



ACS Submission: MPS Public Access and Engagement Strategy

ACS (the Association of Convenience Stores) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime consultation on their draft Police and Crime Plan for London. ACS represents 33,500 local shops across the UK including the Co-Op, Spar, One Stop and thousands of independent retailers (more information about ACS and the convenience sector can be found in Annex A). In London, there are an estimated 6,256 convenience stores which employ 46,479 people¹.

Crime against convenience stores cost an estimated £323m to the sector in the last year, taking into account the amount retailers invest, the total cost of crime per store was £8,538². This is equivalent to a 7p crime tax on every customer transaction³. Shop theft continues to present the biggest cost to retailers as it remains the most prevalent form of crime in the convenience sector, followed by violence and verbal abuse and robbery and burglary. Business crime also present a huge challenge for police forces as its high volume, low value nature is difficult to manage.

We believe that digital reporting does have a role to play in tackling business crime. Therefore, we welcome MPS improving their online reporting system, which will not only provide an additional way of reporting for retailers but could also increase engagement. We particularly welcome the tracking online tool, which will allow victims of crimes to track the progress of their case. This will provide much needed clarity to retailers on how the crimes they are reporting are being dealt with. We encourage MPS to explore how the online tool can go further, for example, considering how online reporting can be integrated with the aims and work of the National Business Crime Centre and the role of business crime single points of contact.

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Retailers have expressed an interest in hosting Dedicated Ward Officers in their stores. A more visible policing presence can foster a good working relationship between retailers and local police. Due to the small nature of convenience stores, which are typically smaller than 3,000 square feet/280 square metres, this may be limited to hosting docking stations and

¹ ACS Local Shop Report 2017

² ACS Crime Report 2017

³ ACS Crime Report 2017 (cost of crime) & ACS Local Shop Report 2016 (sales)

lockers for officers rather than having the space for a Dedicated Ward Officer to host one to one surgery sessions with the general public.

ACS would welcome further engagement with MOPAC and the Metropolitan Police on the implementation of the Public Access and Engagement Strategy, specifically on how Dedicated Ward Officers have been engaged with not only local communities but also local businesses, including convenience stores.

Please see below for ACS' comments on the draft Policing and Crime Plan for London.

1. Do you agree that it is right that the MPS improves its online offer to the public?

Yes, we believe that digital technology can have a role to play in reporting incidents of crime. Giving retailers the option to choose which way they would want to report crime, such as reporting online, could help facilitate the crime reporting process. We encourage MOPAC to engage with local communities and local businesses to consider whether online reporting could lead to increased engagement in their police force area.

As part of the Public Access and Engagement Strategy also commits to allowing victims to track the progress of their case or issue online, from the beginning to the end of the journey. We welcome this commitment as it will provide clarity for retailers but we believe it could go further. As well as tracking the crime, retailers would find value in having their crime be dealt with by the same office, from start to finish. This could improve consistency of service and almost replicate the single point of contact for business crime, by having a single point of contact for an individual crime incident.

We also welcome the commitment to allow the online reporting service to include an easy-to-use function for uploading digital evidence such as images and video; a live chat facility to allow victims to chat with contact centre staff and a new digital route for reporting anti-social behaviour. Any ways that the police can make it easier for retailers to upload CCTV and other evidence of crimes which reduce burdens on retailers and may lead to more reporting of crimes they face. This year, retailers estimated that only 34% of shop theft incidents they experienced were reported to the police⁴.

However, online reporting may not be appropriate for everything. For instance, repeated incidences of shop theft. These types of crime should receive a police response.

2. Do any partners or other community members have suggestions for possible suitable locations for new Dedicated Ward Officer hubs?

When consulting with our members, they expressed interest in hosting Dedicated Ward Officer hubs in their stores and are keen to find out how they can engage further. Hosting Dedicated Ward Officer hubs in their business, allows retailers to engage with local policy and develop a good working relationship.

Due to the small size of convenience stores (defined as less than 3,000 square feet/280 square metres), there may not be enough space for a Dedicated Ward Officer to conduct

⁴ ACS Crime Report 2017

one on one surgery sessions with the public. For instance, ACS' Local Shop Report 2017 suggests that 50% of convenience stores are smaller than 999 square feet.

3. Is it right to replace Contact Points with more flexible Community Contact Sessions designed to free up officer time and meet the needs of individual communities across London? How could they best be run in your area to meet the needs of your community?

We would welcome clarity why Contact Points in supermarkets and other retailers have been closed. Was this only because of location or has the Metropolitan Police decided to look into other locations which are not retail based?

4. Do you agree that it is right that the Metropolitan Police Service prioritise police officers over poorly-used front counters?

A visible policing presence is important for the prevention of retail crime. Retailers report that their Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) remain a key point of contact to discuss issues they are experiencing, whether it relates to anti-social behaviour or a spate of shop theft in the area. As part of [ACS' guidance](#) to retailers on how to prevent crime, we encourage retailers to work in partnership with local police, other businesses and the community. We believe it is important the retailers have direct contact with a dedicated community police officer or PCSO.

9. How can MOPAC better enable local communities to be more aware of, and involved, in the work of the local Independent Advisory Groups, Safer Neighbourhood Boards, Independent Custody Visiting and Community Monitoring Groups?

Members have expressed interest in engaging with their local Independent Advisory Groups, Safer Neighbourhood Boards and Community Monitoring Groups, however, there is generally a low awareness whether these groups exist in the local area. Small business would value one information point to understand where and when their beat meetings are taking place.

12. What type of information should be shared by the police to help communities protect themselves from crime and anti-social behaviour?

ACS has developed bespoke crime guidance for convenience retailers, which aims to support retailers in assessing and managing crime threats against that their businesses face. The guidance covers staff theft, self-scan tills, robbery, violence, and working in partnership. The guidance can be found [here](#). We would welcome MOPAC sharing our guidance to convenience stores in their local area. Local businesses should also be signposted the guidance that is made available on the National Business Crime Centre website.

Police can also empower local businesses to tackle anti-social behaviour by ensuring that they are aware of the steps they can take. For example, ensuring that retailers are aware of the steps to using community triggers which allows members of the community to ask the Community Safety Partnership to review their responses to complaints of anti-social behaviour.

13. By what delivery method should this information be shared? Are there new digital or innovative methods that should be trialled?

Information should be made available through electronic and hard copies. MOPAC should consider hosting information on the National Business Crime Centre which then could be accessed by local businesses.

16. How can we empower local citizens to influence Borough and Ward-level policing? How can this be achieved digitally or through other virtual means, so it is not just through physical attendance at Community Contact Sessions?

Police can empower local businesses to influence Borough and Ward-level policing by ensuring that they are aware and understand how to do this digitally or through other virtual means. This can be achieved by not only making local businesses aware about the different processes for them to input and contribute to policing in their local area but also the benefits of doing so digitally rather than through physical attendance at Community Contact Sessions.

17. What tools or training do local citizens need to feel empowered to assist and work with the police to reduce crime or anti-social behaviour in their area?

Standards for crime reporting and police response to incidents can be an incredibly useful tool to help local businesses feel empowered to assist and work with police to reduce crime. For example, due to the high volume low cost nature of shop theft, it often is not given priority by the police, and can lead to an inconsistent response. This develops a vicious cycle, where retailers choose not to report all shop theft incidents because they lack confidence in police response. If a standard reporting process for retailers was in place, this could in turn lead to a more consistent from the police and break the cycle, increasing the reporting of incidents.

For more information on this submission, please contact Julie Byers, ACS Public Affairs Manager by emailing Julie.Byers@acs.org.uk or calling 01252 515001.