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www.westsussex.gov.uk/tradingstandards

Mr Khawar Shahzad
Gondals Sussex Ltd T/a Sussex News
15b Surrey Street
Littlehampton
West Sussex
BN17 5AZ

3rd March 2022

Dear Mr Shahzad

Our Ref: E205119

On 23rd February 2022 as part of a controlled underage sales test purchasing exercise, a number of shops in West Sussex were visited by a Trading Standards volunteer who was under the age of 18. The child volunteer was asked by our officers to try and buy alcohol and I'm writing to you let you know the sale was rightly refused by staff at Sussex News, Littlehampton.

Whilst it's not our policy to give exact details of our test purchasing work, you may wish to let the staff who were working on that day know that we do recognise the diligence they showed staff when they correctly refused the sale.

You no doubt have various policies in place already to help prevent the sale of age restricted products to underage children, but I've detailed below some best practice checks that we offer as general advice to any retailer who sells age restricted products. You might like to take this opportunity to review if any of these would be a useful addition to your existing controls.

'Challenge 25' system:

If a person attempts to purchase an age restricted product and they appear to be under the age of 25, you should ask them to produce proof of their age. If they're unable to prove their age, a sale should then be refused.

Staff training:

You should ensure your staff are fully trained to ensure they're aware which products are age restricted, what the age restriction is and the action they should take if they believe a person is underage when they attempt to purchase such products.

It is important you can prove your staff have understood what is required of them by the law. This can be done by keeping a record of the training and asking members of staff to sign to say that they understand it.

These records should then be checked and signed on a regular basis by the manager or owner of the business.

Maintain a refusals log:

All refusals should be recorded (date, time, incident, product and description of the potential buyer). Maintaining a refusals log will help to demonstrate you and your staff actively refuse sales and have an effective system in place.

Refusal logs should be checked by the manager or owner to ensure all members of staff are using them, and you could now check to see if the refusal outlined above has been properly recorded?

Till prompts:

If your system allows it may be possible to use your till to remind staff of age restrictions via a reminder prompt when the barcode of an age restricted product is scanned.

Alternatively by way of a staff reminder, stickers could be used to cover certain product barcodes.

Signage:

Displaying posters showing age limits for certain products and a statement regarding the refusal of such sales if the person appears to be underage. This may help deter potential purchasers and act as a reminder to staff.

CCTV:

A CCTV system may help act as a deterrent and reduce underage sales. It will also help you to monitor 'blind spots' within your store if it's not possible to change the layout or relocate age restricted products behind, or closer to, the counter.

Please note the above advice is best practice and is not a legal requirement. However, the legislation states if you are charged with an offence of selling an age restricted product to an underage person, it is a defence if you're able to prove you took all reasonable steps to determine the purchaser's age and that you reasonably believed that the purchaser was not under the age of 18.

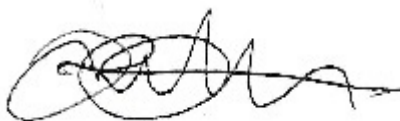
Therefore, by carrying out the above best practice checks, it will help show you and your staff are able to satisfy this legal defence and it will help reduce the sale of age restricted products to underage children.

Further advice and guidance on age restricted products and the sale and labelling of tobacco products, can be found on the Business Companion website:

www.businesscompanion.info/

If you have any queries or require further information, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



David Dutton
Trading Standards Officer