



Home Office

Call for Evidence – Violence and Abuse Toward Shop Staff

Government Response

July 2020

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Ministerial Foreword

This Government recognises that the abuse and physical violence faced by shop staff can have a significant impact on their health, not only physically but mentally and emotionally. Shops are the beating heart of our communities and neighbourhoods, and never more so than in recent months during the coronavirus pandemic. Immediately after the Government introduced measures to control the spread of the virus, shop staff worked tirelessly to keep the nation fed while implementing social distancing measures to keep the public safe. As restrictions have eased, and more shops and businesses have reopened, they have continued to make sure that people can shop safely to help get the economy moving again. I thank them for their hard work and stress how important it is that those working in shops should be free of the fear of violence or intimidation.

The Call for Evidence has been an important step in building our understanding of the problem. It has provided an opportunity for relevant parties to have a say and I am grateful to everyone who took the time to respond. The hard work, passion and determination to tackle this problem is clear and I am confident that by working together we will be able to address the problems raised in the responses. The consultation closed in June 2019, and so responses reflect the experiences of retailers and shopworkers before the pandemic. At the most recent meeting of the National Retail Crime Steering Group, retailers told me that they experienced an increase in incidents of abuse against their staff during the panic buying that occurred in March, and during the subsequent months while social distancing measures have been in place. This makes it all the more important to publish this Government response and begin to tackle this type of crime.

In light of the responses received to the Call for Evidence I am clear that this is only the beginning of the process. I am working with the National Retail Crime Steering Group (NRCSG), which we co-chair with the British Retail Consortium, to develop and deliver a programme of work to drive down abuse and violence. This group brings together trade organisations, enforcement partners, Government and others to create a shared understanding of the problem and to work together to find solutions. The responses to the Call for Evidence have highlighted that there are some key issues which can only be addressed by Government working with the sector. I am pleased to say that we have begun this important work already. As that work develops, we will also consider any new lessons and experiences from retailers during the coronavirus pandemic.

I am particularly concerned to hear that individuals are not reporting retail crime, as they accept it as part of their job or because they do not have confidence in the response they will receive when they do. This must change: the Government expects all crimes to be reported to the police and for them to be investigated accordingly. It

is unacceptable that people who have been the victim of crime either do not have the confidence of their local police force, or else are dissuaded from reporting crimes committed against them by their employers.

I am also keen to improve the criminal justice system response to crimes against shop staff and ensure that victims feel heard and supported. To achieve this, we must ensure that the means and mechanisms for reporting such crimes, are consistent and that the full range of criminal justice outcomes are effectively utilised. This requires Government, businesses, the police and other partners to work together to tackle these issues.

I look forward to seeing the impact of this work.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kit Malthouse', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kit Malthouse MP
Minister for Crime and Policing

1. Background

1. On 5 April 2019, the Government launched a Call for Evidence on the issue of violence and abuse against shop staff. The Call for Evidence was issued following debates during the passage of the Offensive Weapons Act 2019, specifically in relation to the issue as to whether an offence of assaulting a member of shop staff should be created. The model for such an offence was that created under the Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act 2018. Those in favour of the introduction of a new offence argued that shop staff were often at the forefront of efforts to enforce the law. Although the debate took place within the context of the creation of a new offence of selling a corrosive substance to an individual under the age of 18, the argument for introducing an offence of assaulting a shop worker has potential application to the activity shop workers carry out in enforcing restrictions on a range of age-restricted goods. The Call for Evidence closed on 28 June 2019 and invited comments from members of the public, those working in the sector, businesses, the police and other interested parties.
2. The aim of the Call for Evidence was to enable the Government to understand the true scale of the issue of violence and abuse toward shop staff, the measures which may help prevent these crimes and the extent to which existing legislation is being used to tackle them, and to identify examples of good practice.
3. It focused on violence and abuse toward all staff working within a retail setting (including, for example, those working in retail outlets at train stations, town centres and shopping centres) perpetrated by members of the public. Although the issue of violence and assaults committed against those at work extends beyond shop staff and can affect a range of people providing a service to the public, the main focus of this Call for Evidence was incidents which occur in a retail setting, reflecting the reports of increased incidents towards shop staff in recent years.
4. The Call for Evidence sought information in response to 22 questions against four areas:
 - a) prevalence and data;
 - b) prevention and support;
 - c) enforcement and the criminal justice system; and
 - d) best practice.

