

NOTES - SCRUTINY MEETING (RETAIL AND BUSINESS CRIME - POLICING RESPONSE AND PROBLEM-SOLVING) - 20 JULY 2026

Definition

- Retail crime is any criminal act affecting a retail business, including offences against stores, companies, property, employees or customers. Examples include, but are not limited to, business robbery, commercial burglary, employee theft, making off without payment and shoplifting.
- In Cleveland, 82% of retail crime relates to shoplifting, making it the primary driver of retail crime trends. As a result, the evidence outlined in these notes focuses mainly on shoplifting. However, the Force's place-based and offender-focused approach means the strategies, tactics and interventions referenced are relevant to all retail crime types.

Governance Arrangements

- The Force has established a robust governance structure for retail crime. The Tactical Retail Crime Delivery Group, chaired by the Force Retail Crime Lead, oversees the delivery of the Retail Crime Prevention and Reduction Plan. This group reports to the Prevention and Problem-Solving Governance Group, chaired by the Assistant Chief Constable, which in turn reports to the IMPACT Board, chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable, where performance and progress are monitored. Retail crime is also a regular feature at the Neighbourhood Crime Suppression Group, chaired by the Assistant Chief Constable.
- This governance framework is supported by a range of partnership arrangements. Local Retail Crime Forums provide a direct link between retailers and the Force, feeding intelligence, concerns and feedback into the Tactical Retail Crime Delivery Group. The Force also actively participates in regional and national retail crime governance forums to share learning, develop best practice and influence wider policy and activity. In addition, the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) hosts an annual Retail Crime Summit with key partners, the outcomes of which feed into Local Retail Crime Forums and subsequently into the Tactical Retail Crime Delivery Group.
- Alongside these arrangements, the management and investigation of retail crime are monitored through local performance frameworks, with scrutiny and accountability maintained through regular performance discussions at both team and individual officer levels.
- A Retail Crime Spotlight Report is scheduled for consideration at the July IMPACT Board, providing senior force leaders with dedicated oversight of retail crime performance and emerging issues.

Question	Brief Summary of Evidence	Decision of PCC
1. What is the Force's strategy to tackle shoplifting effectively? To include details on: • How effectively the Force responds to reports of retail and business crime and what does the data show? • How the Force identifies, monitors, and proactively deals with retail	• The Force's Retail Crime Prevention and Reduction Plan adopts an intelligence-led, problem-solving and partnership-focused approach built around five core objectives. The plan aims to reduce offending, protect victims and improve outcomes. Its objectives are to: 1. Prevent and reduce retail crime through proactive problem-solving and early intervention. 2. Protect businesses, retail staff and the public from harm. 3. Pursue offenders through effective investigation, enforcement and prosecution. 4. Strengthen partnerships with retailers, local authorities and community safety partners. 5. Improve support for victims and witnesses. • Retail crime remains a significant challenge, but the Force's plan provides a clear framework for delivering sustained reductions in crime and harm over the coming years.	Assured <i>The PCC was assured by the evidence submitted by the Force and commended its response to retail crime. However, the PCC recognises that tackling retail crime effectively requires a strong partnership approach and a collective effort to deliver effective crime prevention measures and address the wider factors that contribute to offending. The PCC also</i>

