

An Garda Síochána



**Theft from Shops
Prevention & Reduction
Strategy**

An Garda Síochána 2011



Foreword

Preventing crime, through the provision of expert advice on areas such as personal security, home security and business security has been the hallmark of An Garda Síochána's positive relationship with communities for decades. This critical Garda Síochána role in preventing crime has been reaffirmed in statute by virtue of Section 7 of the Garda Síochána Act, 2005 and within Garda policy, in the form of the *National Model of Community Policing*, which recognises crime prevention as one of its key Community Policing Pillars.

Thefts from shops are not uniformly distributed within society; some shops are targeted more than others, while specific products seem to be stolen more frequently than others. Recently however many retailers have experienced an increase in the number of thefts from shops, irrespective of the type of retailing in which they engage.

A proactive collaborative effort is required to target and prevent theft from shops. Over the years, retailers have joined together to form partnerships, devise strategies and work in collaboration with An Garda Síochána, e.g. Business Watch, with the aim of reducing opportunities for the criminal fraternity.

The primary focus of this strategy is not on the detection of theft, but rather on its *prevention*. Preventing thefts from shops requires a structured approach by An Garda Síochána and the retail community, through a coherent framework, where prevention and reduction measures, targeting theft from shops are combined with improved communication structures and effective partnerships.

An Garda Síochána is fully committed to preventing and reducing thefts from shops, and this is reflected in An Garda Síochána's Strategy Statement 2010 – 2012.

The underlying message reflected in this strategy, is that retail theft prevention and reduction is deliverable through a structured policing in partnership approach.

Martin Callinan

Commissioner of An Garda Síochána



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Background

In 2009 a retail research study estimated that Irish shops lost approximately €453 million, a figure described by the industry as “shrinkage” - stock losses from crime, or waste expressed as a percentage of retail sales. This study estimated that ‘shoplifters’ were responsible for 40.6% of their losses and stole €183.9m worth of items. ‘Employee theft’ accounted for 36.8% (€166.7m worth of items) of shrinkage in Ireland, which the study claimed was the highest rate in Europe. It is argued that the losses incurred by shops as a result of thefts is equivalent to a tax on every Irish household of €348.91 a year.¹

Rates of shoplifting in Ireland appear to have increased over the past number of years, despite relatively high and consistent detection rates. According to recent official crime figures, theft from shops incidents in May 2010 (of which there were 1,901) show the highest single monthly figure in the last twelve months. In addition to this, data shows that theft from shops nationally has one of the lowest repeat offending rates amongst suspected offenders.

For retailers, an acute mindset shift from theft detection to a focus on theft *prevention* is promoted in this strategy. This ‘*prevention*’ model which has already been successfully implemented in some high profile retail outlets, has tangible win-win benefits for An Garda Síochána, retailers and other stakeholders.

This will require meaningful communication, consultation and action at a number of organisational and statutory levels, such as Joint Policing Committees, to ensure that this type of crime is both prevented and ultimately reduced.

Stakeholder consultation process

This strategy was developed following extensive research and consultation with a number of retailers and key stakeholders within An Garda Síochána.

¹ Figure presented <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/ireland/article6917429.ece>



Current initiatives*

Four examples of excellent initiatives currently carried out by members of An Garda Síochána, in conjunction with retailers throughout the country, include;

