

Retail Crime Action Plan

October 2023

Police investigation of retail crime

Policing received 274,000 reports of retail theft in the financial year 2022 – 2023. It should also be observed that retail theft is sometimes accompanied by assaults and threats of violence by offenders. In light of the present levels of retail crime, it has been recognised that to make improvements there is a necessity to develop a robust partnership approach between policing and all retailers.

This action plan has been led by NPCC in terms of the policing response to retail crime. It has been balanced in relation to the necessity for attendance (immediate vs delayed) against the national approach around threat, risk and harm that applies across the broad spectrum of policing. All reasonable lines of enquiry will be pursued to identify offenders, secure available evidence, seek to recover property and ensure witnesses are identified and interviewed.

What follows can be used as a guideline for forces to follow where operational threat demand allows.

Attendance at the Scene

Police attendance at the scene for retail crime will be prioritised in the following circumstances:

- 1) Where violence has been used.
- 2) Where an offender has been detained (for example, by store security) police will attend the scene with urgency and repeat / prolific or juvenile offenders will be treated with elevated priority. All police attendance will be subject to a THRIVE risk assessment (Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigation, Vulnerability, Engagement)
- 3) Where evidence needs to be promptly secured which can only be done in person by police personnel e.g., securing forensic evidence.



Crime - Reasonable Lines of Enquiry

(This applies to all reported crimes whether officers attend at the scene in an emergency situation, on a delayed response or as a desk based investigation)

Police should follow all reasonable lines of enquiry when investigating an offence.

In line with the College of Policing guidelines, all material and potential evidence should be considered when there is information to suggest the offender could be identified.

For example,

- Where there is clear recorded CCTV (or other) footage, police will recover that and seek to present it as evidence.
- When there is clear eyewitness evidence, that person will be interviewed.
- Where there is strong evidence and forensic opportunities, police will seek to present these.
- Where property is stolen with unique features, such as a serial number, police will seek to recover it and obtain evidence.

Where CCTV is secured, viable images should be checked against those in the Police National Database, and other lawfully appropriate databases, using the facial recognition capability. Reasonable lines of enquiry compliance will be subjected to inspection by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service

Prolific or Repeat Offenders

There are cohorts of prolific offenders who commit the majority of retail theft. A proactive approach to identify and target resources at these individuals will have a positive effect in preventing crime. Local policing teams should work with retailers to identify those offenders who cause the most harm and develop joint action plans to target their offending e.g., trigger plans for offending, use of ancillary orders such as Community Protection Notices (CPNs) and



Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBOs), designated a single point of contact (SPOCs) for efficient collection of evidence.

Once an offender has been identified and detained, the full scope of drug, alcohol or mental health referrals into treatment should be utilised where appropriate. It should be noted, however, that prolific and priority offenders, under the current guidelines, are not eligible for the conditional caution process.

Analytics of Police National Computer (PNC) / Police National Database (PND) data, including crime scene facial recognition data, should be used to identify prolific offenders and proactively pursue them from a criminal justice perspective. This will ensure national consistency in driving forward the policing response.

The use of business and victim impact statements to support prosecutions should be optimised. This will empower courts to consider all aspects following guilty pleas or verdicts. Should repeat/prolific offenders be identified after they have left the scene; then a delayed policing response will take place to gather the relevant evidence with the retailer.

Hot Spot Patrolling

Evidence has shown hot spot patrolling in high crime locations will prevent crime. Through the use of police data and business engagement, the top locations should be identified and through the use of temporal analysis patrol plans developed to provide a highly visible presence to prevent crime, provide reassurance and increase responsiveness.

Problem Solving

Hot spot patrolling activity should be supported by problem-solving policing to tackle the root causes of the offending.



Problem-solving plans should be developed against repeat locations and prolific offenders using the SARA Model to allow the¹:

- identification of a specific problem
- thorough analysis to understand the problem.
- development of a tailored response
- assessment of the effects of the response

Identifying any vulnerabilities presented and supporting accordingly will also deliver robust intervention, safeguarding and prevention opportunities.

Police response to Serious and Organised Retail Crime

Background

The threat of organised retail crime is increasing and now poses a significant challenge to the retail industry and law enforcement. Shoplifting is often dealt with locally by Police forces and due to competing demands, intelligence regarding Organised Crime Groups (OCG's) involved in this type of criminality is not prioritised. This leaves intelligence gaps which does not accurately reflect the scale and scope of the issues.

Some larger retailers manage incidents and intelligence themselves, often using third party companies who will manage their data and help develop a common operating picture of the biggest threats that are posed to them. Due to constraints of GDPR, retailers do not have the confidence to share this information themselves and due to a lack of confidence in police reporting processes often do not inform law enforcement.

