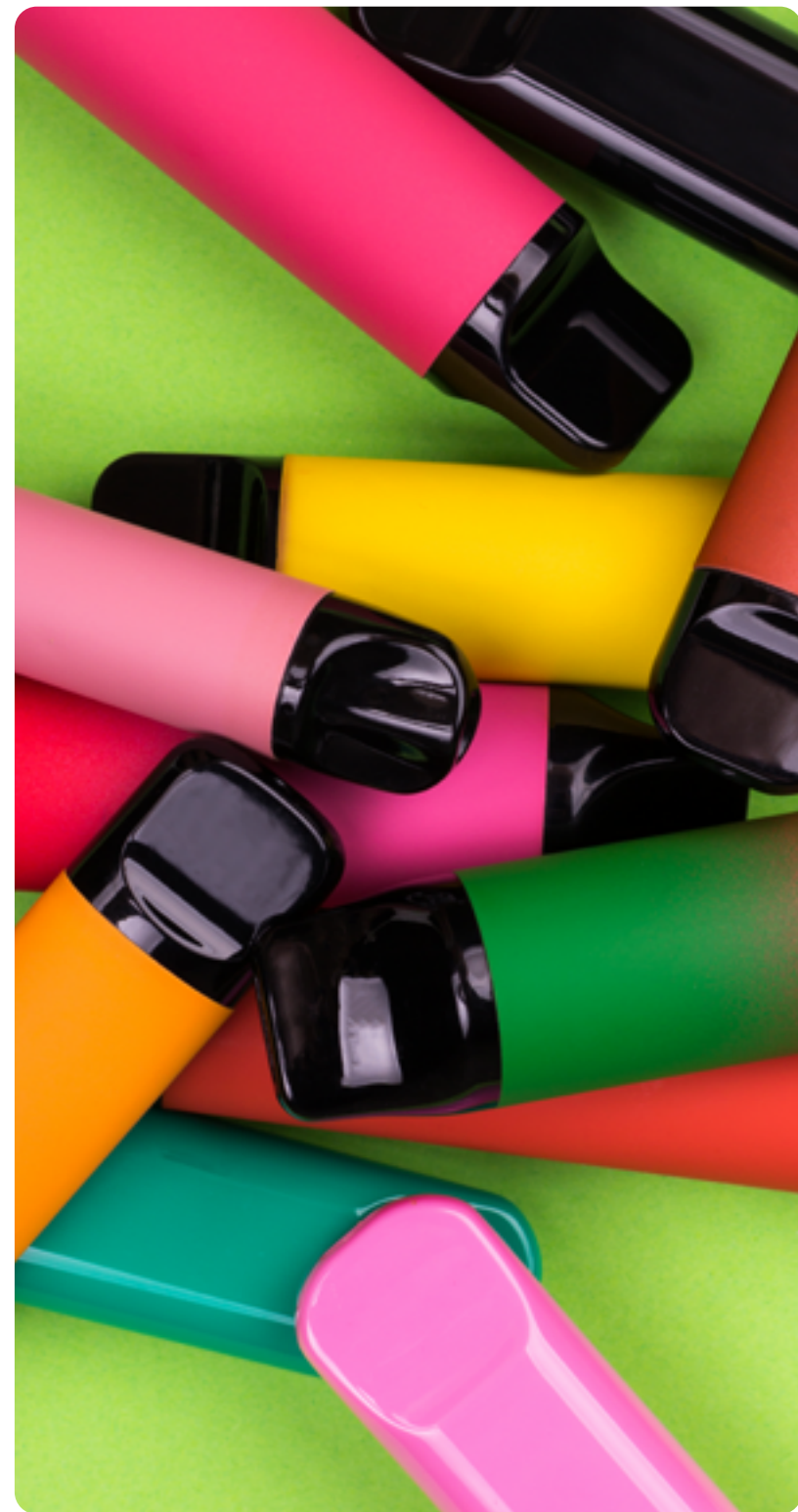




Industry briefing

Vape and electricals recycling: a guide for festival teams

January 2025



4 key take-aways

1. Upcoming ban

Even though the sale of disposable vapes will be banned from the 1st of June, it is likely that **vapes will not disappear immediately** and will still need to be recycled responsibly.

