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RETAIL CRIME TASKFORCE

MARCH 2026 - RETAILER BULLETIN



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Contact Us

We welcome any feedback you may have. For any non-urgent queries or to provide feedback on this bulletin, please contact us at:

SCDRetailCrimeTaskforce@scotland.police.uk

Welcome Message



PI Emma Wright

Emma Wright

Police Inspector | Retail Crime Taskforce

Welcome to our March 2026 Issue, which is our fifth publication, as we approach the end of our first year for the Retail Crime Taskforce (RCTF) and look forward to year two. As we reported in our last issue, the Taskforce has received confirmation of Scottish Government funding for the next three years and this issue will focus on some of our year one achievements, along with updates our plans for the year ahead.

Retail Crime has had a prominent space in the headlines over the past two months with both the Scottish Grocers Federation (SGF) and Scottish Retail Consortium (SRC) releasing their Annual Reports and highlighting the continued trends of rising

shop theft and offences against retail workers. We were pleased to see support for the RCTF from both organisations, with acknowledgement of our early achievements in starting to turn the tide on Retail Crime. Read on for more details concerning our attendance at the SGF Crime Seminar, for the launch of their Report and what the findings indicate has changed since last year.

The results of our RCTF Retailer Survey are also in. In this issue we bring you the headlines and report on what you told us was working and how we might improve. A big thank you to everyone who took time to complete the Survey!

In addition to engaging with you at the SGF Seminar, the Taskforce have been busy over the past two months, including updating the Retail Industry Leaders Group (RILG) and the National Business Crime Centre (NBCC) on our work to date. Retail Crime Leads for Police Forces in England and Wales were impressed with our progress and future plans for Direct Reporting of Retail Crime.

We also engaged with partners at the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit (SVRU) event in March, to mark 20 years of the SVRU approach and what “Unfinished Business” still lies ahead. This gave the Taskforce chance to learn more about how the Contextual Safeguarding approach can have real success to reduce youth violence and how we can develop this to reduce the involvement of young people in Retail Crime. Read more about work under Operation Dynos, our approach to stopping the exploitation of young people for the purpose of Retail Crime, in this issue.

March also bought engagement with partners from law enforcement, the third sector and industry across the UK, involved in tackling Serious and Organised Acquisitive Crime (SOAC) at the SOAC Conference 2026. It was a good opportunity to meet some of the retailers and security companies involved, along with recognising the parallels with the challenges in tackling Retail Crime and other forms of Acquisitive Crime. Similar challenges exist of limited resources to tackle the problem, alongside changing the attitude that acquisitive crime is victimless, as “losses will be covered by insurance”. Again, some interesting ideas taken from this, as to how we can work together more smartly to target Retail Crime as we move forward into year two and beyond.



SGF Crime Seminar and Annual Report 2025/26

On Thursday 12th February the RCTF were delighted to attend the SGF Crime Seminar 2026. DCI Jackie Knight and PI Emma Wright, joined an impressive line-up of speakers, including Siobhan Brown MSP, Minister for Victims and Community Safety, to tell retailers about the Taskforce approach and how it is delivering results. There was great audience participation and an opportunity for Retailers to engage with the RCTF Prevent and Protect Team on our exhibitor stand. Some useful connections were made, and we were able to help a number of retailers or take away their details to pass to Taskforce colleagues in their areas.



We have since had feedback from members of the SGF about how the presentation and team attendance, along with follow up work has made a positive difference to them.

The Seminar also saw the launch of the SGF Annual Crime report 2025/26, in which we were pleased to be able to submit an article giving information to Retailers on the Taskforce. Whilst there are still some concerning trends around Retail Crime, which were well highlighted at the Seminar and in the Report, we were pleased to see some positive changes in the statistics when compared to the 2024/25 Report (prior to the Taskforce formation). These results are highlighted below.

SGF Crime Survey Questions	2024/2025	2025/2026
Report that shoplifting has increased in the past year.	99.8%	54.8%
Report that shoplifting is a daily occurrence.	99.5%	99.6%
Report that police response times to shoplifting incidents are either unsatisfactory or significantly delayed.	96.6%	26.3%
Report they are unlikely or very unlikely to report shoplifting incidents to the police.	48.2%	10.9%



These results indicate that the number of retailers who feel shop theft has increased in the past year has halved and those who feel police response times to shop theft are unsatisfactory or significantly delayed have reduced by over two thirds. The results also show Retailers are far more likely to report shop theft with the number who would be unlikely or very unlikely reducing by almost three quarters. Whilst we know there is still a long way to go, this demonstrates the positive difference being seen in the past year, since the introduction of the Taskforce.