offenders, is there evidence to show that interventions are reducing their offending and protecting frequently targeted businesses?	• Retail crime continues to increase both nationally and locally. Cleveland records the highest crime rate per 1,000 population, influenced by high levels of deprivation and wider socio-economic challenges. • Local analysis shows offending is concentrated within a small number of stores. While reporting levels from these premises are high and welcomed, opportunities remain to strengthen crime prevention through the greater adoption of recommended security measures and operational practices designed to reduce offending. • National and social media coverage continues to reinforce a negative narrative, contributing to a reluctance among retail staff to challenge offenders and a perception that retail crime carries limited consequences. • The Force's operational response is guided by THRIVE (threat, harm, risk, investigation, vulnerability and engagement) principles. While online reporting is encouraged for non-emergency incidents, all reports of retail crime are assessed for investigative opportunities. • The Force encourages the use of online reporting via Single Online Home for non-emergency retail crime incidents as part of a proportionate and efficient approach to managing demand. This helps ensure that 101 capacity remains available for incidents involving higher levels of risk, vulnerability or harm, while continuing to support the recording, assessment and investigation of retail crime offences. The Force is currently developing a QR code that retailers will be able to scan, directing them straight to the online reporting platform. • In response to feedback from retailers and growing demand, a new operating model has been introduced in Stockton. Developed in collaboration with local retailers, the model has been well received. Under this approach, the Primary Crime Investigation Unit (PCIU) undertakes early investigative activity and collates the available evidence, building robust case files that support officers in progressing investigations more efficiently. This enables multiple incidents to be discussed and progressed through a single appointment, reducing duplication, minimising the time required from retailers and improving the efficiency of investigations. This model will be rolled out across the remaining districts in Cleveland, ensuring a consistent approach and enabling the benefits realised in Stockton to be replicated force-wide. • Partnership working is fundamental to delivering sustainable reductions in retail crime. Effective prevention and problem-solving, delivered collaboratively with retailers and key stakeholders, remain central to the Force's long-term approach. • The Force's response is structured around the 4Ps framework (Pursue, Prevent, Protect and Prepare). This supports a proportionate, intelligence-led and risk-based approach to tackling retail crime. While retail crime remains a priority, the Force has a duty to respond to and investigate the offences that pose the greatest risk and cause the highest levels of harm. As a result, resources must be carefully balanced across	<i>acknowledges the need for the Force to maintain a proportionate and risk-based approach to responding to retail crime, while balancing resources across a range of policing demands. The PCC will revisit this topic next year to assess progress and ensure that the agreed measures of success have been delivered.</i>
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	competing demands, ensuring the right response is provided to protect communities while maintaining an effective focus on retail crime. • Some offenders perceive retail crime as a victimless offence, failing to recognise the significant impact it can have on businesses, employees, customers and local communities. • Shoplifting remains a significant force-wide challenge, with Middlesbrough and Stockton recording the highest rates across the Cleveland area. • Over the last 12 months, the Force's response data shows that 86% of emergency incidents and 91% of priority and Priority 24 incidents were attended within local target response times. In relation to reports of shoplifting, the Force's average response times were 8.8 minutes for emergencies, 13.9 minutes for priority incidents and 140.9 minutes for Priority 24 incidents. • Despite unprecedented levels of demand over the last 12 months, the Force has continued to deliver strong performance, achieving a solved outcome rate of 31.4% - significantly above the national average of 19.8%. • The Force has adopted a proactive, intelligence-led approach focused on those individuals responsible for causing the greatest harm. • Regular scrutiny processes have been introduced to identify repeat offenders, hotspot locations and emerging crime patterns and trends. • The Force utilises targeted problem-solving plans, multi-agency interventions and a range of preventative measures, including Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBOs), banning notices and restraining orders. Electronic monitoring could strengthen the management of offenders subject to CBOs by helping to identify breaches more effectively, however, this would require appropriate monitoring. • In response to feedback from retailers, the Force has refined its investigative approach to focus on prolific offenders rather than treating incidents in isolation. • The Force anticipates further opportunities to strengthen its offender management arrangements through the implementation of emerging legislation. • Co-op Redhill Road Case Study – This store was previously recording more than 100 reported offences in a single month. Through a targeted problem-solving plan, officers identified two key premises where offenders were regularly congregating. Working closely with partner agencies, closure orders were obtained for both locations, while significant target-hardening measures were introduced in collaboration with store management. As a result, the store has seen a sustained reduction in crime over the past three months, demonstrating the effectiveness of a combined approach involving enforcement, partnership working and environmental crime prevention.	
2. How is the Force using problem solving approaches - for	• There are currently 13 live retail crime Problem-Solving Plans (PSPs), each supported by a dedicated Problem-Solving Coordinator. These plans are evidence-led, informed	

example, hotspot analysis, targeted patrols, offender focused interventions, and the drone as first responder?	by national best practice and focused on delivering sustainable, long-term reductions in crime and harm. • The Force adopts the OSARA problem-solving model (Objective, Scanning, Analysis, Response and Assessment), providing a structured and consistent approach to understanding issues, implementing targeted interventions and evaluating their effectiveness. • A robust intelligence and analytical framework enables the Force to deliver both place-based and offender-focused interventions. Officers are encouraged to apply the Pareto Principle (80:20 rule), recognising that a relatively small number of offenders, victims and locations account for a disproportionate level of crime and harm, allowing resources to be targeted where they can have the greatest impact. • The Force's expanding drone capability is providing significant benefits in tackling retail crime. Drones can be rapidly deployed to live incidents, helping to locate suspects, support arrest opportunities and enhance situational awareness, while reducing demand on frontline resources. • In response to the evolving nature of retail crime, the Force continues to invest in academic research and evidence-based policing. This includes a current partnership with Teesside University to undertake a Rapid Evidence Review, helping to identify effective practice and inform future operational activity.	
3. What positive outcomes are being achieved for victims and businesses - including any case studies demonstrating good practice?	• Alongside maintaining a strong and improving solved crime rate, the Force has reduced repeat victimisation at high-demand locations, strengthened the management of prolific offenders and increased retailer confidence in the police response to retail crime. • Enhanced engagement with retail partners has been central to improving outcomes for victims and businesses. Retailers report that, alongside increased visible policing, they value the Force's proactive approach to communication and problem-solving and welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively in developing local solutions to local challenges. • Case Study: Middlesbrough Town Centre Shop Watch Scheme - The Middlesbrough Town Centre Shop Watch Scheme has been successfully established for several years, fostering strong working relationships between Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT) officers, retailers and store security staff. This partnership enables the swift sharing of intelligence, coordinated responses to offending and proactive management of prolific offenders. A recent example of the scheme's success involved the identification, arrest and charging of a prolific offender responsible for 19 shop theft offences. Following a coordinated investigation, the offender was sentenced to 38 weeks' imprisonment and made subject to a two-year CBO. • There are currently 16 live CBOs in place for prolific offenders operating within Middlesbrough Town Centre. These orders impose restrictions designed to prevent further offending, including prohibiting individuals from entering designated retail areas. The use of CBOs has strengthened the Force's ability to disrupt repeat offenders,	

