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LENCE SHOP THEFT ROBBERIES ABUSE ORGANISED CRIME SHOPLIFTING TILL SKIMMING BA
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IDENTIFYING DISTINGUISHING FEATURES ROBBERIES ABUSE CCTV ORGANISED CRIME SHOPLIFTI

THE



REPORT

2017

TECTION RATES AGE RESTRICTED SALES CCTV TIME DELAY SAFE FLASH POINTS CIVIL PROCEE
ST PRACTICE BURGLARY REPEAT OFFENDERS IDENTIFYING DISTINGUISHING FEATURES CRIME
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CRIME OVERVIEW

The ACS Crime Report 2017 presents the findings from our annual crime survey of convenience retailers’ experience of crime. This year, the report represents the experiences of 7,123 convenience stores based on the responses from 24 different retailers.

The ACS Crime Report provides an insight into the incidences of crime, the cost of crime, retailers’ investment into crime prevention measures, as well as providing information on different crime types such as shop theft, staff theft, violence and verbal abuse, robbery, burglary, and fraud.

Shop theft cost the average convenience store £2,605 in the last year, and remains the most prevalent crime that convenience retailers face. The high volume, low cost nature of shop theft often means that the public perceive it to be a ‘low-level’ or victimless crime. However, ACS’ Crime Report shows the significant and growing cost of shop theft to convenience retailers.

Retailers continue to invest in crime prevention measures to deter criminals from targeting their stores. This year we have seen retailers invest on average £3,907 per store in crime prevention measures. The most common areas that retailers are investing in are; CCTV cameras, external security equipment, and staff training to support store colleagues in preventing retail crime.

The total cost of crime against convenience retailers is an estimated £232 million. The growing burden of crime against convenience retailers must remain a priority for local police forces, central Government, and the justice system.

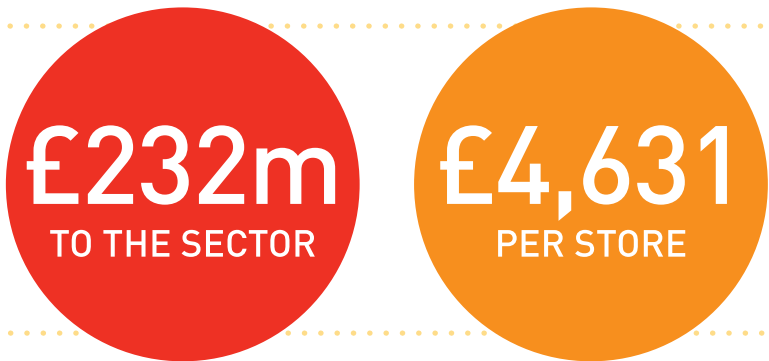
Advice and Guidance
Every local shop is different and so too are the challenges they face from crime. To support retailers, we have developed a package of guidance to act as a starting point for retailers to assess the risks they face from retail crime.

The guidance focuses on how to handle triggers for violence and verbal abuse, how to deal with robberies, and best practice guidance on how to prevent theft at self-scan tills. The guide also provides retailers with details on how they can work in partnership with their local police, local agencies, other businesses, and the community they serve.

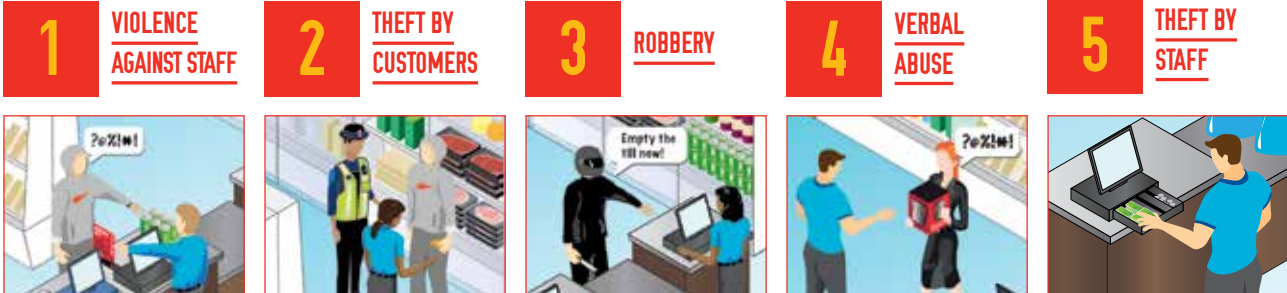
New for 2017 – ACS has provided retailers with the information they need if they want to make a complaint about their local police forces’ response to the criminal activity against their businesses. The guidance looks at appropriate ways that retailers can raise their concerns with their local police forces and Police and Crime Commissioners.

COST OF CRIME TO CONVENIENCE STORES

Crime against convenience retailers costs an estimated



RETAILERS ARE MOST CONCERNED ABOUT



INVESTMENT

ON AVERAGE EACH STORE SPENDS



ON CRIME PREVENTION MEASURES PER YEAR



TOP FEATURES IN-STORE



SHOP THEFT

STAFF THEFT

Shop theft remains the most prevalent and costly type of crime that retailers experience. Shop theft can be difficult for retailers to prevent and detect, as shop theft at convenience stores is high volume, but low cost. Retailers have reported that in attempting to deter and challenge thieves in their stores that they have been victims of violence, abuse, and aggressive behaviour.

