



Retail Crime Strategy

VERSION 1.0 - 2025

Introduction

Surrey Police is committed to tackling retail crime and making town centres safer for everyone.

Retail is an essential part of daily life, and the community would struggle to function effectively without it. Given its diverse nature, retail crime impacts many people in various ways and requires a collective effort to address. From frontline workers who face violence and abuse, and customers who feel unsafe after witnessing such incidents, to business owners whose financial stability is at risk, the effects of retail crime are far-reaching. Moreover, it undermines public confidence in our ability to tackle an issue so closely tied to everyday life.

Over the past 12 months, significant strides have been made in addressing retail crime in Surrey through *Our Plan*. This strategy aims to build on that progress and drive future success in achieving key objectives.

This plan is aligned with the NPCC Retail Plan, ensuring a balance between the need for timely response and the national framework addressing threat, harm, and risk across policing. All appropriate avenues will be pursued to identify offenders, collect evidence, recover stolen property, and ensure witnesses are located and interviewed.

Objectives

The objectives of this strategy are aligned with *Our Plan*, the National Retail Crime Action Plan, and the Government-led Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee. They outline how we will collaborate both within the organisation and with external partners to effectively address retail crime.

Our Plan Missions:

We Prevent Crime and Solve Problems

We investigate Crime Thoroughly

We pursue criminals relentlessly

We provide outstanding victim and witness care

We respond promptly and according to need

Strategy objectives:

- **Attending where there is a call for service**

Surrey Police will use THRIVE (Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigation, Vulnerability, Engagement) to assess all calls for service to assist with making deployment decisions. The opportunity of investigative lines of enquiry should be included in the decision to deploy as per the I in THRIVE. If further information comes to light which is brought to our attention, we will re-THRIVE to assess deployment. It is important for retailers to update us if further information comes to light.

However, in line with nationally agreed deployment for retail crime we prioritise as follows:

1. Where violence has been used.
2. Where an offender has been detained (for example, by store security) police will attend the scene with urgency and repeat / prolific or juvenile offenders will be treated with elevated priority. All police attendance will be subject to a THRIVE risk assessment (Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigation, Vulnerability, Engagement)
3. Where evidence needs to be promptly secured which can only be done in person by police personnel e.g., securing forensic evidence.

- **Follow Reasonable Lines of Enquiry (reported or where officers attend)**

This follows the Crime Management Framework and Op Falcon crime standards, to gather the evidence and arrest promptly, have closer supervision over investigation quality, and continually give victims the best service possible from us.

For example:

- Where there is CCTV (or other) footage, police will recover this and seek to use it as evidence.
- Where there are witnesses the individual will be interviewed.
- Where there are strong evidential and forensic opportunities the police will seek to obtain this and use it appropriately to build a case to prosecute.
- Where property is stolen with unique features police will seek to recover this and preserve evidence.

Retail establishments will need to provide evidence to support suitable lines of inquiry, provide digital evidence of the offence, where available and/or be able to upload evidence to Police systems to support prosecution.

Neighbourhood officers, responsible for local policing and criminal investigations, will be allocated crimes through the Force allocation policy, for non-dynamic deployment. They must comply with the above and look to ensure any identified pattern, series or trend in reporting is reviewed and considered to be raised for a problem-solving approach to the issues.

As a reminder, the 'Four Good Things' that make the biggest difference in getting positive outcomes for our victims are:

- **Early victim statement.** We need to take the victim statement at the earliest opportunity – if we don't, the likelihood of taking one at all drops significantly.
- **Arrest the suspect at the first opportunity** or at least within 48 hours. Again, if we don't the likelihood is they are not arrested at all, and momentum is lost.
- **Quality investigation plan recorded.** Using the new template, record the investigation plan – what are the reasonable lines of enquiry and what is the plan for completing them?
- **Meaningful initial supervisory review.** Within 48 hours the supervisor should complete a quality review (on the template), making sure the above has been done. Where it hasn't been done, they should understand and explain the delays.

- **Targeting Repeat Offenders**

There are offenders throughout the county who are responsible for the majority of retail crime. A proactive approach to identifying and targeting resources towards these individuals will significantly help in preventing retail crime. Arresting suspects, clear ownership, a problem-solving approach, and the use of ancillary orders will play a central role in this effort. Focused days of action will specifically target these offenders, creating a strong response to their criminal activity, while sharing insights and best practices to improve overall effectiveness.

Our Safer Neighbourhood Teams will collaborate with retailers to identify the offenders who cause the most harm and create joint action plans to address their criminal behaviour. The use of ancillary orders, such as Community Protection Notices and Criminal Behaviour Orders, will be considered. We will also work alongside other agencies to address repeat offenders, including making referrals for drug, alcohol, and mental health support. Additionally, business and victim impact statements will be utilised to strengthen prosecutions.