This response to the Call for Evidence summarises the responses against each of the four areas. A list of respondents is included at Annex A.

2. Summary of responses

5. The Home Office received a total of 800 main responses, although some of these were informed by wider consultation, including with members of particular organisations and other interested parties. We estimate that a total of nearly 3,500 individuals, businesses and other organisations, such as charities and trade bodies, engaged in the Call for Evidence to some extent. In addition, some respondents provided anonymised logs and newspaper articles detailing specific incidents involving shop workers, which ranged from verbal threats to armed robbery. These incidents took place in a range of areas and across a range of locations, including retail parks and petrol station convenience stores.
6. The responses from the Call for Evidence fall under three main themes: -
 - a) **The level and extent of abuse faced by those working in the sector.** The majority of respondents believed violence and abuse toward shop staff has increased in recent years. Respondents believed the increase was due to: -
 - an increase in shop theft and greater willingness among offenders to use violence and abuse when challenged by staff;
 - an increase in drug and alcohol abuse among offenders; and,
 - a decline in the number of security guards working at premises.Many respondents also stated that they had experienced threats and assaults where a sharp object was involved.
 - b) **A loss of trust in the response to these offences, by the police, the wider CJS and employers.** A significant number of respondents said they did not report incidents to the police. Reasons for not reporting incidents to the police included: -
 - a lack of response from the police to a previous incident;
 - employers discouraging their workforce reporting incidents;
 - incidents not being considered serious enough to be reported to the police by both employees and employers; and,
 - a general sense that abuse was 'part of the job'.
 - c) **An inadequate response from the Criminal Justice System.** While the principal issue for many was the need to create a new offence, this was not the only issue raised by respondents. Other issues raised included:
 - concern about whether the civil tools under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2014 were sufficient to tackle harassment, or behaviour capable of causing alarm and distress and prevent reoffending;
 - a lack of understanding of how, or opportunity for, victims to explain how they have been affected by crimes committed against them either through a Victim Personal Statement or Business Impact Statement; and,

- a belief that victims did not feel that they were able to gain justice for crimes committed against them.

3. Section One: Prevalence and Data

7. Section one of the Call for Evidence sought information to help address gaps in our understanding of the problem and to build a more accurate picture of the nature of violence and abuse toward staff. Respondents were encouraged to focus on information relating to incidents occurring in England and Wales.
8. Section one sought information in response to five main questions. Those questions focused on: the scale of the problem; the nature of the problem; the impact of geographical location; how organisations record incidents; and the potential impact on staff.

Summary of responses

a) The scale of the problem

9. The majority of respondents believed that violence and abuse towards shop staff had increased in recent years. The most common reason given for the increase was due to an increase in the willingness of individuals to resort to violence, particularly when challenged over shoplifting or suspected shoplifting. Respondents reported that shoplifters were more determined to steal items, potentially as a result of drug and/ or alcohol dependency, and, as a result, were more prone to attack shop workers if they were caught.
10. Respondents felt that there was a lack of deterrent to those intent on committing crimes against business. A number of reasons were advanced as to why this may be the case, including increased pressure on a smaller police force, and a slow, or on occasion, non-existent police response to reports of crimes committed against businesses. Respondents were also concerned that police statements in the media about the level of priority that would be given to crimes committed against business created an environment in which offenders faced fewer risks. Respondents were also concerned that the changes introduced by the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act, 2014, in which the police were given powers to prosecute offences of shoplifting where the total value of goods stolen was less than £200 had given the impression that such crimes would no longer be investigated by the police.
11. In addition, respondents also believed that the increase in violence and assaults was part of a wider problem relating to the standing of shop staff. Some respondents suggested that the view that 'the customer was always right' had created an environment in which some customers were less respectful towards shop workers than they had been in the past. Respondents also suggested that managers were also less prepared to challenge unacceptable behaviour by customers. Respondents highlighted that customer disagreements, such as those arising owing to waiting times to

be served, as well as issues relating to refunds and returns, also contributed to violence and abuse.

