Investigation of retail crime

Joint guidance from the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) and the College of Policing on police investigation of shop thefts.

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Shops support our local communities by providing employment and leisure. Recent increases in retail crime and violence against shopworkers risk resulting in shop closures and damaging public confidence in the police's ability to prevent crime, safeguard shopworkers and target offenders.

Shop theft is often accompanied by assaults and threats of violence by offenders. At the point of first contact, a robust **threat assessment should be carried out using THRIVE** (threat, harm, risk, investigation, vulnerability and engagement).

Attendance at the scene

Police attendance for retail crime, as with other crime, will be prioritised in the following circumstances.

Emergency

An emergency is where a crime is in progress and there is serious:

- danger to life
- use of violence
- threat of violence
- injury
- damage

Priority

A priority is where a crime is ongoing and where no police attendance within one hour is highly likely to result in escalation or deterioration of the circumstances including:

- injury or damage
- specific concern for safety
- significant vulnerability identified

- loss of evidence
- loss of witnesses
- when a person is detained, their identify is not known and there is a risk of escape or violence

Crime review and investigation

In line with the College of Policing guidance, all reasonable lines of enquiry should be pursued to help identify suspects such as the following.

- Where there is clear recorded CCTV (or other) footage, police will recover that and seek to present it as evidence.
- Where 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 obtained, the images should be checked against those in the Police National Database (PND) using its facial recognition capability.

Find out more about following all reasonable lines of enquiry:

- **Conducting effective investigations guidelines**
- **Investigation process APP**

Repeat offenders

In many communities, there is a small number of prolific offenders that are committing most of the acquisitive crime and anti-social behaviour. A proactive approach that identifies – and targets resources at – these individuals will have a positive effect in preventing crime.

Local areas should work with retailers to identify those offenders that cause the most harm and develop joint action plans to target their offending, for example:

- trigger plans for offending
- use of ancillary orders such as Community Protection Notices (CPNs) or Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBOs)

- designated single points of contact (SPOCs) for efficient of collection of evidence
- the use of business and victim impact statements to support prosecutions

- **Read a practice note from Going equipped on tackling prolific retail theft**

Interventions to reduce business crime

The **College of Policing practice bank** contains shared interventions on collaborating with businesses to identify repeat offenders. Examples include:

- **CCTV business viewing events**

Hot spot patrolling

Evidence has shown that **hot spot patrolling in high crime locations will prevent crime**.

The top locations should be identified using police data, intelligence and business engagement insights. **Patrol plans** should then be developed using temporal analysis to provide a highly visible presence, in order 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:

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

Problem solving resources

- **Crime reduction toolkit – retail tagging**
- **APP on policing business crime**
- **National Business Crime Centre (NBCC) guidance on shopworker safety**

- **Shopworker training videos**

Serious and organised retail crime – police response

Background

The threat of organised retail crime (ORC) is increasing and now poses a significant challenge to the retail industry and law enforcement. Shoplifting is often dealt with locally by police forces. Due to competing demands, intelligence regarding organised crime groups (OCGs) involved in this type of criminality is not prioritised. This leaves intelligence gaps that do 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 the constraints of the General Data Protection Regulation UK (GDPR), retailers often do not have the confidence to share this information themselves. Lack of confidence in police may also mean that reporting processes do not inform law enforcement.

Opal is the National Intelligence Unit for Serious and Organised Acquisitive Crime under Chief Constable Amanda Blakeman's portfolio. They will be working in collaboration with a number of high street retailers under an initiative called Pegasus. Opal will use policing expertise in intelligence development and OCG management together with industry data and knowledge.

Response

A new ORC capability will be formed within Opal, which will be funded by the Pegasus group. This team will be centrally governed but will support police forces in identifying the OCGs operating in their area so that they can be effectively targeted locally.

Key activities of the unit include the following.

- The creation of a new dedicated intelligence team focussing 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.
- The development of a National Strategic Assessment on ORC using both industry, police and third party data. For the first time, this will give a detailed analysis of ORC, the offenders and their modus operandi, as well as opportunities to tackle ORC.
- Use of facial recognition software across public and private sectors to identify the individuals who pose the highest threat of harm and risk.
- The identification of OCG's which 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.

Serious and organised crime resources

- **Disrupting serious and organised criminals – menu of tactics**

Tags

Crime reduction