Opal is the National Intelligence Unit for Serious and Organised Acquisitive Crime under Chief Constable Amanda Blakeman's portfolio. Together with a number of High Street retailers

¹ » [Refresher: SARA Model and Problem-Oriented Policing \(evidence-basedpolicing.org\)](https://evidence-basedpolicing.org)



under a partnership called Pegasus; they will be working in collaboration to utilise industry data and knowledge with policing expertise in intelligence development and OCG management.

Response

A new Organised Retail Crime (ORC) capability will be formed within Opal, which will be funded by the Pegasus group. This team will be centrally governed but will be supporting Police Forces in identifying the OCG's operating in their area so they can be effectively targeted locally. Key activities of the Unit will be:

- The creation of a new dedicated intelligence team focusing on ORC, providing a unique interface for retailers to share intelligence with policing to develop into tangible activity, prevention and enforcement.
- Training provided to retailers on appropriate information and intelligence to share with policing.
- The development of a National Strategic Assessment on ORC utilising both industry, Police and 3rd party data. For the first time, this will give a detailed analysis of organised retail crime, the offenders, modus operandi and opportunities to tackle it.
- Utilisation of facial recognition software across public and private sectors to identify the individuals who pose the highest threat harm and risk.
- The identification of OCG's who will be appropriately prioritised, mapped and allocated to local Policing for onward management and intelligence development.
- The development of a performance framework to track activity and outcomes of the Opal ORC team.

Retailer - Crime Reporting Guidelines

There are a number of key actions which police require/expect retailers to carry out. This section outlines the appropriate ways for retailers to report matters to police and what is required to secure sufficient evidence to support the criminal justice process.



Responsibility

Employers are obliged to provide safe working environments for their own staff, protect their assets, stock and infrastructure. Policing can support and engage where required but is not legally obligated to provide this specific function in place of the employer.

Crime prevention is a core responsibility for all businesses, as it is for policing in the wider community. To this end, retailers are required to provide reasonable and effective crime prevention measures to deliver prevention, safeguarding and security.

However, if crime does occur and there are instances where it is appropriate to report it to the police, the following table should be used as a guide to support retailers in using the most appropriate reporting method.

How to report an incident to the Police

999	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is a risk to life, or someone is in immediate danger of harm.• A serious offence is in progress.• Use, or immediate threat of use, of violence• Property is in immediate danger of being seriously damaged.• The crime is, or likely to be, serious and in progress.• An offender has been detained and poses, or is likely to pose, a risk to other people
Online reporting	For non-emergency & non-priority reports - Visit www.police.uk to report crime to the local police force via their website
Non-emergency 101	For all incidents that do not require an emergency response

What to report?

To allow the police to conduct an effective investigation, retailers should prioritise the following instances.



- Where there are incidents involving violence or threats of immediate violence.
- Hate related crimes.
- Offences committed by prolific/persistent or juvenile offenders.
- Offences where there is evidence of organised crime.
- Offences committed with a significant value or commodity type (e.g., corrosive liquid etc) or where there are reasonable lines of enquiry to pursue.

CCTV Evidence

CCTV images provide ideal opportunities to progress investigations. Retailers are required to share the following:

- CCTV images that capture the whole incident and should be shared electronically via a Digital Evidence Management System (DEMS)
- Or the CCTV should be shared, on an agreed timescale, via a CD/USB etc if an online transfer is not possible.
- Provide a digital image of the suspect.

Sharing digital evidence via DEMS provides the quickest, most effective and secure way to share CCTV and images. Expedited delivery of CCTV footage/images will benefit the investigation and will support longer term prevention strategies.

Statements

The police will also need the below statements as a minimum requirement, which can, potentially, be combined into a single statement.

It is critical that the person reporting and/or the key witness is available to make a formal written statement to officers at the time of attendance.



The person making such a statement should do so with the full authority of the company.

- A witness statement is required from the staff member reporting and from the staff member who witnessed the offence, including stock loss details and other offences.
- A statement to produce the CCTV as evidence to be made by the relevant staff member.
- Also consider completing an Impact Statement for Business (ISB) which is a written statement and is intended to provide businesses that have been victims of crime with a voice in the criminal justice process.

The embedded document PDF is a pro-forma example from Hampshire & Isle of Wight Constabulary for those crimes that do not necessitate an immediate or priority response.



Please find below the link to the national Business Crime Centre (NBCC) guide for completing Business Impact Statements

[business-impact-statement-template final.pdf \(nbcc.police.uk\)](#)

