

## Skirting around the issue

THIS season's fashion sensation is about to emerge... and bloom in every stylish wardrobe. Floral skirts are this week's must have buy. Check out some of the best we have found available in the Swansea Bay area this week...



**SKIRTING AROUND**  
Jane Norman, Swansea, £28.



**TWO-TONE**  
Dorothy Perkins, Swansea, £22.



**FLOWER POWER**  
River Island, Swansea, £29.99.



**SHORT AND SWEET**  
Next, Neath and Parc Forest-fach, £22.



**RIGHT PRICE**  
Peacocks, Swansea and Port Talbot, £12.

# Is it time to throw away fast fashion?

ASDA is to extend a 100-day returns policy across its clothing range, claiming it wants to halt the increase of "throwaway" fashion on the high street.

The move comes months after rival Marks & Spencer cut its 90-day returns deadline to 35 days, to the anger of customers. Asda in Morriston and Llanelli said it would allow customers to return any item from its George clothing line up to 100 days after purchase, regardless of how many times it had been washed or worn.

### Commitment

The retailer said the guarantee demonstrated its commitment to providing clothing that was made to last, saying the policy would not lead to higher prices.

In July Asda launched a 100-day trial on school uniforms. It said £9 million worth of school uniforms were bought, with returns and exchanges amounting to £900.

Fiona Lambert, brand director at George, said: "Even though officially it's the end of the recession, the attitudes we have developed towards being less wasteful are here to stay.

"Although we all want to make do and mend, the reality is that the busy mum just doesn't have time.

"The George 100-day quality

by Peter Slee and Emma Jones

## ASDA

guarantee now means that our customers should be just as happy with a George garment after washing and wearing as the day they bought it."

She added: "We are in a new era of retailing where customers' perceptions of value are not solely based on price but how long the item will last."

Marks & Spencer faced a customer backlash recently after cutting its returns policy to just 35 days.

For decades there had been no time limit on returning items providing they were unused, there was a receipt and they could be put back on the rack.

But now the deadline has been reduced — with little fanfare — for the second time in four years as the store attempts to save money.

The cut from 90 days even led unhappy shoppers to vent their frustration on internet forums.

Shoppers have no legal right to return an item and claim a refund just because they have changed their minds.

However, most stores include a

period of grace to return goods on the basis that it is considered to be good customer service.

A customer can only legally claim a refund if the product is faulty or is different to what was described.

Their rights can run for up to six years.

### Rules

However, rules are slightly different for internet or telephone purchases, where a product can be returned within seven days of receipt if the customer changes their mind.

A spokesman for Marks & Spencer said: "The M&S returns policy is the best on the high street.

"We offer our customers a full refund or exchange on goods returned within 35 days, which compares favourably to our competitors, many of which offer just 28 days."

"The last date for return is clearly printed on the till receipt and the overwhelming majority of our customers return unwanted items well within this period — in fact, two-thirds of them return within two weeks."

## Cheeky way to wear new styles for free

DECEITFUL female shoppers have been saving money on outfits by taking new clothes back to stores after wearing them.

One in three women admit to having freestyled — bought a nice dress, worn it with the price tag hidden, then claimed a refund because it 'didn't fit'.

And one in 10 women said they carried out the practice every time they had a big night out, wedding or dinner party to go to.

Nearly three quarters did it because they couldn't afford the clothes they bought — but a crafty 28 per cent confessed they did it because they enjoyed the buzz.

A survey of the 3,000 women revealed only 19 per cent felt guilty about freestyling.

The survey also kicked up a few stories of freestyle shoppers being rumbled including a young woman who bought a £200 dress from a designer store and wore it to a party, only for a fellow party-goer to spot her label hanging out and ripping off the tag and hand it to her. Another shopper bought a £180 dress for a wedding, got drunk and ripped it, making it impossible to return.

A spokesman said: "This survey shows how ruthless women can be when it comes to shopping.

"Buying something and then realising it's not quite for you is one thing, but wearing something and then expecting a refund from the shop takes real nerve.

"It is a way to look good for less

but retailers should wise up and be more stringent when customers return things."

The study found the average freestyled item costs £70 and is usually bought from larger department stores. It also emerged 24 per cent of respondents thought it was perfectly acceptable to take stuff back after wearing it.

Some of the clothes weren't in the best condition when they were returned either — more than one in 10 said they had left the outfit screwed up on the floor overnight before taking it back.

Another 10 per cent say it stank of smoke when they returned it to the shop and two even split a drink over it. So it's not surprising that four per cent have had to cough up to have the outfit dry cleaned before getting a refund.

And it's not just shops women return worn clothes to either — eight per cent have also sent stuff back to mail order catalogues after wearing it.

But these cunning women have some sneaky tricks up their sleeve to try to fool the shop assistants into thinking the clothes haven't been worn. A shrewd 18 per cent keep the labels in when they wear them and a third makes sure they keep the receipts.

Weddings are the most popular reason for wearing an outfit and then returning it with 40 per cent of women saying they have done this. More than one in 10 say they have done it for a black tie ball.



