

ESSEX Village Shops Handbook



Essex County Council

RCCE

RURAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL OF ESSEX

empowering local communities

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This handbook has been put together by the Rural Community Council of Essex and our thanks go to Oxfordshire Rural Community Council for much of the information contained in this booklet.

The handbook is designed to provide guidance and information about many of the issues that have been raised by shopkeepers. This booklet has been financially supported by Essex County Council in line with the priorities included in the local area agreement to increase 'access to essential rural services'.



General Information on Running a Community Shop

Constitution

Charities should have a governing document, which enables the efficient operation and effective governance of the organisation. It should give regard to the “separation of powers” to ensure probability. It should also include decision making structures, which should be representative of the membership and operational structures, which should be defined more narrowly.

Strategic plan

The organisation should have a consideration to what's its medium and long term future should be. This should include a mission, vision and values section.

Complaints procedure

The organisation should have a clear complaints procedure which allows customers to complain about the day to day operation of the organisation. The complaints procedure should refer wider questions to the democratic procedures contained within the constitution.

Community involvement strategy

Organisations, (commercial and community), should give consideration how and why it could facilitate involvement in the organisation. It should also give regard to the training of volunteers to play an effective part in the organisation.

Safeguarding procedure

If your organisation employs under 18's or uses volunteers of a similar age you organisation should have a safeguarding policy to protect children. This should outline the role of the “Child Protection Officer” in the organisation, whos role is to ensure protection of children and vulnerable adults.



Operational procedures

These should include all the statutory duties, (as below), and consider the divide between those duties which should be completed by paid staff and volunteers.



General Information Required For Running a Retail Operation

DOCUMENTS REQUIRED

Name and address of business

The full name and address of the business, including its trading name, should be displayed at the entrance to the shop.

Information on business documents

All documents must show the full business name, the place of registration, the company number, registered office address and a VAT registration number where applicable. This applies to all forms, letter heads, brochures, e-mails, order forms and websites.

Registration of a food business

If you run a food business, under regulation (EC) No.852/2004 Article 6(2), you must register with the local authority 28 days prior to commencement of business. Registration is free and will be accepted automatically.

Opening hours notice

Clearly display the opening hours at the entrance to the shop. Make a clear distinction between the shop hours and that of the Post Office if appropriate.

Post Office

PO Ltd requires a Post Office to display specific information about the branch- further information is available from PO Ltd.

Employer's liability insurance

A current insurance certificate will be issued by the insurance company and should be displayed in the shop.

Liquor licence

The licence relating to the building should be displayed in the shop. It will list the hours during which it is permitted to sell alcohol and name the designated premises supervisor(s). Licences are issued by the district council (see page 33).

Notices relating to restricted sale items

It is a legal requirement to display a clear sign where you sell **cigarettes** stating "It is illegal to sell tobacco products to anyone under the age of 18". On vending machines, the sign should say: "This machine is only for the use of people aged 18 or over".

Alcohol: Display a sign stating "It is illegal to sell alcohol to anyone under the age of 18" or "We do not sell alcohol to under 18's".

Lottery: sell to 16 years and over.

Video/dvd certification: 'U', '12', '15', '18'.

Information should also be displayed about any identification policy which is operational with in the store.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Health and safety notice

The large white Health and Safety Executive poster (ISBN 0717624935) should be completed and displayed in the office/stockroom. Available from HSE Books www.hse.gov.uk 01787 881165.

Health and safety risk assessment

A health and safety risk assessment should be produced, discussed with staff and regularly reviewed. Further information from www.hse.gov.uk and on page 12.

Accident book

Records should be kept of any accidents or near-misses with information about the date, time, personnel involved, nature and circumstances of the accident, outcome/injury and any treatment required. Entries should be made one to a page and stored securely to satisfy the Data Protection Act. Books are available from business stationers.

FIRE

Fire risk assessment

A fire risk assessment document should be produced, discussed with staff and regularly reviewed. See page 20.

Fire warning and evacuation procedures

A simple list of instructions entitled 'In the event of a fire...' should be displayed in each part of the premises. It should name the appointed evacuation area. Agree a warning system - this can simply be to shout FIRE throughout the building - and ensure all staff and volunteers know what to do in the event of a fire.

Fire safety check book

This lists all the various safety checks that should be carried out and provides a record to show that checks and training have been completed. Available from good business stationers.

General Information Required For Running a Retail Operation

FOOD HEALTH AND HYGIENE

Temperature check book

It is a legal requirement that the temperatures of all chiller and freezer cabinets are recorded daily, ideally twice a day.

Diary to record health and hygiene checks in the shop

The latest regulations require a daily written record to be kept of the health and hygiene checks made in the shop at the beginning and end of each trading day. Any hygiene issues should be noted and information kept on how they were dealt with. See page 14.

Examples are given in the Food Standards Agency handbook 'Safer Food, Better Business for retailers'

STAFF INFORMATION

Contact details, next of kin and relevant medical information of staff and volunteers

These should be kept safely for reference in case of emergency

Staff training records

Records should be kept of any food hygiene training and off licence courses completed.

Examples are given in the Food Standards Agency handbook 'Safer Food, Better Business for Retailers' as above. It may also be useful to keep a record of induction training sessions with new staff/volunteers.

General information booklet on shop procedures for staff

Gives details of general procedures in the shop to serve as a reference for staff including working the till, cooking 'bake off' products, dry cleaning, DVD rentals, etc.

Shop diary

A useful way for staff working on different shifts to communicate. This is the main register for comings and goings within the shop particularly for information about any orders taken, customers requests for stock, returned goods etc. It can also include the wastage record, refusals record and daily temperature checks.

Wastage record

Record all goods that have had to be thrown away because they are damaged or out of date. The wastage should be accounted for in the shop's financial figures. Such records will also enable buying patterns to be adjusted accordingly.

Refusals record

A log of all refusals to serve tobacco, off licence goods, solvents and lottery tickets.



Trading Standards

Trading Standards legislation gives protection to consumers whilst ensuring a fair trading environment for legitimate businesses. Although these legal requirements can seem onerous for the village shopkeeper, they must be complied with and customers are within their rights to report poor practice to Trading Standards officers. Moreover, Trading Standards officers have the power to make unannounced visits to your shop premises to inspect whether you are fully compliant with the law.

If a breach of the law is identified, a thorough investigation will be carried out. A range of enforcement actions are available to the officers, including advice and cautions, with prosecution only being undertaken as a last resort. If you are advised to make improvements to the way you conduct your business, it is compulsory that you act upon the advice. The major issues relating to village shops are summarised below:

Date marking – ‘Use By’ and ‘Best before’ guidelines

There are three types of date markings on packaged foods and it is the responsibility of the shopkeeper to ensure that goods are displayed correctly and legally.

Use By: This relates to foods which are highly perishable and which might be an immediate danger to human health if not consumed within a short space of time, eg fresh meat, fish, poultry, cooked meat, pate, dairy products, ready made meals, salads and soft cheeses. The law requires dating with both a ‘a day’ and ‘a month’, eg ‘Use By 10 May’ and a year is recommended but not compulsory. Food marked with a ‘Use By’ date may not be sold or displayed for sale after that date.

To prevent food being sold after these dates: Check chilled goods daily and remove foods marked with an out of date ‘Use By’ marking. Place in clearly marked containers in the back up fridge to be disposed of and not put out for sale again. Consider reducing the

price for a quick sale before it goes out of date.

Best before: This relates to foods intended to have a shelf life of up to 18 months, provided that a full date including year is given. Food which has a shelf life of less than 3 months eg bread, hard cheeses, may have ‘a day’ and ‘a month’ marked with ‘Best before’ or ‘Best before end’ dates. These goods can be sold after their marked dates provided that they remain of good quality and fit for human consumption. It is advisable to ensure that customers know that the date has expired before they make the decision to buy.

Best before dates on eggs: The ‘Best before’ date must be given followed with the day and month until which the eggs remain in good condition. The legal maximum is 28 days after laying. The eggs must reach the consumer with in 21 days of laying or 7 days prior to the best before date, whichever is sooner. Ensure that eggs are supplied to you with long enough dates to accommodate these legal requirements.



The following products are exempt from date marking: Fresh fruit and vegetables(unless peeled or cut into pieces); wine; alcoholic drinks more than 10% proof; any flour confectionery and bread which is normally consumed within 24 hours of preparation; vinegar; salt; sugars; chewing gum.

Price marking

Goods that are offered for retail sale must show the selling price. It should be clearly legible, unambiguous, easily identifiable and inclusive of VAT where appropriate. The prices can be displayed on the goods themselves or on a notice or ticket near to the goods. Goods in the shop window (or similar displays) containing items which can be removed and sold to the customer must display selling prices, unless the items are purely promotional and not for sale.

Selling fruit and vegetables

The latest regulations require a daily written record to be kept of the health and hygiene checks made in the shop at the beginning and end of each trading day. Any hygiene issues should be noted and information kept on how they were dealt with. See page 14.

Examples are given in the Food Standards Agency handbook 'Safer Food, Better Business for retailers'

Loose fruit and vegetables must have the unit price (eg £1.20 per kg/ 20p each) indicated and pre-packaged items must be marked with the selling price, plus the unit price. The prices must be either on or near to the goods and may be by means of a price list. Unit pricing must refer to the metric quantity primarily: the imperial equivalent can also be given but must be no more prominent than the metric.

Fruit and vegetables may be sold by weight, number or bunch depending on what they are whether sold loose or pre-packaged. The weight may be either the net weight (the weight of the produce without wrapping) or the gross weight (which includes the wrapping materials, within certain weight limits) and must be made known to the customer before payment is made, either by weighing the goods in front of the customer, giving the weight in writing or telling the customer what the weight is. See the Trading Standards website for further details.



Selling eggs

Eggs which are sold loose or on trays must be Class 'A' eggs and individually stamped with the producer's unique distinguishing mark. It is illegal to sell unstamped eggs from a shop. *Further information must be displayed on a notice where the eggs are sold giving:*

- An explanation of the stamped code as given below

MARKING	EXPLANATION
0	Organic
1	Free Range
2	Barn
3	Cage
UK	Country of origin
12345	Unique producer number

- The weight grade:
XL or Very Large are eggs from 73g upwards;
L or Large 63- 73g;
M or Medium are 53- 63g
S or Small are below 53g
- The quality class (always 'A')
- The Best Before date (Maximum of 28 days from laying)
- Appropriate storage conditions

Loose eggs should be placed in plain, unmarked boxes(not ones from other sources bearing incorrect information) by the customer and should not be packed prior to the sale. Eggs sold pre-packaged must be labelled as above and with details of the packer's name, address and the number of eggs in each pack.

Labelling of sandwiches made at the shop

Sandwiches which are made and packaged by the retailer for sale on own premises must be labelled with the name of the food; the following additives by category name, if present: antioxidant, flavourings, sweeteners, preservatives, colour or

flavour enhancers; and the presence of any genetically modified ingredients.

Eg **Ham Salad Sandwich**

Reformed ham with lettuce, tomato and cucumber on white bread
Contains preservative and colour.

Sandwiches made and packaged for sale at other outlets must be labelled with

- The name of the food, including the filling and the type of bread

Eg **Breakfast Bun**. Soft white bread roll with bacon, egg, tomato and mayonnaise

- A list of ingredients under the heading 'Ingredients', in weight descending order. Any additives must be listed by their category name followed by the E number or name
- The percentage of the ingredients which are in the name of the food
- Date mark and storage instructions- usually 'Use by' 'Keep refrigerated at or below 8 degrees C
- The name of the manufacturer or packer
- Indication of any allergenic ingredients
- Presence of any genetically modified ingredients

Eg **Ham Salad Sandwich**

Reformed ham with lettuce, tomato and cucumber on white bread.

Ingredients: white bread (wheat flour, water, yeast, salt, flour treatment agent E300), tomato, cucumber, vegetable margarine (contains colour E160(a)).

Use by 1 January, Keep refrigerated- Eat on day of purchase.

Name and address of producer.

Trading Standards

Selling cigarettes

It is illegal for you and any member of your staff to sell cigarettes or any other tobacco products to anyone under the age of 18. You must clearly display a notice in your shop stating that the sale of cigarettes to people under 18 is illegal and keep a record of any refusals. As the owner of the business, you will be held responsible for the actions of your staff, so ensure that they are trained. Staff aged 16-18 that are properly employed by you may legally sell tobacco products following the guidelines above.

Always ask young people to produce proof of their age when they attempt to purchase cigarettes, unless you are certain that the customer is aged 18 and over. If there is any doubt about the age of the customer, or whether their ID is genuine, refuse the sale and record the incident.

Cigarette lighter refills and solvents

It is an offence to supply any cigarette lighter refill canister containing butane or a substance with butane as a constituent to any person under the age of 18.

It is also an offence to supply any intoxicating substance to anyone under the age of 18 if you have reasonable cause to believe the substance is to be used for intoxication.

