



IBVTA Guidance on COVID-19 Aware Working Practices

It is vital that when vape businesses prepare to re-open stores, they do so having in place the correct measures & procedures to protect their staff members and customers, and following all government guidance.

The IBVTA recommends that stores **must only** re-open once the best practises outlined in this document are in place, allowing a safe environment for staff to work in and customers to shop in.

Key Considerations

- **Social Distancing**
 - Store Managers must review their store floor and tape suitable 2m distance between customer and counter. Please see further detail below.
- **Hygiene Best Practice**
 - Replenishment stock of hand sanitiser, cleaning sprays and blue rolls must be available at each store. Best practice is outlined later in this document.
- **Number of people in the store**
 - An assessment must be made on a store by store basis, bases on the number of staff members required to trade safely, and the maximum number of customers that can safely shop in the store at any one time. If there is not enough space behind the counter to maintain 2m distances between staff, then this should also be taken into account.
- **Express Service**
 - Stores must ensure that customers spend as little time in store as possible, and therefore must continue to suspend device set up, flavour testing, and demonstration devices.
- **Product problems/Fault finding**
 - Stores must observe social distancing and ensure an express service offering is maintained. Therefore, there will be occasions when it will be appropriate to ask the customer to leave their device with you and return to the store at a pre-agreed date and time. However, if there are no other customers in store it may be appropriate to undertake our usual service, but paying particular attention to hygiene and social distancing.

Operational Measures

Card Payments preferred: This will minimise risk to staff and customers by taking away any unnecessary contact, and contactless payment will always be preferred where possible.

Cash payments: Cash payments may be taken, but only if no other means of payment is available, and must be treated with extreme caution. Hands must be sanitized both before and after taking payment in cash, and care should be taken to wipe the front of the till and touch screen after cash has been handled. Customers must be given the opportunity to sanitise their hands after they have put their change away.

Age verification checks. With the advice now being that people should wear face coverings when on public transport and while shopping, you may ask the customer to temporarily remove their mask for the purposes of verifying their age.

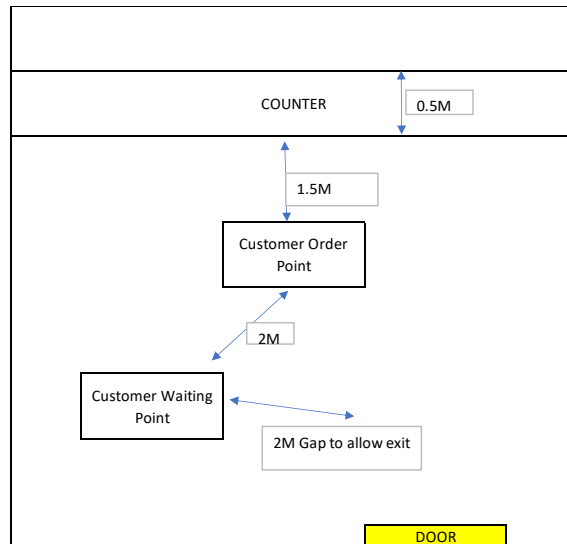
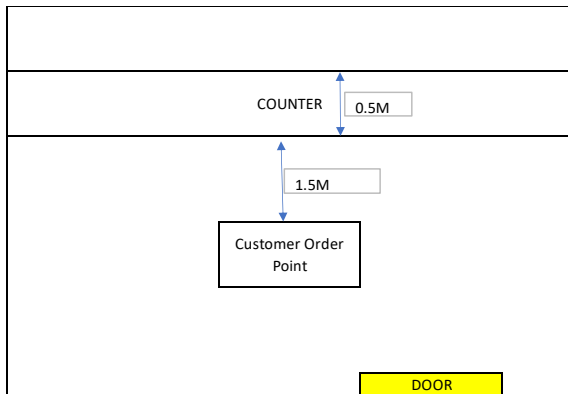
Social Distancing in store

Store Managers to review in store to understand the best place for a customer to stand to place an order, this will be at least 2m from staff members behind the counter. This area should then be marked as a square with hazard tape for customers to stand within. Store managers to review store and assess if it is possible to create a queuing squares, space permitting, allowing for further 2m distancing. See examples below. If it is not possible then only 1 customer is allowed in store at any one time.

No groups or couples should be allowed in store, and only one customer should be allowed to transact each purchase.

Social Distancing Entry/Exit:

It is important that you observe the government's social distancing rules at all times and therefore the number of customers in your store must not exceed 1 per 2 metres of available distance. Consider the use of one-way system in and out of the store, if space permits. Position hazard tape on the pavement outside the store to show safe 2m queuing gaps:





Stores may also wish to install glass or Perspex barriers at counters, but should be aware that the cleaning of the surfaces of these barriers introduce further measures that must be maintained, ideally between each customer.

Hand hygiene

All employees **MUST** keep their hands as scrupulously clean as they can, as often as they can. Soap and water is just as effective as hand sanitizer, and it is important to clean the backs of hands as well as the palms. Extra care must be taken to clean between fingers and around fingernails.

Employees should avoid touching their face at any time, but particularly when they have touched a surface that someone else has been breathing over, unless they have thoroughly cleaned your hands.

Gloves do little in preventing the spread of infections from surface to surface, or to the face, and tend to give a false sense of security that leads people to neglect regular hand cleaning.

