



PROTECTING PEOPLE AND SHOPS

**VIOLENCE AND
ABUSE**

**REPORTING
CRIME**

ROBBERY

**WORKPLACE
SAFETY**

CYBER CRIME

ACS Crime Guidance 2023

A report by the Association of Convenience Stores
[#ACSCrimeReport](#)

ACS | the voice of
local shops

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Introduction

ACS has developed this package of guidance which aims to support convenience retailers in assessing and managing the crime threats that their businesses face. The guidance focuses on how to mitigate crimes including robbery, violence and verbal abuse, internal theft, cyber crime, and how to report a crime to the police.

Every local shop is different and requires an individual assessment for what action they need to take. The guidance includes information on crime prevention equipment including CCTV, external security measures, and how to support store colleagues identify and manage triggers for abuse and aggression.

We have included new information on how convenience retailers can enhance their Cyber Security. Cyber crime, such as phishing emails and malicious software, can cripple businesses and is a growing threat that the convenience sector must prepare for. The guidance we have provided is based on the National Cyber Security Centre's business guide that can be viewed in full here: nscsc.gov.uk

Supporting people

We continue to lead the Home Office-backed #ShopKind campaign that aims to encourage positive behaviours in stores across the country. Launched in April 2021 #ShopKind has brought the retail sector together to call on customers to show respect and patience towards people working in shops and fellow customers. Over 130 retail groups are supporting the campaign as well as many Police and Crime Commissioners, police forces and the very highest levels of government.

In addition to this guidance, ACS has also launched a Wellbeing Guide that has been acknowledged by the Government in their work on delivering wellbeing and tackling loneliness. The ACS Wellbeing Guide provides convenience retailers of all sizes with practical advice about supporting well-being for store colleagues effectively by identifying eight ways to improve wellbeing at work. You can view the guide here: acs.org.uk/advice/wellbeing

There are also many other valuable services out there for retailers to utilise. GroceryAid offers a free helpline to anyone working in the grocery sector who requires emotional support and practical advice. GroceryAid also offers the Workplace Critical Incident Support service to provide support for staff immediately after they have experienced or witnessed a distressing event such as violence and verbal abuse in-store.



Please cut out this page or the section below and place it in your store staff room, to help you and your colleagues.

Reporting crime

Violent crime or emergencies – call 999

You **MUST** report **ALL** incidents of violence and abuse to the police. Violence and abuse against staff is **NEVER ACCEPTABLE** and should not be tolerated.

When to call

Call 999 immediately if:

- A **serious or violent** incident is in progress, or you think it could happen.
- A **crime is in progress**, and you need help right away.
- Property is in danger of being damaged.
- You need **help right away**.

What to say immediately

Speak slowly and clearly:

- State whether there has been violence, or it has been threatened.
- State whether there is a weapon.
- State whether the suspect is at the scene.

Describe the incident further:

- State whether the offender is prolific and whether they have used or threatened violence before.
- State whether there are any injuries.
- Describe the environment – are there children or vulnerable people present? Are there any physical barriers to the entrance/exit of the shop?
- If the suspect has left the premises, describe how they left (on foot or vehicle) and a brief description of their profile.
- State whether the suspect used hateful language.



Non-emergency – report it online or call 101

To report a crime that does not require an emergency response **call 101** or go to the website of your local police force.

When you **call 101** the call handler will encourage you to describe what has happened and provide as much information as possible.

The most important information you can provide to support further action from the police is;



■ That you have evidence to prove a crime has taken place (CCTV footage or a witness)



■ That you are willing to support a prosecution and detail the impact of the crime on you or your business (the cost and/or emotional/physical harm)



■ The offender is known to you or your business (you know their name and/or pattern of criminal behaviour)

Need more help?

If you are not getting the response you need from your local police force you should consider:

- Finding out more information and contacting your Neighborhood policing team by entering your postcode here: police.uk
- Making contact with your Police and Crime Commissioner by entering your store postcode here: apccs.police.uk/findyourpcc

Violence and verbal abuse

Outlined below are the top three triggers for violence and aggression in-store. Managing and preventing these circumstances will help you and your store colleagues avoid violence and abuse in-store.



Encountering shop thieves

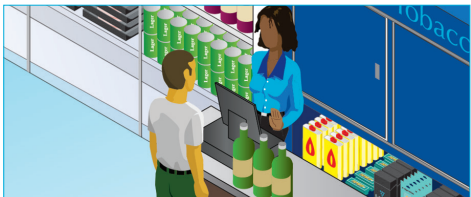
Encountering shop thieves can often result in violence and verbal abuse towards shopworkers. The best way to prevent shop theft is by being attentive, meeting and greeting all customers as they enter the store, so that potential thieves know you are aware of their presence. Ensure that you put your safety first. Keep a safe distance when engaging with suspected shop thieves.



