

AGE RESTRICTED PRODUCTS

RESPONSIBLE TRADER SCHEME

INTRO SLIDE (1)

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Welcome Mr Mayor, Madame Mayor, Your Worships, Honoured guests, Ladies and Gentleman, and most of all welcome to those members from the Business community from both Brent & Harrow.

I am very pleased that so many of you have taken the time from your busy schedules to attend today's launch of our Responsible Trader Scheme for Age Restricted Products. Without our business partners this responsible trader scheme cannot work.

During the course of the evening my colleague David Price will give a presentation on how this scheme is to operate and how you can help to reduce teenage crime and anti-social behaviour. I will give a closing speech after which trading standards officer will be available to answer any questions that you may have. There will be cold buffet and drinks will be provided.

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Thank you for attending the launch of Brent & Harrow Trading Standards Responsible Trader scheme on age restricted products.

My name is David Price, I am a Senior Enforcement Officer with the Brent & Harrow Trading Standards Service. I belong to team of officers who are at your disposal after this presentation, where you can ask questions and get to know those officers from your specific areas.

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Products are restricted by age for good reason. Adolescence is a period in our lives that can sculpt our future and our exposure to life's more provocative fruits, at an early age and can damage a child for the rest of their life.

This is why the Government has chosen to restrict certain products, the problem is that these products are readily available on our high streets and sold not only by small independent traders but by multi-national corporations.

It is understandable that young people will want to experiment, but we all have a duty to guide them, and help steer them away from some of life's more dangerous experiences.

It is pleasing to see so many businesses represented here tonight, showing a commitment to join this worthwhile scheme. Some of you may be wondering what kind of impact you can have, preventing young people from purchasing **age restricted products.**

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Prior to the launch, the scheme was publicised with a poster campaign. This campaign was an attempt to make the public and children aware that shops displaying our poster would now refuse to sell age restricted products.

The types of products covered under the scheme are-

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You may ask yourselves, what can I do? I'm only a small fish in a big pond. I need help in preventing these sales. I have heard of shop owners being assaulted and abused by young people, where are their parents? Why am I being asked to take over their parental responsibilities?

You are right, it's not your responsibility to bring up other people's children, but the impact that you, as responsible traders, can have is enormous, and with the assistance of Trading Standards and the Police, your actions can

help to dramatically reduce the **Anti-Social behaviour** and the problems that we all suffer as a consequence.

Should you succumb to the pressures and treats of these malevolent children the situation will only become worse. Your business will become a magnet for young people, as word spreads. Your regular customers will avoid your business, but more importantly by giving in to these illegal sales, you could be putting your family and your livelihood at risk.

At the moment stories of drugs and alcohol abuse dominate our national press. The recent spate of assaults, some serious, property damage, arson, the defacement of buildings with spray paint, have all been blamed on these excesses.

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Recently you will have heard of the tragic stabbing of a seventeen year old boy in east London. It has been widely publicised that underage drinking contributes to this kind of behaviour.

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There have been calls by the police and the judiciary to increase the penalties for such crimes. The findings of one Think Tank suggested that Britain's teenagers are among the most badly behaved in Europe.

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There is a growing concern amongst trading standards, government and the police to go beyond the normal enforcement route. There is a need to deal with these issues in a holistic way involving all members of our society, to find solutions to these problems and this is where we will try to elicit your help by entering our scheme.

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Let's take alcohol as an example; most of you know that the excess use of alcohol gives what is commonly known as 'Dutch Courage' a release of inhibition, one becomes more daring, more adventurous and sometimes lawless.

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Statistics show that substance abuse kills at least one person every week in the UK.

62% of 16-17 year olds drink alcohol once a week;

Children as young as ten are carrying knives

Children who experiment with cigarettes become addicted to Nicotine;

A recent survey of 11-15 year olds showed that 70% of them bought their cigarettes from corner shops.

You as **responsible traders** can play your part in helping to reduce these incidents.

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Test purchasing of age restricted products in Brent and Harrow reveals that we have a problem which we must all work to improve. Test purchasing of alcohol alone in Brent and Harrow over the past 9 months have resulted in 15 Sales from 159 attempts! This is almost a ten percent failure rate.

Further test purchases of cigarettes lottery tickets, butane videos, video games and knives have resulted in similar failures.

As '**Responsible Traders**' you have been provided with a toolkit to enable you to refuse sales when it is deemed appropriate and to train and monitor you staff to do the same.

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The pack contains a range of information about all of the legislation that control age restricted goods. While you may not sell all of the goods, nevertheless, the actions you take apply to each and every one of these items.

Training Staff on requirements of the legislation, following a simple plan to ensure they understand what is required of them, will help to make them more confident.

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Teaching staff how to refuse a sale, developing ways to stop situations getting out of control and helping to avoid making customers angry will improve their working environment.

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By keeping a training record the business can demonstrate it's commitment to preventing under age sales and this will act as a reminder to conduct refresher training at regular intervals.

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The pack has an explanation of what the law means when it talks about a due diligence system and the importance of following such a system to show that the business has taken all reasonable steps to avoid committing offences.

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Keeping a register of refusals again demonstrates that the business is following good practice and is a demonstration of their commitment.

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Placing the notices that are provided, in prominent places will ensure that your customers are aware that you are a part of the scheme and that you do not sell age restricted products to children and young persons below the specified age.

In the packs we have provided you with samples of training registers, refusal registers and notices that you can display in your premises. If you need more of these items, or any information concerning these items, we are always available..

Organising your premises so that the age restricted product are near a cash area, so that these items cannot be stolen and simply being aware of the potential impact that abuse of these items can cause, can go a long way in preventing illegal sales.

These measures should not be too arduous, even for the smallest of businesses and, once implemented, they can easily become a part of everyday business practices.

I will now pass you back to Mr Bilon.

NSB

From the hardware shop selling spray paints, knives and solvents, the newspapers shop selling cigarettes lottery tickets and butane, the video shop selling video's, DVD's and computer games that are restricted by age and the general purpose shops selling alcohol and a combination of the other goods. They can all benefit by joining the Responsible Trader Scheme and by following the simple advice provided within these packs

You have listened to Mr Price explain what you can do and you may be thinking that if I take up this initiative and the shop across the road or around the corner doesn't, will my business suffer. On the contrary the scheme will provide the tools to enable your businesses to flourish by staying on the right side of the law.

Trading Standards are here to help businesses comply with the law through advice and assistance. But we also conduct pro-active work in detecting and investigating traders that sell age restricted products by sending children into shops with instructions to buy age restricted goods.

Having said all this, I must impress upon you that we are here to help you. We will visit your premises at least once a year and discuss the relevant issues with you. We will attend your premises if requested by you, or answer any queries that you may have by telephone or email. We will keep you abreast of any new or changing legislation and hopefully establish a rapport with you, so that you feel confident and comfortable in contacting us if you feel the need to do so.

Combating anti-social behaviour is a huge task for all law enforcement agencies, but working in partnership with the police, Trading Standards and Brent and Harrow Councils are committed to this fight. However, as previously stated we cannot achieve our aims without your input and support.

By attending tonight for this launch it shows that you are 'Responsible Traders' and that you are committed to helping us in our endeavours and hopefully from this small select group we can make an impact and encourage other businesses, in our boroughs, to join.

I'm sure you will all agree that this scheme has the potential to impact on our society in a most profound way. I must once again stress that it is business people like yourselves who have the potential to make the biggest impact on today's ever changing society and by taking these simple steps and in your own way make Brent & Harrow a better and safer place to trade and live in.

With your help, we can make Brent & Harrow a better place to work and live in.

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