



Assured Advice Age Restricted Products “Top Tips”

This document should be read in conjunction with our Assured Advice for “Age Restricted Products”.

Training

Staff should be trained in all their legal responsibilities, including how to avoid underage sales, and also in the policies you want them to follow. Good records of training given should be kept. Here are some practical tips about how you can do your training.

- As well as explaining the law and what staff must do, it is very important to explain **how to** avoid sales: how to **ASSESS** age (by focussing on customers’ faces); how to **CHALLENGE** for proof of age (don’t ask age, explain why you are asking for proof to deflect responsibility); how to **CHECK** proof of age documents (take them from the customer). If staff do not feel confident to challenge customers, they may not do so, even if they know they should.
- Most training can be given verbally, or by showing staff how to do things, but it is best to have **some written element** – maybe going through this guidance with them. This helps to show what the staff have been told and should be signed by the staff member to show that they have received and understood the training.
- Training (verbal or written) does not need to be given in English.
- All staff members – including **family members** – should be trained.
- Once trained, **staff must be monitored** to ensure they are following their training. Watching staff in the flesh or on CCTV; asking them questions to ensure they remember what to do; checking refusals records; or even doing your own test purchases are ways of doing this.
- If you arrange your own test purchases, use someone unknown to the staff who is between 18 and 21, if possible, to see if they are asked for proof of age when they attempt to buy test purchasing. (Note: it is illegal for anyone under 18 to buy alcohol, or to possess fireworks in a public place, so you cannot use an under 18 to test purchase these goods).
- **Refresher training** should be done periodically: how often is appropriate will depend on the staff member. The maximum recommended period is one month after initial training and then with maximum intervals of six months.
- **Training records** should be kept for each member of staff and should show the date of the training; the nature of the training (eg. verbal / written / by example); the subject(s) covered (eg. Assessing age / Challenging for proof / Checking proof of age etc.); and the trainee should sign the record.
- Film (at least some) staff training, if you can. What better record could there be if you need to show enforcement authorities after a sale?

- It should be made clear to staff how high a **priority** avoiding underage sales is. This can be done by explaining the possible consequences – if your business sells alcohol and loses its licence, it could fail and its employees lose their jobs; by regular (almost daily!) reminders; by giving feedback to staff – whether it is congratulating them for doing well or picking them up where they could have done something better. Some businesses use social media to send their staff reminders.
- **Always get it right yourself!** If you do not set a good example, why would your staff do what you have asked them to?

Refusals Records

- Refusals records are primarily a **management tool**. They can give you information about which staff are following your instructions and which may not be; about when refusals are most likely; and can be used as an extra reminder to staff (“Have you recorded any refusals?”).
- **All refused sales should be recorded**, whether it is because of lack of proof of age; intoxication; a suspected proxy sale; or because it is outside licensing hours.
- The date, time, product, reason for refusal and person making the refusal should all be recorded. If you have CCTV, it is best to ensure the time shown on the CCTV system is the one recorded.
- Someone should **check refusals records** regularly – and overtly. If they are checked in the presence of staff, it will serve as another reminder. Keep a record of the checks, also.
- Make it as easy as possible for staff to record refusals – keep the log and a pen near to the till.

Other Tips

- Use ‘Under 25?’ posters to inform customers and as reminders to staff. It also helps staff to challenge if they can refer to a poster that explains why. ‘Blaming’ the law or the authorities can help minimise confrontation with customers.



- Sometimes till prompts, or other reminders can also be used. Do not rely solely on them: they can become ‘part of the furniture’ and be inadvertently ignored.
- If you do use till prompts, ensure the prompt asks the right question: “Does the customer look under 25?”; rather than “Does the customer look under 18?”.
- Keep a note near the till of the latest year in which an 18 year old could have been born. It acts as a reminder to staff and prevents arithmetical errors.

- If a customer attempts to use fake proof of age, your staff need to know what to do. It could be retained, but staff should never risk their safety doing so. Note the use of the fake on the refusals records. If you know your local police officer, you could then show any CCTV footage to them.
- You may choose not to sell some goods – pornographic magazines and “lads’ mags” and tobacco accessories other than cigarette papers, for example – to young people, even though the law does not prohibit it.