## So how do other stores fare with refunds? We have been finding out ...

Marks & Spencer, Swansea

**HOW LONG FOR AN EXCHANGE?** 35 days with a receipt.  
**WHAT THEY SAID:** "If you haven't got a receipt, you'll get a credit voucher at the last selling price."

Next, Parc Trostre

**HOW LONG?** 28 days with a receipt.  
**WHAT THEY SAID:** "Without a receipt, it is totally at the discretion of the store manager."

Burton, Aberafan Centre, Port Talbot

**HOW LONG?** 28 days  
**WHAT THEY SAID:** "It's not a problem if you haven't got a receipt, we'll exchange it for the price it shows on the till when you bring it in."

Primark, Whitewalls, Swansea

**HOW LONG?** A full refund or exchange will be offered if you have a receipt as long as the item is returned unworn with the original tags on within 28 days.  
**WHAT THEY SAID:** "After 28 days, you can bring the item in and we will check whether it is on

our system, and whether you get an exchange or credit depends on how much later than 28 days it is. If you don't have the receipt, we will do the same thing."

Matalan, Swansea

**HOW LONG?** 28 days  
**WHAT THEY SAID:** "If you haven't got a receipt, bring it back and we'll either offer you an exchange to the value of whatever price we are currently selling the item for, or a voucher."

Millets, Swansea

**HOW LONG?** 28 days. After 28 days, an exchange or gift card.  
**WHAT THEY SAID:** "Without a receipt it is going to be really, really difficult to do anything."

Warehouse, Debenhams, Quadrant shopping centre, Swansea

**HOW LONG?** You can get a refund if you return the unworn item with a receipt within 28 days.  
**WHAT THEY SAID:** "If you return the unworn item with a receipt after 28 days, you can exchange it for goods to that value. If you do not have your receipt, you cannot get a refund but you can get credit in the form of a gift card."

BHs, Oxford Street, Swansea

**HOW LONG?** If you've got the receipt you can get a refund within 28 days.  
**WHAT THEY SAID:** "After 28 days, you can get a credit note to the value of the goods. If you haven't got the receipt, you can exchange the item for goods of the same value."

Jane Norman, Debenhams, Quadrant shopping centre, Swansea

**HOW LONG?** You can get a refund if you return the goods within 28 days and have a receipt.  
**WHAT THEY SAID:** "If it's later than 28 days, you can get an exchange for goods of the same value. If you haven't got the receipt we do not offer anything."

D2, 3-4 Vaughan Street, Llanelli

**HOW LONG?** You can exchange the goods for goods of the same value any time. No refunds.  
**WHAT THEY SAID:** "If you've lost your receipt we will take a look at the goods and then decide. If the product has gone down in price, you will only be able to exchange it at the reduced price."



**BOUQUET BEAUTY** Barbara Fillery, of Fleurs Florist, is busy on the run-up to Mother's Day.

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## Saying it flowers this Mother's Day

by Chris Peregrine

BECAUSE she is worth it! Mother's Day is coming up on Sunday and that means sons and daughters saying it with flowers.

Fleurs Florist in Swansea's Castle Street is just one business getting ready for the rush.

Barbara Fillery, who runs it, said: "People tend to choose mumsy flowers and the very young choose bright colours."

Mixed arrangements are popular these days, as are lilies, roses and carnations.

Barbara tries to hold her prices as much as she can, but she and colleagues are in the hands of the suppliers.

"It's the demand of the Dutch market for certain flowers," she said.

"That will push the prices up. We carry it a bit.

"The packaging prices stay the same."

She said a typical Mother's Day purchase would see someone come in with a £20 note and ask for an arrangement to be made up.

"Orders have already started to come in," said Barbara.

"On Sunday morning people will have forgotten and they will come in or phone an order on their card,

and we will deliver them." So what will a dozen red roses cost you for this Mother's Day?

●Wendy's, 74 Oxford Street, Swansea, £35. Delivery to Tycoch, as an example, £2.50.

●Black Orchid Florist, 93 Brynymor Road, Swansea, £38. Delivery to Tycoch, £3.

●Fleurs Florist, 26 Castle Street, Swansea, £25. Delivery to Tycoch, no charge.

●Flowers by Arrangement, 745 Llangyfelach Road, Treboeth, Swansea, £36. Delivery to Tycoch £3.25, and on Sunday, £5.25.

●Bonnells the Florist, 11a Market Precinct, Llanelli, £35. Delivery to Halfway, no charge.

●Enterprise Flowers, 31-33 Station Road, Llanelli, £45, including delivery to Halfway.

●Forget Me Not, 12 General Market, Green Street, Neath, £40. Delivery to Cimla, £3.

●Bella Fioro, Stall 52, Neath General Market, Green Street, Neath, £40, including delivery to Cimla, except this Sunday when there is a £2 charge.

●Baglan Flower Shop, 32 Church Road, Baglan, Port Talbot, £35. Delivery to Aberavon £2.50.

●Floral Inspirations, 1 Cambrian Place, Port Talbot, £35, £39.99 or £48. Delivery to Aberavon, £2.50.