The most frequently abused products are:

- Solvent based glue
- Dry cleaning fluid
- Marker pens
- Correction fluid/thinner
- Aerosols
- Anti freeze

What you can do to prevent under 18's purchasing products for solvent abuse:

- Refuse to sell cigarette lighter refills to under 18s
- Refuse to sell solvents if the purchaser is under 18 and can't give you genuine reason for buying the product
- Operate a proof of age scheme and keep a book of refused sales (see page 4)
- Identify sensitive products in the shop and move displays of glues and solvents nearer the counter
- Keep the products behind the counter so that customers have to ask for them
- Train your staff to be aware of any solvent based products in the shop and give them a set procedure for dealing with under age sales

Selling alcohol

It is a criminal offence to sell intoxicating liquor to anyone under the age of 18. As the licensee you are responsible for the sale of alcohol from your premises whether you personally make the sale or not, so you could be held responsible if a member of staff sells alcohol to anyone under the age of 18.

Such a sale could result in you and the person who made the sale being prosecuted with fines up to £1000. If you are found guilty of further offences of selling to under age customers, then you may ultimately forfeit your licence to sell alcohol at all.

What you can do to prevent under 18s purchasing alcohol:

- Display appropriate posters, point of sale material and window stickers- see page 4
- Ensure that staff are trained and know the legal requirements. Keep a record of training given
- Make it a requirement to ask for proof of age and support staff in doing so
- Provide a prompt on the till to remind staff to ask for proof of age
- Implement a proof of age scheme accredited by the Proof of Age Standards Scheme (PASS) eg Validate Card, Citizen Card, Prove-it Card. A genuine card will have a PASS hologram and show a photograph and details of the person's age. If they don't have a card, then refuse the sale.
No Card = No Sale
- Supervise staff, particularly young or inexperienced members. Make sure that you or a senior member of staff is always available if a difficult situation arises
- Keep a log of refused sales (see page 5)
- Use CCTV to spot potential problems if practicable
- Remember that the law gives local authorities the power to make test purchases and will undertake routine test purchases with volunteer children to test whether retailers are complying with the law.

Essex County Council website www.essex.gov.uk
Has trading standards information for businesses,

Every shop must have a health and safety policy and have the necessary procedures in place to comply with the law. Whilst overall responsibility for health and safety control rests with the shop owners (or the management committee in the case of a community shop), it is the responsibility of all - owners and staff – to ensure that the shop is a safe place to be.

Since health and safety legislation requires both employers and employees to comply with certain minimum requirements, both can be held responsible in law if they fail to do so.

Health and safety in the workplace is monitored by the Health and Safety Executive, but it is the role of health and safety officers from the district council to visit shops, primarily to give advice and then to ensure that correct practices are being enforced and dangerous practices are stopped.

The legal requirements are:

- A written health and safety policy
- A written risk assessment
- A record of the significant findings of the risk assessment
- Consulting with staff and volunteers on health and safety matters
- The training of staff and volunteers on health and safety matters.

One person should take responsibility for the general implementation of health and safety policy. This is usually the shop owner or shop manager. Implementation involves:

- Keeping themselves informed on relevant health and safety matters
- Carrying out a risk assessment and reviewing it regularly
- Having procedures in place to ensure that health and safety issues will be dealt with effectively at all times
- Training and instructing staff when they commence employment and at regular updating sessions

Health and Safety Policy Statement

**The.....Village Shop
is committed to providing and maintaining a healthy
and safe environment for all of its staff, customers and
any other people who may be affected by its activities.**

Our general policy is:

- To provide adequate control of the health and safety risks arising from work activities
- To consult with staff on health and safety matters
- To provide and maintain safe equipment
- To ensure safe handling and use of substances
- To provide information, instruction and supervision for staff and volunteers
- To ensure that the demands of activities do not exceed the capabilities of staff to carry out their work without risk to themselves or others and to give training where necessary
- To prevent accidents and cases of work-related ill health
- To maintain safe and healthy working conditions
- To monitor and review the effectiveness of the policy and where appropriate to implement improvements

Supervising staff in health and safety matters.

All workers have health and safety responsibilities and should:

- Take reasonable care of their own and colleagues health and safety and that of others who may be affected by their actions
- Cooperate fully with management in ensuring that all health and safety standards and procedures relating to shop work are followed
- Immediately report to management any working situation they consider to be a danger to the health and safety of themselves or others.

This can be done by:

- Looking out for hazards to both staff and customers
- Reporting any hazards or incidents to the manager/supervisor
- Following guidelines particularly when lifting goods, cleaning floors, stacking shelves etc
- Keeping the floor and aisles free of hazards
- Attending training sessions and cooperating with management.

Health and Safety

Health and safety topics which are relevant to village shops include:

- General practices and procedures
- Preventing slips, trips and falls (see page 10)
- Manual handling (see page 10)
- Control of substances hazardous to health (COSHH) (see page 11)
- Good housekeeping and standards of cleanliness (see page 14)
- Food handling regulations (see page 14)
- All aspects of fire safety and risk assessment (see pages 18-22)
- All aspects of security, both of premises and personnel (see page 24)
- First Aid provision (see page 23)
- Reporting of accidents including RIDDOR (see page 23).

Manual handling

This refers to the transporting or supporting of loads by hand or using bodily force - people can hurt their back, arms, hands or feet lifting everyday loads, not just when the load is heavy:

- Think about how you lift goods - do not bend the back, bend the knees
- Store heavy items lower down if possible
- Use (safe) stepladders to fill top shelves

Things to consider when moving objects:

- Examine the object; check the weight, centre of gravity, sharp edges etc.
- Make sure the way is clear; ensure the route is free of tripping or slipping hazards and that the unloading destination is available and clear

- Maintain a good posture - feet apart, bending the knees, back straight, do not twist - move your feet
- Grasp firmly, with both hands and use gloves if necessary
- Keep the load close to the body for as long as possible. Try sliding the load towards you before attempting to lift it
- Ask for help from colleagues if necessary.



Slips, trips and falls

Injuries caused by accidents involving slips, trips and falls can be serious, but avoiding such incidents is straightforward and should be a priority. Listed below are the most common hazards and what action should be taken to avoid incidents.

Hazard	Suggested action
Spillages of wet or dry substances	Clean up spills immediately. If a liquid is greasy ensure a suitable cleaning agent is used. After cleaning the floor may be wet for some time – use appropriate signs to tell people the floor is still wet
Trailing cables	Position equipment to avoid cables crossing pedestrian routes, use cable covers to securely fix to surfaces, restrict access to prevent contact
Miscellaneous rubbish	Keep all areas clear and tidy, remove rubbish and do not allow it to build up
Rugs/mats	Ensure mats are securely fixed and do not have curling edges
Slippery surfaces	Assess the cause and treat accordingly with an appropriate cleaning method
Change from wet to dry floor surface	Wear suitable footwear, warn of risks by using signs and locate doormats where these changes are likely
Poor lighting	Report or replace all failed light bulbs etc immediately. This applies both inside and outside the store
Unsuitable footwear	Choose suitable footwear with a good tread on the sole

Extract reproduced from HSE leaflet 'Preventing slips, trips and falls at work' ISBN 0717611833 www.hse.gov.uk

For information about health and safety contact:

HSE Information Services, Caerphilly Business Park, Caerphilly
CF83 3GG

Tel: 08781545500

e-mail: hseinformationservices@natbrit.com

A wide range of books are available on all aspects of health & safety from

HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk, CO10 2WA

Tel: 01787881165 www.hse.gov.uk

COSHH: Control of Substances Hazardous to Health

Using chemicals or other hazardous substances at work can put people's health at risk, so the law requires employers to control exposure to hazardous substances to prevent ill health. They have to protect both employees and others who may be exposed by complying with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH).

Shops are relatively low risk regarding COSHH, but many village shops stock and use products that are controlled by the regulations. Bleach and cleaning products which are hazardous are marked with a manufacturer's warning and advice is given on the container on how to deal with the substances if they come into contact with the skin or eyes. As an employer you will need to identify such substances, assess the risks of any hazardous products and produce written instructions on how the products should be dealt with in the case of accidental spillage. These instructions should be given to staff and be made readily available in the case of an incident eg posting them up by the sink used for hand washing. These products should be stored with care so that there is a minimum risk of spillage which could be hazardous to customers and staff.

Hazardous products which are used by staff to clean the shop should be stored securely and kept away from food. Protective gloves should be supplied for staff to wear when using the products and staff should be trained to know what to do if there is an accident involving products.

HEALTH AND SAFETY RISK ASSESSMENT

Employers have to assess the risks from work activities and record the findings. The risks should be rated and the significant risks recorded and action taken.

To produce a 'risk rating'

Assess the probable frequency of each hazard occurring and score it from **1 (low) to 6 (high)**

1. **Improbable**
2. **Possible**
3. **Occasional**
4. **Frequent**
5. **Regular**
6. **Common**

Then assess the severity of possible injury resulting from the hazard and score it **1 (low) to 6 (high)**

1. **Trivial injuries**
2. **Minor injuries**
3. **Major injury – one person**
4. **Major injury- many people**
5. **Death of one person**
6. **Multiple deaths**

Add the 2 scores together to give a 'risk rating'

A risk rating of 5 or more indicates that the hazard is significant and requires action.

Step 1: Look for the hazards

Walk around the shop and identify significant hazards which could result in harm to several people. Consult with staff/volunteers and note any comments made by customers.

Step 2: Who might be harmed and how

There is no need to list individuals by name- just think about groups of people that might be affected, in particular vulnerable groups.

For example:

- Staff/volunteers**
- Customers**
- Delivery staff**
- Trainees**
- Lone workers**

Children
Elderly/infirm
Disabled people
Reps

Step 3: Evaluate the risks

For the hazards listed, detail what controls are in place to reduce the risks and list the existing precautions and procedures for dealing with the hazard. Make note of any training, information or procedures which control the risks. The aim is to make the risks as low as possible.

Decide whether existing precautions are adequate or if more should be done to reduce the risk. If more needs to be done, write an action list and prioritise the hazards that should be addressed first.

Step 4: Record your findings

It is useful to keep a written record of the assessment and it is a legal requirement to do so if there are more than 5 employees in the business.

Write down the significant hazards, the action currently taken, and how the hazards are going to be reduced. All staff/volunteers should be kept informed of the findings and the action that is planned.

Step 5: Review the assessment and revise if necessary

Review the assessment annually to make sure that risks are still in the low category and procedures are being followed correctly. If any major changes occur then it may be necessary to amend the risk assessment accordingly.

Next is a Risk Assessment Check Sheet for Health and Safety matters. Use it as a template or adapt it as appropriate.

Health and Safety

HEALTH AND SAFETY RISK ASSESSMENT CHECK LIST

Use the checklist as a basis for your own risk assessment. Review regularly and keep staff updated.

This health and safety risk assessment should identify:

- Items which pose a risk to health and safety at the shop premises
- Features of the shop which

could place people's health and safety at risk

- Measures which can be put into place to reduce or eliminate those risks

Premises:	Date:
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Potential Hazard Person(s) at risk	Yes/No	Risk level Low Medium High	Existing precautions/ procedures Recommendations for improvement	Date Done	Signature
Outside the Premises/ Entrance					
Is there adequate lighting for (a) security purposes (b) preventing trips/falls					
Is the pavement/ car park surface even to prevent trips/ falls					
Is the entrance clear of obstacles eg bicycles, buggies, dogs on leads					
Is there a handrail or ramp to assist disabled and elderly customers gain access					
Are floor mats adequate and undamaged					
Shop Floor					
Is the floor clean, even and in good repair to prevent trips /falls					
Does the shop have a 'Wet Floor' sign and use it when appropriate					
Are the aisles wide enough to enable wheelchair uses and pushchairs to gain access					
Is the floor kept clear of stock at all times, including when deliveries are being put away					
Are free standing stock and shelves secure from toppling on to customers					

Potential Hazard Person(s) at risk	Yes/No	Risk level Low Medium High	Existing precautions/ procedures Recommendations for improvement	Date Done	Signature
Stockroom					
Is the stockroom kept ordered and tidy					
Is the stock stored in a safe manner					
Are heavy items stowed at a low level so they can be (a) moved more easily (b) not risk falling on to staff					
Is equipment available to assist staff in moving stock around. Eg ladders, trolley					
Is such equipment in good condition and regularly maintained					
Are staff fully trained in correct manual handling techniques					
Are knives and scissors stored safely					
Are all cleaning fluids/other dangerous substances stored securely away from food					
Are there instructions on what to do if dangerous substances are spilled or come into contact with the skin and eyes					
Is refuse cleared away each day and stored securely for collection					
Are all portable electrical appliances safe to use					
Do staff receive training on using specialist equipment Eg the oven, slicing machine etc					
Is protective clothing available as appropriates					

Food Safety and Hygiene

The Environmental Health Officers at your local district or borough council are responsible for ensuring that food businesses sell food safely. They can offer advice and guidance on how to comply with the law; they also make unscheduled visits to inspect shop premises in order to enforce compliance.

Legislation:

- Basic hygiene and food safety requirements are set out in the Food Safety (General Food Hygiene) Regulations 1995 and the Food Safety (Temperature Control) Regulations 1995
- Changes in food hygiene legislation which came into force in 2006 require retailers who sell food to complete a written Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) record. See the Risk Assessment Check Sheet on page 16
- The Food Standards Agency has produced a special pack for retailers to explain the impact of the food safety regulations. The pack **'Safer Food, Better Business for Retailers'** is free and available to order from the Food Standards Agency via www.food.gov.uk
- You can use your own versions of these forms as long as they record the relevant information effectively
- For stores that prepare or cook food such as 'bake off' products or making sandwiches, checks must be carried out to ensure that food is kept at the correct temperature and prepared in a clean and hygienic manner
- More specialized shops such as delicatessens will be required to conduct a more detailed risk analysis, following the requirements laid out in the pack
- For further information or clarification contact the environmental health department at your local district or borough council.