Surrey Police will consider 'Focussed Deterrence' - a crime prevention strategy that combines deterrence (clear communication of consequences and swift enforcement) with support services and community engagement to address violent offending. It focuses on identifying and supporting individuals or groups involved in violence to encourage them to desist from their behaviour.

The benefits include:

- **Reduced Violence:** Focused deterrence has been shown to reduce violence in some contexts, particularly when targeting specific types of crime or violent groups.
- **Improved Police-Community Relations:** By engaging with the community, focused deterrence can help build trust and improve police-community relations.
- **Addressing Root Causes:** By providing support services, focused deterrence can help individuals address the underlying issues that may contribute to their involvement in violence.
- **Protecting Repeat Locations, Hot Spot Patrolling and Problem Solving**

In 2024, 1 in 7 shop theft offences in Surrey occurred at one of the top 10 repeat locations. By utilising data and engaging with the community, we will identify these high-risk locations and implement a targeted, partnership-based approach to reduce offences. Where necessary, problem-solving efforts will be carried out in collaboration with the location and relevant partners. Focused days of action will prioritise repeat locations and areas where retailers need the most support, with insights and best practices shared to enhance our collective efforts.

The Force provides crime prevention guidance to retailers through the Force website consistent with national advice.

The Force Designing Out Crime Officers (DOCOs) will be involved in the review and will provide advice to planning authorities on new applications linked to retail developments, as well as change of use applications, this to ensure that any potential negative impacts that these applications may have on local communities are raised and objections are submitted before any potential issues or problems manifest themselves.

The Force will develop good practice and what works best approaches, from reviewing local, regional and national good practice to target retail crime.

Borough Inspectors will own local problem solving around crime prevention, and take a 4Ps (Prepare, Prevent, Pursue and Protect) approach to addressing the issues, once the scanning and analysis phase of SARA has identified the hotspot requiring focus and intervention.

- **Organised Retail Crime**

A collaborative approach to organised retail crime takes place under Op Opal, and Surrey Police will support this and work with others to target organised retail crime in the county.

Opal is the National Intelligence Unit for Serious and Organised Acquisitive Crime.

Organised crime is defined as planned and co-ordinated criminal behaviour and conduct by people working together on a continuing basis. The Force will support the national initiative called Project Pegasus, which is a partnership between business and policing improving the way that retailers can share intelligence to allow for better identification and response to organised retail crime gangs. This operates through the National Intelligence Model and allow for the MoRiLE scoring of identified gangs and forces to be appropriately tasked in response to risk.

Locally, when suspects for organised retail crime are identified, consideration should be made to MoRiLE scoring and 4P plans created and driven through divisional TTCGs to have grip and focus.

- **Collaboration with retailers, Business Improvement Districts and Business Crime Reduction Partnerships**

Crime prevention is a core responsibility for all retailers, as it is for policing in the wider community. Retailers are required to provide reasonable and effective crime prevention measures to deliver prevention, safeguarding and security.

We will support and engage where required, including making the best use of technology, training opportunities and effectively communicating with retailers to give them confidence in our policing service.

Key messages

- We know shoplifting has a significant impact on businesses and can leave shop staff feeling fearful and vulnerable. We aim to approach every investigation with care and service at the forefront of our minds.
- It is a priority for us to robustly pursue any offenders and get them before the courts. In the last year, Surrey Police has achieved a four-fold increase in the number of charges for shoplifting county-wide, amounting to more than 800 cases.
- Work is continuing to ensure we provide a robust response to shoplifting, which includes responding to it in the most appropriate manner and investigating it thoroughly to bring offenders to justice. We continue to work with business owners to help prevent thefts.

- We will continue to tackle shoplifting by following all reasonable lines of enquiry, including gathering victim and witness statements, conducting local CCTV enquiries, utilising our own social media channels to identify suspects and appeal for information, and working with neighbouring forces.
- Our neighbourhood teams will be visiting local retailers during proactive patrols, identifying repeat locations and suspects. We also carry out dedicated days of action against shoplifting, providing additional advice and reassurance to local communities, and working with businesses to review their security measures.
- We know that incidents often go unreported. We encourage businesses to always report crimes to us via our reporting tools. If anyone notices suspicious activity, any digital media should be uploaded to our dedicated Suspicious Activity Portal, this is not a reporting tool but helps us to build an information and intelligence picture.

Toolkit *(to review and refresh annually)*

College of Policing- [Policing business crime](#) | [College of Policing](#)

NBCC [NBCC National Business Crime Centre](#)

NBCC [Business Support \(nbcc.police.uk\)](#) includes Reporting a Crime, Shop Kind, Shop Worker videos, Knife guidance, SaBA days

NBCC [Crime Prevention \(nbcc.police.uk\)](#) includes Cyber & Fraud, Business security, Safeguarding, Shop worker safety, Crime prevention guides, ASB

[Partnerships \(nbcc.police.uk\)](#) Partners, BCRPs, Data sharing, Safe Spaces

[Impact Statements for business \(nbcc.police.uk\)](#) Impact statements for business