b) The nature of the problem

12. Respondents gave a large number of examples of the types of behaviour they faced at work. The most commonly cited instances were violence or abuse that arose in the context of preventing shop theft. Other commonly cited issues included attacks, or threat of attack, involving a weapon.
13. Respondents also provided evidence of incidents where assault and/or injury had occurred in the context of refusing to serve a customer, either because they were under age, or were drunk.
14. Respondents also provided information about a wide range of other types of behaviour and incidents to which they were subject;
 - Anti-social behaviour, typically committed by young people;
 - Organised criminal activity by gangs or groups of individuals;
 - Racial abuse;
 - Armed robberies;
 - Criminal damage;
 - Sexual harassment;
 - Spitting;
 - Biting; and,
 - Acts of violence, or threats to commit acts of violence, including use of, or threats to use, a weapon;

c) The impact of geography

15. Despite over half of respondents agreeing that this issue affected all their sites equally, several respondents went on to state that urban areas and city centres were more likely to be affected than rural areas. Respondents linked this to motivation for crime being different in urban high streets, with drug and alcohol addiction often a factor.
16. Respondents linked violence and abuse occurring in rural areas to slower police response times and a lack of visible police presence. Some respondents suggested that there were differences in the offences committed against shop workers depending on whether they worked in urban or rural areas, with those working in urban areas more likely to experience violence, with those working in rural areas more likely to be subject to verbal abuse, including racial abuse.

d) Issues relating to the way in which organisations record violence and abuse

17. A common theme throughout the responses was a lack of support shop workers received from their employer. Individuals reported being told 'to get on with the job' after reporting instances of verbal abuse and a culture in which managers tended to side with customers rather than employees,

potentially as a result of believing that the customer 'is always right'. Some respondents also felt that managers tended to focus on preserving the reputation of the store and did not always challenge unacceptable behaviour by customers.

18. The lack of support from managers also contributed to a lack of reporting by employees. Other factors as to why incidents had not been reported included a lack of time, as well as a lack of police response, with some respondents feeling that if the police did not respond positively to an incident, then it was unlikely that managers would do so.
19. When incidents were recorded, other than calling 999 or 101, they were done so in a variety of ways, which included recordings made by CCTV, reports given to health and safety or HR, a paper log held by businesses, a call or email to head office or central security department or an entry on a computer system.

e) The impact of violence and abuse on shop workers

20. Over half of respondents listed significant financial implications as impacts of violence and abuse for their organisation. This included a direct result of stock loss, investment required in improving security and preventative tools and measures, high staff turnover or staff needing to take leave following incidents, as well as reputational damage to the organisation affecting business.
21. The emotional impact on staff, particularly on their health and wellbeing, were also listed as key impacts as a result of violence and abuse, with staff needing to take time away from work, seek counselling or feeling afraid and anxious to come to work.

4. Section Two: Prevention and Support

22. Section two of the Call for Evidence sought information to aid understanding of how incidents can be prevented, including in relation to the training and support provided to staff.
23. Section two sought information in response to three questions. Those questions focused on preventative measures that businesses had used or had considered adopting; suggestions of any non-legislative solutions the Government/ businesses/ the police/ others could put in place to raise awareness; and information about any training/ guidance/ support provided to staff on how to handle potential or actual incidents of violence and abuse.

Summary of responses

24. Respondents listed several preventative measures which they used, including CCTV, locked cigarette display cases, tagging items, and investment in drop safes. Some organisations also referred to data sharing agreements, either with the police or with local Business Improvement Districts supporting local crime prevention initiatives.
25. Some examples of staff training were provided, particularly on security, customer service, and conflict resolution, particularly in relation to dealing with customers who were either drunk or had taken drugs.
26. In-house training was provided in some instances, although often focused on conflict management and avoiding confrontation. Some respondents were not aware of or had not received training or guidance from their employer, which contributed further to the sense among respondents that workers were expected to tolerate abuse.
27. There were a variety of measures suggested for Government/ businesses/ the police to implement in response to the issue of violence and abuse towards shop workers. For Government, these included investment in the police or other public services; for employers, suggestions included increased employment of security staff, better and more visible security measures inside premises and an end to lone-working in stores. Given the background to the Call for Evidence, several respondents also called for changes to the law to create a more effective deterrent to those who may assault or abuse shop workers.

