



The Rt Hon Suella Braverman MP,
Home Secretary,
Home Office,
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Helen Dickinson OBE
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29 September 2023

Dear Home Secretary,

We are writing to ask you to take action to support our colleagues who continue to face unacceptable levels of violence and abuse, amid a rise in theft, much of it organised crime, and anti-social behaviour which in many cases are the root cause of violent incidents.

The latest BRC Crime Survey, covering the period from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, reported more than 850 incidents of violence and abuse against retail workers every day, and a more recent survey found theft had risen by a further 27% across 10 of the UK's largest cities over the last year. Recent high-profile interventions by some retail CEOs show that these trends are getting worse. At the same time, retailers lost £953m to shoplifting and invested £715m on crime prevention measures. Many retailers are also making significant investments in technology solutions to tackle the issue.

In 2021, the government amended the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill to place into statute the aggravating factor applied by the courts in cases of assault, as set out in Sentencing Council guidelines, for offences committed against those providing a public service or performing a public duty. This was welcomed by the retail industry as it showed the government understood the scale of the issue, but it is now clear that it did not go far enough. The Ministry of Justice is not able to track data on the amendment, so it is impossible to tell if it is effective, yet the situation in our businesses continues to deteriorate.

Firstly, we ask you to address this issue by creating a new statutory offence of assaulting, threatening, or abusing a retail worker, allowing for violent incidents resulting from retail workers enforcing a statutory age restriction or preventing theft, to be charged as an aggravated offence – similar to the 2021 Protection of Workers (Retail and Age-restricted Goods and Services) Act passed in Scotland. This standalone offence would send an important signal that our colleagues will receive better protection in law and act as a deterrent to would-be offenders. This action should be taken without delay.

Secondly, the police also need to prioritise these offences and improve their response to incidents. While the police face challenges across numerous competing priorities, 44% of BRC members rate the police response as poor or very poor.

For one major retailer, the police's own data shows that they failed to respond to 73% of serious retail crimes that were reported. The police consistently tell us that a lack of data about these offences means they have no visibility about the nature or scale of the issue. While retailers are working to improve reporting of incidents, and we have developed strong and effective partnerships with police in many parts of the country, a standalone offence would vastly improve that visibility so that the police can allocate appropriate resources and improve their response.

Your department's continued focus on retail crime is welcome, and the discussion at the recent meeting with the Minister for Crime, Policing and Fire provided an excellent opportunity for some businesses to identify the most significant threats and potential solutions. While we look forward to supporting the development of the action plan emerging from that meeting, it is our firm view that this standalone offence is also needed.

We ask that you treat this request with the seriousness that it deserves and would be keen to meet with you to discuss the issue in more detail.

Yours sincerely,

Nick Stowe, CEO
Adena Services

Giles Hurley, CEO UK&I
Aldi UK

Maria Hollins, CEO
Ann Summers

Sue Kemp, Managing Director
Associated Independent Stores

James Barker, Managing Director
Barker and Stonehouse

Dawood Pervez, Managing Director
Bestway Wholesale

Meryl Halls, Managing Director
Booksellers Association

Leanne Cahill, CEO
Bravissimo

Charmaine Griffiths, Chief Executive
British Heart Foundation

Kenny Wilson, Chief Executive
Airwair International - Dr Martens

John Boumphrey, UK Country Manager
Amazon UK Services

Mohsin Issa CBE, Co-Owner
ASDA Stores

Graham Bell, CEO
B&Q

Nick Collard, Chief Executive Officer
Bensons for Beds Retail

Andrew Goodacre, Chief Executive
BIRA

**Sebastian James, Senior Vice President and
Managing Director**
Boots UK

Gavin Murphy, Managing Director
Breitling UK

Helen Dickinson, Chief Executive
British Retail Consortium



Gerry Murphy, Chairman
Burberry

Will Stratton-Morris, Chief Executive
Caffe Nero UK

Kevin Barrett, Group CEO
Carpentryright

Owen McLellan, Group Managing Director
Company Shop

David Robinson, CEO
Dobbies Garden Centres Group

Nick Wilkinson, CEO
Dunelm Group

Andrew Hinds, Chairman
F Hinds

Tom Athron, Chief Executive Officer
Fortnum & Mason

Karthik Harith, General Manager (UK)
Getir UK

Henrik Nordvall, CEO/Country Manager UK&I
H&M Hennes & Mauritz UK

Doug Putman, Owner
HMV

Damian McGloughlin, CEO
Homebase

Richard Walker OBE, Executive Chairman
Iceland Food

Andrew Higginson, Chairman
Regis Schultz, Group CEO
JD Sports Fashion

Beth Butterwick, Chief Executive Officer
Jigsaw

Bob Neville, Managing Director UK&I
C&J Clark International

Darcy Willson-Rymer, Chief Executive
Card Factory

Debbie Robinson, Chief Executive
Central Co-op

Alexander Baldock, Group Chief Executive
Currys

Daniel Rubin, Chairman
Dune Group

Nigel Murray, Managing Director
EH Booth & Co

Ed Duggan, Financial & Commercial Director
Fishpools

Noel Coyle, CEO
Fraser Hart

Roisin Currie, CEO
Greggs

Manju Malhotra, Chief Executive Officer
Harvey Nichols

Alex Gourlay, Executive Chairman
Holland & Barrett

Fran Barnes, Chief Executive Officer
Horticultural Trades Association

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British Retail Consortium - a company limited by guarantee
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Glenn Edwards, Managing Director
LEON Restaurants

Stuart Machin, Chief Executive
Marks & Spencer

Alistair Macrow, Chief Executive Officer
McDonald's UK & Ireland

Helen Connolly, Chief Executive Officer
New Look Retailers

Nick Read, Group CEO
Post Office

Nick Vance, Chief Executive Officer
Radley+Co

Howard Saycell, CEO
RETRA

Christina Dowling, UK Retail Manager
Rigby & Peller

Doug Winchester, Managing Director
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John Mewett, CEO
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Linda Campbell, Managing Director
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Muntazir Dipoti, National President
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Leila Bailey, Managing Director
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Paul Marchant, Chief Executive
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Chris Brook-Carter, Chief Executive Officer
Retail Trust

Julie Abraham, CEO
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Simon Roberts, Chief Executive Officer
Sainsbury's

John Brodie, Chief Executive
Scottish Midland Co-operative Society

Steve Carson, CEO
ScS Group

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Mark Smith, Chief Executive
The Southern Co-operative

Gavin Peck, Chief Executive
The Works Stores

Sebastian Hobbs, Chief Executive
Well Pharmacy

David Potts, Chief Executive
Wm Morrison Supermarkets

CC.

The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP, Prime Minister

The Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer

Kevin Hollinrake MP, Minister for Enterprise, Markets and Small Business

The Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP, Shadow Home Secretary

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