and pods per week** - a 31% reduction from 13.5 million vapes per week in 2024.

In the UK, we throw away or incorrectly recycle* approximately **6.3 million vapes** a week. That's **10 every second**.

*Despite best intentions, many people inadvertently recycle vapes incorrectly eg. in kerbside or household recycling bins.

Vapes must be recycled separately at designated recycling drop off points.

80%

of UK vapers feel there is not enough information on how to recycle vapes.

Source: [Material Focus research](#)



The issue of vapes

We are throwing away millions of vapes

Sales have rocketed over the last couple of years, with many new types of products and market entrants.

Single-use vapes as well as other models like pod or Big Puff are **often marketed as 'disposable', rather than 'recyclable'**.

Environmental damage caused by widespread littering can harm wildlife.

An estimated 6.3 million vapes and pods a week are being binned or incorrectly recycled - 10 per second.

There's hidden treasure inside these items

Vape batteries contain **lithium, aluminium, steel, copper**, and plastics which could be recycled.

Lithium is a vital component inside electrical vehicle (EV) and energy storage batteries.

Vapes are actually recyclable - **up to 80% of materials within vapes can be recycled.**

They are dismantled into parts: battery, casing, electronics, and nicotine pads (which are treated separately).

Batteries inside can cause fires if damaged or crushed

There are safety issues with the lithium batteries inside vapes prone to causing fires if damaged when binned in general waste or recycling.

Vapes must be recycled separately.

For more detailed information about responsibilities for **producers, retailers, and distributors of portable batteries**, please refer to our specific briefing.

- [Waste portable batteries: responsibilities and regulations](#)

Source: [Material Focus research](#)

Who are the key players?

Enforcement bodies across the UK

- Environment Agency (EA) - England
- Natural Resources Wales (NRW) - Wales
- Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) - Northern Ireland
- Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) - Scotland
- Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) - enforces the regulations for distributors and retailers of EEE

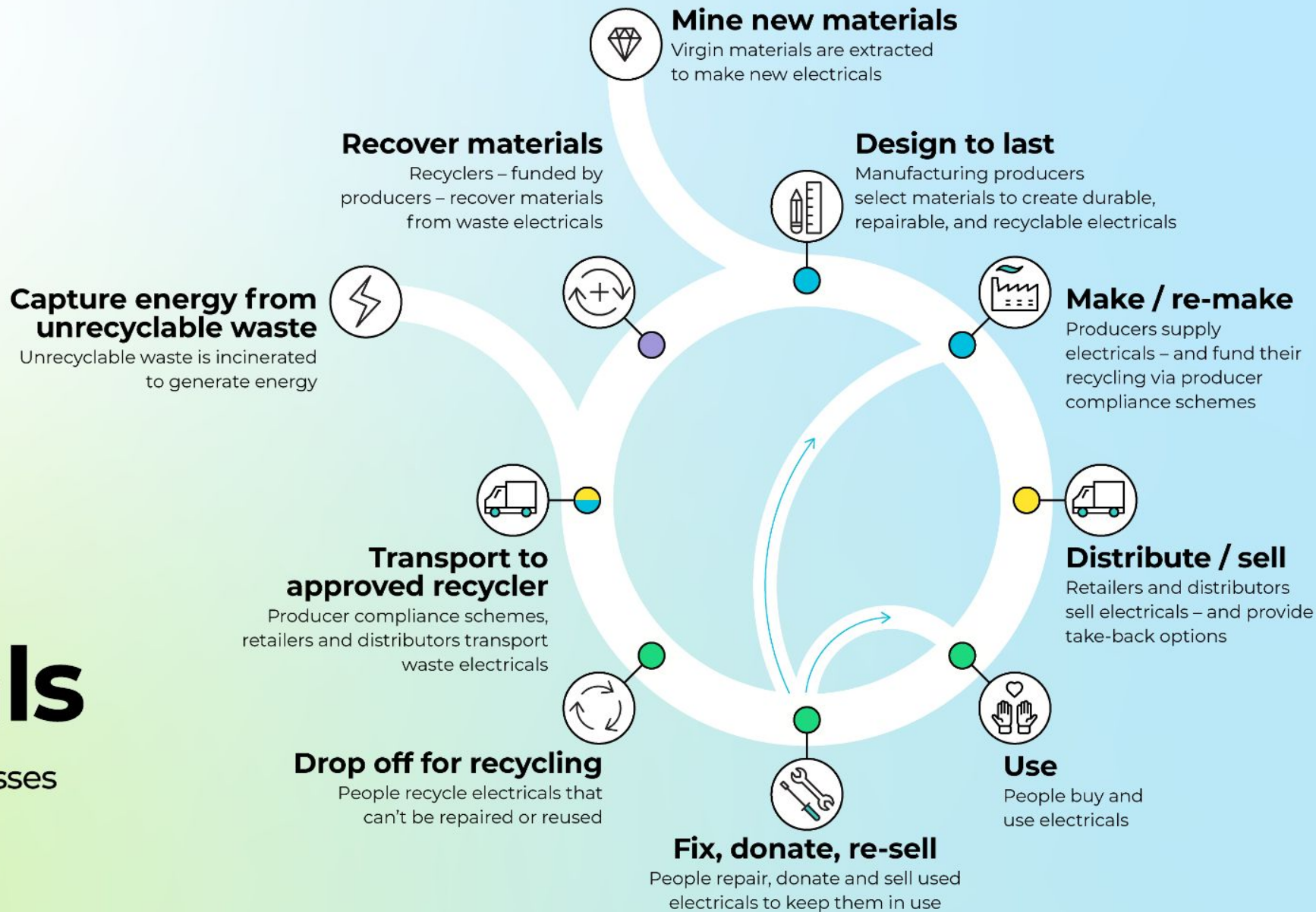
Other agencies

- Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) - producers must submit information about their products
- The Chartered Trading Standards Institute - product safety and compliance



Circular Electricals

How responsible UK businesses keep electricals – and their materials – in use for longer.