2. Waste contractors

Waste contractors must ensure that **all waste batteries and electricals** left on site (including vapes) are **disposed of responsibly** using a registered AATF scheme

3. Festival-goers

The festival audience needs to know that they **should never bin their vapes or electricals, they must always recycle them.**

4. Vape sellers

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

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 - a. Approved vape recycling services
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9. Partner with us

Update: Sale of single-use disposable vapes to be banned in England and Wales from the 1st of June 2025

24th October 2024

- Despite the forthcoming national ban on the sale and supply of disposable vapes, the issue of e-waste on site will not immediately disappear as **disposable vapes continue to remain in use during the phase out period.**
- We expect that **some 'Big puff' and 'pod' devices may not be covered by the ban and will continue to remain on the market.** With 3 million big puff vapes purchased every week, these devices are already increasing in popularity and may fill the gap left by disposables following the ban.
- Whether or not you choose this year to ban vapes at your event, **it is still important to consider how vapes which are collected by security or make their way on site will be handled.**
- **FastTech** like power banks, cables, and headphones should also be considered as a waste issue and will need to be handled appropriately

Source: [Material Focus](#)

Who are Material Focus?

We are an independent, not-for-profit organisation on a mission to get the UK fixing, donating and recycling all of their old and unwanted electricals, to stop precious resources from being lost forever. We do this through:

Insights

- Identifying, producing and sharing insightful, timely and impactful research to help build a better UK e-waste/ WEEE system.

Investments

- Identifying and funding projects which help make it easier for people to reuse and recycle electricals.

Inspiration

- Creating and delivering communications which help make it feel easier for people to reuse and recycle electricals through our [Recycle Your Electricals](#) campaign.



What is e-waste and why is it relevant to festivals and events?



Vapes and e-waste at festivals and events

As vapes and FastTech (small cheap electricals) continue to increase in popularity amongst festival goers, they present **environmental** and **health and safety risks** for festival organisers, and a new challenge for ops teams and waste contractors:

- Increased **fire and health and safety risk** for staff and festival goers
- Increased **contamination** of compost and recycling waste streams
- **Waste management challenges** as electricals require hazardous waste processing methods and **increased costs** for event organisers having to provide these services
- **Environmental pollution** as littered vapes and electricals may remain within the natural environment post clean up, causing potential **damage to wildlife** and festival **sustainability credentials**
- **Resource waste** of some of the most **valuable resources** on the planet - steel, aluminium, copper, lithium

Why are discarded vapes such an issue?

- **Vapes = dangerous waste** - When vapes are binned, the lithium batteries inside them can get crushed or damaged and spark dangerous fires in bin lorries and recycling centres.
- **Single use vapes are marketed as disposable, not recyclable** - Very little communications on options for recycling them being presented to the public.
- **An average of 8.2 million vapes** are being thrown away or recycled incorrectly every week in the UK - Equivalent to [13 per second](#).
-
- **Sales have rocketed** - Many new products and market entrants over the past few years mean identifying vapes and their respective recycling methods is complex. Newer vape models include [single use \(disposable\)](#) and [big puff \(disposables with larger capacities\)](#)
- **Producers, importers, distributors and retailers of single-use vapes need to do more** - In order to meet their legal environmental and financial responsibilities under UK waste electrical (WEEE) and portable battery regulations.



Vapes facts and figures

We are throwing away millions of vapes

The UK public are now **buying 13.5 million vapes/ week** - a 37% increase from 9.9 million/ week in 2023

And **binning, or incorrectly recycling***, approximately **8.2 million vapes, 13 per second**

Vapes are actually 'recyclable'

- Vapes dismantled into parts: battery, casing, electronics and nicotine pads (which are treated separately)
- **Up to 80% of materials within vapes can be recycled**

There's hidden treasure inside vapes

- **Vape batteries contain lithium** (vital component inside electric vehicle (EV) and energy storage batteries), aluminium, steel, copper, plastics which could be recycled
- **If not thrown away, lithium inside the vapes** could have powered **10,127 electric car batteries** per annum

**Despite best intentions, many people are inadvertently recycling their vapes in the wrong places eg. kerbside or household recycling bins. Vapes must be recycled separately at designated recycling drop off points.*

Source: [Material Focus research](#)

Identifying vape types – single-use vapes

Although vape models are constantly evolving, there are some key characteristics you can look out for to help identify which vapes your audience members are using.

Vape type	A single use/disposable vape is a small, non-rechargeable electronic vaping device pre-filled with e-liquid (vape juice) and a built-in battery
Ban status	Banned after June 2025
Charging port?	No
Refillable?	No
Puffs	300-600. Number of puffs is often written on the body of the vape
Comments	Tend to be smaller in size and lighter in weight, with no detachable features.



