

Raising the age of sale of tobacco

Information for retailers

From **Monday, October 1st 2007** the law for selling tobacco will change. It will be illegal for retailers to sell tobacco products to anyone under the age of 18 (an increase from 16) in England and Wales. It is expected that the change in law will also come into effect in Scotland from the same date.

Why is the legislation being changed?

Most addicted adult smokers began as teenagers. This change in the law is to help prevent children and young people from starting in the first place, therefore avoiding the serious health dangers of smoking.

What does this mean for retailers?

The only real change for retailers is that from October 1st, they will need to ensure their customers are 18 or over before selling them tobacco products, rather than 16 or over, as the law currently states.

Tobacco products include cigarettes, cigars, loose rolling tobacco and rolling papers, and the law applies to both over the counter and vending machine sales.

As before, retailers will need to display a sign clearly stating the age restriction on tobacco products. The requirements are the same as before in all respects other than that the age will change from 16 to 18. The sign must say: "It is illegal to sell tobacco products to anyone under the age of 18". The vending machine notice must state: "This machine is only for the use of people aged 18 or over".

What are the penalties for non-compliance?

The penalties for selling tobacco products to someone under the legal age will be the same from October 1st as they are now. Selling tobacco to anyone under-age can result in a fine of up to £2,500. Failing to display the statutory notice can result in a fine of up to £1,000. This applies to both over the counter and vending machine sales.

To ensure customers are 18 or over, retail staff are advised to always ask those who look under-age to see an accredited proof of age card or other valid form of id.

Trading Standards Officers will be responsible for enforcing the law, as they do currently. They will be working collaboratively with retailers to help them prepare for the change and to ensure compliance. Offences can only be proven through carefully supervised test purchasing using volunteer teenagers.

What information and support is being made available?

The Department of Health is running a communications campaign and making a number of resources available to retailers as part of this:

- Early information for those businesses with high volumes of 16-17 year old customers
- A 'toolkit' of information for all retailers, including signage (available in late August)
- A dedicated website, tobaccoagechange.co.uk, containing information on the legislation and communications campaign, as well as useful advice on preparing for the change, to make it as straightforward as possible for retailers and their staff.

The communications campaign is also designed to raise awareness among teenagers of the change in the law, so that no one is caught by surprise when it comes into force on October 1st. The campaign includes advertising, media relations, a digital campaign and work with youth organisations.

For more information on the change in legislation or the communications campaign, or to access additional resources, visit tobaccoagechange.co.uk or call **020 7492 0980**.

Proof of age

Valid proof of age documents include:

- *Passport*
- *Photo driving licence*
- *Citizenscard*
- *Portman 'Prove It' card*
- *Validate card*

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