Spotlight on ShopWatch Scheme In Edinburgh



In April 2025, Police in Edinburgh worked alongside Essential Edinburgh to introduce a ShopWatch Radio Scheme. The scheme sees Retailers using radios in their stores to allow direct communication with other participating retailers, City of Edinburgh Council CCTV operators and some police officers working in the City Centre. Essential Edinburgh funded the radios, and a bid was made by Edinburgh Division for Taskforce funding to supply additional radios for the use of RCTF officers.

The Scottish Government Retail Crime Funding allows the Taskforce to provide funding to local areas to support initiatives in pursuit of the Taskforce Strategy

The scheme now has in excess of 67 Retailers using the ShopWatch Radios and owing to its success, a further bid for RCTF funding was successfully made by officers in Leith to provide 28 radios for a period of 12 months to introduce a similar scheme in the Newkirkgate area.

As the Edinburgh Scheme approaches its 12-month anniversary, PC Evelyn Hegarty, from the Prevention, Intervention and Partnerships team, visited local retailers using the scheme, to learn more about the benefits. The retailers provided some really positive feedback about the impact of the radios.



Prevention

A sports clothing store noted that theft by shoplifting had noticeably reduced since the radios were introduced. Listening to the other shops' transmissions, allowed them to put staff at the front door to fend off any shoplifters working their way through the city centre shops. If they don't get in the store, they don't have the opportunity to steal.



Staff and Shopper Safety

Staff in another store reported that they feel safer, because they have the radio. Recently, they had an aggressive male at the shop, so locked him out and then transmitted on the radio. The security guard from another store heard the transmission, left his own post, and went to help the shop staff (entirely female). He assisted in removing the aggressive male for them.

Also, recently, two young girls who were being followed by a suspicious male entered the shop and asked for help. The staff put the call out on ShopWatch, and the security guard from another store came to help, assisting with removing the male, and then calling the police.

Staff Reassurance

A further store recently had a drunk male causing a nuisance outside the shop. They didn't have any security on duty at that time, but nevertheless the manager wanted to go out herself and move him on. She radioed CCTV and asked if they would keep an eye on her, which they did. She spoke with the male, and he moved on without fuss. CCTV checked she was ok afterwards. She said that it gave her the confidence to speak with the male, safe in the knowledge that she was being monitored, and help would be on hand if she needed it.

"A game changer – amazing!" Angela, Store Manager, Tiso

Tiso Edinburgh explained how a male shoplifter stole an expensive jacket. Staff reviewed CCTV footage as a team the following morning, so all of them were aware of his image. One member of staff popped out for lunch and saw the shoplifter in the street. The staff member immediately returned and transmitted this information on the ShopWatch radio. CCTV operators found the suspect and directed police to him. When arrested, he was still in possession of the jacket from the day before and he had cutters on him that he used to steal it. The jacket was returned to the store.

PC Hegarty explained, "I don't think that when we introduced ShopWatch, we fully appreciated the breadth of its benefits – not only does it help to reduce retail crime, but the retailers talk about it having created a community, where they all feel connected to each other and, as a result, they feel safer at work. The funding for the Scheme from both Essential Edinburgh and the RCTF has allowed us to use the technology to make a real difference to retailers."

IMPACT IN NUMBERS

Effective Engagement

90%

Nearly all who engage with the RCTF find it effective or highly effective.

70.5%

Most respondents understand what the Taskforce can do for them.

79.5%

Vast majority view the Taskforce's overall impact positively.

77.3%

Retailers feel more confident reporting crimes.

The Core Benefits (Retailer Feedback)

Dedicated Specialist Knowledge: Officers know the repeat offenders, their methods, and their patterns.

Intelligence Sharing: Active, two-way communication prevents crime and speeds up identification.

Tangible Results: It provides a visible deterrent, leads to concrete arrests, and reassures frontline retail workers who are facing rising crime.



“

Peace of mind for retailers. Deterrent for the prolific offenders. Current up to date knowledge of offenders and MOs

“

They have innate knowledge of offenders, their particular MOs and often their whereabouts

Your Taskforce in Action

Operation Dynos Update

Operation Dynos is Police Scotland's RCTF response to a surge in organised, high value theft by shoplifting of alcohol for re-sale, across the West of Scotland, largely perpetrated by care experienced, young people coerced into offending via child criminal exploitation. The offences frequently involved elements of disorder, threats and violence towards retail staff.