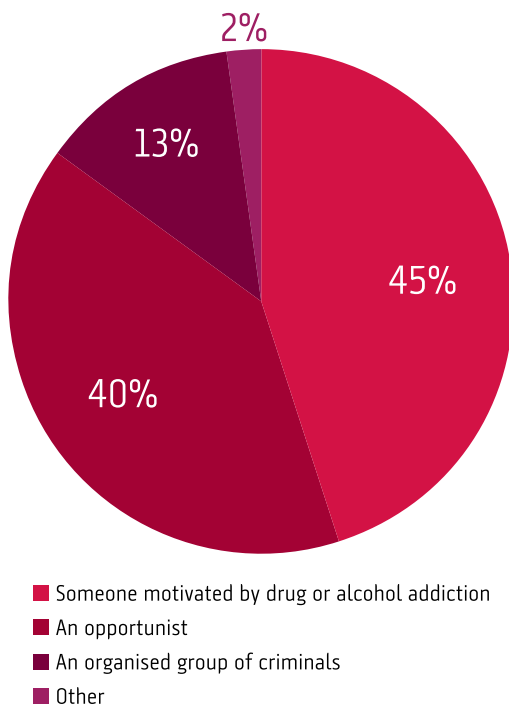
The high volume, low cost nature of shop theft can also mean that it is not given priority by police, most notably through inconsistent police responses to shop theft incidents. This develops a vicious cycle, where retailers

choose not to report all incidences of shop theft because they lack confidence in the police responding. This year, retailers estimated that only 34% of shop theft incidents were reported to police.

The ACS Crime Report provides an insight into retailer's perceptions of the motives of the people committing shop theft in their stores. Retailers believe that 45% of all shop theft committed against their business was by someone motivated by an alcohol or drug addiction. Retailers also noted that offenders were targeting high margin products, such as alcohol and meat, which can be easily resold.

DEFINITION Theft is an offence where money, goods, company property or services are stolen from the business at that premises.

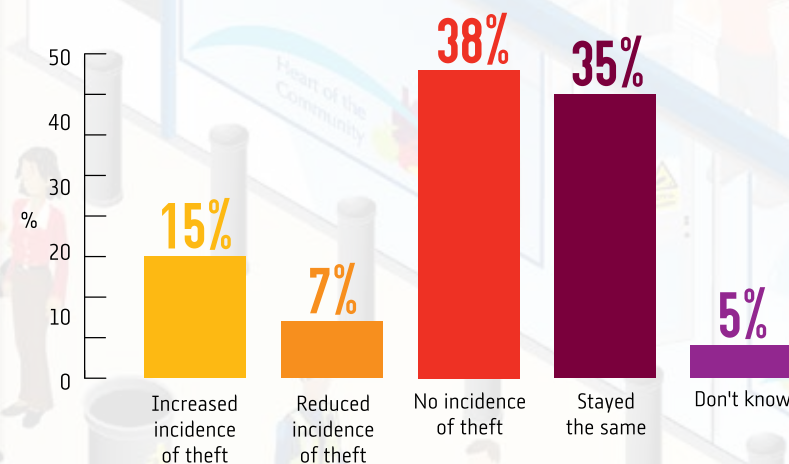
MOTIVATIONS FOR SHOP THEFT



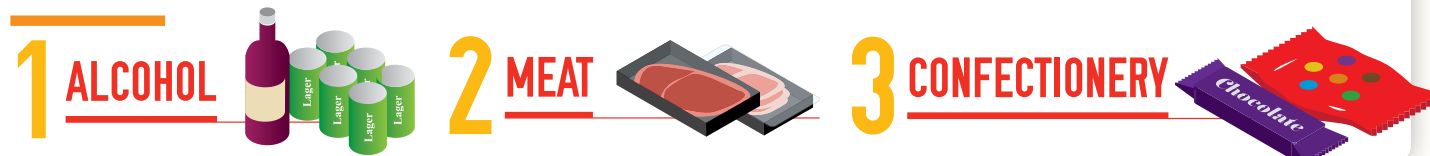
£2,605

THE TOTAL COST OF SHOP THEFT PER STORE

EXPERIENCE OF SHOP THEFT IN THE LAST YEAR (AVERAGE)¹



TOP 3 PRODUCTS TARGETED BY THIEVES



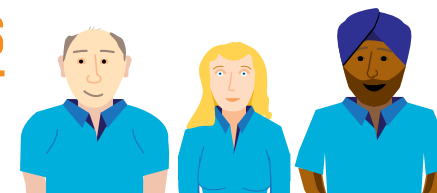
Theft by staff is not commonly discussed within the retail crime debate, however, it poses a significant burden for retailers. The number of incidents are much lower than shop theft – however, the cost per incident is significantly higher.

The retail sector continues to suffer disproportionately from staff theft. The Home Office's Commercial Victimisation Survey shows that the wholesale and retail sector had the

highest rate of employee theft of the four sectors surveyed in 2015 with 103 incidents per 1,000 premises, almost twice the rate of the sector with the second highest rate which was construction with 61 per 1,000 premises.²

ACS has developed guidance to support retailers prevent, identify, and report staff theft. The guidance on staff theft can be found on page 8 of the crime guidance section.