- In 2009 thefts from shops in Cork city represented approximately 42% of all headline crime. To tackle this, the divisional Crime Prevention Officer commissioned the regional Garda Síochána Analyst to conduct a robust in-depth analysis of thefts from shops in the top twelve retail stores within the city. Data unveiled that these retail stores accounted for 52% of all thefts from shops within the division. This review yielded rich information on key 'trends' relevant to profligacy, modus operandi, aggregate value of items stolen and specifics on the days and times when thefts from shops were most likely to occur etc. As a result of the proactive intervention of the Crime Prevention Officer, this data greatly assisted in the formulation of an 'informed' response by retailers and appropriate solutions were devised to reduce future incidence of this crime type.
- Through the revitalisation of Business Watch, An Garda Síochána in the 'Q' District has developed a committed partnership with the Liffey Valley Shopping Centre management. Uniformed members of An Garda Síochána patrol the centre for a specific period, aiming to prevent crime where possible, respond quickly to incidents and to engage with the public and staff. An Garda Síochána's involvement in this operation proactively ensured that Gardaí worked closely with shopping centre security and retailers, thereby improving stakeholder relationships. The 'Lessons Learned' and benefits derived from this initiative are currently being reviewed for organisational dissemination as good practice.
- In Dublin City centre, a very high profile retail store has recently introduced a robust strategy on shoplifting around '*prevention*' rather than detection. This 'prevention' model has had a profound impact on reducing thefts from the store and their success is currently being examined as a good practice strategy.
- In Letterkenny, an innovative 'text alert' system has been introduced involving The Chamber of Commerce, retailers and An Garda Síochána which has proved successful in collaboratively raising awareness of retail crime related information.

* This represents only a sample of current initiatives currently carried out by An Garda Síochána and Retailers.



An Garda Síochána's commitment to this strategy

In order to build on the existing initiatives and practices in place, this strategy will be supported by each and every member of An Garda Síochána. The commitment to target theft from shops in Ireland will be inextricably linked to the framework of the Garda Síochána Strategy Statement 2010 – 2012. This commitment is evident in the organisation's Vision, Mission and Values as set out below.

Vision

'Excellent people delivering policing excellence'

Mission Statement

Working with communities to protect and serve

Values

- ✓ **Honesty** – Being honest and ethical and adhering in the principles of fairness and justice
- ✓ **Accountability** – Accepting individual responsibility and ensuring public accountability
- ✓ **Respect** – Having respect for people, their human rights and their needs
- ✓ **Professionalism** – Providing a professional policing service to all communities (An Garda Síochána Strategy Statement 2010 – 2012).



How will this strategy be achieved?

This strategy of targeting theft from shops will contribute directly to achieving the corporate objective of ensuring a peaceful community, by working with retailers and related agencies to reduce the opportunity for this type of crime. This strategy will be underpinned by the *Garda Síochána National Model of Community Policing* and will complement existing support structures and communication methods.

To deliver this strategy, four strategic priority objectives have been identified and are represented in the following pillars.

1. Develop and maintain effective communication links between An Garda Síochána, retailers and victims of retail theft

2. Promote a theft from shops 'prevention' ethos

3. Deliver a timely and effective proactive response by An Garda Síochána to retailers and victims of retail theft

4. Increase trust and confidence, and determine the ongoing needs of retailers and victims of retail theft.

Strategic roles and responsibilities

To achieve these objectives, the following roles and responsibilities will be allocated;

Senior management commitment

An Garda Síochána will use its strategic management and organisational structure, including the National Crime Prevention Unit (NCPU), to endorse, champion and

