SEN Unity
Sports, Education & Nada (musical sound)

Environmental Policy

October 2026

Environmental Policy

SEN Unity CIC

Version 2.1

Approved: October 2026

Next review: October 2027

Applies to: England

1. Policy Statement

SEN Unity CIC is committed to protecting the environment and reducing the environmental impact of our activities. As a community-focused Community Interest Company (CIC) supporting children, young people, and families with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), we recognise our responsibility to operate sustainably and to promote environmental awareness in a way that is inclusive, practical, and proportionate to our size and resources.

We support the UK's legally binding commitment to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 under the Climate Change Act 2008 (as amended 2019), and the environmental targets set under the Environment Act 2021. We will take realistic, achievable steps to reduce our carbon footprint, waste, and use of scarce resources, and will embed environmental responsibility into our governance, procurement, and service delivery.

This policy is owned by the Directors and reviewed at least annually, or sooner if legislation or our activities change materially.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Directors, staff, volunteers, sessional workers
- Contractors, suppliers, venues and partners working on our behalf or with our service users
- All activities delivered by SEN Unity CIC, including office-based work, events, training, outreach, home visits and any premises we lease, hire or occupy
- Service users and their families, where we can support them to participate in accessible environmental actions

SEN Unity CIC currently operates only in England, so this policy is written to English environmental law. If we expand into Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, we will review and update it to meet the relevant devolved requirements, which differ in areas such as single-use plastic bans, recycling collections and deposit return schemes.

3. Legal and Regulatory Compliance

SEN Unity CIC will comply with all relevant environmental legislation, regulations and codes of practice applicable to our operations, including in particular:

- Climate Change Act 2008 (net zero by 2050; five-year carbon budgets)
- Environment Act 2021 (statutory targets on waste, water, air quality, biodiversity and resource efficiency; Environmental Improvement Plan)
- Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Duty of Care code of practice (all waste must be stored safely, transferred only to authorised carriers, and accompanied by a waste transfer note kept for at least 2 years); the waste hierarchy (prevention – reuse – recycle – recovery – disposal) must be applied
- Single-use plastics bans in force in England: ban on supply of single-use plastic cutlery, plates, bowls, trays, balloon sticks and certain polystyrene containers (since October 2023); ban on disposable/single-use vapes (since 1 June 2025); ban on wet wipes containing plastic (from 19 May 2027)
- Simpler Recycling (consistent recycling collections): non-domestic premises in England must separate paper/card, plastic/metal/glass, food waste and garden waste for collection (in force for businesses since 31 March 2025; micro-business requirements apply from 31 March 2027). Plastic film/flexible plastic kerbside collection is now expected from April 2030
- Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) and waste batteries: correct disposal through authorised take-back or recycling schemes
- Where we lease or occupy premises: Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) for non-domestic private rented property, and any applicable Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) requirements
- Procurement Policy Note PPN 06/21 (central government contracts) and the equivalent social-value requirements applied by public-sector grant funders (including the Department for Education, local authorities, National Lottery distributors and UK Shared Prosperity Fund programmes): when bidding for or delivering public-sector grants and contracts, we will have regard to the social value model — in particular the “climate change”, “waste reduction” and “open spaces / biodiversity” themes — and maintain evidence of delivery

We do not carry out regulated industrial activity, so Environmental Permitting, UK Emissions Trading Scheme, producer-responsibility (packaging EPR, Plastic Packaging Tax), Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting (SECR) and Biodiversity Net Gain obligations do not currently apply to us directly. We will review this annually and if our activities change.

4. Our Commitments

4.1 Carbon reduction and energy use

- Measure our Scope 1 (fuel) and Scope 2 (purchased electricity/heat) emissions at least annually and record them simply (e.g. energy bills and mileage)
- Work towards reducing emissions year on year, with the long-term aim of reaching net zero by 2050 or sooner, proportionate to our resources
- Switch to a renewable or green electricity tariff when contracts are renewed, where cost-comparable
- Switch off lights, heating, air conditioning and equipment when not in use; use energy-efficient lighting and equipment; encourage remote/digital delivery where it does not reduce service quality

4.2 Waste, recycling and single-use items

- Apply the waste hierarchy: prevent waste first, then reuse, recycle, recover and only dispose as a last resort
- Comply with Simpler Recycling: segregate paper/card, plastic/metal/glass, and food waste separately at all premises we control, and ensure hired venues are asked to do the same
- Meet our Duty of Care: use only authorised waste carriers, obtain and retain waste transfer notes, and never fly-tip or pass waste to unlicensed handlers
- Do not purchase, supply or use banned single-use items (plastic cutlery, plates, bowls, trays, balloon sticks, polystyrene containers, disposable vapes, and — from May 2027 — wet wipes containing plastic). Use reusable or compostable alternatives
- Minimise paper use; print double-sided and in black and white where possible; prioritise digital communication and record-keeping
- Dispose of electrical items (WEEE) and batteries through approved take-back/recycling schemes