Face coverings

It is now the advice in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland that where physical distancing is more difficult, for example on public transport and in shops, face masks or face coverings be used. In England, it will be mandatory for those traveling on public transport, from the 15th of June.

Face coverings can provide some protection against transmission of COVID-19, however specialist PPE (e.g. respirators, masks to protect workers from dust and other industrial airborne hazards) should be reserved for those who need them to perform their roles.

If face coverings to manage the risks related to COVID-19, business owners should:

- establish guidelines for when and how face coverings should be used;
- provide masks or face coverings free of charge;
- ensure they are used appropriately, correctly fitted and disposed of safely after use

Businesses should support staff who choose to use a face covering not required by the organization (e.g. homemade face coverings or other face coverings not provided by the employer) and ensure they:

- 1) wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before putting the face covering on and after removing it;
- 2) avoid touching their face or face covering when wearing it, to avoid contamination;
- 3) change the face covering if it becomes damp or if it has been touched;
- 4) continue to regularly wash their hands and sanitize hands where this is not possible;
- 5) change the face covering each day, as a minimum, and more often if necessary;

- 6) wash the face covering at a high temperature before/after each use if the material is washable; if it is not washable, it should be disposed with the usual waste; and
- 7) continue to comply with social distancing guidelines, wherever possible.

Operating Hours

Stores should reassess their opening hours on an ongoing basis.

POS

Ensure that you adequately communicate social distancing measures to your customers so they know what to expect before they visit your store (i.e., on your website or social media accounts) and before they enter the store (e.g., posters in store windows and/or a prominent position in-store).

Returned products

If a product is returned by a customer, consider how this will be handled. A 'no contact' return procedure should be set up, whereby customers use a designated box or container. Ask the customer to place the returned item in the box, and store the box safely, only handling the item to process that repair or return, after 72 hours.

Advice to customers

The IBVTA recommends that members communicate the following to their customers, **before** they visit stores:

- Those who have been advised to isolate themselves, or who are self-isolating at home should continue to do so. Consider sending a household member or friend (who must be over 18) to the shop instead.
- If you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19, follow the advice issued by the NHS and Public Health England. ([Link](#))
- As per the government's latest advice, only leave the house when absolutely necessary. Consider purchasing online, or if you do need to shop in person or send someone else for your supplies, consider getting enough to last you a little longer than usual.
- Shops will have measures in place to minimise the amount of people in a shop at one time, and to keep customers and staff at a safe distance from each other when inside. You may have to be patient, but this further reduces any risks.

Customers in Self-Isolation

Customers that are self-isolating or household-isolating should not be welcomed into stores until they have completed the allotted isolation period. The list of those groups who should be self-isolating may have recently changed so customers should familiarise themselves with the latest guidance.

That is 7 days from first symptoms if they show symptoms, or 14 days from initial household isolation if they do not contract Covid-19.

Customers who are isolating should send someone they know that is not isolated (and over 18) to buy on their behalf. This is important in ensuring the infection is controlled.

If you have good reason to believe a customer should be self-isolating, and cannot reasonably explain any evident symptoms, politely ask them to consider whether they should be self-isolating, and ask them to leave the store. Let them know of any means within your gift to provide them with vaping products without risk to store staff or other customers.

Customers should also be directed to online purchasing, as it could prove a very good temporary solution to getting vaping supplies while they are stuck at home.

Store Team Resource

Where stores have 2 staff members on duty and there are several customers waiting, one should service customers from behind the counter, strictly following the sales process below, and the other should be in the area of the door to ensure social distancing is maintained during entry, exit and whilst queuing. They should also ensure customers have means to pay by card only, and offer hand sanitiser for the customer to use before making their purchase. Store staff should make sure customers are following the signage and advice stated.

In store Sales Process and Sanitising

- Customers should stand in the designated areas provided when placing their order
- During payment, the staff member should enter the amount onto the card terminal, place it on the counter and step away, at least 2m. The customer is then asked to use card terminal, contactless payment is preferred and encouraged. The limit for contactless payments has now increased to £45.
- Once the card payment is completed the customer is asked to step back into the designated square. The team members complete the purchase on the store EPOS system and places items with receipts in a bag/on the counter.
- The team member then steps back 2m and allows the customer to take their goods.
- The customer is then directed to leave store by a staff member at the door (where possible).
- Before serving the next customer, the counter top and card terminal are to be wiped down and the staff member's hands sanitised.
- Ensure all staff wash their hands regularly, particularly upon arriving for the start of their shift and before and after taking breaks or handling food.
- All staff should wash their hands or use hand sanitiser after any contact that could lead to an infection, for example, holding a device that a customer has been handling.
- It is imperative that counter tops, door handles, cabinet handles, and any surfaces inside a store which might be touched must be cleaned thoroughly and regularly.
- Again, soapy water is as effective as sanitary wipes, and regularity of cleaning will make a real difference to the chance of the virus surviving on a counter top.

These are difficult times, and it is incredibly important that vaping businesses do not lose sight of the reason for opening their stores. We are pleased that our sector again has the opportunity to serve customers, as for many people, their local vape shop will be the only thing standing between them and their next tobacco cigarette.

Some customers may be experiencing fear and tension in ways that are very unfamiliar to them, and with social distancing measures in place, it becomes all the more important that they be greeted with understanding and patience.