The team consists of Detective Sergeant Stephanie Bertram and four officers, who are funded via the dedicated Taskforce funding. Their approach was to target the adult offenders and in turn safeguard the young people being exploited.



The following aims were set:

- Target repeat offenders, priority hotspots and organised criminals
- Disrupt the demand/marketplace for resale of stolen goods
- Safeguard and support children & young people at risk of child criminal exploitation (CCE)
- Enable children & young people to disengage from criminal activity via diversionary activities

To successfully meet the objectives, a dual strategy of engagement and investigation was adopted.

Investigation

Stage one of the investigation focussed on identifying the adults facilitating/directing the criminal network and exploiting the vulnerable youths involved. Stage two targeted the resale market for the stolen goods with a view to disrupting the overall functionality of the group.

Your Taskforce in Action

Operation Dynos Update

As a result of positive engagement by the team, they were able to obtain information and evidence, identifying an adult male responsible for the recruitment and training of young people to steal alcohol from supermarkets across the West of Scotland. He would identify the supermarkets to steal from, supervise the thefts, and thereafter take possession of stolen goods, which he would sell on for financial gain. Where possible, he would retain all profits, for example, where young people were too intimidated to ask for their share of the profits. Where payments were made, this was done utilising cash and drugs.

The adult male was subsequently arrested, charged with varying offences including CCE and remanded in prison.

Further inquiries resulted in the recovery of stolen alcohol and a further three adults being arrested and charged with numerous offences including CCE, drugs offences and reset of stolen goods. Restrictive conditions were sought in relation to the offenders to safeguard the young people involved.

Engagement

Through one-to-one engagement with the young people, the team were able to obtain information regarding interests and align these to diversionary activities. This led to discussions with social work to assist with application processes for educational courses and employment. Six of the young people engaged in educational and employment opportunities.

Regular engagement and safeguarding assisted in a number of the young persons who were initially in denial about being victims of CCE realising they had been coerced, controlled, and manipulated into committing crimes. Acknowledging this led to many of them disengaging with the group and its criminal activities.

“By adopting a tailored multi-agency, Contextual Safeguarding approach, Operation Dynos better supported vulnerable young people, reduced the risk of offending, brought offenders to justice, and ultimately created safer communities.” DS Stephanie Bertram, Operation Dynos

Operation Dynos - Year Two

The approach taken during year one has largely dismantled the structure of the previous Organised Crime Group and whilst some young people's offending behaviours have continued, this appears to be independent of direct exploitation.

Over the forthcoming year, the Operation Dynos Team, broadening their methodology and building on their learning, will expand their remit to focus on the young people, presenting the highest risk of harm, in the West of Scotland, where violence against Retail workers has been identified as at the highest. Their activity will form part of a response co-ordinated by a Working Group formed to address the high levels of youth related Retail Crime (in particular involving violence against retail workers).

Your Taskforce Results

Wider Results

We have been working hard to collate data on the results of RCTF-initiated activity.

We now collate all data on the activity of our Central Team and our Divisional RCTF teams, along with results from a number of the RCTF Funding Bids given to local Divisions for Retail Crime initiatives. The positive impact the Retail Crime Taskforce is making isobvious from this data.

Headline Achievements (to 28th February 2026)

Here is a snapshot of our key performance indicators. These conservative estimates show the significant progress being made in tackling retail crime across the country.

5,089 Shoplifting Charges/Detections
601 Retail Worker Offence Charges
2,774 Suspects Identified by RCTF
260 Electronic Briefings Disseminated

1,431 Intelligence Logs Submitted
1,122 Arrests Made
41 Organised Crime Groups Identified
115 Disruptions Against OCGs

In total the RCTF have now recorded **over 14,290 results** across all of our KPI recorded activities.

RCTF Year Two Plans

During 2026/27 the Taskforce will continue with our mission of “Providing a Visible and Measurable Impact on Retail Crime”. We will also continue with our Four P’s Approach to tackling Retail Crime:



PREVENT

Stop people becoming perpetrators of retail crime



PURSUE

Target repeat offenders & organised retail crime groups



PROTECT

Strengthen the collective protection against retail crime



PREPARE

Mitigate the impact of retail crime through Direct Reporting

Our Structure Central RCTF Team

We will continue to operate a Central Taskforce Team, who co-ordinate activity and drive the above strategy across all policing divisions of Police Scotland. The team will consist of a Pursue Team, including Police Officers, Analysts and member of support staff.