INCIDENTS



21,299

INCIDENTS OF STAFF THEFT IN THE SECTOR

COST OF INTERNAL THEFT



£61m

the total cost of staff theft to the sector

£2,870

the cost per staff theft incident

INVESTMENT



MOST COMMON INTERNAL THEFTS³

- 1 Cash directly from tills
- 2 Lottery process
- 3 Price overrides
- 4 Consumption of products in store
- 5 Fraudulent refunds

Incidents of violence and verbal abuse against retailers are all too common in the convenience sector. Retailers and their staff have a one in five chance of being a victim of violence during their work, and more than a one in three chance of being a victim of verbal abuse, which is unacceptably high.

The most common triggers for violence and verbal abuse are when retailers and their staff are enforcing the law in relation to age restricted sales. For example, retailers commonly use age verification policies like 'Challenge 25' to verify the age of customer buying alcohol, tobacco, or other age restricted products. This can regularly result in an aggressive response from customers, despite retailers attempting to sell age restricted products responsibly.

Retailers continue to be most concerned about violence against their staff. Unlike other crimes where the cost can be calculated and quantified – the real cost of violence and verbal abuse is the effect that the incidents have on staff members. Convenience store staff must be able to work without the fear of receiving violence or verbal abuse from members of the public.

Managing the triggers for violence and verbal abuse can prevent potential incidents. ACS has produced guidance to support retailers on managing the top triggers, which can be found on page 4 of the crime guidance section.

DEFINITION

Assaults and threats are incidents where employees are assaulted, threatened or intimidated, as a result of disagreements with customers or other employees.

9,430

number of incidents of violence estimated in the sector

43%

chance of a store being victim to abuse⁴



19%

chance of a store being victim to violence

1,585 INCIDENTS WHERE A WEAPON WAS USED
including firearms and knives in the sector

53%

OTHER WEAPON (E.G. AXE or HAMMER)



32%

KNIFE



15%

FIREARM (IMITATION or REAL)



TOP CAUSES FOR AGGRESSIVE / ABUSIVE BEHAVIOUR

1

AGE RESTRICTED SALES

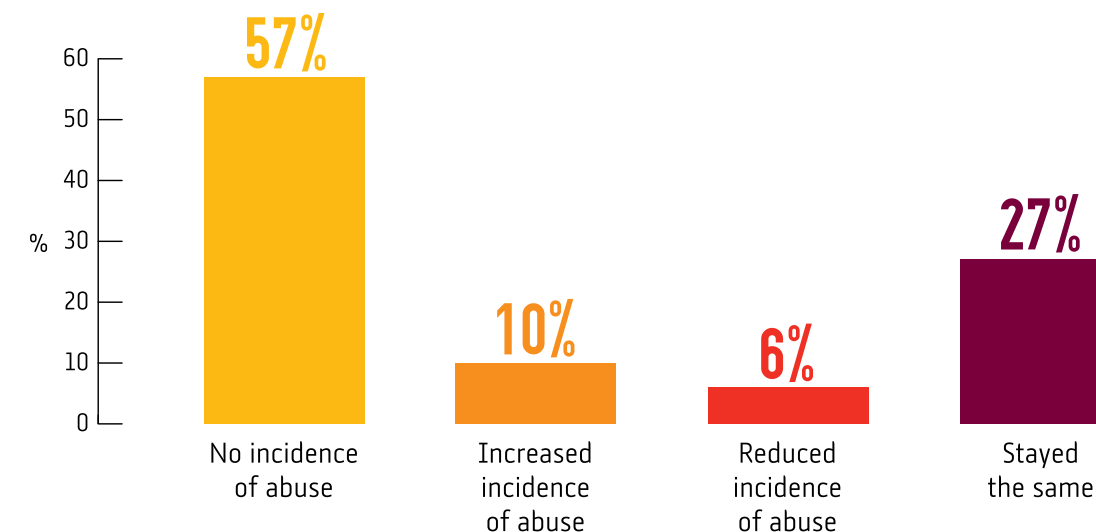
2

REFUSAL TO SERVE DRUNKS

3

PREVENTING SHOP THEFT

EXPERIENCE OF VIOLENCE AND VERBAL ABUSE IN THE LAST YEAR (AVERAGE)⁵



ROBBERY AND BURGLARY

FRAUD

ROBBERY

DEFINITION

ROBBERY is an offence where force, or the threat of force, is used either during or immediately prior to a theft or attempted theft, which can include use of a weapon.

3,163 incidents of robbery

the average cost per incident was

£5,842

the total cost of robberies to the convenience sector was

£18m

BURGLARY

DEFINITION

BURGLARY with entry is defined as entering any building on the premises without permission with intent to steal.

