

News story: Minister for Crime plans to protect shop workers from violence

The Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability, Victoria Atkins, is examining options for providing further protections for shop workers from violence and abuse.

The call for evidence is intended to help strengthen the evidence base and look at all options for addressing these crimes.

Chairing a meeting of the National Retail Crime Steering Group today, which includes members such as the British Retail Consortium and the Association of Convenience Stores (ACS), Victoria Atkins will discuss proposals for a call to evidence. These include how to protect retail workers from abuse and violence that often occur from age-restricted sales, such as cigarettes and alcohol.

The Home Office's Commercial Victimization Survey estimated that in 2017, workers from the wholesale and retail sector were victim to around 510,000 incidents of assaults and threats, more than twice the number recorded in 2016 (203,000 incidents).

The National Retail Crime Steering Group brings government, police and industry together to improve the response to crimes affecting the sector, including assaults and theft. Today the group will focus exclusively on the response to violence and abuse toward shop workers.

Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability, Victoria Atkins, said:

No-one should be subject to violence and abuse in their workplace and I have every sympathy for retail staff who have been the victims of these appalling acts just for doing their jobs.

It is important to tackle this issue. Today's exceptional meeting of the National Retail Crime Steering Group is rightly focussing solely on violence and abuse toward shop staff, to understand what more we can do to protect those in the industry.

ACS chief executive, James Lowman, said:

The safety of people working in local shops is our number one priority and we are determined that our work with the Home Office delivers lasting change and safer local shops.

This includes securing a strong response from the police and criminal justice system to ensure offenders are brought to justice, and to send a clear message that violence against shop workers is

not acceptable.

The Home Office will additionally provide £50,000 of funding for a sector-led communications campaign to raise awareness of the wide ranging offences that may be used to address this behaviour.