Identifying vape types – Big Puff vapes

Vape type	A Big Puff Vape refers to a disposable or reusable vape device that delivers a significantly larger number of puffs compared to standard devices. These vapes are designed for extended use and typically cater to users seeking convenience and longer-lasting performance
Ban status	Some models will remain legal after June 2025, whilst others will be banned
Charging port?	Sometimes
Refillable?	Sometimes
Puffs	2000-6000
Comments	May or may not have a mechanism for refilling e-liquid. May also have interchangeable pods/chambers, and are larger in size than single use disposables



Identifying vape types – reusable vapes

Vape type	A reusable vape is a vaping device designed for long-term use, where components like the battery and the body of the device can be reused multiple times.
Ban status	Legal after June 2025
Charging port?	Yes
Refillable?	Yes
Puffs	Unlimited
Comments	Tend to be larger in size, more robust and heavy, although smaller models are available. As well as a charging port and mechanism for refilling e-liquid, vapes will also have replaceable coils or cartridges meaning they will be made up of multiple components.



The image is a composite of two photographs. The top photograph shows a bright, overexposed sky with a few vertical poles and a small red flag on the left. The bottom photograph shows a large, dense crowd of people at a festival. Many people have their arms raised in the air, and some are holding beer bottles. The scene is captured from a low angle, looking up at the crowd.

How can I encourage good practice as a festival/event organiser?

What can you do?

Establish a recycling system for vapes and electricals:

- Establish **separate [recycling bins](#)** for vapes and e-waste with clear signage. Reduce littering and waste stream contamination by making it clear to your audience where vapes need to go. If vapes will be banned at your event, follow [these steps](#) to ensure they are recycled properly.
- Consider using **different shaped bins** for vapes and e-waste to reduce contamination.
- Ensure **litter pickers separate vapes** and e-waste from other waste streams.
- Ensure your messaging and communications align with what festival goers can expect to see onsite, so that vape bins are instantly recognisable.
- **Open a conversation with your [waste contractor](#)** to discuss how e-waste is processed back of house - Ensure they will work with a recommended [AATF provider](#) to handle e-waste.

What can you do?

Communicate with your retailers

- Ensure all on site vape sellers are aware of their **legal obligation to offer take back**
- Ensure retailers selling FastTech like electric fans, power banks, air bed pumps, are aware of where to sign post users with broken goods

Communicate with your audience

- Use volunteer crews to **interact with and educate your audience**
- **Check out our suggested audience communications approaches** and use our toolkit

Communicate with your artists

- Offer artists **reusable vapes instead of disposables** if requested on riders
- Encourage artists to spread the message to their audience

Gather feedback

- **Collect data** using post event audience surveys
- **Analyse data** to learn what could be done better



How can I set up vape/e-waste bins on site?



Funding for vape bins

We have funding available for 4 festivals or events across the UK to go towards the cost of ordering separate bins for vape collection. We are able to fund up to £500 for each successful festival/production company.

In return, we request that you provide reporting data on the amount of vapes collected, and use our branding to promote electrical recycling.

Funding criteria:

- You must demonstrate that all vapes and WEEE collected will be recycled using an approved AATF
- Ideally organisers will ensure that bins are used at multiple events throughout the season

If you think your event could benefit from our funding, please complete the google form below and rowan@materialfocus.org.uk will be in touch to discuss partnership options.

<https://forms.gle/pLBiYRmYp6JVhsE17>

Case study - Boomtown Festival

Boomtown set up vape tubes across site

- 8 in campsite hubs
- 1 in crew camping

Looking ahead to 2025:

- Bins were good quality and will be reused.
- Looking to **engage audience comms earlier** this year, and will include vape recycling within their **essential audience guide**.
- **Looking to communicate and engage with crew** more on vape recycling, including **collecting crew vapes during build and break periods**.
- Will print **proper bin stickers** for better durability/aesthetic.



Bin model options



Plastic wheelie bins - 240 L



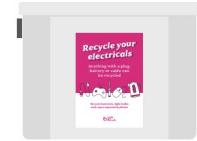
Plastic wheelie bins - 1100 L



Nexus 30 bin



Nexus 50 bin



Pop up bring banks based on 145 L box



Box cycle recycling bin



C-Thru™ 15L Vape Recycling Bin

Bin supplier information

These are the recommended suppliers we are aware of:

<https://uk.glasdon.com/c-thru-15-vape-recycling-bin> - Vape bins **(recommended for festivals and events)**

[Soho Commercial](#) - 240 litres and 1100 litres

<https://uk.glasdon.com/> - Nexus style bins

<https://www.kingfisherdirect.co.uk/box-cycle-recycling-bin> - Box cycle bins

<https://totebox.co.uk/product/54l-tote-box-600-x-400-x-320h-mm-2/> - Tote boxes

Bin signage

You can find our eye catching vape bin sticker designs within our [communications toolkit](#). These can be personalised with your own your logo (using InDesign templates), ready to print and use.