General guidelines for food safety

'Safer Food, Better Business for Retailers' pack

The pack is clearly laid out, easy to understand and explains what is required by law to ensure the safe handling of food in your business. It is strongly recommended that every shop obtains a copy and uses it to formulate best practice.

- It explains the various safety points, why they are important, what needs to be done to comply and what to do if something goes wrong
- The pack supplies an 'opening' and 'closing' checklist, daily diaries and a 4 weekly review, plus a cleaning schedule and staff training records, all of which a shop is required to keep by law
- All food preparation must be carried out in an hygienic manner
- Premises and equipment must be clean, ordered and well maintained
- Staff should be instructed in personal hygiene procedures, particularly before handling food and after using the toilet
- The proprietor/management committee/manager must carry out a hazard risk assessment which must be written down
- Food requiring temperature control should be kept cool below 8 degrees C or warm above 63 degrees C. Frozen food should be kept at minus 18 degrees C

- A daily record of the temperature of both the chilled cabinet or freezer and the food stored in it should be kept. Do not rely solely on the temperature dials on the units. A digital thermometer or food probe should be used to ensure that food is being kept at the recommended temperature
- The temperature of chillers and fridges is not uniform – ideally temperatures should be taken at the hottest spot to ensure the correct temperature throughout the appliance
- When receiving a delivery of chilled or frozen goods, ensure food is restored to its critical temperature as quickly as possible and always within two hours of receipt
- Check the 'Use by' dates of chilled goods daily and remove any out of date goods immediately
- Ensure that all food stock is supplied to you from a reliable source and is in good condition. Reject any stock that is out of date, has damaged packaging, or has not been stored safely in transit
- Staff and volunteers should be supervised and instructed and /or trained in food hygiene matters to a level appropriate to their job.



Staff Training

Training on the essentials of food hygiene should be received by anyone starting work as a food handler for the first time. There are different levels of training for the different categories of food handler:

- Those handling low risk or wrapped food only eg counter staff (category A)
- Those preparing high 'open risk' foods eg catering assistant (category B)
- Those who have a supervisory role eg manager, chef (category C)

Local colleges of higher education and other organizations run accredited Food Hygiene courses. Your local environmental health department will be able to provide further information and a list of local establishments offering courses.

For community shop staff, the Co-op may offer the opportunity to attend their 'in house' training on food hygiene if there are places available. Training needs should be reviewed on a regular basis and a written training record for each member of staff should be kept. Written evidence of hygiene training may be important in demonstrating compliance with the requirements and may be relevant when attempting to establish a 'due diligence' defence.



Food Safety and Hygiene

FOOD HYGIENE RISK ASSESSMENT CHECK SHEET

Use this checklist as a basis for your own risk assessment. Review regularly and update staff.

This food health and hygiene risk assessment should identify:

- Food safety hazards at the various stages in the business
- How these hazards can be

controlled and minimised

- Measures which can be put into place to reduce or eliminate those

Premises:	Date:
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Hazard	Yes/No	Risk level Low Medium High	Existing precautions/ procedures Recommendations for improvement	Date done	Signature
At purchase and delivery of goods					
Chilled and frozen foods are not delivered within the correct temperature range					
Foods are contaminated eg micro biological due to poor temperature control; Foreign body eg glass					
Goods are purchased too close to or beyond 'Use by' and 'Best before' dates					
Food packaging is defective					
Food is purchased from unfamiliar or dubious sources					
Storage					
Chilled and frozen goods are not stored at the recommended temperature					
Risk of cross contamination eg raw meat juices dripping on ready to eat food, Contact with cleaning materials, staples, mice droppings etc					
Food is stored in damp or humid conditions causing mould or rusting of tins					
Defective shelving is damaging fragile packaging					
Stock is not rotated correctly so out of date stock is left on display					
Refrigeration equipment is inadequate, over filled and over iced					
Storage areas are not checked daily for pests					

Food Safety and Hygiene

Hazard	Yes/No	Risk level Low Medium High	Existing precautions/ procedures Recommendations for improvement	Date done	Signature
Preparation (of food for sale in the shop)					
Food is not thawed effectively before cooking					
Food is left out at room temperature unnecessarily					
Preparation room is not well ventilated allowing bacteria to multiply					
Lack of hot water, soap and drying facilities at all hand wash basins					
Staff not trained on personal hygiene practises eg handwashing so risk spreading disease					
Staff continue to handle food and do not report symptoms of food poisoning eg sickness, diarrhoea					
Separate cloths are not used to clean surfaces used for both raw meat, poultry and ready to eat food					
Work surfaces not cleaned and disinfected regularly					
There is no effective cleaning regime, with checklist, which will discourage bacteria & pests					
Risk of food contamination by flies, jewellery, broken glass etc					
Cooking					
Internal cooking – temperatures not checked					
Raw meats and unwashed vegetables not separated prior to service					
Further storage- Hot Holding					
Temperatures not checked to ensure that food is kept above 63c					
Cooked foods are not cooled to below 8c quickly enough eg within 1.5 hours					
Reheated foods are not kept at a temperature greater than 70c for 2 minutes					
General					
Staff not fully trained and consulted on all aspects of food hygiene					
Hazard analysis chart is not regularly reviewed					

Fire Safety

Legislation

In October 2006 the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 came into force, replacing most fire safety legislation with one simple order and ending the issuing of fire certificates.

It is now a legal requirement for the person responsible for the premises to take reasonable steps to reduce the risk of fire and make sure that people can safely escape from the building in the event of a fire. It is vital that consideration is made for everyone who might be on the premises, or nearby, whether staff, customers or members of the public.

Responsibility

The employer is responsible for fire safety and must

- Carry out a full fire risk assessment and record the findings
- Inform staff of any risks
- Plan for an emergency
- Provide staff with information and training
- Provide and maintain the means to detect and give warning in case of fire
- Provide and maintain the means of escape and emergency lighting
- Provide and maintain fire safety signs
- Provide and maintain fire fighting equipment
- Keep records of fire safety provision and maintenance.

General guidelines

Most village shops will fall into the low risk category of fire risk and making the premises safe is generally a matter of common sense.

- Have an adequate number of fire extinguishers, maintain twice a year and make sure staff are trained and confident to use them. There should be one extinguisher for every 200 metre squared of floor space with at least one on each floor.
- Different types of extinguisher-water, powder, foam or carbon dioxide, should be provided to fight different types of fire
- All staff should receive training on how and when to use the various extinguishers and the equipment should receive annual maintenance checks.
- Install fire/smoke alarms and test regularly
- Check safety of electrical equipment regularly
- Ensure that all fire exit routes are clear of stock and other obstacles and that fire exit doors are accessible
- It is illegal to smoke in a public place. You must display the NO SMOKING sign
- Remove waste materials from the shop regularly
- Keep the storeroom and refuse bins tidy and secure
- Give full training on all aspects of fire safety to staff and volunteers.



For further information go to:

www.communities.gov.uk/documents/fire/pdf/144647.pdf

to download free 'A short guide to making your premises safe from fire'

FIRE SAFETY RISK ASSESSMENT

The person responsible for the shop must ensure that a fire risk assessment is carried out by a competent person. This must be documented and can be in the form of a checklist or diagram. A guide to both is given in the Government's document 'A short guide to making your premises safe from fire'.

The following five steps are listed for effective fire safety risk assessment.

Step 1

Identify fire hazards

- Install fire/smoke alarms and test regularly
- Check safety of electrical equipment regularly
- Ensure that all fire exit routes are clear of stock and other obstacles and that fire exit doors.

Step 2

Identify people at risk

- People in and around the shop
- People who use other parts of the premises
- People who are especially at risk through disability or age.

Step 3

Evaluate, remove/ reduce and protect from risk

- Evaluate the risk of a fire starting
- Evaluate the risk to people from a fire
- Remove or reduce fire hazards
- Remove or reduce the risks to people from fire
- Protect people by providing fire precautions.

Step 4

Record, plan, inform, instruct and train

- Record any major findings and action taken
- Discuss and work with other management committee members/ shop manager
- Prepare an emergency plan
- Inform and instruct staff and volunteers
- Provide training for staff and volunteers.

Step 5

Regularly review the fire risk assessment

- Make changes where necessary
- Keep staff and volunteers informed.



Fire Safety

FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT CHECK SHEET

Use this checklist as a basis for your own risk assessment. Review regularly and keep up to date.

This fire risk assessment should identify:

- Items which pose a risk of fire within the shop premises

- Features of the shop which could place people at risk in the event of a fire
- Measures which can be put into place to reduce or eliminate those risks

Premises:	Date:
-----------	-------

Potential hazard Person(s) at risk	Yes/No	Risk level Low Medium High	Existing precautions/ procedures Recommendations for improvement	Date done	Signature
Ignition Sources					
Smoking taking place on the premises (maybe upstairs in private area)					
Use of oven for cooking or other source of ignition					
Light bulbs or fittings kept next to combustible material					
Electrical equipment in poor condition and unmaintained					
Heating systems in poor condition & unmaintained					
Portable or radiant heaters in use					
Potential for arson					
Other ignition sources					
Combustible material					
Combustible materials eg paper not stored safely					
Walls/ceilings have combustible coverings					
Other combustible items which may pose a significant threat					
Flammable substances are used/stored in the shop					
Combustible waste is not correctly managed					
People at risk					
Staff members are at risk from the tasks they carry out					
Staff members work alone or in remote areas					
Staff members are untrained to react quickly to a fire or an alarm					
Some staff members and/or customers with special needs are at risk					
Some customers can't react quickly to a fire or an alarm					
Other people living or working on the premises are not safe					
Other parties can't react quickly to a fire alarm and /or have special needs					

Potential hazard Person(s) at risk	Yes/No	Risk level Low Medium High	Existing precautions/ procedures Recommendations for improvement	Date done	Signature
Adverse structural features					
The premises include features that could result in rapid fire spread, heat spread or smoke spread					
There are no procedures to control any changes or additional hazards in the shop eg, stocking fireworks					
Fire detection and warning					
There are no facilities or arrangements in place for detecting a fire					
There are no arrangements in place for giving warning in case of fire					
The detection system doesn't give enough warning for everyone to escape from the premises					
Means of escape in case of fire					
Escape routes are not free of combustible materials and obstructions					
Escape routes do not lead to a place of safety					
Taking into account reaction time, not everyone can get to a place of safety in under 3 minutes					
Taking into account reaction time, not everyone in high risk areas or with only one escape can reach a place of safety or a point where more than one route is available in about 1 minute					
Corridors/staircases are not protected where necessary					
Escape routes are not wide enough					
Doors do not open in the direction of escape					
Door fastenings are not easy to open without the need for a key					
Escape routes are not signed using pictograms					
Escape routes are not adequately lit					

Fire Safety

Potential hazard Person(s) at risk	Yes/No	Risk level Low Medium High	Existing precautions/ procedures Recommendations for improvement	Date done	Signature
Provision of fire fighting equipment					
There is no suitable fire fighting equipment provided					
It is not situated on exit routes or adjacent to exits					
Employees are not able to use the fire fighting equipment					
Fire fighting equipment is not clearly visible and signed					
Fire fighting equipment is not regularly serviced, maintained and replaced					
Fire emergency plan and training					
The fire emergency plan does not include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action to be taken by staff in the event of fire Evacuation procedures Arrangements for calling the fire service Arrangement to liaise with emergency services when an incident occurs 					
The plan is not clearly displayed in the shop					
Staff and volunteers are not trained in what to do in a fire emergency					
Records of fire safety training and equipment monitoring					
Written records are not kept of dates of staff and volunteer training					
Written records are not kept of safety checks on fire escape routes					
Written records are not kept of maintenance checks on fire fighting equipment					
The fire risk assessment is not reviewed and updated regularly					

Requirements:

Every shop needs to ensure that first aid is available to staff. A first aid box should be kept on the premises and a person appointed to ensure that it is adequately stocked at all times. Note that no medication should be kept in the first aid box. All staff and volunteers should know where the first aid box is kept and know how to obtain first aid support.

Appoint a first aider:

A person should be appointed to be responsible for taking action if there is an incident or accident that requires first aid, by

- Calling a doctor or phoning for an ambulance if secondary aid is appropriate
- Reporting the incident in the accident book and to the shop manager
- Ensuring that the hazard or cause of the accident has been removed if possible.

Giving first aid:

Only members of staff who have received formal first aid training should administer first aid. It is unlikely that there will be a trained first aider on site all the time, so staff should be instructed on the correct procedure to deal with a medical incident.

- Telephone for a doctor or ambulance as the situation demands
- Summon a local first aider and or shop manager/owner
- Keep the patient as comfortable as possible until qualified help arrives.

Keeping Records: Accident Book

All accidents that result in injury, however trivial, and any near misses that had the potential to result in injury, should be recorded in the accident book by the person responsible for first aid or the shop owner/manager.