● Producers

● Retailers & distributors

● Public


● Approved recyclers

Key terms

- **Electrical and electronic equipment (EEE)** - Equipment which is dependent on electric currents or electromagnetic fields to fulfil its basic function. This includes products that are not connected to a mains supply but are wind-up, battery-powered or solar-powered.
- **Producer** - The first UK registered company who places EEE on the market. This can include different types of companies. Producers must register with a PCS or with their environmental regulator.
- **Placed on the market** - EEE is placed on the market the first time it becomes available for distribution or use in the UK. It is not the act of supplying or selling the EEE products but rather making the product available for supply or sale.
- **Producer compliance scheme (PCS)** - Schemes take on producers' obligations to finance the collection, treatment, recovery, and environmentally sound disposal of WEEE. The PCS will charge fees for its services, including fees for collection and treatment costs of WEEE on behalf of producers.
- **Distributor** - Any person in the supply chain who makes EEE available on the market, usually a retailer who makes it available for purchase by the end user. A distributor may also be a producer.
- **Waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE)** - Old or unwanted EEE which has become waste and can't be repaired or reused. Also known as e-waste.
- **Distributor take-back** - All electrical retailers and distributors must provide a way for customers buying new electricals to recycle their old electricals for free on a like-for-like basis.
- **Designated collection facility (DCF)** - Collection points for WEEE before it is sent for treatment, reuse and recycling, including collections set up by local authorities and distributors.
- **Approved authorised treatment facility (AATF)** - A licensed (or exempt) site carrying out treatment on WEEE. Processes WEEE ready for recycling, making it a commodity that can be sold in the UK or abroad. Frequently known as an approved recycler.
- **Evidence note** - Proof of reuse or treatment issued by an AATF per tonne of WEEE. Producer compliance schemes buy evidence notes on behalf of producers to pay off their obligations.

Sources: Various Government guidance

Vape producer responsibilities



If you put EEE on the UK market you must follow rules on both the EEE you sell and the EEE that becomes waste (WEEE).

Who are EEE producers?

The first UK registered company who places EEE on the market is the 'producer'.

You're a producer of EEE in the UK if you:

- Manufacture and sell EEE under your own brand in the UK
- Resell equipment made by someone else under your own brand - (if the maker's brand appears on the equipment they are the producer)
- Import EEE on a commercial basis into the UK
- Are established outside of the UK and supply EEE directly to the UK market by distance selling (for instance online, mail order, by phone)
- Operate an online marketplace supplying EEE to private households in the UK from non-UK suppliers

You are not a producer if you buy an item of EEE abroad and bring it into the UK for your own use.

What is EEE?

Vapes are 'dependent on electric currents' to fulfil their basic function and are therefore classed as EEE. EEE is not just mains-powered equipment, but can be battery, wind, or solar powered. To decide if any other products you may produce are EEE, see guidance on [how to correctly identify EEE](#).

Source: [Producer responsibilities GOV.UK](#)

When is EEE ‘placed on the market’?

EEE is placed on the market the first time it becomes available for distribution or use in the UK.

This is when there is a transfer of ownership from a:

- UK manufacturer to a UK distributor
- UK manufacturer to the final UK consumer or user
- Manufacturer outside the UK to an importer in the UK or the person responsible for distributing the item in the UK
- Manufacturer outside the UK, or formal representative, direct to the final user or consumer

Transfer of ownership can be by:

- Sale
- Loan
- Hire
- Lease
- Gift

You are the person that places on the market if you are the first person in a supply chain professionally making EEE products available for supply or sale in the UK.

You do not have to receive payment.

It is not the act of supplying or selling the EEE products that determines if it has been placed on the market. It is making the product available for supply or sale.

The person placing on the market may be:

- An individual
- A corporate body such as a company
- A not-for-profit organisation such as a public body or a charity

Placing on the market **does not** include EEE products that are:

- Made in the UK and then exported without being placed on the UK market
- Imported and then exported without being placed on the UK market
- Imported where there is evidence that the products were always destined for export, such as those with non-UK voltages, specifications, packaging, or instruction booklets

Source: [Report the amount of EEE you place on the market GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-the-amount-of-eee-you-place-on-the-market)

What you must do as an EEE producer:

Register as a producer annually

This depends on how much EEE you put on the UK market in the previous calendar year (also known as a compliance year).

- If you place **less than 5 tonnes** of EEE on the UK market in a compliance year, you can register direct with your environmental regulator as a small producer using the [WEEE Online service](#)
- If you place **5 tonnes or more** of EEE on the market, you must join a [producer compliance scheme \(PCS\)](#)
- The **PCS then takes on your obligations** to finance the collection, treatment, recovery, and environmentally sound disposal of household WEEE collected in the UK

Information and records

- Mark all EEE products with the **crossed out wheelie bin symbol** and a date mark
- Provide information on reuse and environmentally sound treatment of the products and components (includes materials, dangerous substances and preparations) within one year of putting them on the market
- Make sure that distributors you supply have your producer registration number
- Keep **records for at least 4 years** of the amount of EEE put on the market by category

Improve product design

Producers should aim to improve product design to facilitate recycling and reuse of components and materials.

See guidance on the [restriction of the use of certain hazardous materials \(RoHS\)](#) in electrical and electronic equipment.