Our assets are free to download. If you're not already registered, [sign up today](#) - it takes less than 2 minutes!



Health and safety

Some festivals and events from our previous funding round expressed concerns around collecting vapes and fire safety.

- Many large events, retailers, community centres, and supermarkets, have already **successfully deployed vape bins without incident**. Case studies show that with proper design and management, these bins are both effective and safe.
- **Safer containment:** Vape bins are designed to safely hold devices, reducing the risk of fires caused by damaged or short-circuited batteries.
- **Proper recycling:** Vape bins ensure that these items are collected and sent for proper recycling or disposal, minimizing environmental harm.

I have decided to ban vapes at my event - now what do I do?

1. Let your audience know that vapes are prohibited using your website or preshow comms - Explain why and direct them to their nearest recycling point using our [Recycle Your Electricals locator](#).
2. Brief security on the devices you have banned e.g. Is this just a ban on disposable devices? Check out our guidelines on identifying different vape types [here](#).
3. Collect vapes in separate designated bins at the gate/entrance. Feedback from last years events was that they collected far more than expected. Make sure you have sufficient and safe storage [\(see slide 26\)](#)
4. Make sure all vapes collected go to a registered [AATF \(recycling scheme\)](#). This can be ensured by working with your waste contractor.



How can waste contractors ensure e-waste is processed correctly?



Your waste handling obligations

Businesses have a **legal responsibility and duty of care** to ensure waste is **stored safely and disposed of appropriately**.

Festivals need to ensure that their **policy and advance messaging** prevents or limits non-essential use of hazardous materials, and that they are confident waste materials are being dealt with legally. This means you will need to have **weighbridge certificates** for the materials removed from site on file to prove safe transfer.

Batteries and e-waste are classed as **hazardous waste**. This means they must be kept separate by law and **cannot be put in general waste**. Work with contractors to ensure you have adequate and safe locations for storage of hazardous materials such as batteries and e-waste, including vapes.

Source: [Vision 2025: Festival industry materials and waste briefing](#)



Guidance for waste contractors

For handling e-waste, **we strongly recommend that your waste contractor works with a PCS and an [approved vape recycling service](#)**. Although there may be other charities or waste management companies offering a similar service, there is no guarantee that they will operate safely and environmentally responsibly.

To dispose of the vapes you've collected, waste contractors can do one of the following:

- Speak to a [Producer Compliance Scheme \(PCS\)](#)
 - [Contact](#) the PCS and agree arrangements and fees
 - PCS will arrange for the waste to be recycled at an Approved Authorised Treatment Facility (AATF).
 - You/they may be charged for collection and transportation of the waste to the AATF or the PCS collection point.
- Transport the waste themselves.
 - Register as a waste carrier.
 - Follow the rules on transporting hazardous waste as 'vapes' are considered hazardous.
 - Transport and drop off the waste at an AATF or PCS collection point themselves.



Approved vape recycling services

These waste management companies can organise collection and recycling of vapes at Approved Authorised Approved Facilities (AATFs). When processed through an approved AATF, vapes will be dismantled into parts: battery, casing electronics and nicotine pads which are then treated separately. **Up to 80% of materials within vapes can be recycled.**

