# Greggs trials over-the-counter service to curb rising shop theft in targeted locations



In an effort to tackle rising theft in its stores, Greggs has undertaken a trial to replace its self-serve refrigerated sections with over-the-counter service. This initiative is currently being tested in at least five locations, including a store in Whitechapel, east London. The chain, with over 2,600 branches across the UK, has made this change specifically in areas experiencing higher levels of shoplifting, indicating a targeted approach rather than a nationwide overhaul.

Greggs' spokesperson stated, “This is one of a number of initiatives we are trialling across a handful of shops which are exposed to higher levels of anti-social behaviour.” The decision reflects a growing concern across various sectors about protecting staff and customers from the escalating trend of shoplifting, which has recently reached alarming levels across England and Wales.

Notably, police statistics reveal that shoplifting offences have soared, exceeding half a million cases for the first time, representing a 20 per cent increase from the previous year. This spike has prompted retailers to implement various preventative measures; a Greggs branch in Southwark, for example, has resorted to using D-locks on its drinks fridge, while other locations report more creative solutions as staff take security into their own hands during this crisis.

Despite these challenges, Greggs has made significant strides in business performance. In its latest trading report, the company announced a pre-tax profit of £203.9 million for 2024, an increase of 8.3 per cent compared to the previous year. The chain has attributed this growth to its strategic expansion of new shops, extended opening hours, and recent price increases on its popular offerings, including a rise in the cost of its traditional sausage roll to £1.30.

However, the context of this success is complicated by the current economic climate. Many customers continue to experience financial strain due to the cost-of-living crisis, which includes rising energy prices and housing costs. This financial uncertainty may be influencing consumer behaviour and, by extension, sales figures.

Despite crossing the £2 billion sales mark for the first time in 2024, the company’s share price took a hit, dropping over 12% following this announcement. Analysts have pointed to several reasons for this downturn, including an overall slowdown in like-for-like sales, which came in at just 1.7% during the first nine weeks of 2025, significantly lower than the previous year's figures. Poor weather and waning consumer confidence are thought to have contributed to these disappointing results.

While Greggs has demonstrated resilience in adjusting its operational strategies amid rising theft and economic pressures, the landscape remains challenging. Retailers across the board, including larger supermarkets like Sainsbury's, are similarly adapting to combat retail crime. Sainsbury's, for instance, has employed advanced monitoring systems at self-checkouts to deter theft, highlighting that the issue of shoplifting is not isolated to any single chain.

As Greggs continues its trial of the over-the-counter model and evaluates its broader implications, the company remains focused on maintaining a balance between operational security and customer service. The bakery chain's ongoing adjustments may not only help address the immediate challenges of theft, but also play a crucial role in shaping its future stability in an evolving retail environment.

### Reference Map

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2. Paragraph 2: 1, 2
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Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/greggs-sandwich-shoplifting-change-share-price-b2753639.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.lbc.co.uk/news/uk/london-greggs-branch-forced-to-put-d-locks-on-drinks-fridge-to-halt-shoplifting/> - A Greggs branch in Southwark, London, has implemented D-locks on its drinks fridge to prevent shoplifting incidents. A video shows staff securing the fridge after allowing a customer to select a drink. This measure comes amid rising shoplifting offences in London, with nearly 90,000 recorded in 2024, a significant increase from the previous year. The Office for National Statistics reports a 20% rise in shoplifting offences across England and Wales, marking the highest number since 2003. Retailers, including Greggs, are adopting various strategies to combat this surge in theft.
3. <https://needtoknow.co.uk/2025/05/08/greggs-staff-secure-their-goods-with-bike-lock-during-shoplifting-crisis/> - In response to a surge in shoplifting, staff at a Greggs branch in West Norwood, London, used a red bike lock to secure the drinks fridge. This action was taken after repeated thefts, with one incident involving a thief who claimed he was 'going to chuck it away anyway.' Customers praised the staff's initiative, though it was clarified that this was not official company policy but an isolated incident. Greggs declined to comment on the matter.
4. <https://www.corporatefinancenews.net/greggs-hits-2-bn-annual-sales-mark-but-share-price-falls.php> - Greggs reported surpassing the £2 billion sales mark in 2024, an 11.3% increase from the previous year. Despite this achievement, the company's share price fell by over 12% following the announcement. The decline was attributed to a 1.7% year-on-year like-for-like sales growth in the first nine weeks of 2025, the slowest since the pandemic. Analysts cited challenging weather conditions in January and concerns over consumer sentiment as contributing factors to the slowdown.
5. <https://www.investing.com/news/stock-market-news/greggs-shares-drop-over-8-as-sales-growth-slows-amid-tough-trading-conditions-3904724> - Greggs PLC experienced an over 8% drop in share price after reporting a slowdown in sales growth. Like-for-like sales in company-managed shops rose by 1.7% in the first nine weeks of 2025, a significant deceleration from the 5.5% growth recorded for the whole of 2024. The company attributed the softer performance to poor weather in January but noted that February's trading was more in line with expectations. Despite the sluggish start, Greggs maintained its confidence in managing inflationary pressures and continuing its expansion plans.
6. <https://www.cityam.com/greggs-share-price-falls-after-city-broker-says-sell/> - Greggs' share price declined nearly 4% after Panmure Liberum downgraded its rating for the bakery chain to 'Sell.' The analysts suggested that Greggs' period of 'supernormal' growth may be over, citing concerns over the effectiveness of the company's evening trade expansion and its impact on profitability. The downgrade also included a reduction in the profit before tax forecast for 2025 and 2026, with a potential dividend cut if sales decline further this year.
7. <https://www.proactiveinvestors.com/companies/news/1067292/greggs-plummets-to-two-year-low-as-sales-turn-even-more-negative-1067292.html> - Greggs' shares fell almost 10% to a two-year low following results that showed a continued cooling in sales growth after price hikes late last year. The company's like-for-like sales growth slowed to 1.7% year-on-year in the first nine weeks of 2025, down from 2.5% in the fourth quarter of the previous year. Analysts expressed concerns that the current sales trend and the impact of price increases could lead to even more negative volumes in the future.