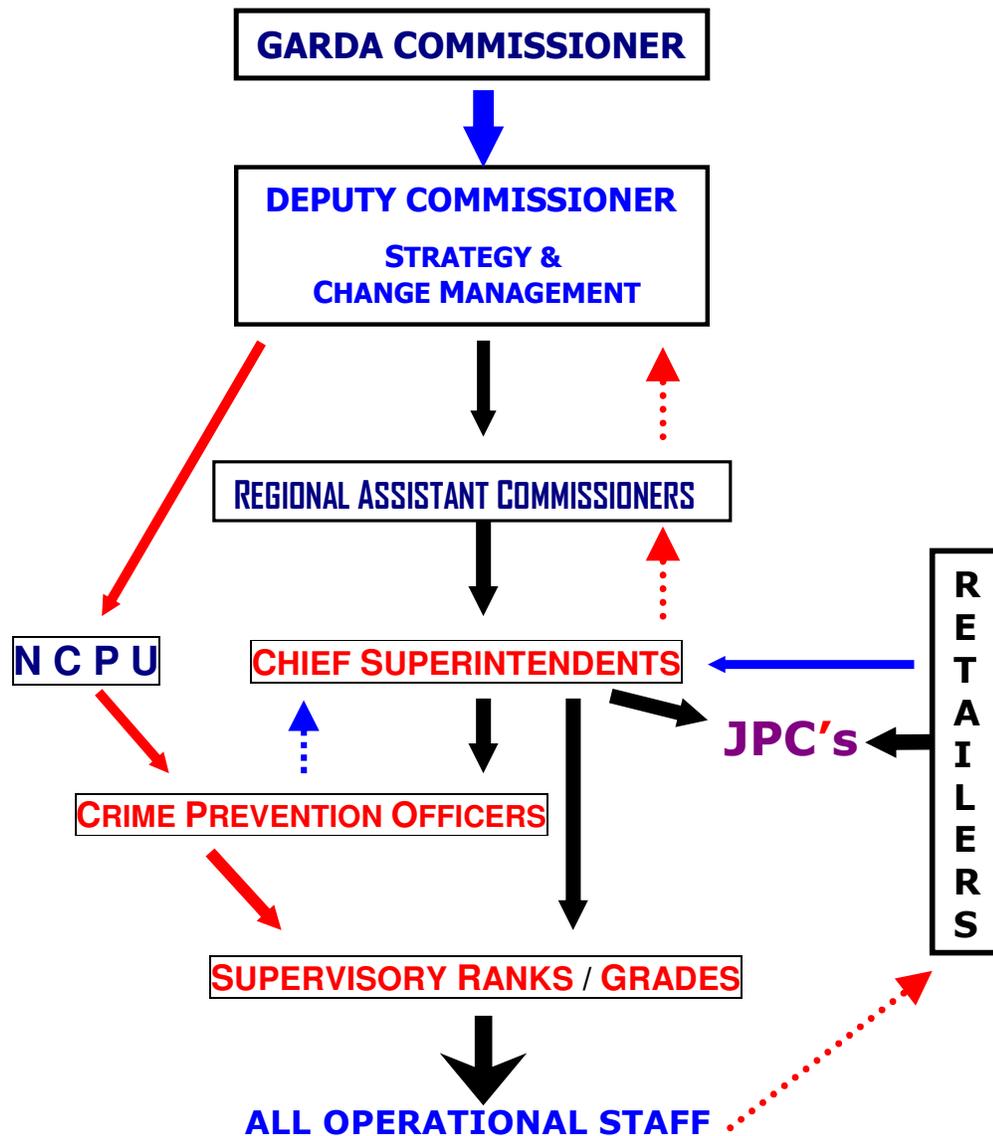


support the implementation of this strategy. Retailers and Joint Policing Committees will play a key role in promoting and delivering a retail theft *prevention* ethos.

Operational ownership

Chief Superintendents, Superintendents and Departmental Heads will have responsibility for drafting and implementing plans at a local level to deliver this strategy. Managers, first line supervisors and all members of An Garda Síochána will be responsible for working towards delivering this strategy as depicted below;

THEFT FROM SHOPS PREVENTION & REDUCTION STRATEGY





Action plan

The following section outlines the objectives of this strategy, the initiatives that will be used to achieve them, the owners of these initiatives and the desired outcomes. This will be achieved through the four strategic priority pillars, which will underpin and drive implementation of this action plan;

1. Develop and maintain effective communication links between An Garda Síochána and retailers and victims of retail theft

Number	Initiative	Actions	Ownership	Outcomes
1.1	Develop a two stranded engagement approach, to facilitate the interchange of experience, ideas and innovations between An Garda Síochána, retailers, and interested parties	A. Host an annual national high level 'Strategic retail forum' involving An Garda Síochána, retail senior management representatives, retail security companies, chambers of commerce, chairs of local business fora & Joint Policing Committee (JPC) representatives, Retail Ireland,	Assistant Commissioner Strategy, Training & Professional Standards. Community Relations & Community Policing Division.	Increased information exchanges and partnership between An Garda Síochána and the business community.