Biffa - contact: services@biffa.co.uk

Environcom - contact: Alison.mitchell@environcom.co.uk

GAP Group - contact: waste@gapgroupuk.com

Reconomy - contact: enquiries@reconomy.com

Recover - contact: info@eco-recycle.co.uk

SWEEP - contact: recycle@swEEP.co.uk

Veolia - contact: <https://www.veolia.co.uk/contact-us>

Waste Care - contact: recycling@wastecare.co.uk

Waste Experts - contact: info@wasteexperts.co.uk





**How can I increase festival-goers awareness
of e-waste issues?**



Communications approaches

1. **Create social media posts and mailers** using our festival communications toolkit. It includes ready-to-use social media assets with suggested copy on recycling vapes, batteries and other posts relating to recycling at festivals. Download [here](#).
2. Increase audience awareness of the bins available onsite using **posters, stage side screens, bar signage, and signage on vape stalls**. You can find all of these in our Communications Toolkit.
3. **Ensure bins are clearly labeled** using our brightly-coloured bin stickers (available within the festival Communications Toolkit)
4. Make information about vapes and e-waste available at **onsite information points**.
5. Use **festival app to issue alerts** and reminders about the recycling facilities available on site.
6. Promote our industry-leading [Recycling Locator](#) (27,000+ drop off points) to help your audience easily locate their nearest electrical recycling drop-off points for vapes and other electricals like power banks, headphones, and electric fans once they leave the site.

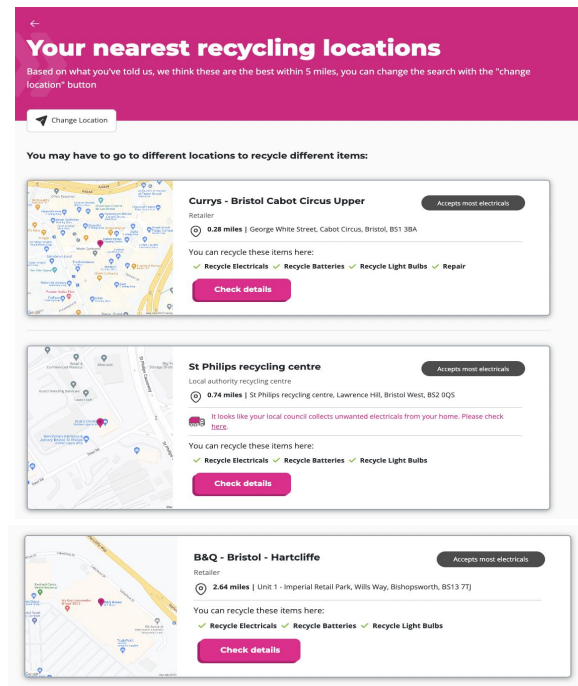
Our Recycling Locator makes it easy to find local drop off points

With **over 27,000 drop off points**, our best in class **Recycling locator** provides the most comprehensive collection of electrical recycling points in the UK.

Users can find local drop off points to recycle, donate or fix their unwanted electricals. It's so simple to use - simply:

1. Pop in your postcode or address
2. Select the items and whether you'd like to recycle, donate or fix them
3. View your nearest drop-off point that accepts your specified items

You can also add our recycling locator **widget to your website**.
Get in touch with us to discuss coding options.



Festivals and events communications toolkit

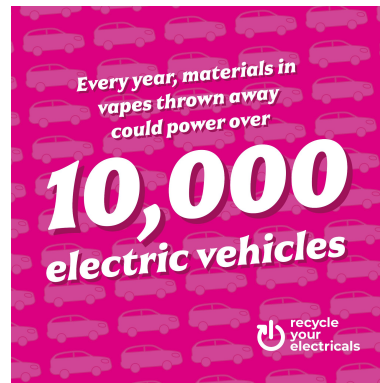
Download from the partnership portal on our [website here](#). If you would like to get in touch to discuss personalised assets, email rowan@materialfocus.org.uk



No vapes here
Nearest vape recycling
drop off point:



Thank you for recycling
your vapes safely here



Use HypnoCat to promote electrical recycling (optional)

HypnoCat is our fluffy-faced figurehead, on a mission to purrrsuade the UK to reuse and recycle their electricals.

HypnoCat delivers information in a concise way with a hefty dose of playful and persuasive personality. Using a character allows us to inject masses of personality into what could be a dry topic. Thanks to [our nationwide TV campaign](#), over half of the UK now recognise HypnoCat as the mascot for electrical recycling!

We are happy to work with you to create personalised hypnocat assets like the ones on this slide to suit your needs - get in touch with rowan@materialfocus.org.uk for more information



Collecting audience data

Collecting audience data can result in key learnings for future projects and highlight successes. Think about collecting data within your post event audience survey on:

- **Audience awareness of facilities on site**
 - Did you notice any **vape bins onsite**?
 - Did you notice any **posters onsite** regarding vape recycling?
- **Audience perception of vapes and e waste**
 - What **type of vaping products** did you notice at festival?
 - **How often** do you use vape devices?
 - **How do you dispose** of your devices once they have been used?
 - Are you aware of **how to recycle your vapes**?
- **How recycling facilities can be improved in future**
 - **What would make it easier**/more likely for you to recycle your used vapes?
 - Did you feel that festival provided adequate information about vaping policies and recycling measures?



