



Home Office

Kit Malthouse MP
Minister of State for
Crime and Policing

2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF
www.gov.uk/home-office

Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

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2 July 2021

Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your email of 1 July to the Home Secretary on behalf of a number of your constituents about the levels of violence and abuse experienced by shop workers. I am replying as the Minister of State for Crime and Policing.

I am very concerned about the continuing violence faced by shop workers whilst doing their jobs, and I recognise the damaging impact that these crimes often have on individuals, businesses, and the wider community. I am committed to keeping our retail environments safe by driving down violence and abuse towards shop staff.

The Government conducted a call for evidence on violence and abuse toward shop staff, to further understand the extent of the issue and how the Government can work with the retail sector to prevent these crimes. The formal response was published on 7 July 2020 and is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/violence-and-abuse-toward-shop-staff-call-for-evidence>.

The Home Office is continuing to work with retail stakeholders through the National Retail Crime Steering Group (NRCSG) to ensure the response to these crimes is as robust as it can be. From the NRCSG membership, four Task and Finish groups were established to deliver on the actions from the call for evidence. They have developed resources to assist retailers to report crimes when they occur, resources for shop staff who are victims of violence and abuse, and the #Shopkind communications campaign. The downloadable resources are free to use and are available here: <https://brc.org.uk/nrcsg-against-shop-worker-abuse-and-violence/>.

This work has been developed with the benefit of industry knowledge and experience and I am confident it will have a positive impact, in the short and longer-term, on making shop staff feel safer. I encourage all retailers to make use of these resources. Currently the work of the NRCSG is to look at the causes of retail violence, such as drug and alcohol addiction, and what can be done to address these in the retail setting.

Your constituents refer to the upcoming Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, calling for an amendment to the Bill to provide greater protection for shop workers. I understand and am sympathetic to the motivations behind this request, however my position remains that existing legislation is sufficient to deal with assaults against shop workers in England and Wales. There are already a series of offences such as common assault, actual bodily

harm (ABH) and grievous bodily harm (GBH) which cover assaults against anyone, including shop workers. Furthermore, the independent Sentencing Council's guidelines for assault offences require courts to treat the fact that an offence was committed against those providing a service to the public as an aggravating factor. This makes the offence more serious and will be reflected in sentencing decisions.

You may also be interested to know the Home Affairs Select Committee has undertaken an inquiry into violence and abuse towards retail workers. Recordings and transcripts of the Committee sessions can be viewed here: [Violence and abuse towards retail workers - Committees - UK Parliament](#). I welcome the report published by the Committee on 29 June. The Government will study its conclusions and recommendations very carefully and publish a full response in due course.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank staff across the retail sector who during the coronavirus pandemic worked tirelessly to keep the nation fed while implementing social distancing measures to keep the public safe.

I hope this information reassures your constituents that the Government is working with the retail sector, police and other partners to take action on this important issue.

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

Kit Malthouse MP