

SHOP THEFT  
REPEAT OFFENCES  
VERBAL ABUSE  
THREATS  
VIOLENCE  
ROBBERY  
BURGLARY  
FRAUD  
SHOP SECURITY  
PERSONAL SAFETY

# PROTECTING PEOPLE AND SHOPS

## ACS Crime Guidance 2020

A report by the Association of Convenience Stores  
#itsnotpartofthejob

**ACS** | the voice of  
local shops

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## INTRODUCTION

ACS has developed this package of guidance which aims to support 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, staff theft, and how to report crime to the police. There is new information on the storage and sale of knives and measures that retailers can implement to improve colleague safety.

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 the location of high value products in sight of the till.

ACS has developed an animation which looks to help retailers and their staff manage violence in their stores. The animation explores how to manage the triggers of violence and verbal abuse including: encountering shop thieves, enforcing age restricted sales, refusing to serve someone who is intoxicated, and armed robberies. Retailers and their staff can view the animation on ACS' YouTube channel.

## SUPPORTING PEOPLE

ACS guidance is all about supporting people to be safe at work. We have worked with the Suzy Lamplugh Trust on their workplace safety charter to make it easily accessible to convenience retailers, we have helped launch and communicate Grocery Aid's Workplace Critical Incident Support service and are highlighting important new guidance for all retailers on the sale of knives provided by the National Business Crime Centre.

**The Suzy Lamplugh Trust** offers advice, and training in order to enable people and organisations to be and feel safer. 'Suzy's Charter for Workplace Safety' was developed to help identify personal safety risks in the workplace with the objective to mitigate the prevalence in violence and aggression towards workers.

**GroceryAid** offers a free helpline to anyone working in the grocery sector who requires emotional support and practical advice. The Workplace Critical Incident Support service can provide support for staff immediately after they have experienced or witnessed a distressing event such as violence and verbal abuse in-store.

**The National Business Crime Centre (NBCC)** was set up by the Home Office to help businesses tackle crime through partnership working and sharing best practice. The NBCC website hosts new guidance for retailers on the storage and sale of knives.

For more information visit:

## PROTECTING PEOPLE AND SHOPS



## Reporting crime

### 1. Reporting violent crime

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:

- It feels like the situation could get heated or violent.
- The crime is in progress.
- Someone is in immediate danger.
- You need help right away.

#### What to say

Speak slowly and clearly:

- Give your location; name of business, address and postcode.

Describe what is happening and tell the call handler if:

- Violence has been used or threatened.
- There is an immediate risk.
- The suspect is still at the scene.
- Weapons have been seen or threatened.
- There are any injuries.



### 2. 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.

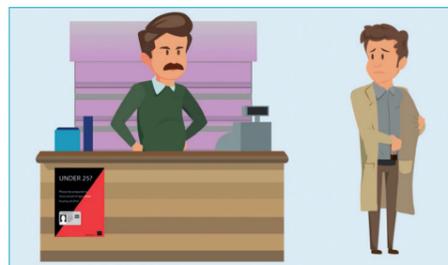
The most important information you can provide to support further action from the police is;

	■ 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)

If you want to report a crime anonymously call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111. Or you can report it anonymously online with Crimestoppers: <https://crimestoppers-uk.org/give-information>

## 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 violence and abuse in-store.



### Encountering shop thieves

In attempt to prevent shop theft offenders from fleeing the store, retailers can experience verbal abuse and violence from the offender.

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 watching them.

Ensure that you put your own safety first. Keep a safe distance when engaging with potential shop thieves.



### 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 a customer who is drunk, 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.



### 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.

Retailers and their staff should consider using the following techniques to stop confrontation when asking customers for their ID 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.

#### 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.

### Further guidance

For more guidance on ways to manage the triggers of violence and verbal abuse, please see ACS' training animation video on 'Managing Violence and Abuse in Convenience Stores' which is available on ACS' YouTube channel.

## Knife retailer toolkit

The Metropolitan Police Service, Mayor's Office for Police and Crime and London Trading Standards have produced a good practice guide and training modules for retailers on the storage and sale of knives. This includes information on the Responsible Retailers Agreement and downloadable posters for use in customer and staff areas.