5. Section Three: Enforcement and the Criminal Justice System

28. Section three of the Call for Evidence sought information to help develop the Government's understanding of the reporting of incidents, application of the current legislative framework, and response by the police and wider criminal justice system to enable Government to understand whether there are any gaps in current legislation and to consider the case for reform.
29. Section three sought information in response to eleven main questions. Those questions focused on whether victims had reported incidents to the police and their experience of dealing with the criminal justice system; the barriers to reporting incidents; and whether individuals, or businesses, had been given an opportunity to highlight the impact of crime. The questions also sought information about the way in which violence or abuse against shop workers was dealt with under existing legislation, including the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

Summary of responses

30. The majority of shop staff who responded said they had been the victim of violence and abuse. A majority of this group said that they had reported the incident to their manager or supervisor.
31. Of the respondents who had reported incidents of violence or abuse, more than half were not happy with the response they received. As has been detailed above, there was a general belief that the police response was insufficient which led to a lack of willingness on the part of managers to act. As a result, shop workers would see offenders, including repeat offenders, return to stores where they had previously been involved in incidents against staff. Returning offenders led some respondents working in the sector to conclude that the rights of the customer was of greater concern for managers and supervisors than the welfare of their staff. The return of offenders deterred individuals from making future reports because they did not believe their reports would be acted upon.
32. Some respondents provided details of their experience of engaging with the criminal justice system. Some reported being advised by police not to report incidents of petty theft as courts would not deal with such incidents. Where this had happened, respondents said this had deterred them from reporting further incidents. Some businesses also reported being concerned about the potential impact of reporting incidents to the police, in particular those with alcohol licences were concerned that regular reporting of incidents at or near to their business may lead to their licence being reviewed.
33. However, under half of respondents did not report the incident due to lack of evidence, or an acceptance of abuse as part of the job. Some respondents also reported a fear that they would not be taken seriously by their managers or

supervisors or, in some extreme cases, would themselves be subject of punitive action by their employer as reporting incidents would cause reputational damage to the organisation. In such extreme cases, it was not made clear whether the incident in question was an assault or another form of abuse.

34. Respondents also indicated that they did not feel they were given sufficient opportunity to raise the impact of any incidents once they had reported them. This was true of both individual victims, with over half of respondents said that they were not offered an opportunity to make a victim impact statement, and businesses, where many respondents said that they were unaware of Business Impact Statements.
35. Over half of respondents were aware of powers under the Anti-Social Crime and Policing Act 2014 that could be applied to deal with offenders. However, they did not feel that the powers were adequate to deal with some of the issues they, or their employees, were facing.

6. Section Four: Best Practice

36. The final section of the Call for Evidence invited respondents to share good or best practice to address these incidents. Good practice was sought to help establish what works, and to consider potential non-legislative solutions.

Summary of responses

37. The most commonly cited example of good practice was partnership working between the police and businesses, such as through initiatives like Pubwatch or Shopwatch. Other examples included work between the police and a company specialising in technological innovation in security, including CCTV, which had resulted in approximately 150 arrests for 1,500 individual offences. Where prosecutions had followed, there had been a 100% conviction rate.

38. Respondents also highlighted the National Business Crime Centre as a valuable source of information, best practice guidance and contact point for the business community to raise their concerns about retail crime and violence.

39. Finally, some respondents also referred to National Business Crime Solutions, a membership organisation providing a means for retailers to share information about active offenders so that preventative equipment could be installed, or staff be made aware of risks to their business. One example of the work that National Business Crime Solutions has carried out for its members was taking out a civil injunction against a number of repeat and violent offenders for a minimum of two years, preventing those offenders from causing further damage to businesses.