- Each record should include at least the name of the patient, date, place, time and circumstances of the accident and details of injury suffered and any treatment given
- Records should be kept in a new style book available from HMSO outlet or business stationery supplier, one entry to a page, and should be stored securely to satisfy the Data Protection Act
- In order to ensure that management is kept informed of any incident, a record should also be noted in the shop diary. Corrective measures may need to be introduced and Health and Safety procedures reviewed as a result of the incident.

REPORTING OF INJURIES, DISEASES AND DANGEROUS OCCURRENCES REGULATIONS (RIDDOR)

This requires the reporting of work related accidents, diseases and dangerous occurrences so that the enforcing authorities can identify where and how risks arise and investigate serious incidents.

It is highly unlikely that such incidents will happen in village shops, but you will be required to comply with the regulations if such circumstances occur. It doesn't require the reporting of all accidents, only those that result in death, major injury, accidents resulting in an injury that requires the injured person to be away from work for more than three days, diseases and gas incidents.

A full list of incidents that should be reported is available at www.hse.gov.uk

- To report an incident contact the Incident Contact Centre either through the Health and Safety Executive website www.hse.gov.uk or on 08453009923
- You will be required to supply information about the accident including the date, time, place, personal details of those involved and a brief description of the nature of the incident or disease
- The completed form can be returned by email or by post to: **Incident Contact Centre, Caerphilly Business Park, Caerphilly, CF83 3GG**
- The Incident Contact Centre will then forward details of the incident to the environmental health department who may contact the shop for further information as appropriate.



Shop Security

Every business should have a security policy to ensure the safety of staff, customers, stock, cash, personal possessions and premises; even the small rural store needs to be security conscious.

Those stores that have invested in CCTV need to abide by the Data Protection Act (see page 30). Whilst sophisticated security and surveillance equipment may be beyond your budget, there are simple procedures that can help to reduce the risks of theft.

When opening and closing the shop:

- Two staff members should be present
- Keep the shop door locked when the shop is closed for business, even if there is still someone working in the shop
- Cigarettes should be locked away, either in the gantry or in a secure room overnight
- All doors and windows should be checked and alarms set before closing up
- Train staff to watch out for anything or anyone unusual
- Make sure there is sufficient lighting outside the shop for staff to be visible
- Make sure staff know what to do and whom to contact in the event of an incident.

Cash handling

- Always cash up out of sight
- Store money in the safe overnight
- Make sure the safe is secure and can't be moved
- Site tills away from the entrance/exit doors
- Keep very little cash on the premises and a minimum in each till
- When banking carry cash in a secure container, but don't draw attention to it

- Vary the times and the routes to the bank
- Pay staff by cheque or bank transfer, rather than in cash.

General advice

- **Don't be complacent:** be security conscious and encourage your staff to be vigilant
- Keep the till closed whenever possible and don't leave the counter vulnerable to attack
- Train staff to look out for cash and credit card fraud and how to deal with it
- Keep service doors locked when not in use (but they must comply with fire regulations)
- Service both the alarm system and CCTV system regularly and store tapes securely
- Fit panic alarm buttons at the counters and make sure they are working
- Restrict access to the rear of the counter and the office using doors, gates or counter flaps
- Provide a safe place for personal effects to be kept whilst staff are working and advise staff not to bring valuables into work
- Carry out a risk assessment – see page 26 for a template
- Contact the local crime reduction officer for information
- Train staff to deal effectively with difficult situations.

Theft from the store

Dealing with shoplifters:

- Don't leave the shop unattended - especially if there are strangers about or when someone is acting suspiciously
- Don't put yourself in any danger
- If you are suspicious about a



customer watch them carefully until they leave. You can't accuse someone of stealing from the shop until they leave the premises and you must be certain that they still have the goods on them

- If you are certain they have taken something without paying, follow them out of the store and ask them to come back in, explaining that you believe they have goods on them that they haven't paid for; offer them the chance to pay for the goods and then record the incident
- Don't manhandle the person and don't attempt to search them; if they come back in but won't pay for the goods call the police and let them deal with it
- While waiting for the police the suspect should be attended at all times to stop them disposing of the goods. You should take the opportunity to write down everything that has happened while your memory is fresh
- If the person won't come back into the store you have the right to make a citizen's arrest, but in reality you probably won't get the opportunity
- Record as much information as possible and call the police.

Dealing with a robbery

- Don't take risks, make sudden movements or 'have a go'
- Do as you are told and give the robbers what they want
- Keep your hands in sight at all times
- Stay as calm as possible
- Concentrate on the actions, words and appearance of the robbers
- If you are not involved keep away
- Don't stare- if you recognise the robber try not to convey it.

If a robber gets away

- Close the premises, call the police and contact the shop owner/manager if appropriate
- Ask witnesses to wait for the police or take their contact details
- Note down all of the details of what happened and what the robbers looked like, particularly any distinguishing marks eg, scars, tattoos
- Note details of any weapons
- Note details of the getaway vehicle and the direction it took
- Don't touch anything that may have finger prints on it
- Don't discuss the incident with anyone until the police arrive
- Don't leave the site until the police arrive.



Getting further information

Essex Police has crime reduction officers available to advise business owners on how to reduce opportunities for crime. Check their website

www.essex.police.uk

for further details and to download a document called 'Your Business- Keep Crime out of it'

Shop Security

SECURITY RISK ASSESSMENT CHECK SHEET

Use this checklist as a basis for your own risk assessment. Review regularly and keep staff updated.

This security risk assessment should identify:

- Items and Practices which could cause a security risk

- Measures which can be put into place to reduce or eliminate those risks

Premises:	Date:
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Person(s) at risk Person(s) at risk	Yes/No	Risk level Low Medium High	Existing precautions/ procedures Recommendations for improvement	Date done	Signature
Security of the premises when the shop is closed					
Is there an agreed opening up and closing down procedure					
Are all windows and door locks adequate and checked before leaving the premises					
Is the till emptied and left open					
Is the safe locked and alarmed					
Is high value stock secure					
Are there regular maintenance checks on security fittings, CCTV, alarms					
Do walls, fences and shrubs shield intruders from view					
Is there adequate lighting outside the shop					
Is there protection from ram raids e.g bollards					
Security of the premises when open					
Is the shop secure when marking up newspapers, preparing the float for the till					
Are two people working when opening up / closing down or is someone on standby in case of emergency					
Is the stockroom secure					
Is access to the stockroom restricted					
Are keys securely stored					
Are the doors and windows at the rear of the shop locked					
Is the door between the shop & living accommodation locked					
Is there a phone accessible behind the counter					
Security of cash in tills					
Is the till firmly fixed to counter and is the counter deep enough to deter till snatches					
Are tills sited away from entrance/exit doors					

Person(s) at risk Person(s) at risk	Yes/No	Risk level Low Medium High	Existing precautions/ procedures Recommendations for improvement	Date done	Signature
Are tills closed unless serving a customer					
Is the till cleared of high value notes & credit card slips regularly					
Is cashing up done out of sight					
Is cash removed from the till overnight and secured in a safe or away from the premises					
Do you vary the time & route when banking cash					
Security of stock					
Is high value stock stored securely out of sight in the stockroom					
Are high value items eg cigarettes, spirits, phone cards displayed behind the counter					
Do you regularly stock check high value items					
Can stock be moved between stockroom and shop without leaving the shop unattended					
Is CCTV installed					
Are there procedures in place for staff purchases					
Does a member of staff sign in all deliveries					
Are staff trained to look for suspicious behaviour					
Security of staff when working					
Do staff receive full training on all aspects of security					
Are staff regularly consulted on issues relating to security					
Do staff know who to contact if difficulties arise					
Are there shop policies regarding theft & robbery					
Are all staff fully trained in spotting and dealing with shoplifters					
Are all staff fully trained in dealing with a robbery					
Is there a procedure for dealing with cash & credit card fraud					
Are staff fully aware of which goods in the shop are age restricted or volume restricted					
Is there an ID scheme in operation in the shop					
Are staff aware of how to avoid confrontation in difficult situations					

Data Protection

The Data Protection Act 1998 sets out a framework to ensure that personal information is held properly and securely.

It states that anyone who processes personal information must comply with eight principles and make sure that personal information is:

- Fairly and lawfully processed
- Processed for limited purposes
- Adequate, relevant and not excessive
- Accurate and up to date
- Not kept for longer than is necessary
- Processed in line with the individual's rights
- Secure
- Not transferred to other countries without adequate protection.

Everyone who processes personal information needs to follow these principles. The Act also provides individuals with important rights, including the right to find out what personal information is kept on computer and most paper records.

The information Commissioner's Office website www.ico.gov.uk tel 01625 545745 gives full details about the Act and its requirements.

Under the Act, organisations and businesses that process personal information are required to notify the ICO, unless they are exempt. Exemption depends upon which records are kept and for what purpose. You don't have to notify if the only processing you carry out is for one or more of the following purposes: staff administration; advertising, marketing, public relations, accounts and records. So many village shops, including community shops with details of shareholders/ members and supporters, will be exempt.

However, there may be a requirement to notify if you have CCTV in your shop. Notification can be carried out on line, by post or by phone and costs £35 per year.

CCTV users should follow these guidelines:

- Notification has been submitted to the Information Commissioner and the next renewal date recorded
- There is a named individual who is responsible for the operation of the system
- A system has been chosen which produces clear images which the law enforcement bodies (usually the police) can use to investigate crime and these can easily be taken from the system when required
- Cameras have been sited so that they provide clear images
- Cameras have been positioned to avoid capturing the images of persons not visiting the premises
- There are visible signs showing that CCTV is in operation. Where it is not obvious who is responsible for the system contact details are displayed on the sign(s)
- Images from this CCTV system are securely stored, where only a limited number of authorised persons may have access to them
- The recorded images will only be retained long enough for any incident to come to light (e.g. for a theft to be noticed) and the incident to be investigated



- Except for law enforcement bodies, images will not be provided to third parties
- The organisation knows how to respond to individuals making requests for copies of their own images. If unsure the controller knows to seek advice from the Information Commissioner as soon as such a request is made
- Regular checks are carried out to ensure that the system is working properly and produces high quality images.

Disability Discrimination Act

The Disability Discrimination Act (1995) applies to all businesses that provide a service, offer facilities or supply goods, regardless of size. All staff have to comply with the law.

If someone breaks the law they could be taken to court and the person(s) responsible for the business may have to prove that everything had been done to prevent discrimination from happening. If not, they could also be found guilty of discrimination.

Who are 'disabled' people

- The Act concerns all disabled people, not just those using wheelchairs. Someone is disabled if their disability makes it difficult for them to carry out day to day activities and the disability has lasted a year, or will be likely to last at least a year

This includes someone who uses a wheelchair or has difficulty walking, someone who is deaf, has significantly impaired speech, is blind or partially sighted, has continuing treatment for diabetes, someone with epilepsy, has a learning difficulty or a mental illness

- The Act also protects people who have a severe disfigurement or whose condition might initially have only a slight effect on their ability but is likely to get worse, such as people with cancer, HIV infections or multiple sclerosis.

What does the Act say

- It is unlawful to refuse to serve or deliberately avoid serving a disabled customer for any reason related to their disability
- It is unlawful for any employer to discriminate against a disabled person when choosing someone for a job or considering people

for promotion, dismissal or redundancy

- Where there is a physical feature of the premises that makes it impossible or unreasonably difficult for a disabled person to make use of a service, service providers have to take reasonable action to remove, alter or avoid it eg, installing a permanent ramp to enable wheelchair users to gain access to premises previously reached only by steps
- Reasonable action is intended to be flexible and may vary according to the type of service provided, the resources of the service provider and the effect of the disability on the individual. However, although allowances may be made for small village shops, it is still necessary to comply with the law.

How accessible are the shop premises

Use the following guidelines to check whether the shop premises comply with the legislation. Some adaptations may require planning permission, particularly if structural or relating to the exterior of the property, so contact the planning department or building control department of the local authority before starting work.

- Identifying and finding the premises

Use clear signs to direct people to the entrance and clearly identify the premises

Use colour to make the entrance easy to identify

If some disabled customers need to use an alternative entrance, check it is clearly signed.

- Approaching the premises

Use external lighting where appropriate

Ensure car parking facilities are adequate for disabled customers

Ensure that paths and other routes are clear, even and non slippery.

- Entering the premises

Ensure there is adequate lighting at the entrance point

If an obstacle such as a step can't be permanently overcome, a temporary ramp may be a solution, provided it is non slip,

Fit handrails to provide support and grip, making it safer and easier to access the premises

A call bell with appropriate signage could be installed at a suitable height in order to alert staff that assistance is required

Where a physical feature can't be removed or overcome, consider other ways of providing the service, such as bringing goods to the door or making home deliveries.



A range of information and guidance can be found via
www.direct.gov.uk

Disability Discrimination Act

- **Making doors easier to use**

Replace or reposition the door handle so that it is easy to grip and operate

Ensure that door opening pressure is not too strong and that doors are well maintained

Check that entrance mats are flush and in good order to avoid tripping

Make sure doors have adequate clearance for wheelchair users

Make sure glazed doors are clearly marked to improve visibility.



- **Finding the way around**

Make sure signs are easy to read

Use contrasting colours to differentiate walls, floors, ceilings etc

Offer staff assistance as appropriate.

