



# VOLUNTARY PLASTIC BAG CHARGE

## RETAILER GUIDANCE

Currently, only large retailers (with 250 or more full-time equivalent employees) are legally required to charge a minimum of 5p (including VAT) for every single-use plastic bag in England. The charge aims to reduce the use of single-use plastic bags and encourages consumers to reuse bags.

Smaller retailers are not legally required to charge but can do so on a voluntary basis if they wish. If you decide to charge for single-use plastic bags in your store, you should consider:

### 1 Which bags will you charge for?

Under The Single Use Carrier Bag Charges (England) Order 2015, large retailers are required to charge for single-use plastic bags which are defined as unused, plastic (70 microns thick or less) and with handles.

There are some items that you can provide a free bag for under the regulations, such as uncooked meat and fish, unwrapped food for human consumption, and flowers. For a list of all the items that are exempt, see here: <http://bit.ly/bagchargeguide>

You should consider whether you will roll out a blanket charge for all single-use plastic bags or whether you will provide free single-use plastic bags for certain products.

### 2 How will you communicate the charge to customers?

Be clear about what the charge will cover (all plastic bags or whether there are exemptions), why you have decided to charge, and where the proceeds of the charge will go.

You can communicate the introduction of plastic bag charging in your store by speaking to your customers, displaying posters in-store, and handing out leaflets to customers with each transaction. To download materials, visit: <http://bit.ly/bagchargeadvice>

### 3 How will you donate the charge to good causes?

Since the plastic bag charge was introduced in 2015, it has raised at least £95 million for good causes. Voluntarily charging for single-use plastic bags provides a great opportunity for your store to contribute to the local community.

Once you've deducted reasonable costs (e.g. cost of plastic bags), you should consider where you will donate the proceeds of the charge, e.g. to a local or national good cause or local school.

Consider how you will involve consumers in how the proceeds of the charge are used. For example, allowing customers to choose which good cause the proceeds should go or promoting how much was raised through the charge and which good cause they were given to.

### 4 Should you record your plastic bag use?

Retailers voluntarily charging for plastic bags are not legally required to keep records of plastic bag use.

However, you may find it useful for your own reference to keep records on:

- The number of bags supplied.
- The gross and net proceeds of the charge.
- Any VAT in the gross proceeds.
- What you did with the proceeds from the charge.
- Any reasonable costs and how they break down.

**For more information about the voluntary charge, please contact:**

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