7. Government Response

40. The Government recognises that the violence and abuse shop workers face can have a significant impact, not only physically but mentally and emotionally. The Call for Evidence was the first step in developing a better understanding of the problem to help inform the development of an effective response. The Call for Evidence generated a high level of interest and the Government would like to thank all those who took part. The evidence and comments received has been invaluable in developing a stronger understanding of the issue. Whilst a clearer picture is emerging, this is only the beginning of a process, and an ongoing programme of work is needed to ensure we develop and deliver an evidence-based response to these crimes.
41. The Call for Evidence took place in the context of a debate on whether the law should be changed to create a new offence of assaulting a shop worker, along the lines of the offence of assaulting an emergency services worker created by the Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act 2018. Those in favour of a new offence suggested it is required to deter potential offenders and ensure an effective criminal justice response to these crimes when they occur. Whilst the Government recognises the motivations behind this suggestion, it does not consider that the case is yet made out for a change in the law.
42. When making sentencing decisions the courts must follow any relevant sentencing guidelines, produced by the independent Sentencing Council. The *Overarching Principles: Seriousness Guideline and Assault Guideline*, requires the court to treat the fact that an offence was committed against those working in the public sector or providing a service to the public as an aggravating factor, making the offence more serious. The Council produced an expanded explanation in 2019 which made clear that this factor “applies whether the victim is a public or private employee or acting in a voluntary capacity”. The Sentencing Council also published interim guidance for sentencers in April 2020, in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. The interim guidance clarifies that, when sentencing common assault offences involving threats or activity relating to transmission of Covid-19 (for example, assaults involving spitting or coughing), courts should treat this as an aggravating feature of the offence. The Sentencing Council is reviewing its guidelines on assault and a consultation on a revised guideline is underway. With regards the existing legislation that may be applied to violence and abuse committed against shop workers, the Government considers this action to be sufficient.
43. In addition, and as is set out in the sections above, respondents to the Call for Evidence reported a general lack of faith in the way in which these crimes were dealt with, either by the police or their employer. Too often, the response to shop workers was inadequate, leading to individuals deciding not to report further incidents. The Government believes that this issue is one that requires more urgent action than it does a change in the law.

44. To address the issues raised by the responses to the Call for Evidence, the Government will take forward a programme of work that will address each of the three themes set out at paragraph 6 of this response. In taking forward that work the Government will aim to: -

- a. deepen its understanding and address the drivers of violence and assault against shop worker;
- b. send a clear message that such crimes are not tolerated and should be recorded whenever and wherever they take place; and,
- c. provide effective support to those shop workers who are the victims of violence and abuse.

a) Deepen the Government's understanding and address the drivers of violence and assault against shop worker.

45. Feedback from respondents suggested that drugs may play a significant role in the abuse suffered by shop staff. In particular, respondents suggested that those using drugs may be more prepared to use violence when challenged over shop theft. To deliver an effective response, it is important for us to build a better understanding of what role drugs, as well as alcohol and other factors, play in driving violence and abuse towards shop workers. We will therefore work closely with members of the National Retail Crime Steering Group to further develop the evidence base.

46. The Government recognises that drugs play a significant role in a large number of crimes that are committed. That is why the Home Office commissioned a major independent review, led by Dame Carol Black, to examine the ways in which drugs are fuelling serious violence, the harm that they cause and the best ways to prevent drug-taking. The findings of the review were published on 27 February¹. A further review, commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Care, led by Dame Carol Black will focus on prevention, treatment and recovery. It will build on Dame Carol's work to ensure vulnerable people with substance misuse problems get the support they need to recover and turn their lives around. It will look at treatment in the community and in prison, and how treatment services work with wider services that enable a person with a drug dependency to achieve and sustain recovery, including mental health, housing, employment, and the criminal justice system.

47. In addition, there is valuable work being led by members of the NRCSG looking at opportunities around targeted drug treatment to try and address the needs of prolific offenders. The Government will work closely with those members over the coming year to better understand the impact of the work they do to address the needs of prolific offenders and, if successful, how they may be replicated elsewhere in the country.

b) Send a clear message that such crimes are not tolerated and should be recorded whenever and wherever they take place

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-drugs-phase-one-report>

48. A significant number of respondents said they did not report incidents to the police. The Government is clear that these crimes, when they take place, should be reported to the police so that they can be investigated appropriately.
49. So that shop workers who are the victims of violence or abuse feel confident to come forward and report incidents to either the police or their employer, the Government will work with the NRSCG to develop communications for both employees and employers to make clear that violence and abuse of shop workers is not tolerated. We will take account of best practice from across different sectors and make use of the NRSCG's membership to develop and test messaging before supporting any national roll-out.
50. The Government is aware of good practice, both encouraging staff to report incidents, as well as providing them with the support they need to deal with the impact of violence and abuse. Working with partners through the NRCSG, the Government will develop a best practice guide that aims to support staff in reporting these crimes when they occur to ensure that a suitable response can be delivered.
51. In addition, the Government will work with the NRSCG and the National Business Crime Centre to look at barriers to effective data sharing between businesses and the police to ensure that information can be used to better understand the problem, including premises selling alcohol not feeling disadvantaged, particularly in relation to tracking prolific offenders.
52. Finally, it is vital that we do not create inadvertent barriers to reporting so we will work with the NRCSG to understand what may be discouraging business from reporting crimes.

