Chartered Trading Standards Institute

Department of Health & Social Care

TOBACCO AND VAPES ACT 2026 - GUIDANCE FOR RETAILERS

Selling tobacco, herbal smoking products and cigarette papers

Key Changes from 1 January 2027



It will be illegal to sell:

- Tobacco products
- Herbal smoking products
- Cigarette papers

to anyone **born on or after 1 January 2009.**

This applies to all retailers, including online sellers.

It will also be illegal for someone aged 18 or over to buy or try to buy these products for a person born on or after 1 January 2009. This is called **proxy purchasing.**

Retailer Responsibilities

Retailers must:

- Check that customers were born **before 1 January 2009** before selling these products.
- Ask for ID if they are unsure.
- Display an updated age-of-sale notice at every tobacco sales point from **1 January 2027.**



Products Covered

The rules apply to:

Tobacco products

Including:

- Cigarettes
- Rolling tobacco
- Cigars and cigarillos
- Pipe tobacco
- Shisha
- Snuff
- Chewing tobacco
- Heated tobacco products
- Tobacco blunts





Herbal smoking products

Including:

- Herbal cigarettes
- Herbal shisha
- Herbal blunts



Other products

- Cigarette papers



Age Verification

If a customer looks like they may not be eligible to buy, retailers should check their ID.

Retailers only need to check whether the customer's date of birth is **before 1 January 2009.**

Penalties for Illegal Sales

Anyone who sells these products to someone born on or after 1 January 2009 may receive:

- A Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) of:
  - **£200** in England, Wales and Scotland
  - **£250** in Northern Ireland (subject to approval)

Or they may be prosecuted and face larger fines.

Age-of-Sale Notices

From 1 January 2027, shops selling tobacco products must display a notice stating:

"It is illegal to sell tobacco products to anyone born on or after 1 January 2009."

The notice must be clearly visible wherever tobacco products are sold.

For further information go to
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/selling-tobacco-herbal-smoking-products-and-cigarette-papers

Proxy Purchasing

From **1 January 2027,** it will be illegal for an adult to buy tobacco products, herbal smoking products or cigarette papers for someone born on or after **1 January 2009.**

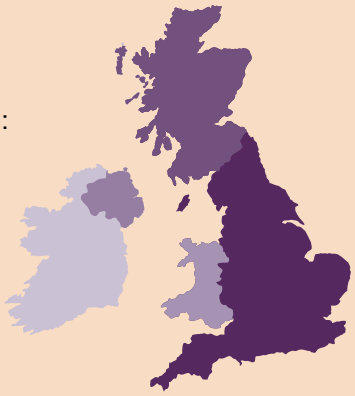
Staff should refuse a sale if they suspect someone is buying for an underage person.



Who the Rules Apply To

The rules apply across:

- England
- Wales
- Scotland
- Northern Ireland



Free Samples and Giveaways

From **29 October 2026,** businesses must not:

- Give away free samples of tobacco products, herbal smoking products or cigarette papers.
- Give away these products as gifts or promotions.

Business-to-Business Sales

The new age-of-sale rules apply only to retail sales.

They do **not** apply to:

- Wholesale purchases
- Business-to-business transactions
- Purchases made on behalf of organisations for legitimate business or research purposes



Large Discounts

From **29 October 2026,** businesses must not sell these products at very large discounts if the purpose is to promote them.



For example, selling cigarette papers for a token amount such as 10p as a promotion may be illegal.



Normal sale pricing, stock clearance discounts and trade discounts are still allowed.

Persistent Offenders

Retailers who repeatedly break the law may face stronger action, including temporary bans on selling tobacco-related products.



Quick Guide for Retailers

- ✔ Check customers were born before **1 January 2009**
- ✔ Ask for ID if unsure
- ✔ Display the new age-of-sale notice by **1 January 2027**
- ✔ Refuse suspected proxy sales
- ✔ Stop free giveaways from **29 October 2026**
- ✔ Avoid promotional deep-discount sales from **29 October 2026**
- ✘ Do not sell to anyone born on or after **1 January 2009**
- ✘ Do not sell on behalf of someone born on or after **1 January 2009**
- ✘ Do not offer free samples or promotional giveaways of covered products.

For further information go to
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/selling-tobacco-herbal-smoking-products-and-cigarette-papers