Responsibilities for batteries in products

If you place products containing batteries on the UK market, you will need to **record separately** the weight of:

- Electrical and electronic equipment (EEE) you place on the market without batteries, as part of your WEEE Regulations duties;
- Batteries in the EEE, as part of your Waste Batteries Regulations duties.

Even if your EEE does not fall under the WEEE Regulations you will still be a battery producer.

Source: [Battery producer responsibilities GOV.UK](#)

If you do not register as a small producer or join a PCS you are committing an offence and may face enforcement action.

For more guidance on how to comply with environmental regulations as a producer:

- [Waste electricals: producer responsibilities and regulations](#)

Find out more about legislation and regulations here:

- [WEEE Regulations 2013](#)
- [Producer responsibility regulations](#)

Source: [Producer responsibilities GOV.UK](#)

Vape retailer and distributor responsibilities

Retailers selling vapes to UK public must...



Offer to take back waste vapes in-store for free

If a retailer sells vapes, they must offer to take back waste vapes in-store for free.

This is regardless of whether you sell direct or over internet, mail order, or telephone.

You must take back vapes of all types, **regardless of make, model, or brand.**



Keep records

- Of all electrical and electronic waste that you collect and dispose
- Of all the documents you make, or are given by a producer compliance scheme or Approved Authorised Treatment Facility
- Of how you tell customers about your take-back scheme

Records must be kept for at least 4 years.

Recycle your vapes in-store

If you have old vapes, you can recycle them in-store for free

Communicate take-back to customers

You must tell your customers which service you provide.

You must clearly communicate take-back to customers at the point of purchase.

Source: [Retailer and distributor responsibilities GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/retailer-and-distributor-responsibilities)

Options for offering take-back service

If you sell vapes, you must take back waste vapes in store or set up an alternative collection.

Free in-store recycling service

In-store take-back must:

- Be free (but can charge for collecting items from customers' homes)
- Give customers at least 28 days to bring back their waste item
- Take back all types of EEE that you sell - you can choose to extend your service to cover all kinds of WEEE

If your EEE sales area is >400m² including aisle, display and shelf space, you must accept any very small electricals* at any store for free, regardless of whether someone buys a new electrical item there.

* *items <25cm on their longest side*

Alternative free take-back service

- You can set up a 'designated collection facility' (DCF) where your customers can take all kind of WEEE
- You can do this on your own or with other distributors
- You must follow the waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) regulations, other waste management legislation, and local planning requirements when managing a DCF
- You must agree with a producer compliance scheme (PCS) to return the WEEE direct to an Approved Authorised Treatment Facility (AATF)


Brands with multi-site stores selling a variety of different products may need to communicate differently in different stores, and should ensure that they store staff advise consumers that larger goods can only be returned to specific stores.

If you sell separate batteries for vapes, you must also offer free take-back for batteries.

For more detailed information about responsibilities for **producers, retailers, and distributors of portable batteries**, please refer to our specific briefing.

- [Waste portable batteries: responsibilities and regulations](#)

Source: [Retailer and distributor responsibilities GOV.UK](#)



Vapes should be collected and stored separately from other small electricals and batteries.

In-store take-back: storing and disposing of waste electricals

Check the conditions to see if you can store the waste temporarily before you dispose of it. To dispose of the waste you've collected you can do one of the following:

1. Contact a producer compliance scheme (PCS)

- Contact a PCS and agree arrangements and fees
- The PCS will arrange for the waste to be recycled or prepared for reuse at an Approved Authorised Treatment Facility (AATF)
- You may be charged for the collection and transportation of the waste to the AATF or the PCS collection point

2. Transport the waste yourself

- You can transport the waste to an AATF or PCS collection point yourself
- You need to register as a waste carrier
- You may also need to follow the rules on transporting hazardous waste in:
 - England and Wales
 - Scotland
 - Northern Ireland

See the [list of approved PCSs and AATFs](#).

Source: [Retailer and distributor responsibilities GOV.UK](#)

Approved vape recycling services

These waste management companies can organise collection and recycling of vapes at Approved Authorised Treatment Facilities (AATFs).

The vapes will be dismantled into parts: battery, casing, electronics, and nicotine pads. These are then treated separately. **Up to 80% of materials within vapes can be recycled.**

- **Biffa** - services@biffa.co.uk
- **Environcom** - alison.mitchell@environcom.co.uk
- **GAP Group** - waste@gapgroupuk.com
- **Reconomy** - enquiries@reconomy.com
- **SWEEP** - recycle@sweep.co.uk
- **Veolia** - www.veolia.co.uk/contact-us
- **Waste Care** - recycling@wastecare.co.uk
- **Waste Experts** - info@wasteexperts.co.uk
- **CCL (North)** - hello@cclnorth.com
- **Smith News Recycle** - <https://recycle.smithsnews.co.uk>



Keeping records - you must:

- Keep records of all electrical and electronic waste that you collect and dispose of
 - You can use a template to keep these records
 - Include the number of units you've received through take-back and say how many of these were returned to a PCS
- Keep all the documents you make, or are given by the PCS or the AATF, when you dispose of electrical and electronic waste
- Keep records of how you tell customers about your take-back scheme
- Keep all your records for 4 years

Source: [Retailer and distributor responsibilities GOV.UK](#)

Government regulation for take-back communications

You must provide free written information to your customers on:

- Which take-back service you provide, including collect on delivery.
- How they can reuse and recycle electrical and electronic equipment.
- Why this waste needs to be separated from other waste.
- The damaging effects of not recycling electrical and electronic equipment.
- The meaning of the crossed-out wheellie bin symbol.

Brands with **multi-site stores** selling a variety of different products may need to communicate differently in different stores (and should ensure that store staff advise consumers that larger goods can only be returned to specific stores).

Retailers which sell electricals in stores and online must display this information both in-store and on your website.

