Business crime coordinator

A targeted intervention to coordinate, prevent and detect business crime, supporting retailers with prominent levels of theft.

First published
8 July 2024

Key details

Does it work?	Untested – new or innovative
Focus	Prevention
Topic	Neighbourhood crime Crime prevention
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Region	North West
Partners	Police Business and commerce
Stage of practice	The practice is implemented.
Start date	April 2023
Scale of initiative	Local

Key details

Target group	Offenders Victims Workforce

Aim

The initiative aims to:

- prevent retail theft from taking place
- improve the detection of retail theft and offenders

Intended outcome

- A reduction in shoplifting offences.
- An increase in confidence from local shops, measured through feedback collected on social media and in-person from retail workers.

Description

The local neighbourhood policing team (NPT) worked with businesses and Blackpool's local Design Out Crime Officer (DOCO) to coordinate various initiatives.

Supporting repeat victims

- The force DOCO and the community beat manager work with stores to design out offending opportunities.
- Notably, this took place at Home Bargains, which was identified as the store with the highest retail theft reported in Lancashire. The store implemented some of the recommendations through liaison with local NPT supervision.
- Coupled with policing activity, this reduced the number of offences significantly.
- Increased proportionate visibility at our highest repeat victim locations using uniformed NPT (PCs and PCSOs).

- Re-invigorated Shop Watch, which involves offering guidance to local retailers on how to use radios and communicate with each other and the police to identify prolific retail thieves.
- Lancashire Constabulary secured joint business improvement district (BID) funding from Lancashire Partnership Against Crime (LANPAC) and Blackpool Council to purchase Pub Watch/Shop Watch radios and conduct additional training for staff.

Detection

- Cases of repeat offenders were collated to streamline the charging process, by giving the force a file of all their offences in one place.
- Use of Criminal Behaviour Order/civil injunctions to tackle repeat offending behaviour, including stealing from shops and stalls, for example the use of a civil injunction to prevent a prolific offender from entering the Co-Op.
- Use of plain-clothed officers to identify and arrest repeat offenders active in stores, for example Asda – positive feedback from stores that it also functioned as deterrent as word got out to criminal fraternity.
- Use of social media and posters throughout the area to promote the use of facial recognition via Police National Database (PND) within division.
- Continued efforts to seek, arrest and prosecute offenders.

Training

- All officers have received a training package from organisational development on the appropriate use of Community Resolutions. The package involves PowerPoint slides accessible to officers which are used as educational tools, helping officers to self-train. This is to reduce lower-level cases being closed with no repercussions.
- Dip sampling – reviewing logs and work trays for missed opportunities.

The activity is monitored through additional scrutiny on retail theft, with focus on identification of repeat victims and offenders through Power BI (a business intelligence tool). Lancashire use Power BI to monitor force data on repeat victims and offenders of retail theft. Tactical tasking and co-ordination meetings are used to ensure retail theft is being managed through Power BI.

Guidance to Stores

The guidance for Home Bargains, the company most adversely affected by shoplifting was delivered by the Constabulary's business crime coordinator. The business crime coordinator is a full-time role, and Lancashire have one in the constabulary.

This guidance was presented in full to the store management team.

The force analysed retail theft offending by looking at the times of day more items were stolen, how the use of CCTV impacted retail theft and how the presence of security guards impacted retail theft. This analysis was used to create guidance for stores which included:

- product placement: highly valuable or highly targeted items being placed in areas of high staff presence
- a review of the CCTV system to ensure it was fit for purpose, assisting the identification of offenders as well as acting as a clear, advertised deterrent
- staff use of headsets and radios to improve communication in store, bodycams, and access control barriers
- the assessment of staff placement and advice and suggestions given about consistently implementing existing measures, such as closing till barriers when not in use
- additional guidance around the use of CCTV and encouraging reporting

Overall impact

Outcomes to date have been positive. In the first month, there was a 26% reduction in retail theft crime reports and businesses reported higher levels of confidence in policing activity.

Through engaging with store managers, it is evident that there have been visible improvements in prevention measures, as stores have started to adopt the guidance. Lancashire can see this has been effective through the reduction of crime reports.

Learning

The use of plain-clothed officers in identifying and arresting repeat offenders was identified as particularly effective, both in direct outcomes and positive feedback from stores.

Challenges include the implementation of guidance given to stores to minimise shoplifting opportunities. Where they are cost-negative, there are rarely any issues, but where investment is required, it can be harder to secure engagement. This can be mitigated by accessing funding

streams, for example where a local BID is in existence.

Best available evidence

Currently, the Crime Reduction Toolkit does not include an intervention similar to this reducing retail theft initiative, but it does include the best-available evidence on CCTV and on retail tagging to prevent shop theft.

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