

Saying no, avoiding conflict age restricted sales

Trading Standards Information

www.southwark.gov.uk

1. Introduction

When dealing with underage customers we know that saying no can sometimes lead to conflict and aggression. But saying yes to will mean they come back and your premises could become a target for groups of young people determined to get hold of age-restricted products.

The following is based on guidance issued by the Trading Standards Institute.

2. Display point of sale proof of age material

Displaying proof of age material, such as our free RU18 / 16 warning stickers or the nationally promoted Under 21 posters, may make youngsters think twice before attempting to buy. At the very least such material will prepare them for the fact that they will be asked for proof of age.



3. Stand your ground

Saying no can embarrass a customer, so you need to be tactful. Always be professional, polite and calm, and don't antagonise by getting annoyed or aggressive. Say you are sorry but you cannot sell without proof of age. If you are faced with a group, try to move the person you're talking to away from the rest. This lessens the chance of them playing to the crowd.

- be polite but firm
- use tact, say you are sorry
- be calm, don't antagonise
- don't humiliate

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4. Avoid blame

When saying no, or asking for proof of age, try to divert blame away from yourself. Say it's nothing personal but the management at the business are insisting on it. Say that they check the CCTV. You can even say that trading standards or the Police have been round checking and the law requires it.

- de-personalise the situation
- explain your legal obligation
- blame the management policy
- don't get angry

5. Keep your distance

Stay behind the counter or bar - this provides a barrier should violence occur. Use relaxed body language and avoid prolonged eye contact. Use slow and deliberate body movements and try to keep something between you and a possible aggressor.

- avoid prolonged eye contact
- use relaxed body language
- say sorry
- keep a barrier between you

6. Product placement in shops

Cigarettes and tobacco are usually behind the counter so saying no leaves the customer empty handed. However alcohol and other products are usually selected by the customer and brought to the till. This could cause additional confrontation as you will need to keep hold of the product.

To try and avoid such problems consider restricting access to age-restricted products in your premises. Where it is not possible to keep products behind the counter many retailers use secure display cabinets so that assistance has to be sought to purchase the item. This deters underage purchasers and makes it much easier for staff to refuse to sell.

Where secure cabinets are not available try to position age restricted products close to the till so that they prospective underage customers will easily be seen by staff. This will make intervention before an underage customer brings them to the till easier.

For larger displays of goods, such as alcohol, you could also consider supervising access at peak times by having a member of staff on duty next to them.

- consider the location of products
- site products where you can supervise access

7. Further information

If you require further assistance, or would like additional information leaflets or any warning notices / reminder stickers, please contact us at the address given.