

18th June 2025

By Email: Katy.Bourne@sussex-pcc.gov.uk OPCC@northwales.police.uk

Dear Ms Bourne and Mr Dunbobbin,

Shop Theft and Retail Crime

We are looking forward to the Crime & Policing Bill becoming law and are encouraged by the new powers it introduces to tackle shop theft and violence and abuse towards shopworkers. We see this bill as the start of a new era - where these crimes are no longer tolerated, where perpetrators are pursued by the police and through the courts, and where criminals are no longer confident that they can commit these offences without consequence.

We are however concerned that the Spending Review allocated a lower budget than many police forces wanted, and that as a result, some senior officers are publicly warning that offences such as shop theft will now receive lower priority. Lowering the priority given to retail crime would disregard the profound impact of such crime on retailers, shopworkers and our communities. It would also ignore what forces up and down the country have witnessed: shop thieves are frequently involved in a broader range of criminal activity that blight communities. Reporting and investigating shop theft identifies these people and allows for appropriate sanctions to be used to break the cycle of re-offending including other acquisitive crime committed by those individuals. We hope you would agree that viewing time investigating shop theft purely as a cost is not consistent with what we have learned, and risks setting us back.

ACS and USDAW have sought to describe the shocking scale of shop theft and retail crime - we know that in the past year there were 6.2 million incidents of shop theft in local shops, and 77% of shopworkers experienced verbal abuse, but we have also sought constructive solutions and promoted local partnerships. We are seeing increasingly effective work of this kind across the country and hearing positive stories about the impact of this. By signalling that retail crime will be assigned a lower priority, senior police officers will undo many years of hard work persuading both retailers and local officers that investigating shop theft is a good use of their time and can lead to lasting results.

With the passing of the Crime & Policing Bill, we have an opportunity to make clear that shop theft and retail crime will be taken seriously and that new powers will be used effectively, but 78% of convenience retailers are dissatisfied with the level of police visibility in their communities. If we don't take the opportunity that the Crime & Policing Bill provides, we will see the cycle of low reporting, non-investigation, no sanctions and re-offending continue.

We believe that you have a pivotal role, in your capacity as the Police and Crime Commissioners for Sussex and North Wales, and APCC joint leads on business and retail crime, to state that the expectations of investigating retail crime will increase not decline, and that these crimes are not perceived as victimless or too small to warrant investigation.

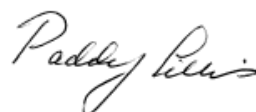
This is a crucial moment, we hope you will feel able to take decisive action at this time. We have also written to Amanda Blakeman, Chief Constable North Wales Police, on this issue.

We would welcome the opportunity to engage on this issue in more detail. For more information on this letter please contact Alexandra.margetts@acs.org.uk

Yours sincerely,



James Lowman
Chief Executive



Paddy Lillis
General Secretary