There will be an increase in the intelligence capacity to enhance the development and collation of intelligence products to better support Local Policing Areas. We have learned that an increased intelligence function is key to progressing the Taskforce in Year Two. The existing Prepare and Prevent/Protect Teams will continue. Operation Dynos will continue with an expanded remit and sitting as part of the Central RCTF Team.

Divisional RCTF Teams

We will maintain Divisional RCTF Teams in the areas that continue to demonstrate the highest need, based on demand. This will mean we have three Divisional Teams operating across Tayside, Edinburgh and Greater Glasgow.

We will provide more updates on the Central RCTF structure and the RCTF Teams in your Local Policing Area in the coming months.

RCTF Funding to Support Local Initiatives

We will continue to operate a Funding Bid process, whereby all Local Policing Areas can apply for RCTF Funding to support initiatives to tackle retail crime and support retailers across Police Scotland. In our next edition of this Bulletin, we will look to bring you a roundup of the various funding bids supported by RCTF in the past year and what they have been achieving in your Local Areas.

Expansion of Online Reporting Message to Retailers from ACC Tim Mairs

Since the inception of the Retail Crime Taskforce, we have been committed to empowering retailers to report all incidents of retail crime and to make this process as simple and efficient as possible.

We recognise that the continued rise in retail offences across the country requires a strong policing response, however, many crimes are reported after an incident has occurred, meaning that priority must be given to answering and resourcing calls where there is a more urgent risk to public safety.



ACC Tim Mairs

In December 2025 our Contact, Command, and Control Division (C3) introduced a proof-of-concept online reporting form, allowing retailers to report incidents of shop theft digitally. The form was piloted in Greater Glasgow Division and throughout the course of the pilot was utilised by 18 retailers across more than 1000 stores.

Its purpose was to improve the user experience of retailers when reporting crimes of shop theft and to reduce non-urgent, lower risk demand on our call handling centres to support priority policing responses.

During the pilot, timescales for creation of a crime report number have reduced from the required 72-hour period to frequent same day processing. In addition, a link to our Digital Evidence Sharing Capability (DESC) system is provided once a crime report number is generated, allowing retailers to upload their CCTV footage immediately, allowing investigations to commence far quicker.

The retailer online reporting form for crimes of 'theft by shoplifting' can only be used in instances where the offender has left the store and where there is no associated threat, harm, risk or vulnerability. If there is another offence, in addition to theft by shoplifting, such as assault of a retail worker or vandalism, other reporting methods such as 101 or 999, in an emergency, should be used. With the pilot period having concluded, we are now working to implement various improvements to the form, to improve its usability. However, we believe it is currently fit for purpose, and it went live across Scotland on Monday, 23 March 2026.

The development of the online reporting form supports the ongoing work to introduce a third-party reporting platform that can provide a consistent approach to reporting certain retail offences whenever they arise within Scotland.

The form can be accessed here or by scanning the QR code

<https://www.scotland.police.uk/contact-us/report-shoplifting>

and retailer feedback to date is positive, with many reporting that completion of the online form is easier than reporting via phone call or ContactUs.

We will continue to develop the form further to ensure it meets all needs of our retail industry colleagues when reporting a theft by shoplifting offence. Please familiarise yourselves with the form and utilise it in the event a shop theft incident occurs on your premises.



Report a shoplifting

New Webinar Forum for Small and Independent Retailers

The Taskforce currently holds a monthly Joint Retailer Forum attended by Senior and Security Managers of major retailers. Due to the success of this Forum, the RCTF will be holding a quarterly Webinar via Microsoft teams for smaller independent retailers. The aim of this is to give smaller and independent retailers access to the knowledge and experience of the Taskforce officers, which will include Retail Crime Prevention advice, Dealing with Confrontation and updates on work being carried out by the RCTF.

If you are a smaller independent retailer, it will also allow you to ask questions or highlight ongoing Retail Crime issues. There will be guest speakers from partner agencies throughout the year, who will provide further useful information on services available to the retail sector.

The first scheduled Webinar will be **1100hrs on Wednesday 6th May 2026**, this will be an initial introduction to the RCTF and what you can expect from future Webinars. If you would an invite please email

SCDRetailCrimeTaskForcePrevent@Scotland.police.uk

to be added to the circulation list. Due to the expected number of attendees, if there are any questions you wish answered, please add these to the same email, and we will look to answer as many of these as possible during the Webinar.

RCTF Linked In Page Goes Live



You may have already noticed, but you can now keep up to date with RCTF via Linked-In! Last week saw the launch of our Police Scotland RCTF page on the platform as part of communications to support National Business Crime Reduction Partnership Awareness Week. The page will highlight the partnership work taking place across Scotland to tackle Retail Crime and support safer town and city centres.