Shops

You can provide this information by, for example:

- Displaying posters in your store about which service you provide.
- Including information leaflets with the electrical and electronic equipment you sell.

Our [comms toolkit](#) has a poster that includes all of the information you need to display in your store in order to be compliant.

Online retailers

You must publish this information on your website.

Our [comms toolkit](#) includes legally compliant copy with all the information you need to display on your website.

Source: [Retailer and distributor responsibilities GOV.UK](#)

Fully compliant OPSS approved take-back communications toolkit

- Access compliant take-back comms

Recycle your electricals here

If you have old unwanted electricals you can recycle them in-store for free

Anything with a plug, battery or cable can be recycled and turned into something new.

Simply hand your electricals to a staff member, and they'll do the rest.

Donate or recycle any other electricals by searching 'Recycle Your Electricals' to find your local drop-off points.

We are helping protect the environment, under the UK WEEE regulations, by ensuring waste electricals are collected separately for recycling. We are not responsible for the environment, under the UK WEEE regulations, by ensuring waste electricals are collected separately for recycling. We are not responsible for the environment, under the UK WEEE regulations, by ensuring waste electricals are collected separately for recycling.

Recycle your electricals here

Buying a new electrical item? Recycle the one you're replacing in-store, for free

Anything with a plug, battery or cable can be recycled and turned into something new.

Simply hand your electricals to a staff member, and they'll do the rest.

Donate or recycle any other electricals by searching 'Recycle Your Electricals' to find your local drop-off points.

We are helping protect the environment, under the UK WEEE regulations, by ensuring waste electricals are collected separately for recycling. We are not responsible for the environment, under the UK WEEE regulations, by ensuring waste electricals are collected separately for recycling. We are not responsible for the environment, under the UK WEEE regulations, by ensuring waste electricals are collected separately for recycling.

Recycle your vapes here

If you have old vapes, you can recycle them in-store for free

Vapes, and anything else with a plug, battery or cable, can be recycled and turned into something new.

Simply drop off your old vapes for recycling here.

Donate or recycle any other electricals by searching 'Recycle Your Electricals' to find your local drop-off points.

We are helping protect the environment, under the UK WEEE regulations, by ensuring waste electricals are collected separately for recycling. We are not responsible for the environment, under the UK WEEE regulations, by ensuring waste electricals are collected separately for recycling. We are not responsible for the environment, under the UK WEEE regulations, by ensuring waste electricals are collected separately for recycling.

Recycle your batteries here

If you have old batteries, you can recycle them in-store for free

Batteries can be recycled and the materials inside turned into something new.

Simply drop off your old batteries for recycling here.

Donate or recycle any other electricals by searching 'Recycle Your Electricals' to find your local drop-off points.

We are helping protect the environment, under the UK WEEE regulations, by ensuring waste electricals are collected separately for recycling. We are not responsible for the environment, under the UK WEEE regulations, by ensuring waste electricals are collected separately for recycling. We are not responsible for the environment, under the UK WEEE regulations, by ensuring waste electricals are collected separately for recycling.

Take back everything

Like for like

Recycle vapes

Recycle batteries

Source: Retailer take-back communications toolkit

Vapes communications toolkit

**Recycle your
vapes here**

If you have old vapes,
you can recycle them
in-store for free

Strut cards and bin stickers

Our specific vapes toolkit for retailers includes strut cards and bin stickers for vapes recycling.

Create your account for free and download the toolkit [here](#) from the gated section of the Material Focus website.



HypnoCat leaflets

Access our ready-to-use, A5 HypnoCat leaflets with information about how and where to recycle vapes.

Portrait and landscape versions available.

**Did you know?
Vapes and pods
can be recycled
at the shop you bought them
from!**

Social media posts

Create social media posts using our vapes communication toolkit. It includes ready-to-use social media assets with suggested copy.

Assets are available in English and Welsh.

How to communicate vape recycling to the public

NEVER BIN THEM - RECYCLE ALL YOUR VAPES.

Batteries in vapes can cause fires when binned.



Single-use vapes

Leave the battery inside and recycle the whole thing.

- Drop the vape in a vape recycling bin
- If there isn't a separate bin for vapes, recycle yours with other small electricals

E-liquid/ vape juice pods

These may contain metals or electrical components.

- Put pods in the vape recycling bin
- If there isn't a separate bin for vapes, recycle yours with other small electricals

Rechargeable vapes

Recycle the battery separately if it is removable.

- If you can remove the battery, drop it in a **battery recycling bin**
- Put the rest of the vape in a **vape recycling bin**
- If there isn't a separate bin for vapes, recycle yours with other small electricals

If the battery is not removable, recycle the whole thing with vapes or other small electricals.

Overview - vape retailer obligations

- Collect and **store vapes separately** from other small electricals and batteries
- Clearly **communicate vape take-back** options to the public
- Contact waste management company, specialist vapes recycler or PCS via vapes PCS Balancing System (PBS)
- **Keep a record** of collections and recycling of vapes via PCS/ AATF
- for a minimum of 4 years

If you fail to comply with the WEEE regulations, you can be prosecuted and get an unlimited fine from a magistrates' court or a Crown Court.

Find out more about legislation and regulations here:

- [WEEE Regulations 2013](#)
- [Retailer and distributor responsibilities](#)

Source: [Retailer and distributor responsibilities GOV.UK](#)

PCS Balancing System (PBS)

For retailers and distributors



A distributor is any person in the supply chain who makes an item of EEE available on the market.

Who are EEE distributors?

Under the WEEE Regulations, “distributor” means any person in the supply chain who makes **an item of EEE available on the market**.

This is usually the retailer who makes the vapes available for purchase by the end user.

A distributor may also be a **producer**.