- **Getting to goods and services**

Reposition or adapt units to make access easier

Consider the height of shelves and displays

Ensure product information, especially prices are easy to read.

- **Lighting**

Use to highlight hazardous areas

Ensure good and well maintained lighting throughout the store.

- **Moving about within the premises**

Keep aisles and corridors free from clutter and allow adequate clearance

Ensure surfaces are as level as possible

Fit handrails for internal steps and ramps.

- **Counters and Checkouts**

Create a lower section at the counter, or provide a lower writing area, lap tray or clipboard

Make sure that any service bell is located in an accessible and obvious position

Offer flexibility in the way transactions are carried out eg away from the counter, but try to retain privacy for the customer if appropriate.

- **Getting out of the premises**

Ensure that emergency procedures are in place and that staff are fully trained

Keep exit routes free from obstruction.



Adequate insurance is important, so shop around to make sure that the policy gives you the cover you require. Review it annually and particularly when you make changes such as introducing a new service, investing in a new piece of equipment or increasing stock to cover Christmas or when you are on holiday. Carry out a risk assessment to identify which risks need insuring against and the level of cover you require.

Business insurance

Can cover a wide range of items- the fabric of the building, fixtures and fittings, stock in the shop, stock in transit, theft of stock, loss of stock stored in chillers and freezers due to equipment breakdown, extra stock holding at Christmas, fire, theft, loss of cash and interruption to business. Ensure your policy gives you the cover you need.

Employer's liability insurance

This is compulsory and provides a minimum level of cover against claims by employees who may have been injured at work or have become ill from working at your store.

Public liability insurance

This covers the shop owners for claims made by members of the public who may be injured whilst shopping on your premises.

NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATES - BUSINESS RATE RELIEF

Retail businesses are charged business rates on the shop property they occupy. However, there is a range of relief available, particularly for small businesses in rural areas. Please note that you can only qualify for the one relief that is most valuable to you.

Rural village of population under 3000

You are entitled to a 50% reduction in the rates bill if you are:

- The only village general store or post office with a rateable value of less than £8500
- A food shop with a rateable value of less than £8500
- The only village pub or petrol station with a rateable value of £12500



The local district or borough council may award further discretionary relief if they see fit.

Small business rate relief

Eligible businesses with a rateable value of below £6000 will get 50% rate relief on their liability. This relief will decrease on a sliding scale of 1% for every £120 of rateable value over £6000 up to £12000.

(However further concessions apply between 01/10/10 to 30/09/11 where the first £6000 receive 100% relief)

The process for applying for rate relief is free as is an appeal over the rateable value.



A range of information and guidance can be found via www.direct.gov.uk

Value Added Tax (VAT)

VAT is a tax charged on most business to business and business to consumer transactions in the UK. VAT is charged by someone who is registered for VAT on goods and services sold to the consumer.

You must register for VAT if your turnover for the previous 12 months is over a specific limit - currently £70000 or if you think your turnover may soon go over this limit. You may register voluntarily at any time.

There are three rates of VAT

- Standard rate, currently 17.5% but changing to 20% from 4th January 2011
- Reduced rate, currently 5%
- Zero rated
- Moving about within the premises.

Standard rated goods include:

confectionery, crisps, ice cream, soft drinks (including fruit juice and bottled water), alcoholic drinks, paper household goods (toilet tissue, kitchen rolls etc), cleaning products, beauty products, medicines, cards and stationery, gifts and toys, pet foods, biscuits with real chocolate (not chocolate flavoured biscuits).

Reduced rated goods include:

domestic fuel, women's sanitary products.

Zero rated goods include: food and drink not listed above, fruit and vegetables, stamps, newspapers, magazines, books, children's clothes.

Mixed rates: some items attract a mixed rate of VAT, for example, plain biscuits (zero rated) in a presentation box (standard box).

Supplier invoices should clearly state the VAT rate applicable to the item supplied & goods can therefore be priced accordingly; the exception to this is a small supplier who is trading below the VAT threshold e.g a local artist producing greeting cards. You will not be charged VAT on supplies but you must charge VAT on sales.

For items which are standard rated or reduced rated for VAT, VAT is charged to the buyer/ customer (output tax) by the VAT registered seller/ retailer. If you are registered for VAT generally you charge VAT on your business sales and reclaim VAT on your business purchases. The difference between the VAT you charge and the VAT you are reclaiming is the amount of VAT you must pay to HM Revenue and Customs. If the value of the VAT you reclaim is more than the value of the VAT you charge, then HMRC pays you.

There are several VAT retail schemes and your accountant will be able to advise you on the one best suited to your circumstances. You usually account for VAT on a quarterly basis by filling in a VAT return and submitting it to HMRC. You then pay HMRC the excess of your output tax over the VAT you can reclaim as input tax. If the input tax you can reclaim is more than your output tax, you can reclaim the difference from HMRC.

For further information go to the HMRC website at

www.hmrc.gov.uk

To work out the VAT element of an item

Divide the selling price by 6.7143 (assuming VAT is at 17.5%)

Selling price / 6.7143 = amount of VAT on item

Eg £1.76/ 6.7143 = 26p



Applying For a Liquor Licence

Under the licensing Act 2003, there are now separate licenses for premises and for the individual licensee. A premises licence allows alcohol to be sold from a particular premises and a personal licence allows an individual to sell, or give authority to sell, alcohol from any licensed premises.

Who issues the licences

- The responsibility for the licensing of both premises and individuals to sell and supply alcohol has been transferred from the magistrates court to the district council
- All application forms and information can be obtained by contacting the licensing department of the relevant district/borough council
- A personal licence application must be made to the district/ borough council responsible for the area in which you live, even if the premises from which you will be selling is in an area under the responsibility of a different council
- Applications for a premises licence should be made to the district/borough council responsible for the area in which the premises are situated.

The personal licence

- A licence holder is able to sell alcohol from any licensed premises
- The current cost of a personal licence is £37 and is valid for ten years
- The applicant must be aged 18 or over and hold a licensing qualification such as the BIIAB level 2 National Certificate for Personal Licence Holders or the GOAL Level 2 Certificate for Personal Licence Holders. The licensing department at your district/borough council should have details of local courses
- Not everyone who makes a sale has to be a license holder, but all staff should receive training and any young or inexperienced staff

should be directly supervised

- The applicant must have a basic disclosure certificate issued by the Criminal Records Bureau and sign a declaration that he/she has not been convicted of a relevant foreign offence
- If there are relevant offences the Police can make a representation against the application to a hearing of the council's licensing panel.

The Designated Premises Supervisor

- There must be at least one appointed Designated Premises Supervisor (DPS) per licensed premises, who will be held as the person in overall charge of the premises. He/she must be a personal license holder
- The DPS must be nominated on their personal application form and consent to being the DPS on the premises application form
- The DPS doesn't have to be on the premises at all times, but must take responsibility for what happens on the premises
- He/she should ensure that staff have a full understanding of the Licensing Laws and that they are fully trained to sell alcohol
- A person can be a DPS at more than one premises at a time.



The premises licence

- The application for a premises licence can be made by anyone aged 18 or over who proposes to sell alcohol by retail from a particular premises. In a community owned shop this would normally be made by a member of the management committee
- There is an initial fee for licensing the premises and an annual fee for renewing the licence. The fees are set according to the business rates band of the premises and are in the region of £250
- The Licence runs for the lifetime of the business.

Applying For a Liquor Licence

How to apply for the premises licence

- Contact the licensing department of the borough/district council responsible for the area in which the premises are situated
- Complete the application form
- Complete the operating schedule. This sets out details of how the licensed premises will operate such as what activities will be carried out, where the alcohol will be stored, the name of the nominated DPS and ways in which the licensing objectives (prevention of crime and disorder, prevention of public nuisance, public safety and the protection of children from harm) will be promoted
- Draw up a plan of the premises showing where the alcohol and fire fighting equipment is situated on the premises. Unless previously agreed with the licensing authority this should be on a scale of 1:100
- Ask the nominated DPS to sign the appropriate consent form
- Submit the application to the borough/district council and send copies to responsible authorities such as the police, fire authority etc. A full list is supplied with the forms
- The applicant is required to place a blue site notice at the premises and place an advertisement in the local press, giving information about the application and how interested parties can make representations
- There will be a 28 day period of consultation
- The Council will promote the licensing objectives by attaching conditions to the licence



- An application will be granted automatically if there are no objections
- If relevant objections are made by responsible authorities or interested parties, a licensing panel made up of three councillors will decide the application.



The Licensing Departments at the District/ Borough Councils will have all the information you require including Guidance notes, Costs and application forms

Customers will expect friendly, efficient and professional service, so staff training in customer service is important. This should result in improved customer loyalty and a confident sales team. The following hints should help to improve customer service.

Give the customer your full attention and make them feel that they count

- Stop any private conversations with other staff members
- Put on a cheerful face, even if you don't always feel like it!

Give a smile and greeting to every customer and treat each one with equal courtesy

- Smile, make eye contact and address them by name if possible
- Thank them when they leave and say 'goodbye'.

Be attentive to the customers needs

- Pay special attention to the elderly, but don't interfere or pester
- Show customers where items are if they can't find them
- If goods are out of stock, offer to place an order or suggest an alternative.

Acknowledge customers who are waiting, particularly at busy times

- A cheerful and sympathetic attitude from you should help dispel frustration.

Chatting and small talk are important

- So is confidentiality, so don't gossip
- Customers may need time and space to think about what they want to buy, so don't intrude
- Take care not to hold up the queue chatting, some people may be in a hurry.

Ensure your staff look smart, clean and tidy

- Consider using a 'uniform' to present a professional image.

Ensure your staff are well trained and informed

- Training staff in till procedures, returns policy and dealing with complaints will improve efficiency and customer satisfaction
- Make sure staff know about special offers, new items in stock etc and encourage them to recommend them to customers.

Give 'added value' to your customers

- Pack bags at the till and offer to carry to the car if appropriate.
- Offer a home delivery service for bulky items, elderly customers and those without a car
- Take telephone/ email orders for customers who commute out of the village during the day or during the week
- Keep a suggestion box/ book for customer comments and respond as appropriate.

When dealing with awkward people, be firm but polite

- Treat a difficult situation as a challenge to turn a possible enemy into a friend
- Stay calm, be polite, courteous and don't be aggressive.



When refusing service because a customer is underage, remain calm and friendly

- Be polite and tactful – refusing service can cause embarrassment and may provoke an aggressive reaction
- Don't be confrontational, but stay firm.

If customers complain, use it to improve your standards of service

- Listen carefully to what the customer has to say, show understanding and sympathise
- Use the criticism constructively to improve procedures so that it doesn't happen again.

Returns Procedure - Sale of Age Restricted Products

Customer's rights

Under the Sale of Goods Act 1979 (amended 1994) consumers have the right to goods that are not faulty, of satisfactory quality, are fit for the purpose and as described. If goods don't comply with these requirements, consumers are entitled to compensation, usually the full price of the goods.

The customer is not entitled to anything if they caused any damage themselves, if they made a mistake eg wrong size or if they have changed their minds about the goods or seen them cheaper elsewhere. Shops may refund in these circumstances, but they don't have to.

Out of condition, faulty or damaged goods

- All out of condition, faulty or damaged goods should be automatically replaced or refunded, provided that they are accompanied by a receipt. If there is no receipt, then a refund is appropriate where the goods were clearly bought from the shop and you are reasonably sure they were not tampered with in order to obtain a refund
- All refunds and replacements should be entered into the Shop Diary with full details of the customer's name and address, details of the item and steps taken
- All out of condition, faulty or damaged goods should be clearly labelled and returned to the wholesaler if appropriate.

Error purchases

- You are not obliged to offer an exchange if the customer has simply decided that they don't like the product or no longer want it but it is good customer relations to do so

- Exchange should not be offered on chilled or frozen goods as maintenance of the chill chain can't be ensured
- Exchange or refund can't be offered on special orders unless the goods are faulty
- Other goods should be checked for damage and shelf-life, providing the goods are in a saleable condition and are accompanied by a receipt or were clearly bought from the shop, an exchange should be offered
- Make sure that staff know the legal position and encourage them to seek assistance if necessary.

SALE OF AGE RESTRICTED PRODUCTS

It is a criminal offence to sell age restricted goods to persons below the specified age limit and it is the owner's responsibility to ensure that no restricted products are sold illegally in the shop.

All staff should know the law relating to the sale of age restricted products. You are legally required to display a sign forbidding the sale of tobacco and alcohol products to persons under 18 years of age, and spot checks may be made by Trading Standards.

The following must not be sold to a person under the age of 18

- Cigarettes and tobacco (but may be sold by an employee under 18)
- Alcohol
- Fireworks (excluding Party Poppers, where customers must be 16)
- Potentially offensive weapons eg knives
- Intoxicating substances that may be misused eg butane gas,

lighter fuel/fluid, solvent based glue, aerosols, nail varnish remover, correction fluid

- Cigarette lighters containing butane or a substance with butane as a constituent part.

The following must not be sold to a person under the age of 16

- Lottery tickets and scratch cards, Party Poppers, Liqueur chocolates.

Videos and DVDs

Must not be sold to anyone under the age of the classification shown on the recording

If you are unsure of the age of a customer, ask the person for proof of age that has a photo, name, date of birth and signature. Consider adopting a 'No ID, No Sale' policy and ask staff to keep a note of any declined sales.

