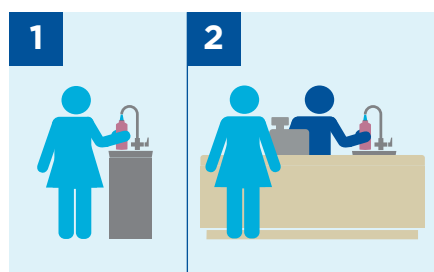


If you are a business that sells alcohol for consumption on the premises, you are required to provide water free of charge for customers on request. For stores that do not sell alcohol, or only sell for consumption off the premises, there are no requirements. However, providing water for customers that want to fill up their own containers can be a good way to demonstrate your commitment to the environment.

For retailers that are looking into providing a facility for water refills, there are a number of areas to consider:



Types of water refill point

There are two main ways to offer a water refill service to customers. The first involves a member of staff taking a customer's container and filling it up from a tap somewhere behind the till, while the second involves providing either a tap or facility on the shop floor where customers can fill up themselves. For retailers looking to provide a water refill facility on the shop floor, it is important to minimise the potential of spillage so as not to cause health and safety issues.



Security concerns

You should consider whether to offer a water refill service during times when the business is operating with only one member of staff on the shop floor, for example on a forecourt during the night shift. Where a water refill service requires a member of staff to leave the till point, either to fill up at a point behind them or in a different room, this leaves the store exposed to potential theft.



Acceptable containers

It is recommended that members of staff only accept clean containers when providing a staff-operated water refill service. Manufacturers of single use plastic bottles recommend that they are not to be refilled, but this is not a legal requirement and so is at your discretion as to whether you accept them to be refilled. Dirty containers should not be accepted as they raise potential health and safety issues. For all containers it is recommended that the container should not come into direct contact with the tap to avoid any risk of cross contamination.



Mains fed tap water

Drinking water

All mains fed tap water in the UK and Ireland is safe to drink. If you are providing a water refill service, you should ensure that the tap you provide water from is mains fed and is not fed from a tank on the premises.



Commercial considerations

If you do not sell alcohol on the premises for immediate consumption, there is no requirement for you to provide water free of charge. While the vast majority of businesses that provide water refills do so free of charge, there is no obligation to do so and you may want to consider whether to require customers to make a purchase in store to be able to fill up their container for free, or whether to charge for the service itself.

This guide is provided by the Association of Convenience Stores in consultation with Woking Borough Council. It was last updated in January 2023. Please refer to the ACS website for the most current version of this guidance.

CONTACT

For more details on this guidance, contact a member of the ACS team on 01252 515001

Our website www.acs.org.uk

Our social media @ACS_localshops on X, TikTok and Instagram

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