What is EEE?

To decide if your product is EEE, see guidance on [how to correctly identify EEE](#).



Distributors can issue a regulation 43 request to a PCS to get access to free treatment to end-of-life vapes.

Regulation 43 requests

Under the WEEE Regulations, vape distributors can issue a regulation 43 request to a producer compliance scheme (PCS) to get access to **free treatment to end-of-life vapes** via the PCS Balancing System (PBS).

A regulation 43 request can only be issued when a distributor has end of life vapes ready to be collected and recycled.

The end of life vapes must be presented to the PCS in a **compliant container** at the expense of the distributor to ensure that the PCS is able to accept them into their system.

The distributor will also have to arrange for delivery of such container to the PCS's appointed AATF at their own expense. This can usually be agreed directly with the AATF appointed for delivery.

More information

- Find out [what information must be included as part of a regulation 43 request](#)
- To find a PCS to issue a regulation 43 request, the list of approved WEEE compliance schemes can be found on the [government website](#)
- Download a template letter for submitting a regulation 43 request to a PCS [here](#)
- Find out more information about the type of [compliant containers](#) which vapes taken back under distributor take-back obligations should be stored in

Source: vapespbs.org.uk

Distributor take-back obligations

Take-back obligations

Distributors of vapes who supply new vapes to a person will ensure that end of life vapes can be returned to them, provided that any such WEEE:

- Is of an equivalent type to, and
- Has fulfilled the same function as the product sold

This must be free of charge and on a one-to-one basis by that person.

Distributors should provide customers with written notice that they take back end-of-life vapes for recycling. We can help support with this communication by using [our online comms toolkit](#).

Information

Suppliers of new vapes will make information available in writing to users of vapes on:

- End of life vapes should not be thrown away in general waste or littered
- The collection and take-back systems that are available to them
- Their role in contributing to the reuse, recycling, and other forms of recovery of WEEE under the WEEE Regulations
- The potential effects on the environment and human health due to the presence of hazardous substances in vapes
- The meaning of the crossed out wheeled bin symbol

Record keeping

Each distributor will keep a record of the information.

- A distributor which offers **in-store take-back** will keep a record of the number of units of vapes that are returned to them
- A distributor who returns vapes under **regulation 43** will keep a record of the number of units of vapes returned by them under that regulation

Records must be kept for a period of at least **4 years**.

Find more [information on record keeping](#) and download a [template for your records](#).

Source: vapespbs.org.uk

Distributor take-back options

Distributors have two options for ensuring waste vapes returned to them are managed correctly.

1. Vapes collection service

A number of waste management companies now offer vape collection and recycling services which include advice, containers, collections, and recycling in an easy-to-use service.

Contact your existing waste management company or search online for vape recycling.

2. Return collected vapes yourself

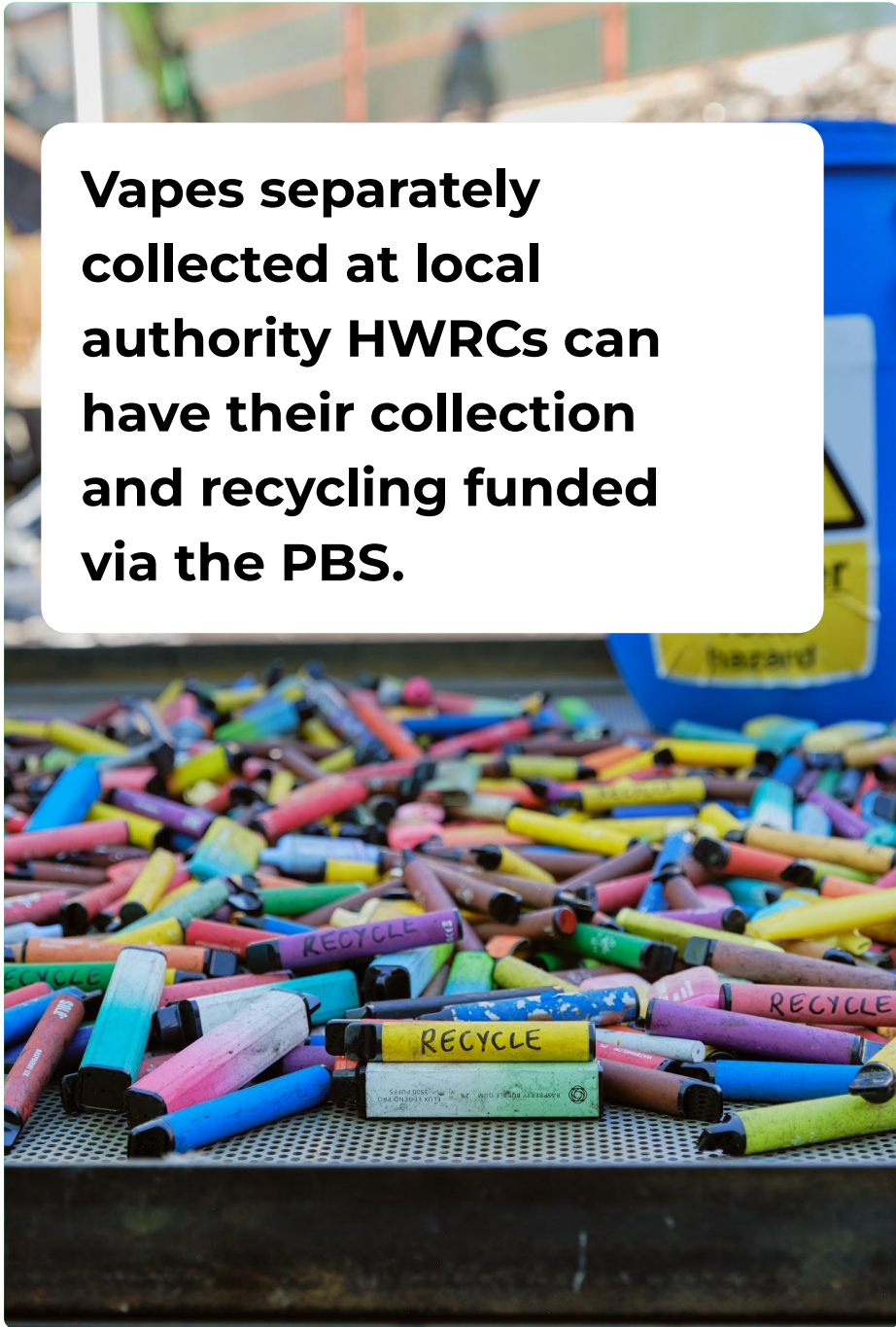
A distributor may return collected vapes at their own expense to the WEEE system and receive free of charge treatment by issuing a **regulation 43 request** to the PCS. This allows the distributor to arrange delivery of returned vapes into an AATF for free treatment.