c) Provide effective support to those shop workers who are the victims of violence and abuse

53. One of the key reasons given for underreporting was a sense that there would not be a suitable criminal justice response. There already exists a wide range of offences that a person may be charged with that could be committed against a shop worker. These include, for example, theft, burglary and assault, which have different maximum penalties, as set by Parliament, to reflect the seriousness of the offences. These include life imprisonment for the most serious assault offences or aggravated burglary.

Police response to abuse and violence towards shopworkers

54. It is for Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners, as operational leaders and elected local representatives, to decide how best to respond to individual crimes and local crime priorities. To help ensure that the police have the resources they need, the Government is recruiting 20,000 officers over the next three years. £750 million will be provided to support forces to recruit 6,000 additional officers by the end of March 2021 across all 43 forces in England and Wales as part of an unprecedented drive to increase their ranks. In addition, the Crown Prosecution Service is receiving an extra £85 million to ensure the criminal justice system can support the work of these extra officers.

55. However, as the responses to the Call for Evidence indicate, reporting levels are low and it may be that local prioritisation does not reflect the level of local need sufficiently. The Crime and Policing Minister will therefore write to all PCCs and Chief Constables highlighting this issue and asking them to continue to work closely with local businesses to understand the scale of the issue locally and to develop suitable responses to it.
56. Respondents raised concerns about the effectiveness of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. Of particular concern is s176 of the Act, the shoplifting of goods valued up to £200 is a summary offence unless the defendant, if an adult, elects to be tried in the Crown Court. Where a summary offence is committed, the case can be handled as a police-led prosecution. Some respondents considered that this change in the law had created the impression among offenders that shoplifting, where the value of goods stolen is less than £200, would not be dealt with by the police. Some respondents also felt that this was one of the contributory factors behind increased brazenness among offenders.
57. Shoplifting offences involving the theft of goods worth up to £200 can, and should, still be pursued as a criminal offence by the police. S176 has no bearing on the ability of the Crown Prosecution Service to prosecute a person for theft from a shop, or on the courts' powers to punish offenders. An offender convicted of theft in the Magistrates' Court can still face a penalty of up to six months' imprisonment for a single offence.
58. To help ensure that this is understood, the Crime and Policing Minister will write to PCCs and Chief Constables setting out that the theft of goods valued up to £200 from a shop should be prosecuted as a criminal offence and therefore should not constrain the ability of the police to arrest or prosecute someone in the way they feel is most appropriate.
59. The Government will also look at the issue on the effectiveness of s176 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing 2014 Act as part of the post-legislative scrutiny of the Act.

Sentencing

60. This Government is serious about fighting crime and protecting the public from its devastating consequences. That is why in the Queen's Speech we announced new sentencing laws. The legislation will include proposals targeted at the most serious offenders to ensure their punishment reflects the severity of their crime.
61. We know that prolific offenders, including shoplifters, generally have multiple and complex needs which are linked to their offending behaviour. The legislation will therefore also contain proposals for community penalties that offer an appropriate level of punishment, so that the public can have confidence in them, while tackling the underlying drivers of offending and addressing issues such as mental health or drug or alcohol addiction.
62. The Government intends to publish a White Paper ahead of sentencing legislation. This will include proposals for tougher community sentences.