<u>Number</u>	<u>Initiative</u>	<u>Actions</u>	<u>Ownership</u>	<u>Outcomes</u>
		<p>RGDATA (family grocers association), The Small Firms Association (SFA), and The Irish Small and Medium Enterprises (ISME) Association etc,</p> <p>B. Host an Annual '<i>Local Retail Forum</i>' involving An Garda Síochána, and local retail management representatives.</p>	<p>Divisional Officers.</p>	<p>Improved service provision.</p>
<p>1.2</p>	<p>Promote schemes that build partnerships.</p>	<p>A. Establish, reinvigorate or maintain local <i>Business Watch</i> programmes.</p> <p>B. Ensure JPC meetings are used as a mechanism to engage with local retailers, local government, etc.</p>	<p>Community Relations & Community Policing Division, District Officers</p> <p>Community Relations & Community Policing Division, District Officers</p>	<p>Trusting relationships will be established and maintained.</p>



<u>Number</u>	<u>Initiative</u>	<u>Actions</u>	<u>Ownership</u>	<u>Outcomes</u>
1.3	Communicate this strategy in line with An Garda Síochána's Strategy Statement 2010-2012.	<p>A. Communicate this strategy, and other examples of good practice through the Garda portal, the Garda website and the <i>Community Times</i> newsletter.</p> <p>B. Highlight locally at PAF meetings.</p>	<p>Community Relations & Community Policing Division.</p> <p>Divisional Officers and District Officers</p>	Co-ordinated approach to strategy implementation.
1.4	Develop, publicise and promote crime prevention/security information for the business community.	<p>A. Design crime prevention leaflets on topics relevant to retailers and distribute same through the Garda portal, Garda website, during visits, meetings etc.</p> <p>B. Use the <i>Garda Community Safety Week</i> campaigns to highlight issues surrounding theft from shops</p>	<p>Community Relations & Community Policing Division, Divisional Officers and District Officers</p> <p>Community Relations & Community Policing Division, Divisional Officers and District Officers</p>	Enhanced business awareness of crime prevention / security measures.



<u>Number</u>	<u>Initiative</u>	<u>Actions</u>	<u>Ownership</u>	<u>Outcomes</u>
		<p>C. Consider the development of a Garda schools programme <i>theft from shops</i> module.</p> <p>D. Highlight the obligation on retailers, to report thefts from shops and to follow through on the investigative / prosecution process</p>	<p>Community Relations & Community Policing Division, Divisional Officers and District Officers.</p> <p>Retail management, District Officers and Crime Prevention Officers.</p>	<p>Enhanced business awareness of crime prevention / security measures.</p>
<p>1.5</p>	<p>Explore diverse technology channels to increase engagements and contact with the retail community.</p>	<p>A. Review possibility of having a secure information exchange capability for retailers and An Garda Síochána, to exchange sensitive / secure information.</p>	<p>Community Relations & Community Policing Division, Executive Director of ICT.</p>	<p>Increased efficiency and frequency of contact.</p>



2. Promote a theft from shops 'prevention' ethos

Number	Initiative	Actions	Ownership	Outcomes
2.1	Promote an ethos of retail theft 'prevention'.	A. Promote and embed an ethos of theft from shop 'prevention' amongst <u>all retailers</u> and their relevant stakeholders.	Community Relations & Community Policing Division, Local Crime Prevention Officers. Divisional Officers and District Officers Top retail management and retail staff. Joint Policing Committees.	Reduction in incidents in theft from shops



<u>Number</u>	<u>Initiative</u>	<u>Actions</u>	<u>Ownership</u>	<u>Outcomes</u>
2.2	Support retail theft prevention practices	A. An Garda Síochána to support retailers in 'theft prevention' policy and practices through awareness raising, CPO advice, security surveys etc.	Divisional Officers Joint Policing Committees Community Relations & Community Policing Division, N C P U and Local Crime Prevention Officers.	Improved awareness and response. Reduction in incidents in theft from shops