Source: vapespbs.org.uk

www.materialfocus.org.uk



Guidance for local authorities



Vapes separately collected at local authority HWRCs can have their collection and recycling funded via the PBS.

Collecting from HWRCs via the PCS Balancing System (PBS)

The mandatory Producer Compliance Scheme Balancing System (PBS) is part of the current UK WEEE Regulations. It has been modified to process **regulation 34** requests arising at local authority household waste recycling centres (HWRCs).

That means that vapes collected separately at local authority HWRCs can have their **collection and recycling funded via the PBS.**

Local authorities may not currently have signage and containers etc in place at their HWRCs to collect vapes separately.

Any local authority wishing to collect vapes separately at an HWRC should **contact the producer compliance scheme (PCS)** they currently work with to discuss next steps.

- Contact your producer compliance scheme for advice to set it up
- Register with the [PBS managed by Material Focus](#)
- Collect vapes in separately recycling bin at HWRC
- Clearly communicate separately recycling bins to the public

Source: <https://www.wsfpbsmaterialfocus.org.uk>

Current recommendations and support



Local guidance for residents

Ask your producer compliance scheme (PCS) and/or partner waste management company for local guidance to give to residents about recycling vapes.

Drop off points will differ by area.



Vape recycling poster

Display our vape recycling poster at HWRCs, advising on safe disposal and recycling of vapes.

Download it [here](#) from the gated section of the Material Focus website. Sign up as a local authority - it takes 2 minutes to do.



Social media posts

Create social media posts using our vapes communication toolkit. It includes ready-to-use social media assets with suggested copy.

Download it [here](#) from the gated section of the Material Focus website.

How to communicate vape recycling to the public

NEVER BIN THEM - RECYCLE ALL YOUR VAPES.

Batteries in vapes can cause fires when binned.



Single-use vapes

Leave the battery inside and recycle the whole thing.

- Drop the vape in a vape recycling bin
- If there isn't a separate bin for vapes, recycle yours with other small electricals

E-liquid/ vape juice pods

These may contain metals or electrical components.

- Put pods in the vape recycling bin
- If there isn't a separate bin for vapes, recycle yours with other small electricals

Rechargeable vapes

Recycle the battery separately if it is removable.

- If you can remove the battery, drop it in a **battery recycling bin**
- Put the rest of the vape in a **vape recycling bin**
- If there isn't a separate bin for vapes, recycle yours with other small electricals

If the battery is not removable, recycle the whole thing with vapes or other small electricals.

Government updates

- Ban on the incineration of vapes
- Ban on the sale of single-use vapes (and guidance)
- New category of electrical equipment for vapes
- New obligations for online marketplaces

A ban on the incineration of vapes

Regulation 31 of the WEEE Regulations requires producer compliance schemes (PCS) to set up separate collection and treatment of WEEE using **best available collection, treatment, recovery, and recycling techniques**.

It also requires that PCSs make sure the WEEE is treated at an authorised treatment facility (ATF). All ATFs must use best available treatment recovery and recycling techniques to treat WEEE.

In the case of vapes this will include the **removal of batteries and liquids**. If such a recycling technique for vapes reasonably available (eg. manual dismantling) then an ATF must use it.

Whole vapes should not be incinerated.

Any fractions from the treatment of vapes that contain POPs need to be managed in a way that ensures that **POPs are destroyed or irreversibly transformed**.

Source: letsrecycle.com





It is illegal for businesses to sell or supply single-use vapes.

Single-use vapes ban

It is illegal for businesses to:

- Sell or supply single-use vapes
- Offer to sell or supply single-use vapes
- Stock single-use vapes that you plan to sell or supply

The ban came into force in **1 June 2025** and applies to:

- All organisations that sell or supply single-use vapes in the UK, whether online or in shops
- All single-use vapes, whether or not they contain nicotine

What does this mean for vape responsibilities?

- In terms of producer and retailer recycling obligations, **this doesn't change anything**
- Vapes are electrical items, whether they are single-use or reusable
- Retailers must accept vapes and vape parts that customers return for recycling. This includes any single-use vapes returned by customers after the ban began on 1 June 2025
- Vapes should be disposed of in vapes bins only and regularly collected for recycling

Source: [Government crackdown on single-use vapes GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-crackdown-on-single-use-vapes)

Definition of single-use and reusable vapes



Single use vapes

Single-use vapes are not designed or intended for reuse.

