

The Licensing Act 2003 introduced mandatory conditions on every alcohol licence, including one that requires all premises to have a policy in place in order to prevent underage sales.

While there is a minimum policy for premises to adopt, they are able to go further in order to ensure that they have the most robust procedure in place should they choose. This guide has been produced to support retailers wishing to adopt the Challenge 25 policy, which has been developed by the Retail of Alcohol Standards Group to support the effort to eradicate underage sales.

### Why Challenge 25?

Since the introduction of Challenge 25 (previously Challenge 21) the number of underage sales has significantly declined. In 2012 Serve Legal reported that the test purchase pass rate had risen from 55% in 2007 to 76% now<sup>1</sup>. Further to this, the Department of Health report into Drinking, Smoking and Drug Use among young people show the number of young people purchasing alcohol continues to decline<sup>2</sup>. This is because the increased threshold of challenging 25yr olds, along with the training involved in the scheme, has meant better awareness of frontline staff leading to fewer mistakes and ultimately fewer underage sales.

### How do you adopt Challenge 25?

Challenge 25 simply requires that every person buying an age restricted product such as alcohol, who looks under the age of 25, is challenged to produce a valid ID. In order to adopt Challenge 25, organisations are recommended to consider the following:

- **Training** – It is important to have programmes in place to regularly train staff about the Challenge 25 scheme. Including who to challenge and how. This will help to ensure that staff are confident in making challenges and that the policy is consistently applied in store. It's also useful to keep training records to ensure staff have their training refreshed regularly;
- **Advertise** - Display the posters in prominent places in the store to advertise your proof of age policy. This helps not only to deter potential underage customers, but will also act as a back up to staff members who make challenges;
- **Support staff** – Challenge 25 only works if the staff have confidence that the decisions they make will not be undermined. It is therefore important to ensure that difficult decisions staff have made are not challenged and overturned;
- **Keep records** – It is useful to keep records of all failed attempts to buy alcohol of those without ID who look under 25, this could help with police or trading standards operations. You can use the WSTAs model template book by clicking here: <https://www.wsta.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Refusals-book.pdf>
- **Be clear about what ID is acceptable** – There are hundreds of forms of ID that are used in the UK. The standard Challenge 25 scheme suggests accepting Passports, Driver's Licences and PASS approved cards. While individual premises can accept anything with the law (ID that includes a hologram, name, date of birth and photo) it is important to make a decisions about what you will accept and publicise this clearly;

---

<sup>1</sup> Serve Legal and Plymouth University, *Checked out: the role of ID checks in controlling underage drinking*, June 2012

<sup>2</sup> Smoking, drinking and drug use among young people in England in 2010, Department of Health

- **Be aware of fake ID** – The Home Office has produced guidance for retailers to help them understand how to spot fake ID. It will be important to ensure staff are trained about the types of ID that are acceptable and how to look out for fakes.

### What are the penalties for underage sales?

There are significant penalties for selling alcohol to a person under the age of 18 for both staff and retailers. These include:

- A potentially unlimited fine if a member of staff makes an underage sale unless they can show they have taken all measures including asking for identification that would convince a reasonable person that they were over 18;
- A potentially unlimited fine for a premises that persistently sells to people underage, defined as happening on 2 or more occasions in a 3 month period;
- Closure orders for a maximum of 14 days following persistent underage sales;
- A potentially unlimited fine for proxy sales, where a person purchases alcohol on behalf of a minor.

### Is there any further useful information?

For further information about Challenge 25, including all designs for posters, badges and shelf sliders which are available to download for free, visit: <http://rasg.org.uk/materials2/>

#### Home Office Guidance on Fake ID is available here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/183495/False\\_ID\\_guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/183495/False_ID_guidance.pdf)

**Home Office Guidance on the Licensing Act 2003 and Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act is available here:** <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/alcohol-drugs/alcohol/guidance-section-182-licensing?view=Binary>

**Community Alcohol Partnerships** - Community Alcohol Partnerships aims to tackle public underage drinking through co-operation between alcohol retailers and local stakeholders, such as Trading Standards, police, local authority licensing teams, schools and health networks.

CAP addresses both the demand and supply side of underage drinking through enforcement, education and public perception. Chaired by Baroness Newlove, there are now over 35 CAPs in operation across the UK. For more information go to [www.communityalcoholpartnerships.co.uk](http://www.communityalcoholpartnerships.co.uk)

**The Proof of Age Standards Scheme (PASS)** - PASS is the UK's national proof of age accreditation scheme, endorsed by the Home Office, the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), the Security Industry Authority (SIA) and the Trading Standards Institute (TSI).

PASS sets and maintains minimum criteria for proof of age card issuers to meet. All cards schemes are required to submit to periodic audits carried out by an independent audit team appointed by the Trading Standards Institute (TSI) to ensure that they meet and keep the standards required for PASS accreditation. For more information go to <http://www.pass-scheme.org.uk/>