

Scrutiny Unit
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

26 May 2021

FAO: Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Public Bill Committee

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing this email to ask for the committee's support in making an amendment or adding a clause to the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill which will provide greater protection for shopworkers.

This is a serious problem – over the last two years, there has been a significant increase in the use of violence and weapons against shop workers. As a regional, independent co-operative with more than 200 convenience stores and franchise stores across the south, I am submitting this request on behalf of the people who work in retail stores everywhere and their right to work within a safe environment free from harm and the fear of harm.

We are working hard to protect our colleagues, tackling crime from every angle – causes, prevention, reporting and justice – but we need help to do this.

During the pandemic, our colleagues have been recognised as key workers and have worked tirelessly to keep serving our local communities but they're still facing abuse and threats of violence, often on a daily basis. Our own figures show a 25% increase in crime across our estate in 2020 compared to 2019, including a 68% increase in assaults and violence. This is not acceptable and things need to change. The abuse our colleagues face is often as a result of enforcing laws put there by the Government, such as the sale of age-related items, or social distancing.

We have some great examples of partnership working in our trading area which regularly lead to convictions but the sad reality is that the sentence they receive rarely takes into account the devastating and lasting affect the attack/crime has on our colleagues. We have more than 4,000 colleagues and a few of them have shared, in their own words, the consequences of these violent acts on their own lives:

<https://vimeo.com/458113655/a0c53f139c>

Having heard first hand of the mental and physical damage that abuse and violence has had on our colleagues, we ask again, please add an amendment or clause to the Bill which provides greater protection for all shopworkers.

Please follow the example made by the Scottish Parliament which has recently passed legislation in the form of Daniel Johnson MSP's Bill.

Yours faithfully,



Mark Smith
Chief Executive
Southern Co-op