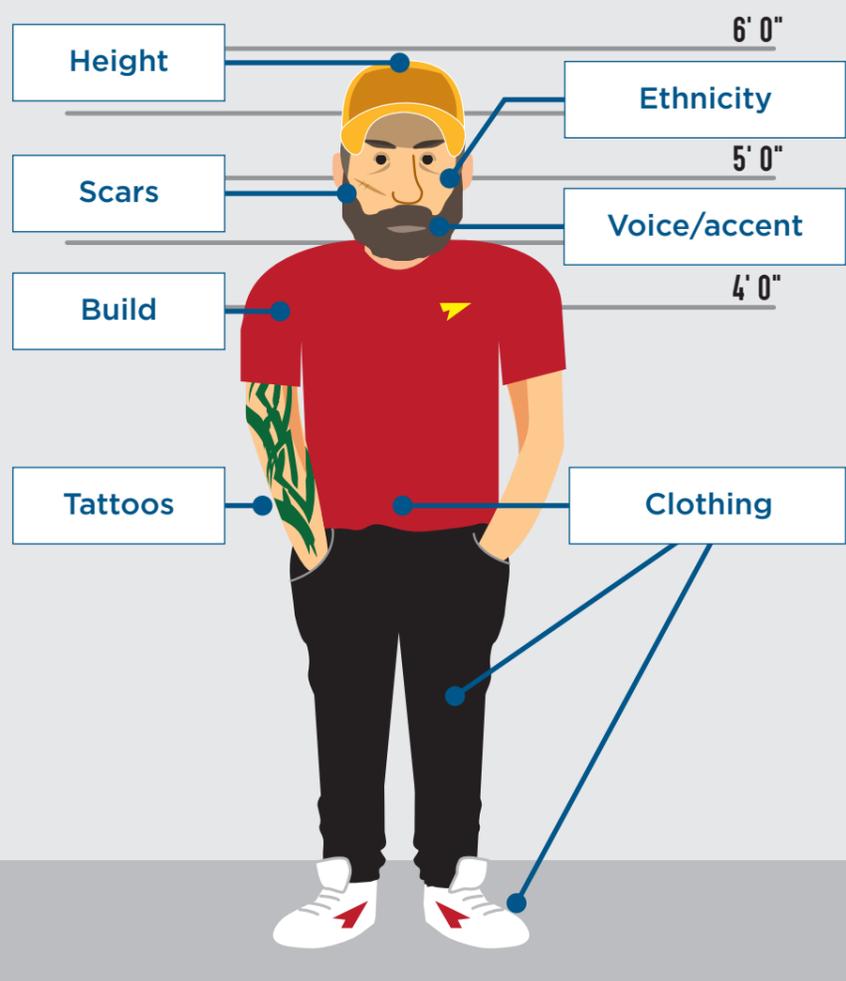
The resources are available on the NBCC website. ACS' Assured Advice on Preventing Underage Sales also includes information on the sale of knives.



## 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.

### 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.
- ACS' campaign posters are available to download and display in store: <https://www.acs.org.uk/lobbying/encouraging-retailers-and-colleagues-alwaysreportabuse>
- 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.

