

Mr Andy Slaughter MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA



By email: andy.slaughter.mp@parliament.uk

1 December 2021

Dear Mr Slaughter,

I wanted to write to you to thank you for your welcome visit to the London - 260 Goldhawk Road Co-op store as part of Usdaw's Respect for Shopworkers week. I know that Umar and the team really welcomed your visit and the opportunity to discuss shopworker violence and our Safer Colleagues, Safer Communities campaign.

Retail crime was getting worse before the pandemic and at the Co-op we have seen a 650% rise in violence towards our colleagues between 2016 and 2020. Worryingly, this rise has continued and in the first 9 months of 2021 we have seen a further 12% rise in violent incidents. The frequency continues to get worse, but so has the violence involved – half of the physical attacks my colleagues face involve weapons like knives and syringes and during the pandemic the virus has been weaponised with colleagues spat at and told they are going to catch COVID.

That means that every day so far in 2021 in one of the 2,600 Co-op stores up and down the UK, more than 10 of my colleagues are attacked and approaching 150 are abused or threatened.

In the wider sector, the latest British Retail Consortium report estimates that the continued rising trend in incidents of violence and abuse amounts to the equivalent of over 50 incidents an hour or almost one a minute during a typical 9 hour shopping day within the context that this represents on average 11 violent incidents every hour which equals approximately one every 5 to 6 minutes.

As you will have seen from your visit, nothing is more important to the Co-op than the safety of our colleagues, which is why we have invested over £140m in security, crime prevention and colleague safety over the past 5 years and we will continue to do all we can to protect our colleagues.

Moreover, we have continued to be vocal on the need for action nationally and we are delighted that the new legislation in Scotland came into effect in August 2021. In our evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee earlier this year we made the case for new legislation and we were delighted when the Committee agreed in its recommendations with the need for a new offence to be created.

Registered Office: Co-operative Group Limited
1 Angel Square, Manchester, M60 0AG. Reg No 525R

coop.co.uk

The Government has been listening and have now made clear in both The Commons and the Lords that they will look at all options, including legislative change, as the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill passes through the House of Lords.

If the Government build on what they have already done and create that new offence to provide the same legal protection for shopworkers in England and Wales that they have in Scotland then it will make it easier and more straightforward for the police and the courts to investigate and sentence those who attack and abuse shop workers.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for listening to our colleagues, and for your ongoing support.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'P. Gerrard', written in a cursive style.

Paul Gerrard

Director of Campaigns and Public Affairs

Registered Office: Co-operative Group Limited,
1 Angel Square, Manchester, M60 0AG. Reg No 525R