

23 Oct 2023

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## Partnership to crack down on shoplifting

Centralised national intelligence team and action plan to bolster policing response

Policing, retailers and the Government have come together to set out further measures to tackle the rise in shoplifting, catch more prolific offenders and keep retail workers safe.

The Policing Minister Chris Philp chaired a meeting with senior police leaders and 13 of the UK's biggest retailers today to launch the [Retail Crime Action Plan](#).

Commissioned by the Minister and published today, the plan includes a police commitment to prioritise urgently attending the scene of shoplifting instances involving violence against a shop worker, where security guards have detained an offender or where attendance is needed to secure evidence. Police attendance will be assessed based on risk, and prolific or juvenile offenders will be treated with elevated priority.

Police have also reaffirmed their pledge to follow up on any evidence that could reasonably lead to catching a perpetrator. Forces will step up targeted hotspot patrols in badly affected areas.

The plan sets out advice for retailers on how to provide the best possible evidence for police to pursue in any case, making clear they should send CCTV footage of the whole incident and an image of the shoplifter via the digital evidence management system as quickly as possible after an offence has been committed.

Where CCTV or other digital images are secured, police will run this through the Police National Database using facial recognition technology to further aid efforts to identify and prosecute offenders – particularly prolific or potentially dangerous individuals.

A specialist new police team is also being created to build a comprehensive intelligence picture of the organised crime gangs that fuel many shoplifting incidents across the country, to help target and dismantle them.

The initiative, dubbed Pegasus, is a business and policing partnership that will radically improve the way retailers are able to share intelligence with policing, to better understand the tactics used by organised retail crime gangs and identify more

offenders. This will include development of a new information sharing platform and training for retailers.

Spearheaded by Katy Bourne, the Business Crime lead for the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC), Pegasus is the first national partnership of its kind, and is backed by the Home Office, John Lewis, the Co-op, M&S, Boots, Primark and several more, who have collectively pledged to provide over £600,000 to get the initiative off the ground.

Chief Constable Amanda Blakeman is National Police Chiefs' Council Lead for Acquisitive Crime. She said:

*“Dealing with retail crime requires a multi-faceted approach and through the launch of Pegasus, plus the Retail Crime Action Plan, we have bolstered the policing response to tackling offenders and supporting retailers in reducing shoplifting and attacks on retail staff.*

*“We welcome the collaboration between retailers, police and crime commissioners and policing through Project Pegasus which centralises intelligence and enhances our ability to identify and tackle the groups involved.*

*“We continue to target those prolific and habitual offenders whose behaviour causes misery and takes profit from our communities and retailers. Local police forces assess each report through a threat, harm and risk model to determine their police response and will deploy resources where they can be most effective in catching offenders and keeping people safe.”*

Crime and Policing Minister, Chris Philp said:

*“I want a new zero-tolerance approach to tackling shoplifting. It is a blight on our highstreets and communities and puts the livelihoods of traders at risk. I am determined to drive forward change.*

*“While it is encouraging to see a 29% increase in charges for shoplifting in the past year, the rise in offending is unacceptable and there is much more to do to stop it happening in the first place.*

*“That’s why we’re taking action and bringing together government, policing and business to commit to smarter, more joined up working when it comes to retail crime, which will help to drive down criminal behaviour and rebuild public confidence in the police response when it does occur.”*

The majority of funding for Pegasus will go towards the creation of a dedicated team of specialist analysts and intelligence officers to work within OPAL – the national policing team that oversees intelligence on serious organised acquisitive crime, run by Detective Chief Superintendent Jim Taylor and overseen by North Wales Chief Constable Amanda

Blakeman. Recruitment has already started, and the team will be operational later this month, delivering outcomes across the country by the New Year.

Pegasus will deliver a new digital interface to streamline information sharing between retailers and the police and also provide training for retailers on appropriate information and intelligence to share with policing.

Paul Gerrard, Campaigns, Public Affairs and Board Secretariat Director, The Co-op: *“The Co-op has long called for greater police prioritisation so they tackle the rampant rise in retail crime especially those involving violence or prolific offenders; this is now what happens at present as our colleagues see every day.*

*“We, therefore, welcome the commitments in the ‘Retail Crime Action Plan’ to attend incidents of violence, incidents where offenders have been detained and ensure all evidence is collected so every reasonable line of enquiry can be followed.*

*Alongside Operation Pegasus, which the Co-op is helping to fund, we are hopeful that this will mark the point at which the police will provide the support to protect shopworkers and shops so they can help the communities they serve thrive.*

*The Co-op stands ready to work with every police force to ensure our colleagues and the shops they work in can continue to serve their communities.’*

PCC Katy Bourne and APCC National Lead for Business and Retail Crime said:

*“Pegasus will be game changer in the fight against retail crime providing for the first time an accurate national picture of the organised groups from local families to cross border criminals driving organised shop theft.*

*“Retailers will agree ways to capture information that can be shared and analysed to create intelligence packages for police forces to target and track perpetrators. I am very grateful to all the contributors to Pegasus and to Mitie in particular for helping to get Pegasus airborne.”*

Nicki Juniper, Head of Security for the John Lewis Partnership said:

*"While there's no silver bullet for tackling retail crime, we welcome this significant step forward. Retail crime is not victimless, it has an impact on Partners, customers and on prices. We look forward to continuing to work collaboratively with police and others in the sector to keep our Partners and customers safe."*

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