Serving Disabled Customers

It is unlawful to refuse to serve or deliberately avoid serving a disabled customer for any reason related to their disability.

Further information on the Disability Discrimination Act is given on page 31. Training should be given to staff in communication and giving assistance to disabled customers. Here are some basic guidelines:

- Always talk directly to the disabled person, not to anyone accompanying them
- If you are talking to an adult, treat them like an adult
- When talking to a deaf person who can lip read, make sure your face is in the light, look directly at the person, speak clearly and naturally, and keep your hands away from your face. Consider using an induction loop, particularly if behind a glass screen, or other means of communication such as written notes
- When first meeting a blind person, introduce yourself. When you are going to move away, tell them. Don't leave them talking to an empty space
- When talking to someone with a speech impairment, concentrate on what is being said, be patient and don't try to guess what they want to say. If you don't understand, don't pretend you do
- If someone has difficult understanding you, perhaps because of a learning disability, be patient and prepared to explain something more than once. Use simple language
- When talking to a wheelchair, position your eyes are at the same level as theirs, eg. By sitting down. Don't lean on the wheelchair, it is part of the user's personal space
- If someone looks 'different', avoid staring. Concentrate on what they are saying, not on the way they look
- Consider the language you use – some words and phrases offend disabled people because they suggest that the disabled person is dependent or helpless. Here are some alternative words and phrases:
 - Say 'disabled people' or 'people with disabilities' instead of 'the disabled'*
 - Say 'a person who has' or 'a person with' instead of 'suffering from', 'crippled by' etc*
 - Say 'deaf without speech' instead of 'deaf and dumb'*
 - Say 'a person with epilepsy' instead of 'an epileptic'*
 - Say 'a person with cerebral palsy' instead of 'spastic'*
 - Say 'a person with a learning disability' instead of 'mentally handicapped' or 'retarded'*
 - Say 'wheelchair user' instead of 'confined to a wheelchair' or 'wheelchair bound'*
- If someone looks as though they need assistance, offer it, but wait for them to accept before you help
- When guiding a blind person don't push or pull them. Ask if they would like to take hold of your arm. If there are any steps, tell them whether the steps go up or down.
- Guide dogs for blind people, hearing dogs for deaf people and other assistance dogs are working dogs, not pets. Don't feed, pat or distract them if they are working
- Don't make assumptions about their abilities or needs – if you aren't sure how something might affect a disabled person, ask them for advice.



Stock Management

SUPPLIERS

Sourcing the right range of goods from suppliers at a good price is vital for successful shop keeping. Most village shops have one main supplier for regular grocery and household items and a selection of smaller suppliers for other goods.

- **The local cash and carry company** will provide a comprehensive range of goods. You are able to see the full range of goods on offer, take advantage of any special offers and buy in new lines which may be on promotion. Products usually have to be bought in complete outers, although some depots may split cases. Delivery to your store may be possible for larger orders. Sourcing goods this way can be time consuming and tiring – remember to factor in the time and cost of travelling to the warehouse, selecting and buying the goods and then bringing them back to the shop.
- **The delivered wholesaler** will bring pre-ordered products to your door which offers greater convenience and reduces the time and manpower required. Special offers and promotions are available to order. There will be a minimum order value and a delivery charge.
- **Symbol Group** members take advantage of economies of scale to increase buying power, although smaller village shops may find they are not able to match the entry criteria. You will have to conform to the requirements of the symbol group which some shops feel compromises their independence, but there are many advantages to being part of a symbol group.
- **Buying from local supermarkets** allows small quantities to be

bought from a wide range of goods (but not chilled or frozen items).

Check terms of payment and supply:

many suppliers offer a free delivery service and a short credit period, depending on the amount of stock ordered and the shop's credit worthiness.

Use a range of smaller suppliers

for bread, milk, eggs, dairy products, fruit and vegetables, meat and poultry, speciality foods, pet food, wines, stationery, greetings cards, flowers, gardening supplies etc.

Support local producers and suppliers:

help the local economy and the environment.

Build a trustworthy relationship with the supplier:

ensure that orders are placed and payments are made on time.

Ask the supplier for recommendations/ suggestions:

change the range of stock to keep the customer interested

disappointed customers: too much stock ties up cash, reduces profits and results in wastage.

A fully utilised and well maintained EPOS system can be an excellent tool in reducing the amount of guesswork required, but you will also need to be aware of seasonal trends, the weather forecast, special celebrations and the routine buying habits of customers.

Here are a few hints to help:

- Check that the shelves have been filled from the stockroom before you begin, so that extra stock is not ordered in error.
- Take into account how many days stock you require by calculating the number of days between making the order and the 'next but one' delivery date
- A comprehensive stock list in an order book is an essential tool if you don't have an EPOS (electronic point of sale system). List the items in categories to make ordering easier. An example is given below.

Description of goods	Size	Outer Size	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
Baked Beans	41.5g	12						

MAKING UP ORDERS

Judging the right amount of stock to order is important : too little stock results in lost sales and



Your supplier may provide an order book with a list of stock for you to use.

- If you use an EPOS system to generate the order, still check that everything on the order is required – a computer doesn't always appreciate why more stock is sold one week than another eg pancake mix during the week of Shrove Tuesday
- For smaller suppliers, create a stock sheet of regular products. Listing the usual daily/ weekly stock holding in a 'make up to' box gives a useful guide.

Make up to	Order	Product
7		Double cream 125ml
10		Single cream 256ml
5		Natural yogurt 75ml

Placing orders

- Keep a copy of any order that you give to a wholesaler or supplier, whether by phone, fax or on line, until you have received the delivery and checked it off.
- When errors occur it is much easier to check what you ordered and receive credit or replacement goods, if you are able to show what the original order was for.

CHECKING DELIVERIES

- Make sure that you have an invoice or delivery note that lists the items in the delivery, their cost to the shop, whether the items are liable for VAT, and a recommended retail price if known
- Always check deliveries against the invoice before pricing goods and putting them out on the shelf. This will improve stock control and reduce errors.

Check that:

- The goods itemised on the invoice correspond to the goods delivered. This applies whether or not the shop uses an EPOS system.
- Discrepancies are reported as soon after delivery as possible
- Credit is claimed from the supplier if appropriate
- The goods are not short dated - always check Best Before and Use By dates, particularly on chilled food. Reject any items too close to the date
- The goods are in good condition – goods that are delivered in damaged boxes, or any dented tins and broken jars should be returned to the supplier for credit/ replacement

- Chilled and frozen goods are delivered at the correct temperature and put into chillers or freezers as soon as possible to prevent any deterioration or risk of bacterial contamination. Reject goods that are no longer frozen or look in poor condition
- The selling price correctly corresponds to the cost price. Even if you follow recommended retail price and don't need to calculate the sell price, check that you have been correctly invoiced. Mistakes can happen!
- Promotions or price marked goods have been invoiced correctly to give the correct profit margin
- The price scans correctly at the till and corresponds with the price displayed on the shelf edge, if using an EPOS system
- The delivery is entered on to the EPOS system so that the stock holding figures are correct. If any adjustments have to be made for changes in price, barcodes or special offer items, ensure that they are made as soon after delivery as possible.

Putting deliveries away

- Chilled and frozen goods should be put into chillers or freezers and returned to the correct temperature as soon as possible
- Price up the goods carefully. Make sure you have used the right coloured label if colour-coding VAT products (eg. White label: zero VAT; Yellow label: standard VAT)
- Wipe the empty shelf clean before putting new stock out
- Place the goods flush with the front of the shelf edge, rather than with the back. Make sure items are facing forward and are the right way up

- Check the dates of the items already on the shelf and the dates of the new stock. The stock with the shorter date life should be put at the front of the shelf
- Don't leave half opened packs of stock lying around on the floor or where they might fall. If you need to leave the stock in order to serve a customer, take the stock with you and place behind the counter or in the stock room
- Put excess stock into the stockroom. Store carefully in the designated place, so that the stock can be located easily
- Any damaged goods should not be put out in the shop. Arrange for return/credit to the wholesaler.

DISPLAY

- All displays should be kept full, clean and tidy. With perishable goods, particular attention should be paid to fresh appearance and quality
- Rigorous stock rotation is essential. Slow moving lines should be discounted and discontinued before they gather dust
- A regular cleaning schedule should be in operation for all shelves, fittings and fridge/freezer units
- Store layout should ideally be altered at least once a year - this encourages customers to look around and can help reduce shoplifting.

Stock Management

PRICING

The village shop should aim to achieve an average gross profit margin of 18- 22%. Profit margins on goods vary widely so a balanced mix of high and low margin goods is recommended to achieve a good overall profit margin.

KVIs – known value items

KVI's are basic commodities that are price sensitive. Customers know what prices they expect to pay for such goods and trade is very competitive. Newspapers, tea, cornflakes, toilet paper, pet food etc are all KVIs so price goods close to the Recommended Retail Price. Products that don't have a known value can be priced more flexibly. These include delicatessen items, chocolates, wine, toys, garden products etc.

Understanding mark up and gross profit margin

Before setting price, it is important to understand that margin and mark up are different. Whilst they both express the profit on an item, mark up is the profit expressed as a percentage of the cost price, where as gross profit margin is the profit as a percentage of selling price. To achieve an average gross profit of 18-22% will require an average mark up of 25-30% on the cost price.

How to increase the overall profit margin

- Purchase products at a lower price, but charge the same retail price
- Stock a broad range of goods that span both high and low margin items
- Change the product mix to stock more high margin items of a non known value
- Reduce the number of markdowns and offers

- Reduce the amount of wastage from poor stock control
- Price your services higher
- Increase retail prices.

PROFIT GUIDELINES

The following table gives general guidelines on the mark up that should be applied to certain items and the gross profit margin that will be achieved as a result.

Type of Goods	Mark up on Cost Price	Gross Profit margin on Sales Price
Greengrocery/ Flowers/ Plants	60% (allows for wastage)	37.5%
Wine & Beer	30-40%	23-29%
Spirits	10%	9-10%
Delicatessen/ specialist grocery	50-60%	33-37.5%
Cards/Gifts/ Fancy goods	50-100%	33-50%
Dairy/Provisions	30-35%	23-26%
General Grocery	21-25%	18-20%
Household	30-35%	23-26%
Confectionery, sweets, crisps	30%	23%
Frozen foods	30-35%	23-26%
Cigarettes	RRP+ 1p (unless price flashed)	

How to set the selling price

To set the selling price, add a percentage mark up to the cost price. In the examples below, a 30% mark up is added to the cost price in order to set the selling price. This results in a 23% gross profit margin on the selling price. VAT must be added to the sell price if the item is liable for VAT. This is currently set at 17.5%, except for items which are charged at 5% (coal, fuel and some personal hygiene items). The invoice received from the wholesaler or supplier of the goods will indicate which goods are liable for VAT.

For items without VAT e.g Basic foods, newspapers, books, children's clothing and postage stamps

Divide the cost of the case price by the number of items in the case,

then add the suggested percentage 'mark up' to give the selling price of each item

Case price divided quantity
(=cost price) + %mark up
=selling price per item

Eg £7.49 / 12
(=62p) +30%(19p)
=81p selling price per item

A simpler way to calculate this is to multiply the cost price of the item by 1.

Depending on what mark up you wish to put on the item.

For example, to get a 30% mark up, multiply by 1.30; for a 45% mark up, multiply by 1.45 etc

Case price divided quantity
(=cost price) * mark up(30%)
= selling price per item

E.g £7.49 / 12 (=62p)
*1.30 (30%) = 81p selling price

For items with VAT, currently at 17.5% eg. Luxury' foods (eg chocolate, bottled water, fizzy drinks, ice cream, crisps), cigarettes, alcohol, pet foods, household goods, gifts, stationery, cards, dry cleaning and shoe repairs

Follow the same procedure, then add 17.5% of that figure to give the full sell price

Case price divided quantity
+ %mark up + 17.5% VAT
= selling price per item

E.g £5.65 / 6 (=94p)
+ 60%(56p) + 17.5%(26p)
= £1.76 selling price

The simpler way is to multiply the selling price by 1.175 if 17.5%VAT(or 1.05 if 5% VAT

Case price divided quantity*
% mark up * 17.5% VAT
= selling price per item
E.g £5.65 / 6 (=94p) *
1.6(£1.50) *1.175 VAT
= £1.76 selling price

MONITORING SALES

Sales of stock should be monitored to ensure that:

- The right products are being sold
- Stock is selling through regularly and wastage is reduced to a minimum
- The mark up on the goods is giving a good profit margin
- The range of goods is changed on a regular basis to create new interest
- Any stock that is failing to sell is moved out quickly
- Valuable shelf space is used to optimum effect
- Dusty, faded, out of date stock gives the shop a poor image.