3. Deliver a timely and effective proactive response by An Garda Síochána to retailers and victims of retail theft

Number	Initiative	Actions	Ownership	Outcomes
3.1	Continuous analysis, identification, profiling and targeting of criminals suspected of committing retail theft on a regular basis.	<p>A. Conduct national analysis with support from the Garda Síochána Analysis Service (GSAS) and local criminal intelligence officers, to target prolific offenders.</p> <p>B. Use the Garda portal, to provide local and national intelligence led information on organised professional shop lifting gangs.</p> <p>C. Explore the feasibility of ANPR as an alert for known shoplifters' vehicles.</p>	<p>Garda Síochána Analysis Service (G S A S) in consultation with Divisional Officers and District Officers, N C I U.</p> <p>N B C I.</p> <p>N C I U.</p> <p>G N T B & Community Relations & Community Policing Division.</p>	<p>Targeted responses appropriate to requirements.</p> <p>Targeted responses appropriate to requirements.</p>



<u>Number</u>	<u>Initiative</u>	<u>Actions</u>	<u>Ownership</u>	<u>Outcomes</u>
		<p>D. Develop a local strategy to deal with organised professional shop lifting gangs.</p> <p>E. Co-ordinate regional theft from shops investigative operations, making full use of available resources and intelligence.</p>	<p>District Officers.</p> <p>Detective Superintendents.</p> <p>District Officers and Detective Superintendents.</p>	<p>Reduce incidence of theft from shops.</p>
3.2	Continuous analysis of retail theft to identify trends and patterns	<p>A. Conduct analysis of local retail theft statistics with support from the local GSAS services and the national GSAS office.</p>	<p>G S A S in consultation with Divisional Officers and District Officers and N C P U.</p>	<p>Targeted responses appropriate to requirements.</p>
3.3	Determine the policing requirements of retailers and develop appropriate responses.	<p>A. Update the Garda Síochána <i>Retail guide</i> and <i>Business Watch</i> packs for dissemination by Divisional CPO's.</p>	<p>Community Relations & Community Policing Division.</p>	



<u>Number</u>	<u>Initiative</u>	<u>Actions</u>	<u>Ownership</u>	<u>Outcomes</u>
3.4	Deliver high visibility targeted patrolling, both mobile and foot, around retail stores both on streets and in centres.	A. Detail Community Gardaí to regularly visit and engage with retailers in their area of responsibility.	District Officers Crime Prevention Officers & Community Policing Inspectors and Sergeants	Targeted responses appropriate to requirements and trusting relationships developed.
3.5	Continue to engage with planning authorities to promote Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED).	A. Establish CPTED expertise within the organisation, to consult and engage with local authorities / government on major retail projects.	Community Relations & Community Policing Division, N C P U.	Improved awareness of crime prevention advice.



4. Increase trust and confidence, and determine the ongoing needs of retailers and victims of retail theft

Number	Initiative	Actions	Ownership	Outcomes
4.1	Increase awareness among Gardaí of the issues and challenges facing retailers.	<p>A. Outcomes from local and national fora, to inform policing responses to retail theft.</p> <p>B. Use the Garda portal to circulate relevant material to all Garda members.</p> <p>Circulate local issues by crime prevention & criminal intelligence officers.</p>	<p>Community Relations & Community Policing Division, G S A S.</p> <p>Community Relations & Community Policing Division, N C P U.</p> <p>Local Crime Prevention Officers.</p>	Improved awareness of issues.
4.2	Explore the possibility of developing local 'district register' of retailers (with consent) as a means to support engagement by Community Gardaí.	<p>A. Use as a means of initiating contact with all local retailers.</p> <p>Encourage participation with register.</p>	<p>District Officers.</p> <p>Crime Prevention Officers & Criminal Intelligence Officers.</p>	Increased confidence and develop trusting relationships.



<u>Number</u>	<u>Initiative</u>	<u>Actions</u>	<u>Ownership</u>	<u>Outcomes</u>
4.3	Use all opportunities to promote the idea of supportive partnerships between retailers and An Garda Síochána.	<p>B. Engage with the chambers of commerce to assist in the development of local district registers.</p> <p>A. Use JPC meetings as a means of identifying opportunities for partnered projects.</p> <p>B. Research 'communication' practice models within the retail environment, for sharing of information on prolific shoplifting offenders.</p>	<p>N C P U. Crime Prevention Officers.</p> <p>Community Relations & Community Policing Division, Divisional Officers and District Officers.</p> <p>Community Relations & Community Policing Division.</p>	Increased confidence.



