

Business and Retail Crime Strategy 2026-2031



**Cheshire
Constabulary**

Foreword

Tackling business and retail crime is essential for maintaining economic stability, public safety, and consumer confidence. When businesses are targeted, they face financial losses that can lead to higher prices, reduced investment, and even closure. This not only affects business owners but also harms employees and local communities that rely on these enterprises. Additionally, unchecked retail crime can fuel organised criminal networks and create an unsafe environment for workers and customers. Addressing such crime through stronger security measures, law enforcement, and partnership working helps to deter offenders and create a hostile environment for offenders to operate. By prioritising the reduction of business and retail crime, it encourages economic growth, job creation, and trust and safety in commercial environments. This, in turn, supports vibrant, resilient communities and a more robust Cheshire, Halton and Warrington economy.

What is business crime?

Business Crime is *“any criminal offence where a business, or person in the course of their employment, and because of that employment, is the victim”*. This includes offences committed against shops and those working within them, typically known as *“retail crime”*.

Business and retail crimes typically include:

- The theft of goods, typically referred to as shoplifting
- Violence, threats and abuse
- Burglary
- Robbery
- Fraud and Cyber Enabled Crime
- Criminal Damage

The Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee

We are committed to strengthening local policing in every community. A key component of the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee is improving confidence in local communities and taking visible action tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB) and increasing the safety of our town centres and high streets. This matters because town centres have experienced rising levels of retail and street crime, namely personal robbery, and theft from the person offences, as well as ASB. This criminality and disorder erode community confidence in policing, impacts feelings of safety in the public domain and can play a part in stifling local growth.

The Retail Crime Action Plan

We recognise that retail crime is an issue of serious concern to our communities. Retail crime has a real and significant impact across society, from those employed within the retail sector who experience violence and intimidation to the end consumer who experience increased prices because of offending and the loss it causes to businesses. We are committed to tackling business and retail crime in all its forms and are fully implementing the Retail Crime Action Plan which has informed our strategy.



nbcc.police.uk
Retail Crime Action Plan

Retail and Business Crime in Cheshire

Our vision is to ensure that Cheshire is a hostile place for criminals. This includes and will always include those that target our businesses and retailers and individuals who work within them.

We know that there are many root causes of retail and business crime.

We know that many crimes are committed by prolific and repeat offenders who steal to fund addictions to drugs and alcohol.

We know that many crimes are committed by organised criminal groups.

We know that shop workers and security staff who intervene are often subject to violence, intimidation and abuse.

We know that a significant proportion of these crimes go unreported.

Retailers report that retail crime remains a significant concern and cost to their businesses with over 1,600 incidents of violence an abuse each year, 118 physically violent assaults each day, and 13,000 incidents each year involving a weapon across the UK. Many businesses report losses from delivery theft as a major emerging concern with losses of over £100 million.*

(*Source, [BRC Retail Crime Survey 2026](#))



£5 billion spent by
retailers on crime
prevention
measures



Over 1,600
incidents of
violence per
day in the UK



Delivery theft
emerging as a
major concern

In 2025 Cheshire Constabulary recorded 5,367 offences of shoplifting. This was a slight reduction on 2024 when 6,369 offences were recorded. Between 2021 and 2025 over 25,000 shoplifting crimes were reported with increased rates of reporting year on year until a reduction in 2025.

Whilst recorded crimes have increased so too have the rates for which identified offenders are subject to positive outcomes with 37.1% of recorded shoplifting offences being brought to justice in 2025 versus 21.1% in 2021.



Working in Partnership

The issue of Business and Retail Crime is not one that can be tackled by police alone. Effective partnership working is key, and we work closely with a number of organisations across Cheshire including the Cheshire and North Wales Business Crime Reduction Partnership and the Cyber Resilience Centre for the North West. Local officers across Cheshire regularly engage with a number of Business Improvement Districts across the county. Business and Retail Crime is part of the safer town centres pillar for the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee (NPG) and this strategy is designed to support that.

Fraud and Cyber-Crime

Fraud and cyber-crime are a growing threat to all businesses and industries. Over four in ten businesses and three in ten charities in the United Kingdom report having experienced some kind of cyber-attack or security breach*. Any organisation connected to the internet can expect to be targeted by ever more sophisticated attacks seeking to steal valuable or confidential data or extract money. As online presence grows in an ever more connected world so too do the risks faced by businesses. Our Cyber Crime Team works to support investigations into cyber related offending, and we work with the Cyber Resilience Centre for the North West to help businesses in Cheshire secure themselves against cyber-crime.

(*Source, [Cyber Security Breaches Survey 2025](#))



nwcrc.co.uk
North West Cyber Resilience Centre

Organised Crime Groups

Businesses perceive that a significant amount of the crime they face is perpetrated by groups of organised criminal gangs systematically targeting multiple locations across the country*. We work with OPAL; the national intelligence unit focussed on serious organised acquisitive crime to share intelligence and coordinate our work to target organised criminals affecting businesses in Cheshire.