Running stock reports is quick and easy to do using an electronic stock control EPOS system and will give information on frequency and

profitability of product sales, provided that the sales data is kept up to date. If such tools are not available, look at how often it is necessary to restock an item and gauge whether the item is worth continuing to stock in the future. Once the slow moving lines have been identified, consider the following options for moving the stock out:

- Change the location - the product could be right, but the location could be wrong
- Promote the product with point of sale or place in a dump bin
- Sell two for the price of one
- Change the price - the product could be over (or under) priced and so has not sold
- Consider using the products as part of a window display – for example, toys and games can be taken out of their packages and used to promote sales
- Carefully pack away seasonal goods in the stock room and sell them next year
- Give them to a local charity
- If none of the above work, discard the products and record them as shrinkage to the business
- Replace with new products such as those currently being advertised in the national press, those with a special interest eg, local products or those which broaden the category range, appealing to a different type of customer.

STOCK TAKING

An annual stock take is a necessary part of compiling the end of year financial reports. All stock held in the shop on the date that completes the trading year must be counted and valued at cost.

How to do it

- **Make a list of all products in stock.** List different sizes, types and flavours. Use a stock list or the EPOS system as a basis for this, but don't forget to include items without barcodes
- **Work along the shelves** and count the numbers of tins/packets/jars of each size, flavour and type of products. Note the number on the list of products in stock. Working in pairs will give a double check for accuracy
- **Do the same in the stock room**, behind the counter, in the back up freezers and anywhere else that stock is kept
- **To calculate the stock value**, use the cost price of each item to value the goods. Go through past invoices to find the cost price, then multiply the number of goods in stock by the cost price to give a stock value. The cost price should be without VAT
- **Using an EPOS stock control system** or even a simple spreadsheet to calculate the cost, will speed up the process
- **Professional Stocktaking Companies** will do the job for you. When transferring a business, both vendor and purchaser should be involved in the stock taking process.

Stocking Local Food

Stocking produce that is grown or raised locally, either by a producer within 30 miles of the shop or from a defined region or county, can create extra interest or provide a unique selling point for your business.

Customers are becoming more aware of the benefits of buying local produce – they see it as a way of ensuring fresher, better quality produce; supporting the local economy; and protecting the environment through the reduction in 'food miles'.

Getting started

- Get a map and mark the area that is 30 miles from the shop
- Make a list of goods that you already stock and which can be described as local, then try extending a range of products already stocked by sourcing locally
- Make contact with local suppliers and producers to find out if they are able to supply your requirements
- Check that you have the facilities and equipment to display and store the products
- Check out what is available elsewhere – visit other village shops and farm shops – and try the produce for yourself
- Be aware of seasonal variation in some ranges of products – there may be differences in your product range depending on the time of year.

Finding the produce and the producers

- Look around for local suppliers and approach directly
- Contact current suppliers to see if they can source local goods for you
- Contact the Local Food Group in your area for information on suppliers

- Ask the producers/suppliers for the following information: details of the product including shelf life, packaging and labelling; how the product should be stored; the wholesale and retail prices; what quantities can be supplied and delivered regularly; how and when delivery and payment will be made; whether point of sale material is available.

Marketing and Promotion

As well as following the guidelines on marketing products in your store on page 43, here are some extra pointers for use when stocking local food.

- Make sure that your storage arrangements display the food at its best
- Request point of sale material from the producer and/or supplier and make it available to the customer. Also read it yourself so that you know exactly what you are selling
- Mark local products with a distinguishing feature eg green dots on the produce. This will help customers identify locally sourced stock easily
- Shelf talkers, window displays, posters, 'A' Boards and even bunting are easy ways to make shoppers aware of local food
- Any particular details which will increase interest in the products should be described, such as where and how it was produced
- Arrange tasting sessions. Your supplier may be willing to provide free samples
- Suggest recipes that can be made from local ingredients



- Advertise in the Village Newsletter and/or the Local Food Guide
- Link in with the local school to increase awareness of the importance of fresh, local food amongst children and young people (and their parents)
- Offer to work with the local pub or restaurant on promoting each other's businesses
- Join in with national initiatives such as British Food Fortnight: tel 02078409292 www.britishfoodfortnight.co.uk for further information.

Marketing a business is not only telling people about what the shop sells and the services on offer; it is also about catering and branding an image for the shop, setting standards of good product availability and personal service, and then maintaining those standards. It is about identifying what the customer needs and then establishing a reputation that your store is the one place to satisfy those needs.

As customers can probably buy most of the things that you have to offer at a wide variety of retail outlets, there has to be something about your shop that satisfies their needs in a way that other shops don't. Identify your strengths – for example a particular range of products; local accessibility; friendly service – and then make sure the customers know all about benefits to shopping at your store.

There are various ingredients which all together add up to effective marketing – the 5 'P's: product, price, place, people and promotion.

Product

Think about the type of products on offer:

- Quality, brand name, style, range
- Product mix
- Introducing new products
- Extending current ranges eg, new flavours
- Changing existing products eg, dropping unprofitable lines
- Also consider what you are selling other than product eg, personal service, convenience, community involvement, support of local suppliers etc
- Consider a broad range of services to increase footfall.

Credit/ debit card machine	Offering cash back
ATM machine	Mobile Phone top ups
Paypoint or similar facility	Postage stamps
Parcel collection point	Home delivery service
Delicatessen counter	Local food products
Specialist products	Information on local suppliers
Food/ Wine tasting	Photocopier/ fax machine
Bulk ordering	Tea room
Coffee machine	Microwave/ food heater on counter
DVD rentals	Flowers and plants
Prescription drop off point	Local information
Website	Convenient parking
Estate Agency (renting window space)	Themed window displays
Seasonal promotions	National lottery
Renting space to other concessions	Internet access

Price

The convenience market is heavily influenced by price. Most village shops have the image of being expensive, even if they are not! Adding a small premium on the

price for local convenience is acceptable but be wary of over pricing the goods.

- Check prices with other village shops and convenience stores
- Be aware of KVIs and other price sensitive products
- Consider sourcing goods from a supplier giving a better margin – don't be afraid to negotiate terms
- If you choose to offer discounts or special offers always ensure that you are still selling at a reasonable profit.

Place

Customers take just ten seconds to make a judgement about a store, so make sure that the shop is bright, clean and well stocked. Stand outside the shop and view your business through the customer's eyes.
Be critical - would you shop here?

- Situation/position in the village – ideally every shop should be centrally placed, well signposted and have ample parking
- The building should be in good repair both outside and in
- Internally the shop should be well maintained - floor, equipment, fixtures and fittings - and kept clean, bright, tidy and well stocked
- Externally the shop should be litter free, clean and tidy. Customer friendly items such as somewhere to tie up dogs or to safely leave a bike or a pram may also be appreciated
- The ambience of the store should be welcoming, pleasant and comfortable
- Displays in the shop should be eye-catching, drawing people into the store.
- The shop should be convenient for public transport and display local bus times in the premises.

Marketing

People

The owner of a store plays an important part in setting the ethos of the business. Running an open, efficient and well organised business will inspire confidence and loyalty from both staff and customers. Make your customers feel valued by ensuring that all members of staff are:

- Warm, welcoming, friendly and presentable
- Capable, well informed and confident
- Discreet and trustworthy.

Promotion

Effective promotion should raise the shop's profile; regularly remind customers that you are there and what it is that you do; introduce new products and services and inspire customer loyalty.

When organising a promotion consider

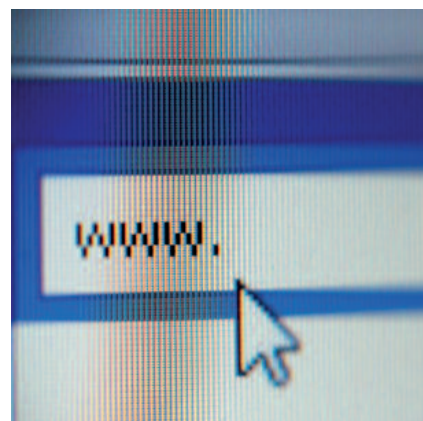
- What you are trying to achieve – are you seeking new customers or promoting a new service or product to existing customers?
- Who you are trying to reach – new or established customers, from within or outside the village?
- What is the most appropriate method of advertising?

You could try:

- How to enthuse your customers. Use positive language and imagery to promote new products or services and their benefits; emphasise the special things that you do; sell the benefits of service, convenience and invite them to visit the store to see for themselves
- Continuous/repeat promotion. Advertising once isn't enough as people need to be constantly reminded that you are there and to be told every time you introduce a new product or service
- Whether it will work. Time, effort and expense do not always guarantee effectiveness. Make sure your methods target those you want to reach.

Once you have created interest amongst your customers through promotions, be sure that you can convert that interest into sales:

- At the beginning of an advertising campaign ensure that all of your staff are fully acquainted with the goods and services being promoted and that they will be able to answer queries fully
- Ensure that space instore displays live up to expectations created by advertising, and that adequate stocks are available to meet demand



- If products are advertised as 'available to order', ensure that full information on pricing and delivery is readily available – and that you can meet promised delivery deadlines
- Promotional goods should be prominently displayed: at the store entrance/exit, at the ends of shelves or fixtures, or near the till.

Window displays/posters	Pavement advertising boards
Leaflet drops	Newspaper/radio advertising
In-store promotions & displays	Point of sale material
Village newsletter/ parish magazine	Your own news letter
Leaflets	Adverts sent out with monthly bills
Product tastings	Create a website
Link with village events	Create a welcome leaflet for new residents

Making the Most of Your Profits

The increase in fixed costs, such as the cost of borrowing, fuel, raw materials and stock, impacts upon the profits of a business. Careful housekeeping is needed to make the most of hard earned profits.

Here are some suggestions:

Stock

- Check the cost of goods and maintain margins as much as possible
- Don't waste money by buying (or cooking) too much stock and then have to discard it
- Don't tie money up holding too much stock
- Make sure that the stock you have is what the customers want
- Check off all deliveries against delivery notes to make sure they are accurate
- Don't accept short dated goods
- Make sure you get refunds from suppliers for damaged or short dated goods
- Be aware of the weather forecast and adjust stock levels accordingly
- Compare suppliers' terms and prices and don't be afraid to negotiate a better deal
- Keep chillers, freezers and air conditioning equipment in good working order to reduce running costs.

Prices

- Check invoices to ensure that the supplier is maintaining agreed discount levels
- Check for any increase in delivery charge and negotiate if necessary
- Check that prices are correct and that the correct profit margin is maintained
- Any promotions should be making money by selling extra volumes – be careful about discounting goods.

Shrinkage

- Reduce all opportunities for pilfering
- Train staff to be vigilant
- Have effective security measures in place for both stock and staff.

Customer credit

- If you must offer occasional credit, make sure that it is accurately recorded and collected
- Customer accounts and newspaper accounts should be settled monthly - don't run the risk of non payment.

Fixed costs

- Compare energy providers, telephone and broadband providers, insurance brokers, accountants etc. For the best deals you could consider charging for plastic bags rather than giving them away.
- Don't waste electricity, water, gas - switch off non essential equipment eg, Turn of drinks chillers overnight, pull down chiller curtains overnight and repair dripping taps etc.



Employing Staff

Contract of employment

A contract of employment is an agreement between the employer and the employee and is made as soon as the employee accepts a job offer. Both sides are then bound by its terms until it is ended (usually by giving notice) or until the terms are changed (by mutual agreement). The contract is often a verbal agreement and is not written down. However, employees are legally entitled to be given a written statement of employment within two months of their start date.

The written statement of employment sets out the particulars of an employee's terms of employment and should include pay, hours of work, holiday entitlement, sick pay arrangements, notice periods and any information about disciplinary and grievance procedures.

Business Link provides a tool to help produce a written statement www.businesslink.gov.uk

If it is necessary to change the terms of the contract during the period of employment, the new information must be given to the employee in writing within one month.

National minimum wage

The national minimum wage applies to nearly all workers and sets out hourly rates that pay can't fall below. Changes usually occur on 1st October each year. Retailers who fail to pay the minimum wage rate can face prosecution, risking a criminal record and large fine.

From October 1st 2010 the rates are:

£5.93 for employees aged 22+

£4.92 for employees aged 18 – 21 inclusive

£3.64 for employees aged 16 – 17 inclusive

PAYE and NIC

PAYE (Pay As You Earn) is the system that HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) uses to collect Income Tax and National Insurance contributions (NICs) from employees' pay as they earn it.

As an employer, you will have to deduct tax and NICs from your employees' pay each pay period and pay Employer's Class 1 NICs if they earn above a certain threshold. (For the tax year 2010-2011 this is £125 a week, £540 a month, £6475 per year.) You pay these amounts to HMRC monthly or quarterly by the 19th of each month and if you don't send the correct amount, or if you send it in late, you may have to pay interest.

As a new employer you will have to register with HMRC if any of the following apply:

- The employee already has another job
- The employee is receiving a state or occupational pension
- The employee is being paid at or above the PAYE threshold (see above)
- The employee is being paid at or above the National Insurance lower earnings level
- You are providing the employee with employee benefits.

If you need to register you can do so up to four weeks in advance of the first pay day.

The easiest way is via email or by phone on 08456070143. For help and guidance on all aspects of PAYE and NIC go to the HMRC website www.hmrc.gov.uk

Payslips

When paying your staff, you have to give each of them a pay statement or payslip – at or before the time that

you pay them. This can be in either paper or electronic format but it must show certain items, including each employee's gross pay (before tax), any deductions and the net amount payable after the deductions have been made. If you don't give your employees an itemised payslip they could complain to an employment tribunal. At the end of each tax year you must give them a summary of their pay and deductions on form P60. This must be in paper format.

