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Rt Hon David Hanson MP
House of Commons
London
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Retailers Roundtable

Dear David

When we met on 11 December, I committed to write to you setting out how I intend to respond to the concerns you raised regarding violence and abuse toward shop workers. I am grateful to you and the organisations that attended that discussion, for providing me with further information about this important issue. I have enormous sympathy for shop workers who, in their endeavours to enforce the law, can face intimidation, threats and, in some cases, violence.

As you may be aware, the National Retail Crime Steering Group has been looking at this issue. While there is some promising work which is close to fruition and will result in a comprehensive package of guidance to retail staff, the police and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) about how to address this issue, I think there is more we can do to respond to the concerns raised by you and those organisations who attended the roundtable. The Government therefore intends to announce the following package when the Offensive Weapons Bill enters Committee stage in the House of Lords:

- A call for evidence on violence and abuse towards shop workers to help ensure we fully understand this issue and consider all options for addressing it;
- Funding for the sector to run targeted communications activity to raise awareness of the existing legislation in place to protect shop workers; and
- Refreshing the work of the National Retail Crime Steering Group on violent crime. I intend to discuss this work at an extraordinary meeting of the Group I

will chair on 7 February. That meeting will focus exclusively on violence and abuse toward shop workers.

In addition, you may wish to note that the Sentencing Council is reviewing its guidelines on assault and a consultation on a revised guideline is anticipated to commence this Summer.

I have also written to Ian Dyson, Commissioner of the City of London Police, who has recently taken over responsibility for the National Police Chiefs' Council portfolio on business crime, to discuss the police response to this issue. I am also prepared to ask HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service to carry out an inspection on violence against staff working in the retail sector, although this will need to be balanced against other priorities.

I believe that this broad package will allow us to move quickly to take concrete action to achieve an objective we both share: reducing violence and abuse towards shop workers. It will allow us to generate good practice to enable partners to take preventative action and will raise awareness amongst the public, including perpetrators, of the law and potential consequences of carrying out these crimes. Finally, it will provide us with information about the police response to these offences and strengthen our understanding so we can better understand whether the legislation in this area needs to be revisited.

I have written in similar terms to Richard Graham MP, those who attend the roundtable on 11 December, Sir Ian Dyson, Paddy Tipping, and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners. I will arrange for a copy of this letter to be placed in the House Library.



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