

Johnson calls for protection for shop workers

Urgent action is needed to protect shopworkers, Scottish Labour has warned.

In a letter to the new Chief Constable of Police Scotland, Daniel Johnson highlighted shocking news that there have been almost 8,000 reported cases of shopworker abuse or assault since August 2021.

It was Mr Johnson who introduced the Protection of Workers (Retail and Age-restricted Goods and Services) (Scotland) Act 2021 in order to tackle the abuse that too many shopworkers face, but since the law was introduced it has been used a staggering 7,955 times.

Daniel Johnson's letter was co-signed by the Scottish Retail Consortium, the Scottish Grocers' Federation, the Federation of Independent Retailers, Usdaw, the Scottish Co-Op Party, and GMB Scotland.

The Edinburgh Southern MSP said: "It is a scandal that so many shopworkers face violence and abuse at work.

"Workers are too often bearing the brunt of retail crime, and the astonishing number of crimes being reported exposes the scale of this crisis.

"The new legal protection offered by my bill was an important step forward, but it must be backed up with a comprehensive plan to prevent these crimes as well as prosecute them.

"Shopworkers must be safe at work and the SNP must ensure the

new Chief Constable has the support and resources she needs to make that a reality.”

David Lonsdale, Director of the Scottish Retail Consortium said: “It’s utterly unacceptable whenever shopworkers face abuse, intimidation or violence whilst serving the community.

“Despite better legal protections and record spending by retailers on crime prevention, it’s clear more needs to be done to protect the skilled and passionate colleagues who help make our industry such a vibrant place to work; let alone to bear down on rising levels of anti-social behaviour and thefts.

“A greater level of prioritisation must be given to retail crime and responding to incidents, with the police and courts having the direction and resources they need to tackle this blight and ensure the perpetrators face the consequences.”

Chief Executive of the Scottish Grocers’ Federation, Dr Pete Cheema OBE, said: “Retail crime is now endemic across every highstreet, every community and every local convenience store in Scotland, and it’s only getting worse.

“The threatening abuse, cost to business and physical violence that retailers are facing is very real, and a daily occurrence in many stores. It isn’t only shop windows being shattered, it’s people’s lives and livelihoods. Impacting both families and communities to the point where some colleagues are now refusing to come into work, for fear of their safety.

“That is why we need an emergency strategy targeting retail crime. Retailers feel that they have no support from the authorities and no recourse, while offenders believe there are no consequences for their crimes. It will take a concerted effort from Ministers, Police Scotland, and the Justice system to reverse the trend and bring it under control.”



Daniel Johnson MSP for Edinburgh Southern PHOTO ©The Edinburgh Reporter