Holiday entitlement

All employees, whether they work full or part time, have the legal right to paid leave from work. Whilst employers do not dispute the need for employees to take holidays, the logistics of covering staff on leave and the extra cost involved can cause difficulties for shopkeepers, particularly if the business has a small staff base and a limited staffing budget.

The legal position is:

- Employees are entitled to a minimum of 5.6 weeks paid annual leave (28 days for someone working five days a week)
- Part-time workers are entitled to the same level of holiday pro rata (so 5.6 times your usual working week, eg 22.4 days for someone working four days a week)
- An employee starts building up holiday entitlement as soon as they start work
- As the employer you can control when the employee takes their holiday (within reason)
- An employee should be paid their normal pay for your holiday
- When an employee leaves they are entitled to get paid for any holiday they have not taken

For information about the national minimum wage go to the Revenue and Customs Website www.hmrc.gov.uk

- Bank and public holidays can be included in the minimum entitlement
- Employees continue to be entitled to holiday leave throughout the ordinary and additional maternity leave and paternity and adoption leave
- As an employer you can offer more than the minimum but extra days must apply to both full and part time staff
- An employee has no right to additional holiday, even if it is unpaid, unless the contract of employment provides for it, but it can be taken at the employer's discretion.

Employing children and young people (under 18's)

The Children (Protection at Work) Regulations impose a number of restrictions on the employment of people under the age of 18.

- Under 13's can not work
 - Under 14's may carry out light duties but please seek further advice
 - Under 15's can not work more than 5 hours on any day on which they don't have to attend school and which is not a Sunday, and they can not work more than 25 hours in any week that they aren't required to attend school
 - Also, those aged between 14 and school leaving age (16) can not work...
- Under 18's can only be employed for 'light' work that doesn't place the person in danger or affect their health, development or attendance at school
 - Under 17's can not work in street trading (unless for their parents)
 - Under 16's can not sell lottery tickets
 - Under 18's must be supervised when selling alcohol
 - The EHO may impose restrictions on young people working in food preparation – better to check before taking someone on especially if the job entails using any machinery.

- Under 16's are not liable to pay National Insurance contributions and you are not liable to pay employers contributions
- Over 16's will be liable for NI in the normal way once their earnings exceed the Lower Earnings Limit.

Contracts of employment

You can give a young person a contract of employment, but it will be almost impossible to enforce it until they are 18 (the law doesn't recognise under 18's as being capable of being bound by an employment contract).

In most cases you will have to inform the children's services department when you employ a child under school leaving age. This can be done via the child's school. The school will provide a form to be completed by the employer and the child's parents and then returned to the school for processing.

For further information and advice contact Essex County Council and your local borough/district councils' environmental health department for guidance.

PAYE and NIC

- No previous employment: the young person should be treated as any other new employee without a P45. If the employment is for more than one week a P46 should be completed in the normal way
- Students employed only during the vacations: no tax will be due as long as a declaration is made on Form P38(S), the student signs a statement at the start of the employment and they do not earn more than the lower earnings limit

Earlier than 7am or later than 7pm

For more than 8 hours per day if over 15

For more than 35 hours per week if over 15

For more than 4 hours in any day without a break of 1 hour

Without at least 2 consecutive weeks away from work during school holidays

During school hours on school days

Employing Staff

Employment equality (age) regulations

Since October 2006 when the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations came into force, it has been unlawful to discriminate against employees because of their age. The main points of the legislation are:

- Upper age limits on unfair dismissal and redundancy are removed
- There is a national default retirement age of 65, making compulsory retirement below 65 unlawful
- Employees will have the right to request to work beyond 65 and as an employer you have a duty to consider such requests.

The regulations make it unlawful on the grounds of age to:

- Discriminate directly against anyone ie, treat them less favourably
- Discriminate indirectly against anyone ie apply a criterion or provision which will disadvantage anyone
- Harass or victimise anyone.

As an employer it will be unlawful, on the grounds of age, for you to:

- Decide not to employ someone
- Dismiss them
- Refuse to provide them with training
- Deny them promotion
- Give them adverse terms and conditions of employment
- Retire an employee before the employer's usual retirement age or the default age of 65 whichever applies
- Allow employees to harass or discriminate against another member of staff.

Resolving employment disputes

There is a minimum three step procedure that must be followed when disciplining employees, dismissing them or handling a grievance. The three mandatory steps are;

1. **Put the procedures in writing** – an employer must put the reasons for the disciplinary action or dismissal in writing to the employee. Similarly, the employee must put the reasons for a grievance in writing to his employer.
2. **Meet and discuss** – a face to face meeting between employer and the employee. Both must be given time to consider the facts of the other's complaint prior to the meeting. Employees must be informed of the employer's decision and their right to appeal.
3. **Holding an appeal meeting, if required.**
This may happen after sanctions have already been imposed. The employee must be informed of the final decision.

What is an employer required to do in an employment dispute?

The aim should be to resolve the problem whilst keeping the employee on. Certain procedures must be followed otherwise a tribunal case may go against the employer.

- **Disciplinary and grievance procedures** should be communicated to all staff in writing – either as a separate document, as part of an employment contract, or in the letter sent when offering the job. Failure to do so could incur additional fines if a tribunal was to decide the case in the employee's favour

- When an employee is not performing satisfactorily or is misbehaving at work, an **informal discussion of the problem should take place.** The employee should be clear about what he/she is doing wrong and how it can be resolved. The employer should keep a note of the date of the meeting, what was discussed and what action was agreed to resolve the situation
- If the issue is still not resolved or the matter is more serious, a **formal discussion should take place.** The employee has the right to be accompanied by a colleague to this meeting. If the employee's explanation is unacceptable, a letter should be written to the employee, setting out the problem, how and when an improvement is expected and what will be done if there is no improvement. If the issue is serious, a final written warning should be given, listing details of and the grounds for the complaint. It should warn the employee that failure to improve or modify behaviour may lead to dismissal and it should refer to the right of appeal
- If there is still no improvement and further action against the employee is necessary, the new **standard procedures should be started.**

For further information on these procedures, including sample letters, visit the bis website www.bis.gov.uk or acas website www.acas.org.uk

Any community owned facility should give consideration to its form of incorporation.

This could include:

Co-operatives

A co-operative can provide an equitable solution for community facilitates. A co-operative can form as a limited company but has a structure that guarantees involvement from its members or devisable parts of its membership, e.g. by age, community etc...Any profits from the cooperative must be distributed evenly amongst its membership, regardless of the numbers shares held.

Charity

A charity can operate only within a set criteria documented within its founding document, (providing those aims are charitable). A charity makes surpluses not profit, which should be re-invested in the charity. The governing document of the charity should also lay out the responsibilities of the trustees, who are responsible for the charity but cannot recompense above expenses. They are some tax benefits to being a charity.

Limited companies

Some charities form trading arms as limited companies to give more flexibility to operation in commercial markets.

Community interest companies

A community interest company (CIC) is a new type of company introduced by the United Kingdom government in 2005 under the Companies (Audit, Investigations and Community Enterprise) Act 2004, designed for social enterprises that want to use their profits and assets for the public good. CICs are intended to be easy to set up, with all the flexibility and certainty of the company form, but

with some special features to ensure they are working for the benefit of the community.

Elements of the governing document

- **Name**
What the official name of the organisation will be and what it will be known as.
- **Role**
The clear aims should be displayed in no more than five points.
- **Function**
The way the organisation achieves these aims, (not always necessary).
- **Governing body**
The governing body should be cast wide to ensure representation across the membership. It should have the power to set the direction of the organisation and hold the managing committee to account.
- **Management Committee**
A committee should exist to manage the day to day operation of the organisation, which may delegate its formulation of plans to sub committees.
- **Finance**
The main detail concerning the signing limits for expenditure of the organisation.
- **Affiliations**
The organisation may want to consider what type of organisations it should be able to affiliate to pursue the aims in the document.
- **Appendices to main document**
The detail of operation should be included in the appendices to the main document.
These tend to be:
- **Elections**
The procedure pertaining to the election to the management committee or the representative body

- **Finance**
The detailed procedure for authorising expenditure and arranging payment.
- **Conduct of meetings**
Detailing the standing orders concerning all meetings within the organisation.
- **Job Descriptions**
Detailed job descriptions containing the roles and responsibilities of each post within the organisation.
- **Code of conduct**
To ensure the organisation appears transparent and accountable the organisation should consider a "code of conduct". This should include the expected standard to which those involved with the organisation should aspire too. The Nolan Report into "standards into public life", provide a useful guide for an organisation.

Section 4

Forward Planning

Planning for the years ahead is very important when running a business. Retail trends and individual circumstances are constantly changing, so it is important for a shopkeeper to plan how the business will develop and adapt to these changes.

The life of a shopkeeper is a busy one and it is all too easy to just keep offering the same services and products, because that's how it has always been done. However, it is important to take the time to stand back from the business in order to make an objective analysis and then develop a plan to take the business forward. This will give your business a direction and set proposals to aim at.

A **SWOT** analysis is a useful tool to achieve this. It involves answering a set of questions to explore the **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats** of the business, prioritizing actions and setting out a plan for the year. If appropriate, involve staff in this process – they may have different information and insights into the business that can give an added dimension. Remember to consider national or even global circumstances that may be outside of your control as well as local and immediate ones.

- **Identify your strengths:**

What do we do really well?

What sector of our shop/business is the most profitable?

What are the key points of our business that enable us to grow our business?

What are the key factors that our customers appreciate about our business?

- **Identify your weaknesses:**

What areas of our business cause the most frequent complaints?

In what situation are we most vulnerable as a retail operation?

What products or processes provide the most problems?

What products or processes bring in the lowest returns?

- **Opportunities:**

What opportunities exist to improve the internal running of the business?

What current market opportunities can we exploit?

What changes are taking place outside of the business that will allow us to operate more effectively?

- **Threats:**

What are the main factors that create a threat to the business?

Which threats are the most serious to our futures?

What changes could take place that could threaten our business?

When these questions have been answered objectively, it will then be possible to establish what actions need to be taken to improve the business, both in the day to day running and over the long term. Consider how the staff or customers will react to the proposals, whether you have the necessary expertise to carry out the plans and the financial implications of what you want to do. Work out if it is possible to carry out these plans by yourself or whether outside help will be needed.



Firm up the ideas by devising an action plan for each proposal, setting out what is to be done, when, how and by whom.

Selling the Business

Selling a retail business can sometimes be a long process. To be successful you will need to present your business well, have relevant business information readily available, be realistic, patient and be prepared to sell the advantages of running a village shop.

Determine a value:

The first step in selling your business is determining what it's actually worth. There are lots of formulae for valuing a business but the best step is to take professional advice – there are a number of Business Transfer Agents and Commercial Estate Agents locally, so use their expertise.

Plan ahead:

An exit strategy should be part of your business plan so good forward planning will help. If you're thinking of retirement or a career change don't expect to be able to sell your business in a hurry; selling will depend on a lot of factors - not least the strength of your business.

What's in it for you?

Think carefully about how much you need to realise from the sale of the business? Will it be enough for you to retire on? Will it offer an attractive proposition to prospective purchasers? Look at other businesses on the market and assess how your business compares with others.

Appoint an agent:

It will pay to ring around to find out what's on offer and what it will cost you. Shop around to get quotations and develop a relationship with the agent. A good business broker can help you determine a realistic price for your business and he or she can also identify and qualify appropriate buyers, put together a sales prospectus, negotiate terms of a sale, and maintain your business confidentiality so that only prospective purchasers know your business is on the market. You'll probably also want to work with your accountant, solicitor and other

experts to make sure that all aspects of a sale are handled properly.

Looking at your business from a buyer's perspective:

Prospective buyers will probably base a purchase offer on the value of the assets in your business (cash flow, gross revenues, annual growth and other factors), so present the business in the most positive and accurate light possible. Make sure that you have all the relevant, up to date information available and discuss with your accountant how to present any adjustments you may currently make for personal drawings, car expenses etc.

Be prepared to answer questions on the business and how it could be developed. Prospective purchasers will want to know how long you have been trading and why you are selling. Aim to give positive answers that support the view of a forward looking business. Saying you've 'had enough' isn't a good selling point! Make sure the shop and accommodation look bright, clean, welcoming and well cared for. A few hours spent tidying up, repairing and decorating can make all the difference.

Some prospective buyers will take only a few minutes to assess whether they are seriously interested in buying your business/property so first impressions are important.

Staff:

Under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (known as TUPE), the existing terms and conditions of your staff's contracts of employment will transfer automatically to the new owner. This means that staff will normally carry on working for the new owner as before.



Staff can refuse to work for the new employer, but must let you or the new owner know that they object to the transfer. This will be viewed as a resignation and they will not have the right to claim unfair dismissal or redundancy payment.



Whilst every care has been taken to provide you with accurate information, we do not take any liability for any errors or omissions.

We hope the handbook will be a useful tool that assists you in continued success of your Village Store.



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Inworth Road, Feering, Essex CO5 9SE

Tel: 0844 4773938 www.essexrcc.org.uk

Reg. Charity No 1097009 Reg. Company No. 4609624.

Empowering Local Communities

"To provide local communities with the skills, resources, and expertise necessary to achieve a thriving and sustainable future"