<u>Number</u>	<u>Initiative</u>	<u>Actions</u>	<u>Ownership</u>	<u>Outcomes</u>
		<p>C. Explore the concept of using the fixed charge penalty system for 'minimum value' theft cases.</p> <p>D. Explore the use, where appropriate, of 'restorative justice' in cases involving shoplifting by juvenile offenders.</p>	<p>Community Relations & Community Policing Division, Crime Policy and Administration.</p> <p>Community Relations & Community Policing Division, Garda Office for Children and Youth Affairs.</p>	
4.4	Provide 'feedback' to retailers, in relation to outcomes of the investigative process.	A. Gardaí to provide updates / feedback to retailers.	Divisional Officers and District Officers.	Building of more trusting relationships.
4.5	Explore the use of 'case management' of juvenile prolific offenders, engaged in theft from shops.	A. Use the case management of juveniles intervention for prolific theft from shops offenders.	Community Relations & Community Policing Division, Garda Office for Children and Youth Affairs	



<u>Number</u>	<u>Initiative</u>	<u>Actions</u>	<u>Ownership</u>	<u>Outcomes</u>
4.6	Explore means of disseminating crime prevention advice material to retailers at national and local level.	<p>A. Broadcast a feature on retail theft on <i>CrimeCall</i> or other national TV programmes with a wide audience.</p> <p>B. Use the Garda website to publish relevant material.</p> <p>C. Use media opportunities to highlight local issues.</p>	<p>Community Relations & Community Policing Division.</p> <p>N C P U. Director of Communications.</p> <p>Divisional Officers and District Officers.</p>	Increased confidence in Garda service.
4.7	Document needs, expectations and key issues arising from regular interaction with retailers. Consider using this information to update policing plans.	A. Policing plans and strategies updated to take account of theft from shops issues.	Divisional Officers and District Officers.	Identification of retailers most at risk.
4.8	Monitor the recording and updating of incidents involving retail crime.	A. Engage with local GSAS to identify common data quality issues	Divisional Officers and District Officers.	Improved standards of recording.



Practical use of this strategy

This strategy has been designed to meet the needs of all divisions and districts. It is robust but flexible enough to ensure it contains advice and guidance so local management can react to the wide range of issues that are associated with the theft from shops. This strategy supports a holistic examination of local problems, while supplying examples of possible initiatives and approaches that can be used to prevent and reduce theft from shops.

Assessment of implementation

Evaluation of this strategy will be carried out in collaboration with a range of other strategies and initiatives underway within the framework of An Garda Síochána's Strategy Statement 2010-2012 and the Garda Síochána National Model of Community Policing. The evaluation will include evaluation of interagency meetings, community meetings and events, collaborative approaches undertaken, crime trends, complaint trends and interviews/surveys.

Conclusion

Shoplifting costs Irish retailers and the exchequer millions of euro every year in Ireland. This strategy will be adaptable enough to target shoplifting and the diverse locations in which it occurs. Therefore, the evaluation criteria cannot stay static; they will change as the strategy evolves to meet the changing needs of retailers and communities, as will An Garda Síochána and its responses. Due to consistent increases in theft from shops over the past number of years, a renewed and concerted focus on the *prevention* of shoplifting and the policing service provided is required.



Acknowledgments

This strategy was researched and produced by the Garda Síochána Community Relations and Community Policing Division.

An Garda Síochána is committed to the delivery of this strategy, but you can also play a part

What services would you like to see available from An Garda Síochána for retailers to assist in combating retail crime? What good ideas do you have that could assist in preventing and reducing this type of crime? What other agencies, individuals, etc can play a role?

If you would like to comment, or make suggestions about this document and its contents, or if you have answers to the questions above, please do contact us at:

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