



# Preventing Under-Age Sales

Abuse is Not Part of the Job



# Age-Restricted Products

**Refusing under-age sales is a common trigger for abuse, intimidation and even violence against shopworkers.**

Selling age-restricted products, even by mistake, can result in shopworkers being sent to court and given a large fine. Usdaw recognises the difficulties faced by staff from youngsters attempting to purchase age-restricted goods.

## Age-Restricted Products

It can be very difficult to assess a customer's age. People can become abusive or threatening when refused a sale.

It is still the responsibility of shopworkers to ensure that they do not make an under-age sale on a wide variety of products.

Trading Standards Officers are encouraged to conduct 'sting' operations to try to catch out shopworkers making under-age sales. The penalties are severe.



Item	Minimum Age
Knives, blades and similar items	18
Cigarettes, tobacco and e-cigarettes*	18
Lottery tickets and scratch cards	18
Petrol	16
Party poppers and caps	16
Aerosol paints	16
Crossbows and air guns	18
Alcohol	18
Fireworks	18
Solvents (if not for intended use) <sup>†</sup>	18
Butane gas lighter refills	18
Video, DVD, Blu-ray, cinema and computer games	12, 15 and 18
Christmas crackers	12

If e-cigarettes contain nicotine.

<sup>†</sup> It is legal to sell solvents to under-18s if you believe they will be used for their intended purpose, but it is illegal if you have reason to believe they may be used for inhaling.





## What the Law Says

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To avoid prosecution, the seller has to 'take all reasonable steps' to avoid serving under-age customers:

- If in any doubt, ask for proof of age from the purchaser.
- Most retailers expect customers who are lucky enough to look under 25 to prove their age.
- If there is no valid ID, refuse the sale.
- In Scotland, it is now a specific offence to abuse, threaten or assault a retail worker, with an increased sentence if the offence relates to age-restricted sales.

## Penalties for Making an Under-Age Sale

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### *Alcohol*

- £90 penalty notice for disorder (on-the-spot fine).
- Court appearance and/or fine of up to £5,000.
- Removal of alcohol licence.
- These penalties apply to shopworkers and workers delivering alcohol to under 18s, ie dot com drivers.

### *Tobacco and Aerosol Paints*

- Maximum fine £2,500.

### *Other Products*

- Maximum fine £5,000 and/or six months in prison.

# What You Should Do



**If your job involves selling age-restricted goods, you should follow the letter of the law. If in any doubt at all, refuse the sale.**

1. **Training:** Insist on training from your employer.
2. **Ask:** If you have doubts, always ask the customer for proof of age. Most retailers expect customers to prove their age if they appear to be under 25.
3. **Proof:** Request proof of age when appropriate. Only accept photo ID with the PASS hologram logo, or picture driving licences, passports or a local card scheme if it is supported by your Trading Standards Department.
4. **No ID, No Sale:** Ask your employer to display 'No ID, No Sale' notices (available at [www.noidnosale.com](http://www.noidnosale.com)).
5. **Refusals register:** Keep a register which will prove that you do refuse sales when in doubt. Make sure your manager signs the register every day. You can obtain a Refusals Register at: [www.noidnosale.com](http://www.noidnosale.com)
6. **Penalties:** Point out that you could get fined for making an under-age sale. It is an offence for a young person to attempt to buy alcohol if they are under 18. In Scotland it is also an offence to attempt to buy tobacco products if under 18.
7. **Abuse:** Know company procedure for dealing with customers who become abusive when refused a sale. Report all incidents of abuse, threats or violence to your line manager and keep a record. This could be used to ban the person from the store, or as police evidence for an ASBO.
8. **Stay calm:** You may have a long queue at your checkout and feel under pressure to rush. Don't let this stop you asking for proof of age.
9. **Be polite but firm:** Other people in the queue will understand your dilemma and appreciate your determination not to break the law.
10. **If in doubt, refuse the sale:** Call the manager or ask a colleague for assistance.



# Support Available

## Your Company

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Your company has a duty to ensure that staff do not make under-age sales. Therefore, they need to give you the training and support necessary.

Some retailers, while not condoning under-age sales, offer staff support and representation if they are being prosecuted due to a 'sting' operation by Trading Standards Officers.

Your company also has a duty of care to protect you from violence and threats at work. If you are suffering intimidation and abuse, ask for support and a risk assessment.

See Usdaw's Freedom From Fear Campaign materials for further advice: [www.usdaw.org.uk/fff](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/fff)

## Trading Standards

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Ask the Trading Standards Department at your local Council to come and give you advice about preventing under-age sales. Check which local ID card schemes they authorise.

## Police

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Contact the police for support in dealing with persistent offenders.

Ask what evidence you will need to keep for them to take anti-social behaviour measures against those who abuse and intimidate staff.

## Usdaw

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If you are subject to abuse, threats or violence, contact your Usdaw rep or Area Organiser for support in doing a risk assessment and ensuring practical measures are taken to protect you.

Usdaw in no way condones under-age sales but we do support members who are subject to 'sting' operations.

If you are a member of Usdaw and subject to a 'sting' operation, contact the Legal Department as soon as possible on **0161 224 2804**.

## *Usdaw's Freedom From Fear Campaign*

Freedom From Fear is Usdaw's award winning campaign against abuse, intimidation and violence against shopworkers. We are campaigning for a national Proof of Age scheme for young people and a compulsory No ID, No Sale policy to cut the number of attempted sales and help protect shopworkers.

To help our campaign, or for support, advice and practical measures you can take to make your store safer, visit:

[www.usdaw.org.uk/fff](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/fff)

# How Joining Usdaw Can Help

- Usdaw National Officers work with companies to agree clear policies that support and protect retail workers.
- Reps and Area Organisers are available to offer advice and support for workplace issues.
- Usdaw offers support through FirstCall Usdaw for accidents and injuries sustained while at work.
- The Retail Staff Survey helps Usdaw make a better case to employers and politicians to secure stronger protections. Share your experiences online at: [www.usdaw.org.uk/fffsurvey](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/fffsurvey)



Scan to take the survey

## Legal Support

If you're a victim of violence and you suffer serious injury in the UK, call FirstCall Usdaw on **0800 055 6333** to start your claim. Usdaw Legal Plus can help members claim compensation from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority, a state funded scheme.

To qualify for compensation, your injuries must be sufficiently serious to justify the minimum amount of compensation, £1,000; you must personally report the incident to the police within 48 hours and get a crime reference number; you must see a doctor immediately for treatment of physical injuries as well as psychological ones such as stress or shock.

Subject to qualifying criteria, Usdaw also offers an Assault at Work Grant. Further information can be obtained from your local office.

## Join Usdaw

Usdaw understands the issues that retail workers face in the workplace and the more members we have, the stronger our case is with companies for better policies and better protections.

Simply complete a membership form and return it to Usdaw's Head Office. Just write FREEPOST USDW on the envelope and put it in the post.

You can also join online at: [www.usdaw.org.uk/join](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/join)



Scan to join today



For further information call our Helpline on **0800 030 80 30** or visit: [www.usdaw.org.uk/fff](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/fff)