3,313 incidents of burglary

the average cost per incident was

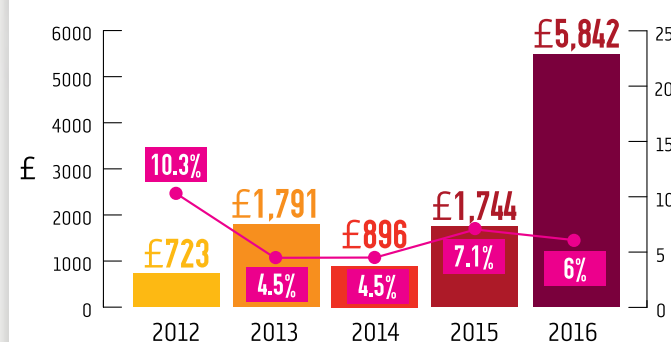
£2,889

the total cost of burglaries to the convenience sector was

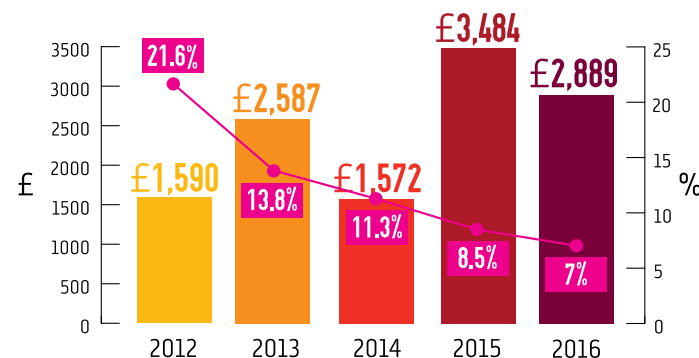
£10m

COST PER INCIDENT VERSUS % CHANCE OF VICTIMISATION

ROBBERY



BURGLARY



Fraud cost the convenience sector an estimated £8m in the last year, which works out to £150 per store. Counterfeit notes and coins continue to be the most expensive type of fraud experienced by convenience retailers. The majority of customers (79%) still pay with cash⁶.

However, the introduction of polymer (plastic) banknotes aims to reduce the number of counterfeit notes in circulation. Polymer notes include a number of new security features which make them more difficult to counterfeit. The new £5 banknote was introduced in

September, and the new £10 note is expected to be introduced in summer 2017. For more information visit: <http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/banknotes/polymer/>

It is not just banknotes that are vulnerable to counterfeiters. The Royal Mint estimate that approximately one in 30 of the current £1 coins are counterfeit. To combat counterfeiters, a new, 12-sided, bi-metallic £1 coin will be introduced on 28 March 2017. For information visit: <http://www.thenewpoundcoin.com/>



COST OF FRAUD

OVER

£8m
to the sector

OR

£150
per store

MOST EXPENSIVE TYPES OF FRAUD EXPERIENCED BY RETAILERS

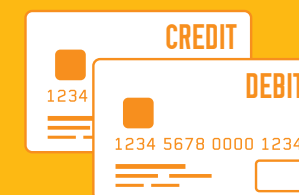
1

Counterfeit notes



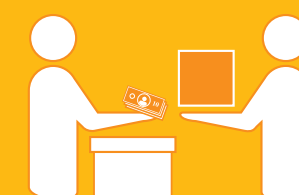
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Credit and debit cards

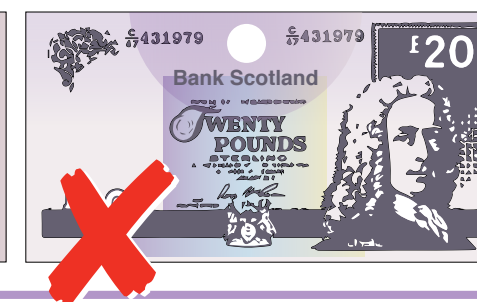


3

Refund fraud



COUNTERFEIT NOTES



£20
MOST COMMON NOTE USED

Crime is one of the biggest operational challenges for retailers and the illustration below outlines some of the key considerations for managing crime.

Assessing the vulnerabilities of your business to crime and planning a proportionate response is essential, whether it is installing CCTV or providing additional training for staff.

An example risk assessment for a convenience store is available from the Health and Safety Executive website: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/casestudies/pdf/newsagent.pdf>

CUSTOMER SERVICE

- Make eye contact with customers when they enter the store and acknowledge them.
- Reduce queuing in-store, as it can be a trigger for customer frustration.

SELF-SCAN TILLS

- Ensure you have sufficient staff to authorise items during busy periods.
- Ensure staff are trained to support customers to scan difficult items through tills correctly such as fruit and vegetables.

EXTERNAL SECURITY

- Ensure that all doors and windows are secured to prevent burglaries.
- For high risk stores, consider the installation of external shutters (this may require planning consent).
- Where reasonably practicable, advertising should be restricted to allow for clear viewing into and out of the premises.

POLICE

- Get to know your local police and PCSO.
- Attend local beat meetings to raise your concerns.
- Visit www.police.uk for more information.

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

- Contact your local police or community safety partnership.
- You can use the Community Trigger power to force a response from local agencies.

CCTV

- Ensure one camera provides quality images of everyone entering your premises and a second covers the till.
- A minimum of six frames per second should be used on your camera. Ensure recorded images are similar quality to live images and all images have a time and date.
- Identify the most important areas of the store for camera location and consider the angle of view and lighting.
- www.acs.org.uk/cctv

INTERNAL THEFT

- Regularly monitor stock levels and stock rooms to deter theft by employees.
- Theft by an employee is a serious offence and breach of trust, it should be reported to the police.

TILL POSITION

- Are high value goods or targeted products (meat, cheese, alcohol) in view of the till?
- Ensure that the front of the store is visible from the till, so staff can see customers approaching.

CASH

- Reduce the amount of cash held in tills and on your premises.
- Change the routine of banking procedures so they are not easily observable.

STAFF

- **Make sure staff have been informed about:**
 - Security measures such as panic buttons and CCTV.
 - Internal and external crime reporting structures.
 - Dealing with abusive customers.

AGE RESTRICTED SALES

- Ensure you have visible signage at the entrance, till and shelf edges of your store.
- Make sure staff know the store policy and acceptable proof of age documents.