(*Source, *BRC Retail Crime Survey 2025*)



npcc.police.uk
Opal: Tackling Serious Organised Acquisitive Crime

Our approach

We are committed to delivering an effective and proportionate response to all reports of business and retail crime, working in collaboration with local and national partners to ensure that Cheshire is and remains a hostile place for criminals. We will work towards this goal by;

- Ensuring that we are **prepared** to deal with business and retail crime.
- Working with businesses, retailers and partners to **prevent** crime.
- Using our powers and resources wherever appropriate to **pursue** offenders.
- Working with our communities to **protect** them from crime.

Prepare

We will ensure that we are prepared to deal with business and retail crime in Cheshire, working with a range of partners to address the causes of business and retail crime by:

- Developing and maintaining connections with retailers and businesses in our communities including through Business Crime Reduction Partnerships and Business Improvement Districts.
- Working closely with the National Business Crime Centre and College of Policing to ensure that learning and best practice is quickly recognised and shared.
- Understanding national trends through OPAL and ensuring that these are consistently shared with local officers.
- Investing in new technology such as facial recognition, embedding its use in our daily practice.
- Ensuring our officers and staff are trained and equipped to deal with retail and business crime and are informed on issues and developments both nationally and in their communities.
- Continuously tracking our own performance to ensure a consistent and effective approach.

- Ensuring the investigation of Retail Crime is of the highest standards, supported by the evidence based guidance and approach contained within the College Of Policing authorised Professional Practice (APP) and Guidance for Policing Retail Crime
- Making use of evidence based approaches of best practice maintained by the College of Policing and contained with the What Works Centre for Crime Reduction

Prevent

We will work to make it difficult for offenders to operate in Cheshire, raising awareness across business and retail communities by:

- Ensuring that our business and retail communities have effective policing plans in place in support of the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee.
- Working in partnership with Business Crime Reduction Partnerships and Business Improvement Districts across Cheshire, establishing effective information sharing agreements with partners to target and disrupt offenders.
- Taking a problem solving approach, utilising Crime Prevention Officers and Designing Out Crime Officers to support businesses and retailers to proactively protect themselves.
- Making use of the powers available to us such as Criminal Behaviour Orders and Conditional Bail to target persistent offenders and prevent them from reoffending.
- Ensuring that seasonal crime trends are recognised and that proportionate resources are in place to effectively respond.
- Collating and acting on intelligence to target and disrupt offenders.

Pursue

We will work for victims, making effective use of our powers where appropriate to target offenders and bring them to justice by:

- Responding to reports of business and retail crime promptly, proportionately and effectively, taking into account the principles of Threat, Harm and Risk.
- Prioritising our attendance where violence has been used, an offender has been detained or where evidence needs be quickly secured and can only be done in person in line with the National Retail Crime Action Plan.

- Pursuing all reasonable lines of enquiry to identify suspects and bring them to justice.
- Ensuring that reports of crime are assigned appropriately to officers and teams with the right skills and resources, identifying opportunities to maximise positive justice outcomes.
- Making effective use of out of court disposals, civil orders and powers and existing and emerging legislation such as the Crime and Policing Act 2026 which creates a specific offence of assaulting a retail worker.

Protect

We will work to ensure that the business and retail community feel safe and able to engage with us by:

- Working with Business Crime Reduction Partnerships and Business Improvement Districts to understand the concerns of retailers and businesses.
- Ensuring that victims are referred to support services where appropriate.
- Ensuring that victims are kept up to date about their case.
- Ensuring that local officers and school engagement officers are working in communities to provide education and diversion away from crime.

How you can help

Businesses and retailers can help us to work together to tackle crime by reporting offences to us quickly and consistently. Incidents of violence, threats and abuse should always be reported. In reporting matters to us you help us to understand issues and patterns in our communities and give us the best chance to act. We ask that you assist us by remaining vigilant, reporting your concerns to us and making evidence available as quickly as possible. We have systems available to assist in providing us with CCTV evidence quickly and easily online. Whilst victims and witnesses of crime are sometimes needed at court this is not always the case and where attendance is needed support is available from Witness Care. Additional support for victims of crime is available from our Witness Care Officers in our dedicated service, Cheshire Cares.

How to report

You should not put yourself in danger.

In an emergency or where a crime is taking place always dial 999.

For less urgent matters call 101 or report online.



cheshire.police.uk
Report a crime

Information can also be reported anonymously through the independent charity Crimestoppers by calling 0800 555 111 or visiting their website.



crimestoppers-uk.org
Give information anonymously

Support and resources

Details of your local officers and information about your area can be found on our website.



cheshire.police.uk

What's happening in your area?

Support is available to victims of crime in Cheshire from the Police and Crime Commissioner's dedicated service, Cheshire Cares. Information about their service can be found online.



cheshire-pcc.gov.uk

Cheshire Cares



Guidance and support

A collection of guidance, support and engagement material can be accessed online by scanning the QR code or visiting

www.cheshire.police.uk/business-and-retail-crime/

Contact

Email: public.contact@cheshire.police.uk

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