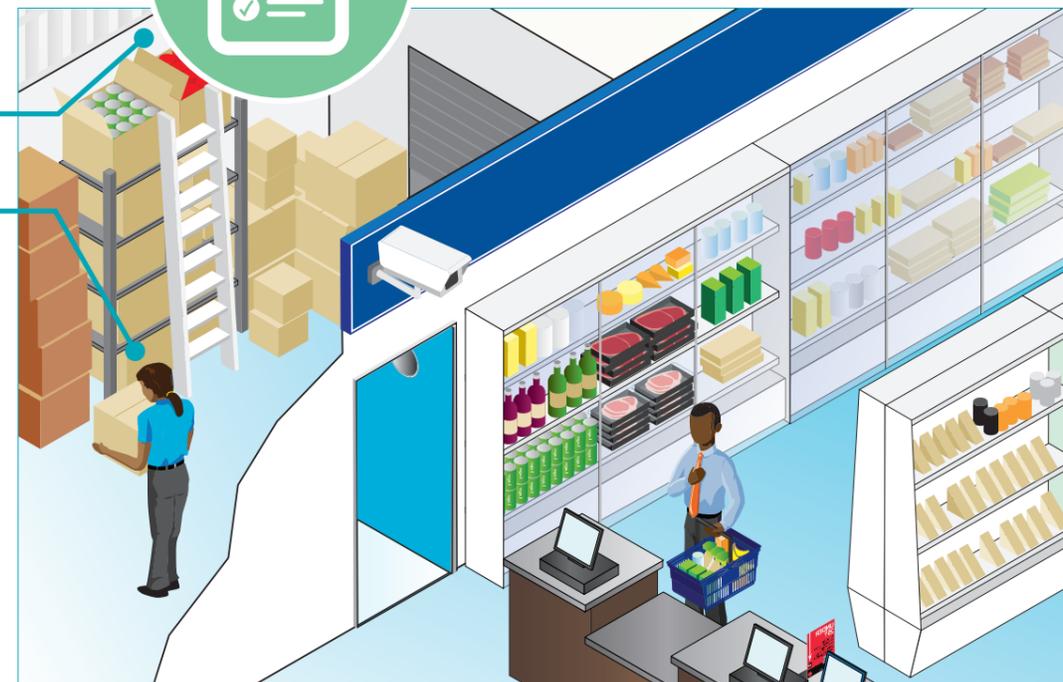


### Reporting and supporting

- 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.

## Staff theft

### Preventing 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.
- Train staff to make them aware of the security features in-store.

### Identifying staff theft

- Monitor till processes carefully and review individual end of day reports.
- Use till overlay systems to allow CCTV to combine with 'real-time' till receipt images.
- Monitor voids and refunds transactions closely
- Analyse till, cash management and inventory data to identify trends - look for anything out of the ordinary.
- 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.

### Reporting staff theft

- Report incidents to the police using the 101 number.
- Only using civil action means that the offender can move into another business and repeat the offence.

**£26m** 

the total cost of staff theft to the sector

**18,370**   
Incidents of staff theft in the sector

### Most common internal thefts

- 1 Cash directly from tills
- 2 Consumption of products in-store
- 3 Price overrides

## Protecting your business from scams

Retailers may experience scams in their stores. These are the top scams that retailers should be aware of to prevent them in-store:

	<b>Cash swapping</b>	The scam works as an attempt to confuse retailers and their staff by trying to swap bank notes for other bank notes or coins repeatedly. Often the scammer is known to ask for change or purchases a small value item with a large banknote.
	<b>Distraction theft</b>	Two or more people enter the store, one distracts a staff member by asking questions, being loud or noisy. Sometimes the staff member may be led to the back of the store. The other person goes unnoticed and selects and steals goods.
	<b>Refund requests</b>	A person selects a high value item from the shelf and takes it straight to the till asking for a refund (although they have never purchased the item). The person may attempt to use an old receipt or no receipt.
	<b>Credit cards</b>	Fraudulent card transactions which occur in store could risk retailers being required to pay this money back. Offenders often use fraudulent credit cards to purchase high value items with a card that bypasses pin verification and produces a signature slip.
	<b>Bag swap</b>	Two people enter the store with the same bag. One of the offenders selects products off the shelf and put them in their bag, while the other offender walks around selecting nothing. Before leaving, the offenders switch bags. Upon being checked on the way out, the offender has nothing in their bag. However, the other offender leaves with the products unchallenged.

## Managing self-scan tills

Self-scan tills are commonplace 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.

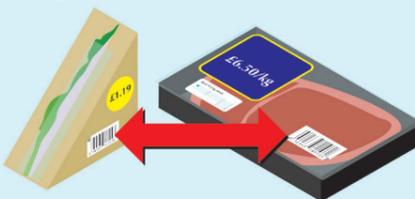
Retailers should consider location, management and IT competencies of self-scan tills before installing them in-store and be aware of the opportunities they present to shop

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**



**Look out for**

- 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.

**! Variable weight barcodes**



**Look out for**

- 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.

**! Walk through**



**Look out for**

- 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.

### 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.