1. ACS Crime Survey 2017

The survey was sent to ACS members between 11th November and 23rd December 2016. The survey had 24 respondents representing 7,123 stores. The figures in the Crime Report relating to the total cost to the convenience sector are based on store number figures from the ACS Local Shop Report 2016, which stipulates that there are 50,095 stores in the sector. The survey gathered responses from independent stores, multiple stores and co-operatives. The survey data has been weighted to represent the different store types according to their proportion of stores in the market. For data regarding the proportion of stores in the market please see ACS Local Shop Report 2016.

2. ACS Voice of Local Shop Survey (VOLS)

The Crime report includes data from ACS' VOLS. VOLS is a quarterly tracker of the key confidence indicators in our sector. VOLS polls 1,210 retailers, running both symbol and independent businesses across the country to discover essential information about the trading performance of their stores, their opinion on what barriers are to the growth of their businesses and their experience of crime.

Staff theft

The question on the most common internal thefts was asked in the February 2017 VOLS survey. Please see below for the question asked to retailers.

What are the most common ways in which employees attempt to steal from your business, (tick all that apply):

- Cash directly from tills
- Price overrides
- Partial scanning or products
- Consumption of products in-store
- Lottery process
- Fraudulent refunds
- Bill payment process
- Collusion with customers
- Double ordering of stock
- I have not experienced employees stealing from my business

Shop theft, violence and verbal abuse

The questions on crime in the Voice of Local Shops survey are set out below. The average figures from these questions from February 2016 to November 2016 were used for the 'experience of shop theft' and 'experience of violence and verbal abuse' charts.

Thinking about your experience of shop theft in the last year, have you experienced...?

- No incidents of theft
- Increased incidents of theft
- Reduced incidents of theft
- Stayed the same
- Don't know

Thinking about your experience of verbal of physical abuse in the last year, have you experienced...?

- No verbal or physical abuse
- Increases in incidence
- Reduced incidence
- Stayed the same
- Don't know

3. Home Office Commercial Victimisation Survey (CVS) 2015 (page 5)

The 2015 CVS is the fourth in a new series of surveys run by the Home Office, designed to measure crime against businesses.

The CVS is a telephone survey where respondents from a representative sample of business premises in England and Wales were asked about crimes experienced at their premises in the 12 months prior to the interview.

Estimates for the 2015 CVS are based on 3,204 interviews with respondents at premises in the wholesale and retail, agriculture, forestry and fishing, information and communication, and construction industry sectors. Two of the four sectors included in the 2015 survey were also included in the 2012 to 2014 surveys. They were the wholesale and retail sector and the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector. This continuity has enabled further reporting on trends in crime against businesses, building on the first trend analysis published in 2015.

Fieldwork was carried out between August and December 2015 and the survey achieved a response rate of 43%.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/crime-against-businesses-findings-from-the-2015-commercial-victimisation-survey>

4. ACS: The Local Shop Report 2016 (page 9)

The 2015 edition of the ACS Local Shop Report provides insights with a deep and wide ranging look at the people who run, work and shop in the UK's local convenience stores. The Local Shop Report stipulates that there at 50,095 convenience stores in the sector.

The methodology for the Local Shop Report is available at www.acs.org.uk/research

CONTACT

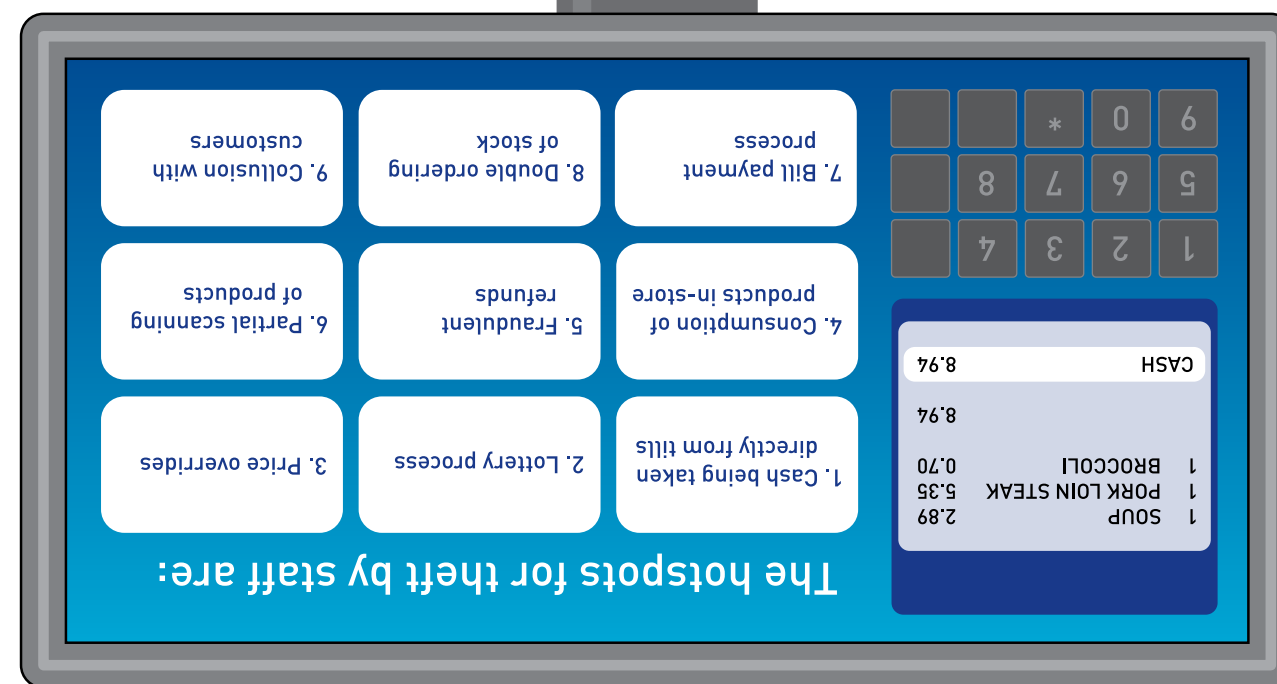
For more details on this report and guidance, contact Julie Byers at ACS by emailing Julie.Byers@acs.org.uk

