



Shop staff are better at refusing alcohol sales

Boost in ID checks

Christine Boggis

Off-licences and convenience stores have boosted their performance in checking IDs to prevent under-age sales, according to a report by test-purchasing body Serve Legal.

But the second quarter of 2009 saw pubs and clubs outperform the off-trade for the first time, with a pass rate of 71% compared with 69% in the off-trade.

Overall, 69% of the off-trade retailers approached by Serve Legal's 18 and 19-year-old volunteers challenged them for ID in the first half of 2009.

Off-licences and convenience stores saw the biggest improvement since last year – off-licences had a pass rate of 66% compared to 55% the previous year, and the pass rate for convenience stores jumped from 65% to 70%.

Supermarkets also passed 70% of the tests – up from 69% last year.

Serve Legal said the results show retailers are getting better at stopping under-age sales – but there is still room for improvement.

Director Charlie Mowat said: "The biggest driver for under-age drinkers when it comes to buying alcohol is whether or not they think they will be served. That is why it is important retailers to send out a strong message of zero tolerance."

The company's results for the first half of this year found that southern England performed better than the north, with a 68% pass rate compared with 64%.

Scotland got the highest pass rate at 75%, up from 68% last year, followed by 73% in Wales and 72% in East Anglia. The worst performing region was Northern Ireland, which got a pass rate of 57%.

COMMENT

ROSIE DAVENPORT EDITOR



Is Bibby FQR's silver bullet?

With First Quench Retailing's turnaround plan moving up a gear, it's clear there are many more changes on the horizon. As acting chief executive Martin Healy explains in this issue, the business is now committed to behaving like a high-street drinks retailer, with a focus on what customers want and a distribution network that ensures they can actually buy it.

Getting products on shelf has not always been a strong point – as store managers who have been with the group long enough to recall successive changes in distribution companies will testify – and obviously there's the ongoing issue of credit withdrawal.

With the current contract with Christian Salvesen now drawing to a close, there are concerns that history could repeat itself.

Clearly, with FQR under the spotlight like never before, and suppliers seeking assurances that progress is being made to redress the £30 million loss made last year, the Welwyn Garden City team know a smooth transition is vital.

Healy is also under no illusion that it can't afford any hiccups – particularly as he has set the company a deadline of two years to return to growth. Finding the right logistic

Being able to