	provide additional protection for businesses and secure more robust action against those who continue to target retailers. While reductions in retail crime are expected to be realised over a longer period, the initiative has already delivered positive outcomes, including a 30% reduction in antisocial behaviour, helping to create a safer environment for retailers, staff and customers.	
4. How are partnership arrangements with local authorities, Business Crime Reduction Partnerships and retailers contributing to problem solving and prevention?	• Partnership working is fundamental to preventing offending and reducing harm. Through local Business Crime Reduction Partnerships, the Force works closely with a wide range of stakeholders, including retailers, local authorities, security providers, academic institutions and community safety partners. • This collaborative, multi-agency approach enables the Force to address both the immediate impacts and underlying drivers of retail crime. By combining expertise, intelligence and resources, interventions are better informed, more targeted and more effective in delivering sustainable, long-term outcomes for businesses and communities. • Through strong partnership working, the Force can deliver a coordinated response to retail crime, enabling earlier intervention, improved evidential opportunities, enhanced victim support and greater resilience across the retail sector. • The Force continues to work closely with criminal justice partners to understand and respond to the impact of the Independent Sentencing Review, including the reduced use of custodial sentences. While effective enforcement remains important, reducing offending requires a broader partnership approach that addresses the underlying causes of crime and identifies the interventions most likely to support rehabilitation and prevent reoffending. • Example of Partnership Working with a Major Retailer - The Force continues to strengthen its relationships with retail security and loss prevention teams, recognising the valuable role they play in preventing and detecting retail crime. Through close collaboration with Tesco's regional Tactical Support Units, the Force benefits from enhanced intelligence relating to offender behaviour, organised retail crime networks and emerging crime trends. This partnership supports the timely exchange of information, complements police intelligence systems and helps to identify prolific offenders and coordinated criminal activity. By combining retailer intelligence with police resources and investigative capabilities, the Force is better equipped to target offenders, protect businesses and deliver a more proactive response to retail crime. • Local authorities have an important role to play alongside policing and criminal justice partners, with prevention orders offering an additional mechanism to deter offending, reduce harm and support long-term problem solving.	
5. How is the Force measuring the impact of its activity and what measurable	• In measuring impact and evidencing improvement, the Force has developed a comprehensive performance framework that draws on both quantitative and qualitative data. However, retail crime is a complex issue and success cannot be measured by crime volumes alone. The Force also assesses a range of broader indicators, including	

improvements would it like to see in 6-12 months?	feedback from retailers and levels of engagement and participation in partnership activity. Together, these measures provide a more holistic understanding of the effectiveness of the Force's response and the outcomes being delivered for retailers and local communities. • The key measures of success for the next 12 months are: • Reduction in retail crime at the five most frequently targeted stores. • Reduction in offending by the five most prolific retail crime offenders. • Increased use of preventative and disruptive powers to tackle persistent and repeat offending. • Increased use of Business Impact Statements to strengthen the victim voice. • Reduced repeat victimisation, evidenced through the successful implementation of problem-solving interventions. • The Force is committed to building on the strong foundations already established, with a focus on achieving sustained reductions in retail crime within identified hotspot locations. The introduction of the Crime and Policing Act 2026 presents a significant opportunity to further strengthen the Force's response through enhanced powers, improved offender management and greater opportunities to prevent and disrupt persistent offending.	
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Action

1.	That the PCC revisits the topic in 12 months to assess progress against the agreed success measures and ensure the intended outcomes have been delivered.
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