

# How to start an internal Plastic Champions Network

## Overview:

This guide will enable you to create an internal staff network focused on delivering positive environmental outcomes. Internal networks have been shown to benefit staff in many ways such as, enhancing wellbeing.

An internal network can vary in scale depending on the appetite of staff and the capacity of the lead or committee.

This is a detailed guide of how to start an internal network on a large scale, however, you may only want to action parts of it to suit your organisation and capacity. Remember small steps and actions add up and contribute to wider positive environmental change.

“The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it.”

~ Robert Swan



# Step 1

## The aim

**Decide on the aim of the network you would like to create. For example, the aim of the Environment Agency's Plastic Champions Network, based in the UK, is:**

- Working with others by sharing information, raising awareness, and bringing together a community to inspire positive change, enhancing the environment for future generations.
- Delivering on the ambitions of Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) 25 Year Environment Plan (25YEP) to reduce avoidable plastic waste by enabling and motivating others to reduce their avoidable plastic and single-use item consumption.
- Bringing together passionate individuals across Defra and government departments who go the extra mile to make plastic pollution a thing of the past.
- Contribute to four of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

## Step 2

# Network communication

**Choose new or existing communication channel/s network members can use to discuss ideas, news, and articles.**

For example, the Plastic Champions Network uses emails, newsletters, Knowledge Hub, Google Drive and Yammer.

When choosing a platform, consider:

- Security
- Privacy settings
- Staff access

# Step 3

## Resource storage

**The Plastic Champions Network provides members with lots of accessible online resources.**

This includes 'how to' guides, school workshops, posters, and education packs. Access resources via the [Preventing Plastic Pollution](#) website.

When choosing where to store your resources it is important to consider:

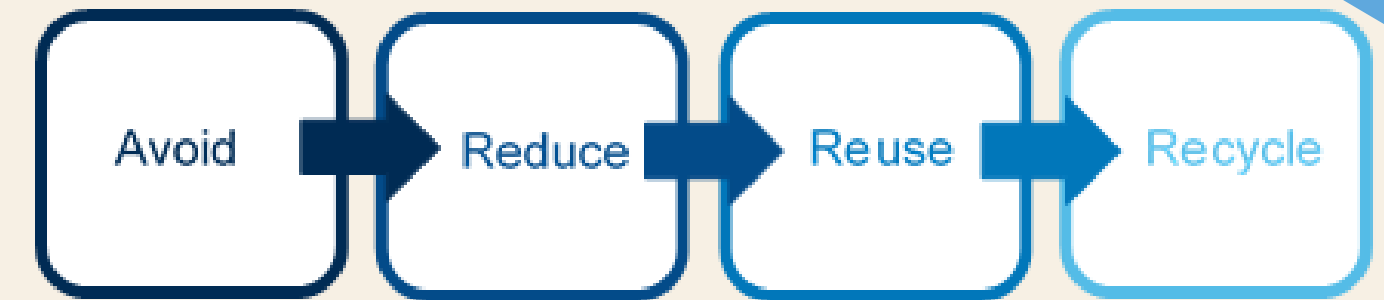
- Accessibility – see a guide to [creating inclusive and accessible documents](#)
- Privacy settings
- Amount of storage space

# Step 4

## Network messages

Choose the messages your network would like to advocate. For example, the Plastic Champions Network' messages are:

- We advocate the waste hierarchy (see image). Reducing the number of resources you use, particularly single-use, will reduce the amount of greenhouse gases you release.
- By avoiding single-use items you avoid unintended consequences from switching to a different material. This aligns with the UK government's 25YEP which include working towards zero avoidable waste by 2050 and eliminating avoidable plastic waste by the end of 2042.
- We advocate preventing the escape of plastic into the environment by facilitating a circular economy which is based upon three principles; design out waste and pollution, keep products and materials in use and regenerate natural systems.



# Step 5

# Recruit

**Recruit the first plastic champions - staff who are already passionate about reducing plastic pollution and are eager to undertake activities to inspire others to reduce their single-use plastic pollution.**

Encourage these plastic champions to:

- Undertake activities at lunch time such as holding an informal meeting to bring staff together to learn about a topic.
- Organise a litter pick with colleagues or their local community.
- Write/send short articles and engaging photos about their plastic champion activities and motivation, which can be used to promote the network and inspire wider staff to join.



# Step 6

# Advertise

**Use your organisations internal communication channels such as internal e-bulletins, newsletters, and websites, to advertise the new network.**

You could include:

- Why tackling plastic pollution is important
- A summary of the aims of the network
- Activities already undertaken by pioneer plastic champions
- The benefits of being a network member.
- Eye catching photographs and details of how to join the network.

# Step 7

# Membership

Future plastic champions email a shared mailbox or an agreed mailbox to request membership.

New members are sent an email with further information about the role and a template/form requesting additional details.

New members are then added to a database and are sent relevant communication platform/resource links on a further template.





## Step 8

## Ongoing communication

**Once the network is set up, choose how to engage, and communicate with the network, including frequency and channels.**

An active network will encourage more staff to join. Engagement ideas could include:

- Posting a new article once a week and commenting on other people's contributions.
- Sending out a monthly newsletter featuring plastic champion activity and other relevant news.
- Holding quarterly webinars on relevant topics and network news. Webinars are also a great place for the community to meet each other.
- Holding an annual network conference to celebrate the networks achievements.

## Step 9

## Feedback & evaluation

**It is important to capture the activity and impact of plastic champions, such as:**

- The number of individual hours spent undertaking an activity
- The number of single-use items avoided
- The number of bags of litter collected
- The number of people engaged/educated about the plastic issue.

Once you have decided on the metrics, ensure you create an activity tracker which all plastic champions can access and update.



If your organisation sets up an internal plastic network we would love to know how it is going and how many members your network has.

Please email:  
[plasticsandsustainability@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:plasticsandsustainability@environment-agency.gov.uk)