Supporting Victims

63. The responses to the Call for Evidence also highlight a sense that shop workers who are the victims of crime feel there are a lack of opportunities for them to explain its impact. The Government has published guidance on both the Victim Personal Statement, which gives victims an opportunity to explain how the crime has affected them, physically, emotionally, psychologically, financially or in any other way, and on the use of Impact Statements for Business, which provide victims with the opportunity to tell the courts about the impact a crime has had on their business, including any financial and reputational implications.
64. To ensure these are being effectively used, the Crime and Policing Minister will write to all Chief Constables reminding them of the need for their officers to provide victims the chance to use either or both these impact statements. This will ensure criminal justice agencies use the information to make a sound judgement on what action should be taken against an offender, as well as make decisions on the support and services that victims may need.
65. More widely, the Government is taking steps to improve support for all victims of crime, including shop workers. It is consulting on a revised Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (Victims' Code) to address its complexity, accessibility and update victims' rights so that they are more reflective of their needs.
66. A consultation on a Victims' Law, guaranteeing victims' rights, will follow as soon as possible after the consultation on the Victims' Code. The Government will consider legislating to ensure that where agencies have failed to provide victims with their entitlements, they are held to account. The law will also strengthen the powers of the Victims' Commissioner, already a powerful voice for victims.
67. It is clear that there is still work to do but it is also evident that there is significant support from those who responded to the consultation, and those they represent and who are willing to do more to address the issues the response to the Call for Evidence raised. The Government is committed to working with the sector to ensure that those issues are addressed, so that shop workers feel safe in their workplaces, that their businesses thrive and that the communities they serve feel safe.

Annex A – Summary of actions

1. The Government will work closely with members of the National Retail Crime Steering Group to further develop the evidence base regarding the role drugs, as well as alcohol and other factors, play in driving violence and abuse towards shop workers (paragraph 45).
2. The Government will work closely with members of the NRCSG over the coming year to better understand the impact of the work they do to address the needs of prolific offenders and, if successful, how it may be replicated elsewhere in the country (paragraph 47).
3. Government will work with the NRSCG to develop communications for both employees and employers to make clear that violence and abuse of shop workers is not tolerated. We will take account of best practice from across different sectors and make use of the NRSCG's membership to develop and test messaging before supporting any national roll-out (paragraph 49).
4. The Government, working with members of the NRCSG, will develop a best practice guide that aims to support staff in reporting these crimes when they occur to ensure that a suitable response can be delivered (paragraph 50).
5. The Government will work with the NRSCG and the National Business Crime Centre to look at barriers to effective data sharing between businesses and the police to ensure that information can be used to better understand the problem, including premises selling alcohol not feeling disadvantaged, particularly in relation to tracking prolific offenders (paragraph 51).
6. The Government will work with the NRCSG to understand what may be discouraging business from reporting crimes (paragraph 52).
7. The Crime and Policing Minister will write to all PCCs and Chief Constables highlighting the issue of violence and abuse towards shop staff and asking them to continue to work closely with local businesses to understand the scale of the issue locally and to develop suitable responses to it (paragraph 55).
8. The Crime and Policing Minister will write to PCCs and Chief Constables setting out that the theft of goods valued up to £200 from a shop should be prosecuted as a criminal offence and therefore should not constrain the ability of the police to arrest or prosecute someone in the way they feel is most appropriate (paragraph 58)
9. The Government will also look at the issue of the effectiveness of s176 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing 2014 Act as part of the post-legislative scrutiny of the Act (paragraph 59).
10. The Government will introduce legislation for community penalties that offer an appropriate level of punishment, so that the public can have confidence in them, while tackling the underlying drivers of offending and addressing issues such as mental health or drug or alcohol addiction (paragraph 61).

11. The Government intends to publish a White Paper ahead of sentencing legislation, which will include proposals for tougher community sentences (paragraph 62).
12. The Crime and Policing Minister will write to all Chief Constables reminding them of the need for their officers to provide victims the chance to use either or both these impact statements (paragraph 64).
13. The Government will consider legislating to ensure that where agencies have failed to provide victims with their entitlements, they are held to account. The law will also strengthen the powers of the Victims' Commissioner, already a powerful voice for victims (paragraph 66).

Annex B – List of respondents

Age Check Certification Scheme

Association of Convenience Stores Ltd

British Beer and Pub Association

British Retail Consortium

CCTV Inspectorate

Charity Retail Association

City, University of London

Convenience Stores

Cooperative

Heart of London Business Alliance

Janine Green ASB

JD fashion group plc.

National Association of Business Crime Partnerships

National Federation of Independent Retailers

National Pubwatch

One Stop Stores Limited

Pharmacists' Defence Association

Savills

Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers

UNISON

Responses were also received from the general public both directly or through organisations they are a member of.



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