For more details on ACS:
Visit: www.acs.org.uk
Call: 01252 515001

Follow us on Twitter: @ACS_Localshops

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- Only using civil action means that the offender can move into another business and repeat the offence.
- Report incidents to the police using the 101 number.
- When carrying out internal theft investigations, ensure you establish how and why the offence happened. This enables you to tackle the motive and presents an opportunity to prevent future incidents.
- Analyse till, cash management and inventory data to identify trends – look for anything out of the ordinary.
- Monitor voids and refunds transactions closely
- Use till overlay systems to allow CCTV to combine with 'real-time' till receipt images.
- Monitor till processes carefully and review individual end of day reports

REPORTING STAFF THEFT

- Check references of any new employee.
- Highlight internal investigation procedures in staff meetings or staff newsletters.
- Implement training processes for Store Managers and Supervisors to help them identify staff theft.

IDENTIFYING STAFF THEFT

PREVENTING STAFF THEFT

STAFF THEFT



MANAGING SELF-SCAN TILLS

Self-scan tills are common place in many convenience stores and an important aide to reducing queuing times for 'time-poor' customers. Self-scan tills need to be managed carefully to ensure the customer has a positive experience and, as far as possible, reduce any shrinkage issues through theft of customer error.

Retailers should consider location, management and IT competencies of self-scan tills before installing them in-store and be aware of the opportunities they present to shop thieves.

Whilst the majority of issues at self-scan tills are linked with operational challenges and genuine customer error, shop thieves may see self-scan tills as a new avenue to steal goods. This guidance aims to support retailers to think about the risks and difficulties that self-service tills present and best practice that retailers can use to mitigate losses.

Common operational challenges and scams used by shop thieves at self-scan tills include:

SWAPPING BARCODES



- Shop thieves often change the barcodes of high value products so they can scan through high value products at cheaper prices.
- Staff should be vigilant of consumers removing or tampering with barcodes.

LOOK OUT FOR:

VARIABLE WEIGHT BARCODES



- Products with variable weights, such as fruit and vegetables, can be incorrectly processed at the tills to reduce the prices or process higher value items.
- Checkout staff should be vigilant of variable weight products being scanned at the till and support customers to process them correctly.

LOOK OUT FOR:

WALK THROUGH



- During busy periods checkout staff should be vigilant for customers that queue at self-scan tills but make no effort to pay.
- Maintaining staff levels to support customers at self-scan tills during busy periods is essential.

LOOK OUT FOR:

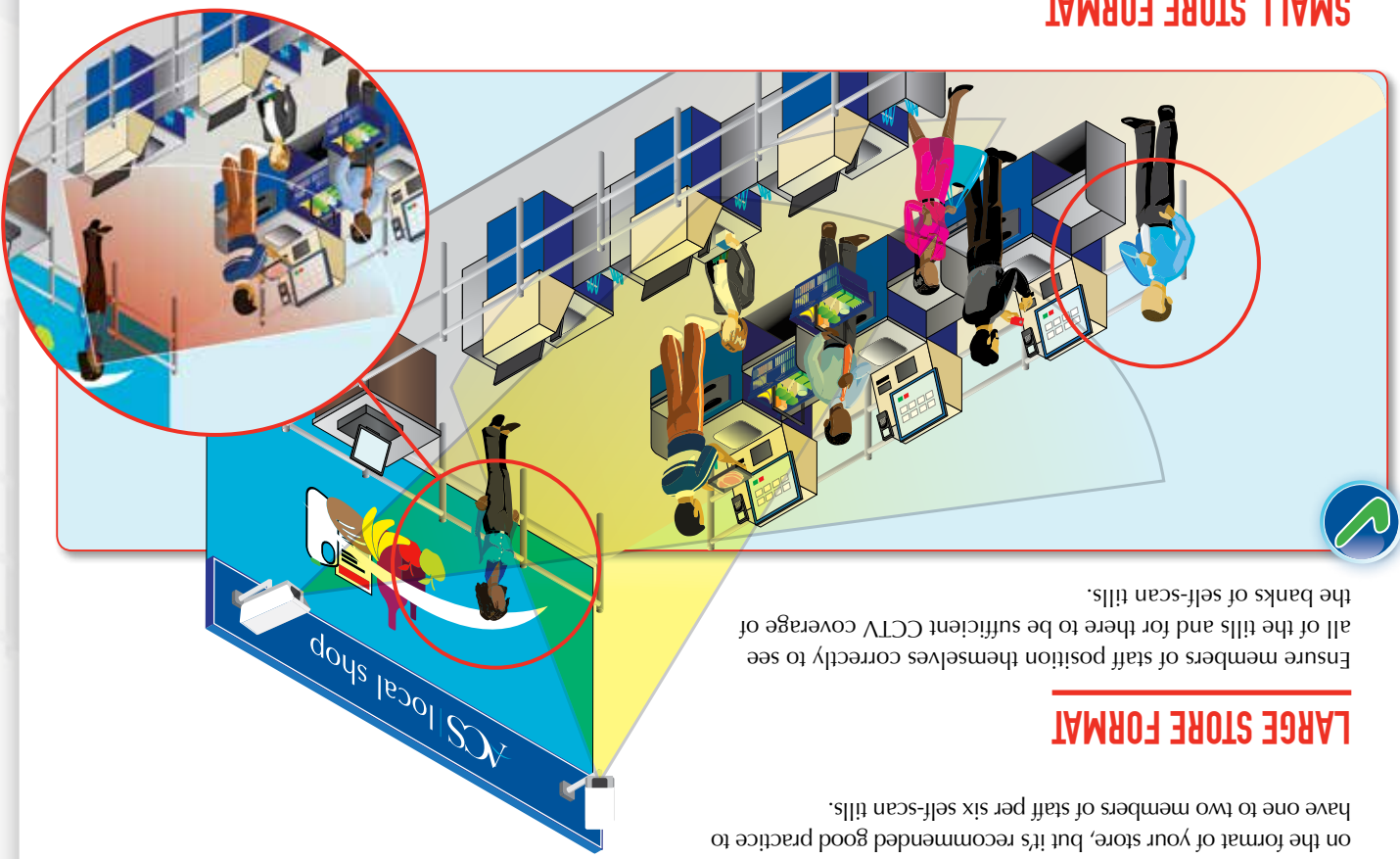
SELF-SCAN TILLS LAYOUT

Retailers should consider the layout of self-scan tills and the allocation of staff to self-scan tills to prevent opportunities for shop thieves and to deliver good customer service.

The layout of the store and staffing allocation will depend greatly on the format of your store, but it's recommended good practice to have one to two members of staff per six self-scan tills.

LARGE STORE FORMAT

Ensure members of staff position themselves correctly to see all of the tills and for there to be sufficient CCTV coverage of the banks of self-scan tills.



SMALL STORE FORMAT

Make sure staff have a clear vantage point of the self-scan tills and can get quick access to tills to support customers. During busy periods there should be dedicated staff to support consumers at self-scan tills.



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 staff avoid abuse in-store.



AGE RESTRICTED SALES - ABUSE AT THE TILL

Making sure that staff challenge customers for the sale of age restricted products such as alcohol and tobacco is imperative, but can often lead to confrontation. Ensure that you have clear signage in-store explaining your policy and that staff enforce this consistently. Make sure that your staff are trained to manage difficult customers and can clearly explain your store policy.

REFUSING TO SERVE INTOXICATED PERSONS

Retailers are legally obligated to refuse an alcohol sale to an intoxicated person. One way to avoid personal abuse, is to make clear to the customer that it is not your decision, but the rules applied to your licence.

PREVENTING SHOP THEFT

In attempt to prevent shop theft offenders from fleeing the store, retailers can experience verbal abuse and violence from the offender. Ensure that you put your own safety first. Keep a safe distance when engaging with potential shoplifters. Assess each individual situation on whether it is safe to make the confrontation.



