

Raising the Age of Sale of Tobacco

From **Monday 1st October 2007** the law for selling tobacco has changed. It is now illegal for retailers to sell tobacco products to anyone under the age of 18 (an increase from 16) in England and Wales.

Why has the legislation 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 1st October, they will need to ensure their customers are 18 or over before selling tobacco products to them, rather than 16 or over, as the law currently states.

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 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 from the 1st October for selling tobacco products to someone under the legal age are unchanged. 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. These include a toolkit of information for all retailers, including signage and a dedicated website, www.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 1st October. 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 www.tobaccoagechange.co.uk or call 020 7492 0980.