A vape is single-use if it either:

- Has a battery you cannot recharge
- Is not refillable



Reusable vapes

Reusable vapes must have a:

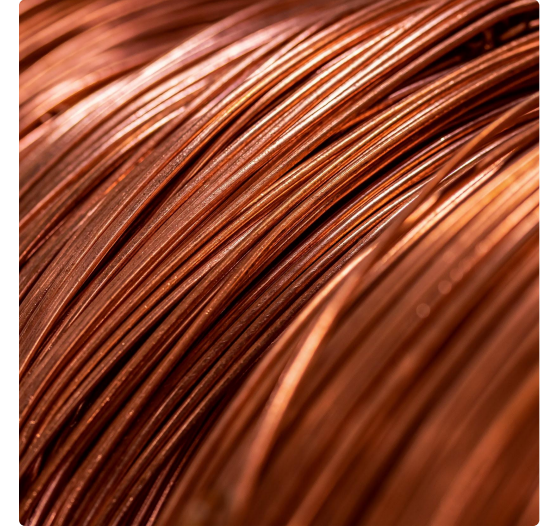
- **Rechargeable battery**
- **Refillable container that holds the vaping e-liquid** (such as a chamber, capsule, cartridge, pod, or tank)
- **Removable and replaceable coil** if the vape contains a coil



Reusable vapes can be **refilled** by either:

- Filling up the tank or cartridge with e-liquid
- Inserting new, pre-filled pods

Refills (pods or e-liquid refill bottles) should be separately available for users to buy.



Reusable vapes can have **coils** that are either:

- Directly removable and replaceable
- Contained in a removable or replaceable pod or cartridge

The coil should be separately available for users to buy (as part of a replacement pod or not).

Source: [Single-use vapes ban guidance GOV.UK](#)

Defra's guidance for the single-use vapes ban

Who does the ban apply to?

The ban applies to all organisations that sell or supply single-use vapes in the UK, such as:

- Importers
- Manufacturers
- Wholesalers
- Healthcare settings and stop smoking services
- Retailers, such as
 - Convenience stores
 - Market stalls
 - Petrol stations
 - Specialist vape shops
 - Supermarkets

Not sure a vape is reusable?

It is your responsibility to check the products you sell or supply are legal and meet the definition of a reusable vape.

It is illegal for businesses to sell or supply single-use vapes.

Check the definition of single-use and reusable vapes first. If you're still not sure a vape is reusable, you can contact your [local Trading Standards](#) for advice.

Enforcement of the ban

Regardless of where your business is located within the UK, it is an offence to sell or supply, offer to sell or supply, or have in your possession to sell or supply a single-use vape. This includes both online and in-store sales.

What happens if you break the ban is specific to the nation your business is located in, detailed in the [guidance](#).

The guidance covers further information on:

- What to do with leftover stock of single-use vapes
- Recycling vapes
- Other restrictions on vaping products
- Providing evidence during inspections

Source: [Single-use vapes ban guidance GOV.UK](#)

New category for vapes

A **new category of electrical equipment for vapes** has been introduced to ensure the costs of their collection and treatment fall fairly on those who produce them.

Vape producers will need to **report the weight** of products placed on the UK market under this new category. Vapes were previously reported under Category 7, which includes toys, leisure and sports equipment.

Separate collection targets for vapes will be set under the WEEE reporting obligations.

Source: [Government press release August 2025](#)