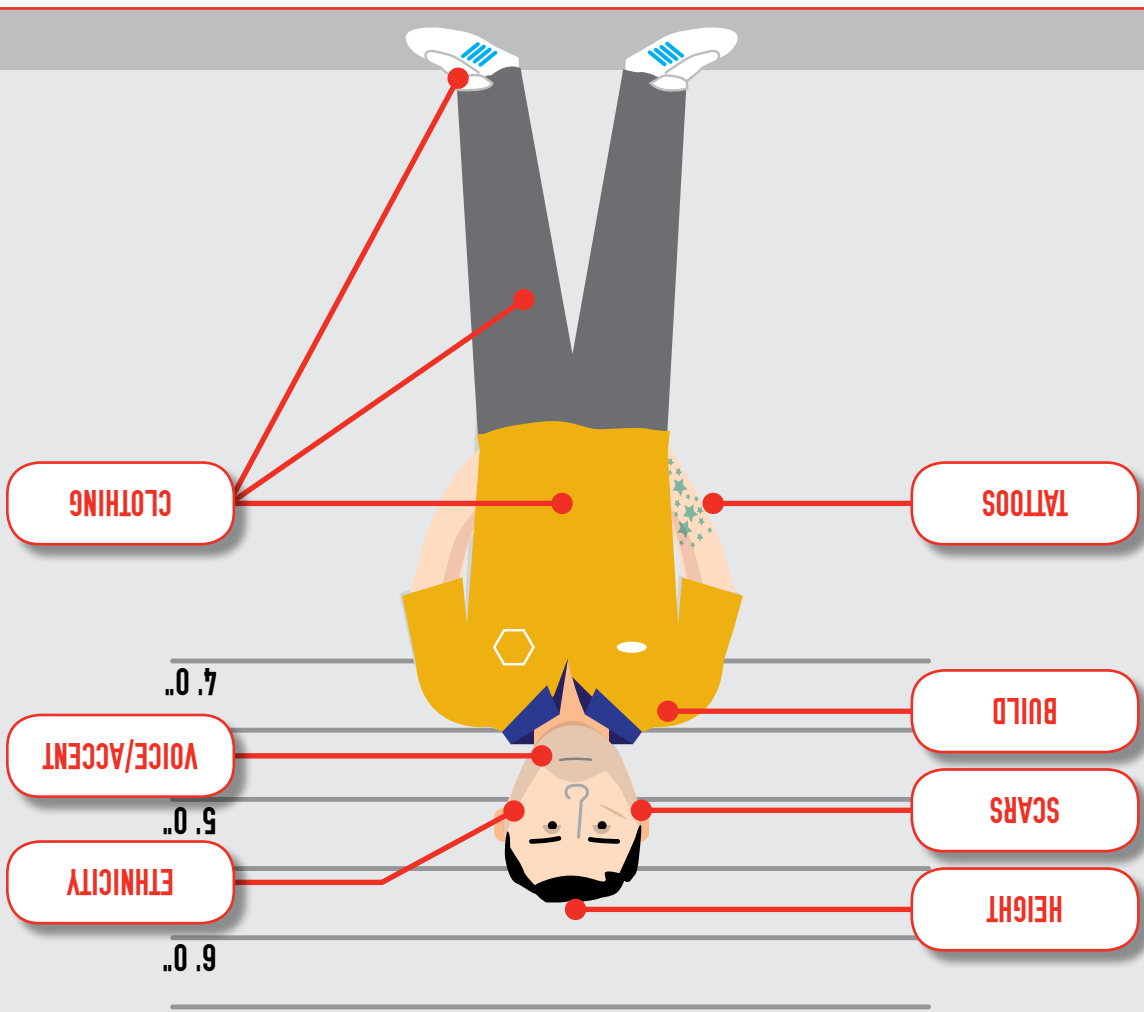
TOP TIPS

- 1. Make sure your staff are aware of the triggers of abuse and are trained to deal with difficult customers.
- 2. Have a clear policy for reporting abuse by customers internally and externally to the police.

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. Be compliant and passive with the robbers instructions but remain in control.
- 2. When safe, call the police and write down a description of the robber(s) immediately.
- 3. Reduce the amount of cash held on the premises.
- 4. Change your banking procedures regularly, so they are not observable to offenders.

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INTRODUCTION

ACS has developed a package of guidance to support retailers in assessing and managing the crime threats that their businesses face. The guidance focuses on partnership work with local agencies as well as the main retail crime risk areas, including: robbery, violence and verbal abuse, staff theft, and best practice around self-scan tills.

For this year's report, we have developed new guidance to support retailers to understand the police complaints procedure.

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 locating high value products in sight of the till.

ACS has developed separate crime prevention for fuel retailers which is available at www.acs.org.uk/advice



WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

This section highlights the importance of having great links with local police and other agencies. Partnership work is the most effective way to prevent retail crime and responding to it quickly.



POLICE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

This section supports retailers to understand what they can complain to the police about and how they can make the complaint.



VIOLENCE AND VERBAL ABUSE

This section focuses on the triggers for abuse that could result in violence and verbal abuse towards retailers and staff.



ROBBERY

This section supports retailers and staff to focus on gathering evidence to support police in following up an incident of robbery.



MANAGING SELF-SCAN TILLS

Self scan tills in stores are an emerging trend that support quick service for 'time-poor' customers, but they can also present opportunities to shop thieves. This guidance sets out some ideas for best practice for retailers and products that cause customer difficulty.



STAFF THEFT

This advises retailers on preventing incidents of staff theft, how to identify staff theft and how to deal with offenders.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

OTHER BUSINESSES

- Talk to other businesses in your area and see if you can work together.
- Business Crime Reduction Partnerships may be able to help share intelligence with you on local offenders and criminal activity.

BANNING LETTERS

Many retailers use banning letters to stop persistent offenders from entering their premises. Banning letters are more effective when delivered by the police to the offender's home address. Contact your local police team and ask if they will help deliver the banning letter.



LOCAL POLICE AND POLICE COMMUNITY

SUPPORT OFFICERS

Working in partnership with local police, other businesses and the community, is the most effective way to prevent and challenge crime against your business.

- Build relationships with your policing teams and PCSOs to understand how best to report crime and communicate the challenges faced by your business.
- Find out when your next local beat meeting is on the www.police.uk and meet your neighbourhood policing team.
- Every police force has a nominated single point of contact (SPOC) that liaises with the business community on business crime. To find out who your business crime single point of contact is, contact your local police force or contact the Association of Convenience Stores on 01252 515001.

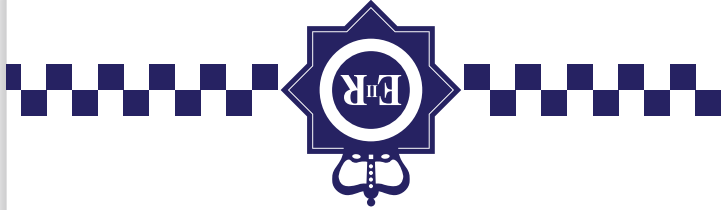
POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONERS

Each police force has a Police Crime Commissioner that is democratically accountable for your local police forces performance. If you have a complaint about how your area is policed or the police budget, you should consider writing to your Police and Crime Commissioner. You can find the contact details for your Police and Crime Commissioners on the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners website: www.apccs.police.uk



INDEPENDENT POLICE COMPLAINTS COMMISSION

- You can complain about how your local police force is run, for example about policing standards, or policing performance. The Independent Police Complaints Commission recommends that you take the following action:
- Email, phone or write to your local police force.
- Visit your local police station in person.
- Use the Independent Police Complaints Commission's online form via www.ipcc.gov.uk/complaints



2017

GUIDANCE



ACS