# South London bookshop owner appeals for community support after break-in



A south London independent bookshop has been targeted in a break-in, prompting its owner to appeal to the community for support and understanding. On the night of Thursday, 18 April, Lala Books, located on Grove Lane in Camberwell, suffered a robbery resulting in a smashed front window and the theft of several items, including an iPhone. The window damaged during the incident featured "beautiful" Victorian wobbly glass, highlighting a loss beyond mere property damage.

The owner, who operates the business as a solo female entrepreneur, described the impact of the break-in and took the opportunity to address the issue of ongoing shoplifting occurrences. Speaking via Instagram, she disclosed, "We might be a bit slower this morning as we had a break-in last night. It wasn’t too bad really—a front window smashed (sadly our beautiful Victorian wobbly glass), an iPhone and a business ATM card stolen. It could have been way worse."

She also acknowledged that since opening, there had been occasional shoplifting of books, noting wryly, "Actually really good books too, whoever you are you have great taste!" At the same time, she recognised the wider challenges facing many people, such as the cost-of-living crisis, saying, "I get it, the cost of living sucks, so does capitalism really, shoplifting might even feel exciting!"

The owner emphasised the difficult financial realities for small independent businesses like hers. She highlighted that she does not own the building nor have significant wealth, having invested her own savings to establish and maintain the shop. She said, "I pay myself below minimum wage but at the same time look after my staff (starting wage at Lala is £15 p/h, I offer lots of benefits including paid sick leave). I pay my taxes and my bills on time. I try to run my business ethically and in a way that benefits the community."

In light of these circumstances, the shop owner made a heartfelt plea. She asked the public not to steal from small businesses or cause property damage, emphasising how such actions adversely affect these community-focused ventures. Moreover, she extended a generous offer to those facing financial hardship, inviting anyone who cannot afford to buy a book to approach her in the shop or contact her via direct message. "I’d rather you have the magic of a book than not, I really do," she said. "I’m happy to gift books to people who can’t afford them. It’s a genuine offer and I promise you it won’t be weird."

Lala Books, which has positioned itself as a welcoming, ethical business supporting both its employees and customers, hopes that this incident and message will foster greater respect and support from the local community.

The myLondon publication is reporting on this incident and the subsequent response from Lala Books' owner.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.mylondon.news/news/south-london-news/camberwell-independent-bookshop-broken-robbed-26970250> - This article from MyLondon reports on the break-in at Lala Books in Camberwell on the night of April 18, confirming the smashed Victorian wobbly glass window and theft including an iPhone.
* <https://www.instagram.com/lalabooks.london/> - Lala Books' official Instagram page where the owner shared a post addressing the break-in, the theft, ongoing shoplifting issues, and her appeal to the community.
* <https://www.thebookseller.com/news/independent-bookshops-face-growing-challenges-amid-cost-living-crisis-1308459> - This article explains the financial difficulties faced by independent bookshops in the UK during the cost-of-living crisis, aligning with the shop owner’s remarks about economic challenges and ethical business practices.
* <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/shoplifting-rise-uk-cost-of-living-b2334102.html> - A news report that documents the rise in shoplifting incidents across the UK linked to the cost-of-living crisis, supporting the owner’s comment on understanding why some might resort to theft.
* <https://www.gov.uk/minimum-wage-rates> - The official UK government page detailing minimum wage rates, corroborating the owner’s statement about paying staff above minimum wage (£15 per hour) with benefits such as paid sick leave.