

RETAIL CRIME – VICTIMISING COLLEAGUES, COMMUNITIES AND JOBS.

WINTER 2017



FOREWORD

The retail industry finds itself in a challenging position, with margins shrinking and a very difficult economic outlook.

Retail crime is a serious and growing problem that threatens to close stores. Significant increases in violence, theft and fraud affects store colleagues' working and family lives. That makes it a real threat to economic growth, local employment and community cohesion. Our absolute priority is the safety of our colleagues, who should be able to work free from the threat of violence and abuse.

Our absolute priority is safety from violence and abuse, which is often linked to acquisitive crime.

We know that police and others face difficult resourcing decisions, but we ask them to give retail crime the priority it needs and to work with retailers and others in a genuine partnership aimed at reversing the unchecked growth of crime against shops.

James Martin,
Crime and Security Adviser
BRC



RETAIL CRIME – VICTIMISING COLLEAGUES, COMMUNITIES AND JOBS.

MORE THAN

1 IN 10

JOB IN THE UK ARE
IN RETAIL, an industry
which is uniquely woven
into every community.¹



1 IN 10

SHOPS ARE VACANT.²



Business Rate costs alone
will increase by

£270 M

FROM SPRING 2018.³



£660 MILLION

national direct cost of retail
crime reported in the BRC's
2016 crime survey, an
8% INCREASE IN ONE YEAR.⁴

40%

INCREASE REPORTED VIOLENCE
AGAINST/ABUSE OF RETAIL
COLLEAGUES IN 2016.⁵

51

INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE
AND ABUSE PER

1000

STAFF.⁶

VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

EACH INCIDENT IS COMPLETELY UNACCEPTABLE – TACKLING VIOLENCE AND ABUSE IS BRC MEMBERS' HIGHEST PRIORITY.

In partnership with the Home Office, we are developing a strategy for tackling violence and abuse towards store colleagues. The most extreme violence is used by prolific and persistent offenders intentionally to help them steal. We ask PCCs to engage with us on this very serious issue and prioritise it within their Crime Plan.

Retailers tell us that the most worrying violence comes from prolific and persistent offenders in the course of theft.

CASE STUDY 1:

In Winter 2017 two masked males entered a store carrying a shotgun and a machete. Three colleagues were in store at the time, including a store guard, who was knocked unconscious with a blow to the back of the head from the machete. Directing their shotgun at colleagues the offenders threatened to cause significant bodily harm to them. The criminals made off with the contents of a till, some change and a few cigarettes. The store had CCTV and colleagues had been trained in avoiding conflict.

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A lot of theft goes on in this store, so we have to challenge possible threats often. It happened so quickly I didn't realise what was going on until it had already started. I'd been trained in avoiding conflict, which I think helped. They threatened me with a gun over and over, but didn't say they'd actually kill me. Everyone's been great, but it's been a big shock. **PAUL, STORE MANAGER***.

“

My manager and team have been super, but I had to take some time off work. I went back because I wouldn't let them win and ruin my life. I'm still petrified whenever someone comes in with a scarf and hat on. The cold weather and winter are making things worse. **ANNE, STORE COLLEAGUE.***

* Names have been changed.

Violence and abuse affects our colleagues' family lives as much as their working life

CASE STUDY 2:

In Autumn 2017, helmeted male attackers burst into a shop waving knives in colleagues' faces and screaming at them to open the tills.

The staff were mainly female, and report feeling petrified and that time "seemed to slow down" during the attack.

The colleagues report going over that night's events in their heads again and again, flashbacks and panicked episodes whenever men with helmets or even just similar trainers come into the store. Their employer has offered each free counselling by trained specialists.

The colleagues report that the incidents has affected their family lives, with some unwilling to tell their loved ones about the use of weapons to spare them some of the concern. Others are now unable to work later shifts because of the psychological trauma received as a result of the incident.

SHOPLIFTING

WE KNOW THAT ORGANISED CRIMINALS WILL OFTEN USE VIOLENCE OR THREATS IN A CONSIDERED WAY - KNOWING IT WILL GET THEM WHAT THEY WANT.

POLICE RECORDED SHOPLIFTING INCREASED BY 11% IN THE YEAR TO JUNE 2017 - AND THAT WAS 22% HIGHER THAN 11/12 AND 28% HIGHER THAN 06/07. ⁷

As the number of crimes has increased, the average cost has risen to.

IN 2012-'16 THE AVERAGE COST TO EACH VICTIM OF SHOPLIFTING MORE THAN DOUBLED, FROM £237 TO £500. ⁸

Along with fraud, these changes make it significantly more difficult to maintain stores in each part of the UK.

FRAUD

HOME OFFICE FIGURES SHOW THAT FRAUD IS THE SINGLE LARGEST CRIME IN THE UK.

3.3 M INCIDENCES OF FRAUD IN THE YEAR TO JUNE 2017. ¹⁰

BRC MEMBERS REPORTED A COST TO THEM OF **£180 MILLION** IN 2016, AROUND HALF OF WHICH WAS CYBER-ENABLED. ¹¹

BRC Members deploy class-leading techniques to protect their customers against fraud. But fraud and cyber-crime always has a wider cost to local communities.

Across all retail crime, a strong partnership is required between the CJS and retailers.

HOW CAN WE IMPROVE THINGS?

We know that resourcing is difficult, and there are a huge range of demands on tight budgets. But retail crime is growing too quickly, and it is harming local people, their jobs and families.

**TO COMBAT RETAIL CRIME AND ITS EFFECTS,
WE ASK SENIOR POLICE OFFICERS AND CRIME COMMISSIONERS TO...**

- work together to develop targeted strategies and monitor performance;
- work with other CJS agencies to include them in plans and monitor performance;
- engage with retailers, both operating in the spirit of genuine partnership and co-operation;
- include specific provision in their Crime Plan;
- focus on violence and abuse against staff without losing sight of its links to shoplifting; and
- work to protect consumers against fraud and cyber-crime.

There are resources and expertise out there you can draw upon. In the first instance please email the BRC using the details below, or you might talk to the National Business Crime Centre or the APCC for more assistance.

FROM MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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THE BRITISH RETAIL CONSORTIUM

Retail is an exciting, diverse and dynamic industry undergoing transformational change. The BRC is at the forefront – enhancing, assisting, informing, and shaping. Our broad range of stakeholders demonstrates how retailing touches almost every aspect of our culture.

The BRC leads the industry and works with our members to tell the story of retail, shape debates and influence issues and opportunities which will help make that positive difference.

We care about the careers of people who work in our industry, the communities retail touches and competitiveness as a fundamental principle of the industry's success – our 3 Cs.



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