Enforcing age restricted sales

Making sure that staff enforce age-restricted sales such as alcohol and tobacco is important but can often lead to confrontation. Shopworkers should consider using the following techniques to prevent confrontation when asking customers for their proof of age when purchasing age-restricted products:

- **Deflect** – Move the blame onto the law, by explaining that retailers are required by law to ask for ID.
- **Flattery** – Be complimentary, for example, by telling the customer they look good for their age.
- **Be constructive** – Help the customer understand what ID they need to bring.



Refusing to serve intoxicated customers

Retailers are legally obligated to refuse an alcohol sale to someone who is intoxicated. If you have to refuse to serve an intoxicated customer, stay calm and polite. For example, “Sorry we cannot serve you today” – do not say that they are drunk. If they become aggressive, keep at least an arms-length distance between you and the customer and seek help from other colleagues.

Top tips

- 1 Display Challenge 25 campaign materials around your stores so customers understand they will be asked to provide proof of age.



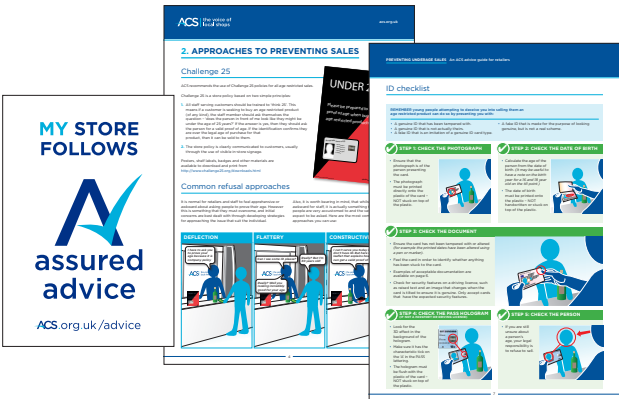
- 2 Share ACS’ ‘Managing Violence and Abuse in Convenience Stores’ video with shopworkers to make them aware of the top triggers for violence and abuse which is available on ACS’ YouTube channel.



ACS Assured Advice guides

ACS provides industry-leading information and guides on all aspects of regulatory compliance for convenience retailing, including on Preventing Underage Sales.

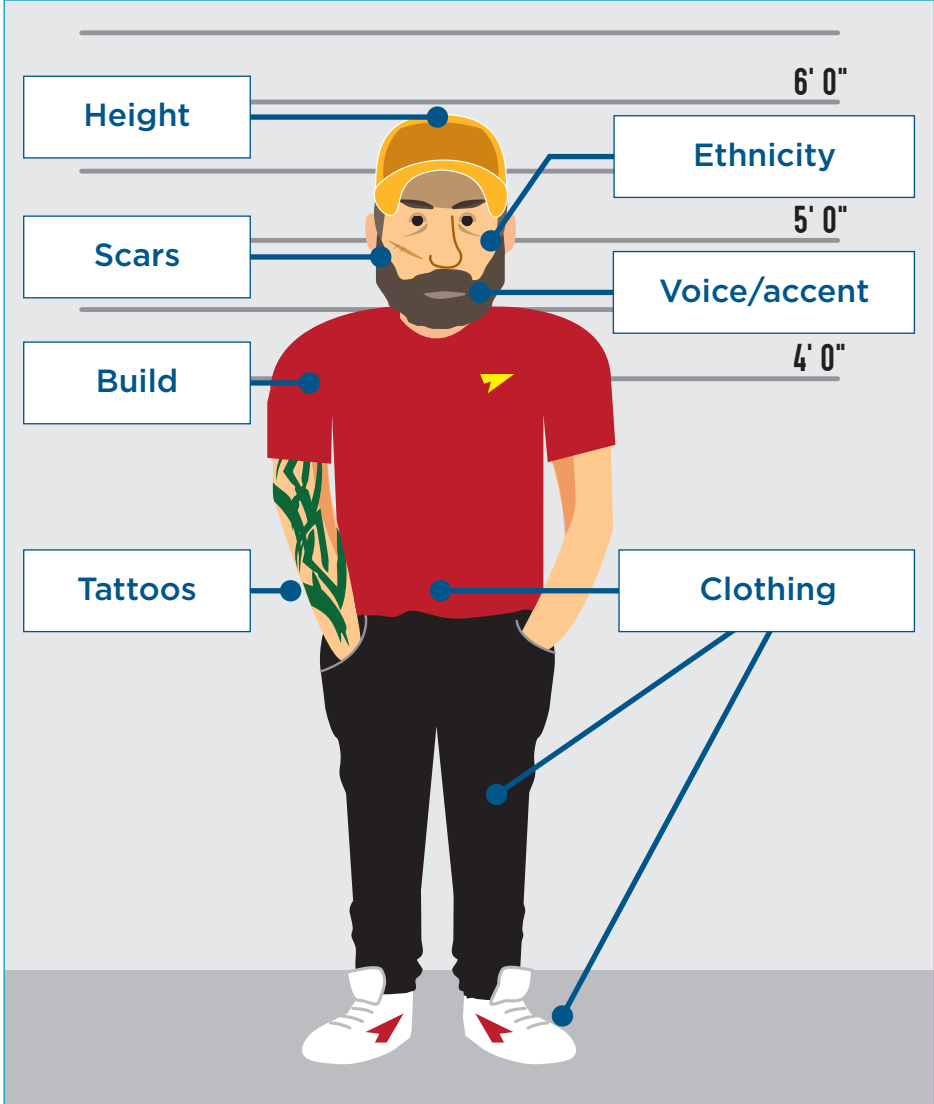
These are covered by the Assured Advice guides and Training Scheme.