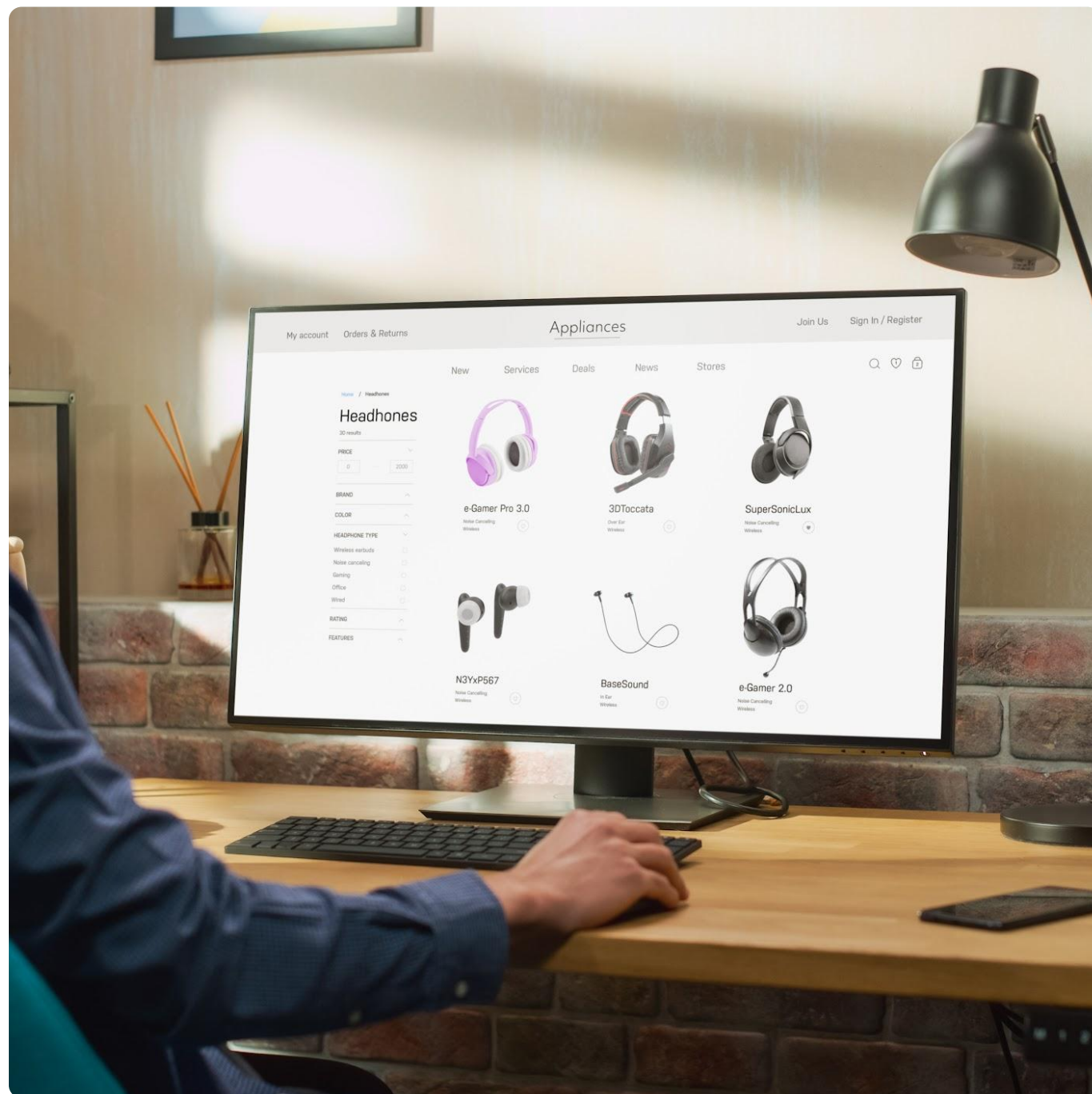
New obligations for online marketplaces

Online marketplaces now have **obligations to contribute to the cost of collection, treatment, reuse, and recycling** of waste electricals.

Online marketplaces need to register with the Environment Agency and report data on sales made by their overseas sellers in the UK.

This data will be used to calculate the amount of recycling companies must finance annually.

Source: *Government press release August 2025*



**Who is Material
Focus?**

We are an independent, not-for-profit organisation **saving valuable, critical and finite materials from going to waste** by making it easier for everyone across the UK to fix, donate and recycle their electricals. We do this through..

Insights

We identify, produce and share insights to improve the UK e-waste system and inform policy decisions.

Investments

We identify and fund projects that make it easier to reuse and recycle; or that encourage circular design.

Inspiration

We inspire, educate and encourage the UK public to fix, donate, sell and recycle their unwanted electricals through our Recycle Your Electricals campaign.

Frequently asked questions

Q: How is Material Focus funded?

A: Our funding comes from UK WEEE Regulations Compliance Fees. These are paid by electrical producers if they don't meet annual recycling targets set by the government. The fees are set higher than the average costs of collections to encourage collections to take place. We manage spending of the fees to support reuse and recycling of electricals in the UK.

Q: Is Material Focus a regulator?

A: We are not a government body nor a regulator, and work separately to the regulators across the UK. But we will regularly share information with them to help improve the e-waste system - to make it as easy as possible for the public to reuse and recycle their electricals.

Q: Is your work across the UK?

A: We work across the UK. We are a not-for-profit organisation with expertise in the electrical waste sector. Our role is to help improve the UK e-waste system through improving the reuse and recycling rates of waste electricals - this includes working with organisations across the UK sector to increase awareness of obligations and how to meet them.

Q: Who are the regulators in the UK?

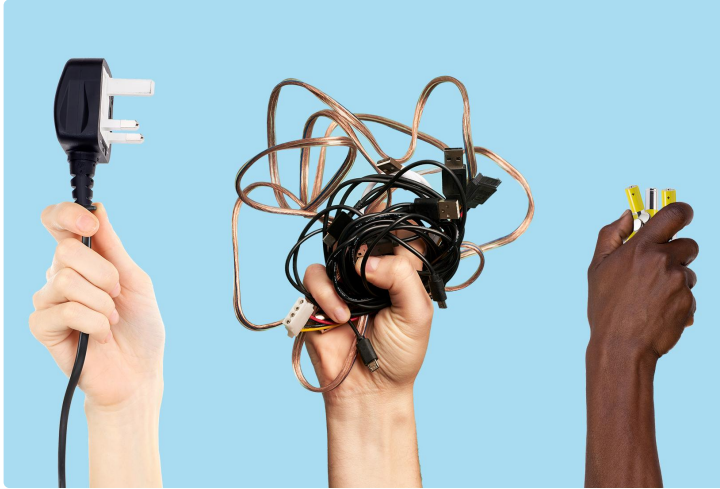
A: Your relevant regulator is dependent on your company registered address location:

- **Environment Agency (England)**
- **Natural Resources Wales (Wales)**
- **Northern Ireland Environment Agency (Northern Ireland)**
- **Scottish Environment Protection Agency (Scotland)**

Disclaimer: This document aggregates information from a number of sources and presents it as guidance to enhance understanding of the subject matter. It also provides a link to other third party sites where detailed information and guidance may be available. It is not intended to be a definitive report or a substitute for taking professional advice on regulatory, legal and other related issues.

Whilst Material Focus, as an independent not for profit organisation, will make all reasonable efforts to check the accuracy of the information provided, users should use their own professional judgment and discretion when assessing the implications for their organisation and should assume sole responsibility for results obtained and for conclusions drawn.

Explore our other industry briefings



Waste electricals: producer responsibilities and regulations

The environmental obligations for all UK producers of EEE and an explanation of the different responsibilities you have if you manufacture, resell or import electricals.

- [Read our producer briefing](#)



Waste portable batteries: responsibilities and regulations

A summary of the waste batteries regulations for producers, importers, distributors and retailers of portable batteries in the UK.

- [Read our portable batteries briefing](#)



Retailer take-back: industry briefing for retailers

An explanation of the legal obligations for electrical retailers to help customers recycle their electricals and what retailers need to do to comply.

- [Read our retailer take-back briefing](#)