Please follow our page to learn more about the work underway across Scotland to tackle Retail Crime and promote safer communities:

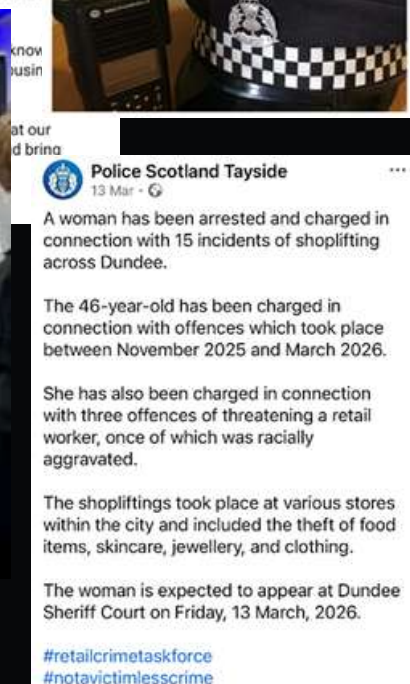
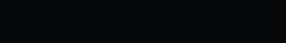
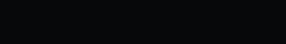
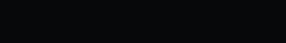
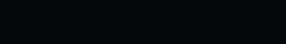
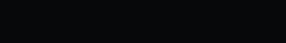
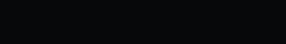
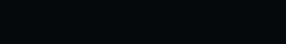
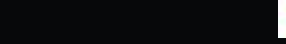
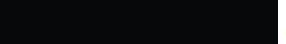
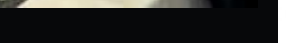
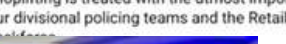
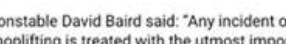
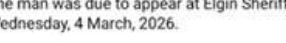
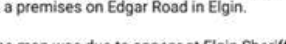
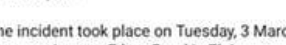
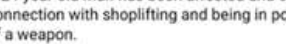
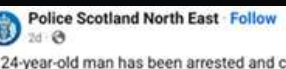
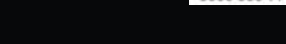
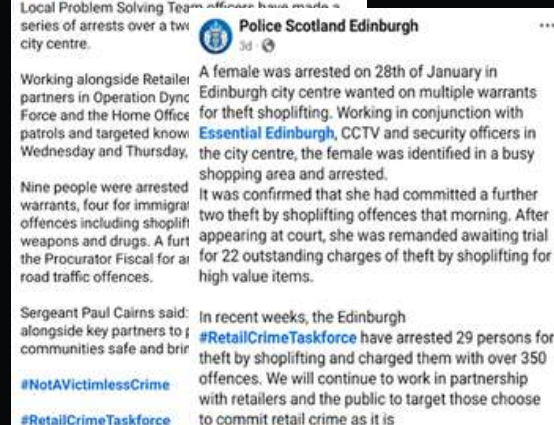
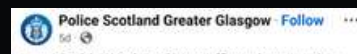
[Police Scotland Retail Crime Taskforce: Overview | LinkedIn](#)

In The News

Our work continues to gain media attention across Scotland. You can follow our work and join the conversation on social media.

Search for **#retailcrimetaskforce** and **#notavictimlesscrime** to see the latest updates, and feel free to use these hashtags when posting about your own work to tackle retail crime.

This bi-monthly publication will provide updates to retailers on the work of the RCTF. Please share our bulletin widely with your stores and colleagues



Watch this SPACE

Our Taskforce has made a good initial impact on retail crime, however, there is a significant amount of work still to be done. Expect updates on the following in coming editions of this Bulletin:

- How the RCTF funding bids for Local Policing Areas have been spent in the first year and some highlights of the results they have achieved so far.
- RCTF work with the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) – we are working in collaboration with COPFS to tackle Retail Crime. We are focussing work on how we effectively deal with the highest harm offenders and the tools available to us. We hope to run a feature on our progress in a future issue.
- Further updates on expansion of the Direct Reporting of Retail Crime in relation to our work to develop reporting via third party suppliers already used by retailers to record retail crime internally.
- Work with Community Justice Scotland to signpost retail offenders to appropriate community support services and tackle the root causes of Retail Crime.
- A new partnership between Victim Support Services and the Retail Trust to better support Retail Workers who are victims of crime.

Contact Us

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