Robbery

With the number of robberies increasing, retailers should think about how they can prepare and respond in the event of a robbery. Make sure you are utilising existing security measures to prevent your premises becoming a target for robbers. Assess your risk by following these steps: identifying the hazards, deciding who might be harmed and how, evaluating the risks and deciding on precautions, recording the findings and implementing them, and regularly reviewing your policies.

Key characteristics police request for crime reports



Top tips

- 1 Look out for anyone acting suspiciously (e.g. waiting outside the store, taking pictures in store, looking around for cameras, asking questions about store security).
- 2 Do not discuss security with anyone who does not work in your business.
- 3 Ensure CCTV is working every day and that all cameras remain free from obstruction.
- 4 Keep till floats to a minimum.
- 5 All cash should be stored securely. Do not leave cash unattended.

In the event of a robbery

- 1 Remain calm and follow the robbers’ instructions.
- 2 Raise the alarm if it is safe to do so and get yourself to a safe place.
- 3 Never chase after robbers. When safe, call 999 immediately.
- 4 Close the store and write down a description of the robbers and any information about their getaway vehicle.

Workplace safety



The Suzy Lamplugh Trust has developed 'Suzy's Charter for Workplace Safety'. The Charter outlines how people can feel and be safer at work through eight key areas which include embedding a workplace personal safety culture, implementing robust risk assessments and systems to raise the alarm in the event of an incident.

ACS and The Suzy Lamplugh Trust have collaborated to focus the Charter on key areas specifically relevant to the convenience sector. The diagram below reflects the information within the Charter that can be applied to store operations, and links to practical information from ACS and other sources.



ACS is co-ordinating the #ShopKind campaign to help prevent violence and abuse towards shopworkers. ShopKind is supported by the Home Office and aims to: encouraging positive behaviour in stores, acknowledge the essential role of shopworkers and raise awareness about the scale and impact of abuse and violence towards shopworkers.

All retailers can get involved with ShopKind by visiting www.nbcc.police.uk to download, print or share ShopKind marketing material to promote the ShopKind message. You can access in-store posters, shelf sliders, screen graphics for self-service tills, staff room posters, staff badges and social media graphics. ShopKind was launched in April 2021.



Communications and training

- Ensure both staff and customers are aware that violence and abuse are not 'part of the job' and will not be tolerated.
- ShopKind campaign Posters are available to download and display in stores from www.nbcc.police.uk
- Encourage staff to speak openly and regularly with management about their personal safety experiences to quickly identify new risks. Inform all staff of your safety policies and procedures, why they exist and ensure they are followed.
- Consider personal safety training for your staff. For more information on personal safety training visit: <https://www.suzylamplugh.org/Pages/Category/lone-worker-training>
- Ensure staff are trained in recognising the triggers for violence and abuse and skills in de-escalation.
- ACS' 'Managing Triggers' animation will help staff to identify and avoid these triggers in-store. The animation is available on ACS' YouTube Channel.