4.3 Sustainable procurement and supply chain

- Consider environmental impact when purchasing goods and services, and prefer suppliers who demonstrate sustainable and ethical practices where reasonably practicable and cost-comparable
- For public-sector grants and tenders, build in the social value themes (climate change, waste reduction, open spaces / biodiversity) at bid stage and evidence delivery in funder reports
- Maintain a simple social-value evidence file (energy bills, business mileage logs, waste transfer notes, event catering and venue choices, staff/volunteer training records, photos of green activities) so we can demonstrate environmental delivery at bid stage and in grant monitoring returns
- Avoid unnecessary single-use items, particularly plastics, in catering, merchandise and printed materials; prefer durable, reusable, recyclable or refillable products
- Buy locally, seasonally and fairly traded where possible, and avoid products containing peat or unsustainably sourced timber

4.4 Travel and transport

- Encourage walking, cycling, public transport or car-sharing for work travel where feasible; record business mileage to monitor emissions
- Use virtual meetings and digital delivery where appropriate to reduce travel
- Plan activities locally and share venues to reduce travel; choose accessible venues well served by public transport
- If we lease or buy vehicles, choose low-emission or electric vehicles when vehicles are replaced, and provide or identify charging facilities where practical

4.5 Catering and events

- At events and training, provide tap water in reusable/personal cups rather than single-use bottles
- Offer mainly plant-based, local and seasonal catering options; avoid red meat as a default due to its high carbon footprint
- Do not use single-use plastic serveware; use reusable or commercially compostable alternatives and ensure correct disposal
- Plan quantities to avoid food waste; donate or compost surplus food where safe and possible

4.6 Water use and pollution prevention

- Encourage water conservation in all settings; report and fix leaks promptly
- Use environmentally preferable cleaning products where practical; store chemicals safely to prevent spills

- Maintain a simple spill-response procedure; report any pollution incident to the Environment Agency hotline (0800 80 70 60) immediately
- Do not dispose of oils, chemicals, paint, batteries or electrical items down drains or in general waste

4.7 Biodiversity and nature

- Where we use or influence outdoor spaces, protect and encourage wildlife (e.g. pollinator-friendly planting, peat-free compost, no pesticides)
- Consider green/sensory outdoor activities for service users where appropriate, linking environmental engagement with positive SEND outcomes

4.8 Inclusive environmental awareness

- Promote environmental responsibility in a way that is accessible and appropriate for children, young people and adults with SEND
- Encourage positive, achievable actions rather than imposing unrealistic expectations; avoid creating barriers to participation
- Embed sustainability awareness into activities where appropriate, and welcome suggestions from staff, volunteers, service users, families and partners

5. Roles and Responsibilities

- Directors: own this policy, approve it, ensure resources are available, and review it at least annually
- Environmental Champion – the Projects Coordinator: day-to-day coordination, monitoring of energy/waste/mileage, reporting to the Director, and updating the policy as law changes
- Staff and volunteers: follow this policy, raise concerns and suggestions, and participate in awareness-raising
- Contractors, suppliers and venue partners are expected to align with this policy when working with SEN Unity CIC; relevant clauses will be included in contracts where proportionate

6. Training and Awareness

This policy will be communicated to all staff, volunteers and sessional workers on induction and at least annually thereafter. Brief, accessible guidance will be provided on waste segregation, energy saving, travel and single-use items. Environmental performance will be reported to Directors at least annually and referenced in our annual Community Interest Company Report (Form CIC34) where relevant.

7. Monitoring, Targets and Review

- Record at least annually: electricity/gas use, business mileage, waste volumes and approximate recycling rate
- Set simple, measurable improvement targets (e.g. % reduction in paper use, % of waste recycled, % of meetings held virtually) and review progress
- Review this policy at least annually (next review: October 2027) or sooner if legislation, funding requirements or our activities change
- Check key upcoming changes: micro-business Simpler Recycling obligations (31 March 2027), plastic wet wipes ban (19 May 2027), Deposit Return Scheme for drinks containers in England (expected October 2027), and plastic film collections (expected April 2030)

8. Incidents and non-compliance

Any environmental incident, spill, or suspected breach of this policy must be reported to the Environmental Champion or Director immediately. Serious pollution incidents must be reported to the Environment Agency on 0800 80 70 60. We will investigate, take corrective action, and learn from incidents.

9. Continuous Improvement

SEN Unity CIC recognises that environmental responsibility is an ongoing process. We are committed to making realistic improvements over time, proportionate to our size and resources, and to transparently reporting progress to our community, funders and regulators.

Approval

Approved by: Director of SEN Unity CIC

Name (signatory): A. Merchant

Role: Director

Date: October 2026

Next review date: October 2027

Version history and summary of changes from August 2026 version

Version	Date	Changes
1.0	August 2026	Original policy issued.
2.0	October 2026	Updated for current UK legislation: added named legal framework (Climate Change Act 2008, Environment Act 2021, Duty of Care/waste hierarchy, single-use plastics bans including disposable vapes (June 2025) and plastic wet wipes (May 2027), Simpler Recycling non-domestic obligations, PPN 06/21 social value); added net-zero/carbon measurement commitment; added waste duty-of-care and food-waste segregation requirements; added catering/events, pollution prevention/incident response, biodiversity, training, named Environmental Champion, annual monitoring metrics, and upcoming regulatory dates; fixed approval-block typo; moved review cycle to October 2027.
2.1	October 2026	Confirmed England-only operation (devolved nations wording reduced to a future-expansion note). Strengthened public-sector grant/tender readiness: expanded social-value section to cover grant funders (DfE, local

		authorities, National Lottery, UKSPF) and added a requirement to maintain a social-value evidence file for bids and funder monitoring returns.