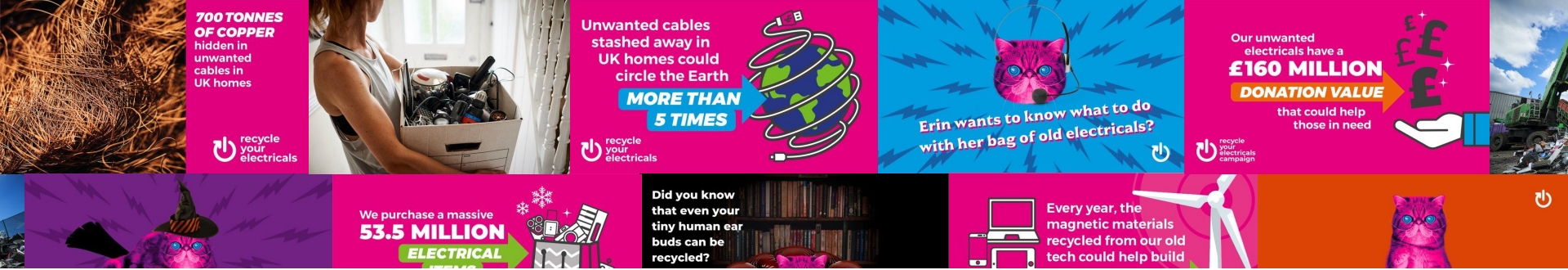
How can onsite vape sellers comply with environmental regulations?



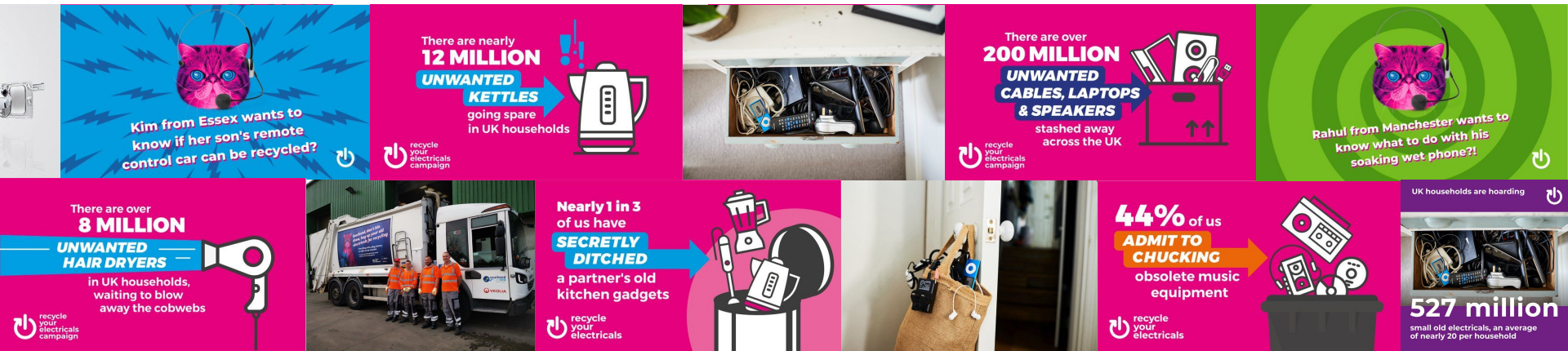
Retailer responsibilities - for all retailers selling vapes on site

- **All retailers selling electricals** (including vapes) need to provide a way for customers buying new electricals to dispose of their old electricals **on a like-for-like basis**
 - Regardless of how they sell the products, whether direct or by internet, mail order or telephone
- You must take back items for recycling that have **the same function, regardless of brand**. Eg.
 - take back any brand of vape/ e-cig when they buy a new vape or e-cig
- You have 2 options to offer this take-back service to your customers
 - provide a free, in store recycling service
 - set up an alternative recycling service

If you fail to comply with the waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) regulations, you **can be prosecuted and get an unlimited fine** from a magistrates' court or a Crown Court.



Partner with us



Get in touch

If you would like to discuss creating personalised versions of our communications assets, applying for funding, or just for advice and support, please get in touch with rowan@materialfocus.org.uk to discuss partnership opportunities further.

Material Focus is an independent, not-for-profit organisation on a mission to save valuable, critical and finite materials inside electricals from going to waste. 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.

www.materialfocus.org.uk