Reporting and supporting

- Have a clear policy for reporting abuse by customers internally, as well as externally to the police and provide access to reporting tools for all employees to enable immediate reporting of all personal safety incidents and near misses relating to, or impacting on, work.
- ACS has produced guidance for reporting emergency and non-emergency crimes, available on Page 3 of this guidance. Crimes can be reported anonymously to Crimestoppers on **0800 555 111**.
- Reporting procedures should include incident follow-up with staff to ensure wellbeing and wider risk mitigation, as well as sign-posting to support services where required.
- Contact GroceryAid for the Workplace Critical Incident Support Service following a violent incident in-store on **08088 021 122**.
- Depending on the outcome of risk assessments, for example if the store is large and individual staff working in certain areas cannot be seen by cameras or other staff, consider providing personal safety alarms and/or lone worker devices to staff.

Risk assessments

- Carry out regular risk assessments to mitigate risks for all staff and ensure compliance with legislation and HSE guidance.
- Consider risks specific to all staff who work alone for any part of their job, including in stock rooms, the shop floor, freezers, outside the store or away from the business e.g. At a cash and carry.
- Risk assessments should include the impact of stress and mental health implications of violence and aggression connected to work.
- Ensure that all staff have been consulted on, and understood, the risk assessment and allow staff to regularly feedback on content.
- The Health and Safety Executive website provides a template for you to complete a risk assessment and an example risk assessment for a convenience store, which includes violence and threatening behaviour. <https://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/casestudies/newsagent.htm>



Lone working

- Ensure a manager is aware of staff whereabouts and that the staff rota is documented to provide a record of who is on-site at all times.
- Implement a buddy or tracing system to ensure the safety of lone workers can be established at all times of the day and night.
- Headsets or walkie talkies can be useful to monitor safety and communicate with staff. Employers can also establish staff whereabouts via CCTV or their till log in.
- Have a clear procedure to follow if a colleague does not return or check in when expected.
- Keep staff contact details and emergency contact details up to date for use in the event that a staff member is unaccounted for.
- Implement a system for staff to covertly raise the alarm, and to alert colleagues in case of an emergency.
- Panic alarm switches can be fitted under the till with a direct line.

Cyber crime

Cyber Crime is crime that can only be committed through the use of online devices and where the devices are both the tool to commit the crime and the target of the crime.

Cyber crime is an active threat to all UK businesses including the convenience sector. Convenience retailers must review their cyber security measures and colleague training to protect their business from cyber-attacks.

What Cyber security measures should I have in place?

This guidance is based on the National Cyber Security Centre *Small Business Guide: Cyber Security* available in full here: nccsc.gov.uk

	<p>Back up your data</p> <p>All businesses, regardless of size, should take regular backups of their important data, and make sure that these backups are recent, separate from your computer and can be restored. Consider using cloud storage solutions.</p>
	<p>Protect from malware</p> <p>This is malicious software that can damage your business. Install and turn on anti-virus software, which is often free with your existing operating system, turn on your firewall and keep IT equipment updated with the latest software updates. Reduce your colleague's ability to download software and apps and control the use of USB drives in your business.</p>
	<p>Keep smartphones and tablets safe</p> <p>Switch on password protections such as pin or facial recognition, keep your device and apps updated and make sure mobile devices can be tracked and remotely erased in case they are lost or stolen. Make sure your colleagues do not use unknown or public wi-fi hotspots when using mobile devices.</p>
	<p>Strengthen your passwords</p> <p>Switch on password protection across all your IT equipment such as screenlock password, PIN, or other authentication method (such as fingerprint or face unlock) and avoid using predictable passwords. The NCSC advises you to use three well-chosen random words that can be quite memorable but not easy to guess such as TreeMugCar.</p>

Phishing emails

Phishing emails are reported as the most common type of cyber crime experienced by convenience retailers. Phishing emails are fake emails asking for sensitive information. You should consider the following actions:

	<p>Minimise colleagues IT permissions</p> <p>Give colleagues the lowest level of user rights required to perform their jobs.</p>		<p>Look out for common tricks</p> <p>Common tricks include sending an invoice for a service that you have not used or sending emails impersonating members of your team asking for money or information.</p>
	<p>Report all attacks</p> <p>Encourage staff to report phishing emails by forwarding questionable emails to report@phishing.gov.uk. If you have become a victim of online fraud, report it to Action Fraud here: https://www.tinyurl.com/yckkhcba</p>		<p>Check for obvious signs</p> <p>In phishing emails spelling mistakes often appear and grammar is often poor. Is the email addressed to you or 'valued customer' or 'friend'?</p>