# Owners of Medway newsagents face daily threatening behaviour from youths



Owners of a village newsagents in Medway, Kent, have reported ongoing terrorisation by groups of children engaging in increasingly aggressive and threatening behaviour. The family-run shop, which has served the community for nearly two decades, is facing a surge in anti-social incidents that staff describe as daily occurrences.

The store’s owner, who spoke anonymously, outlined how verbal abuse from youths has escalated to physical intimidation, with display stands being thrown at staff members. They recounted fears growing that threats initially made with plastic knives could soon involve real weapons. Speaking to the Daily Mail, the owner said: "We've always had some kind of trouble, but I think it's gotten worse now because people can't reprimand kids. There's no discipline in schools and it just overspills onto the streets. They think they can do what they want, but they can't carry on doing this."

The owner further described how the children refuse to adhere to shop rules such as limits on the number of youngsters allowed inside at once. "If you tell them it's only two at a time in the shop, they don't like that, and they try and push their way in," they explained. When staff warn they will call the police, the youths retort, "The police aren't going to come out anyway," reflecting their confidence in the lack of immediate law enforcement response.

Incidents captured on CCTV have included a customer who was refused service after previously assaulting staff by throwing sweets and display items. This individual allegedly threatened to return with acid and was subsequently charged by police. Another case involved a habitual shoplifter who claimed assault after being removed from the shop, prompting a police attendance.

Recently, surveillance footage recorded a group of children heckling and throwing water at staff outside the premises during the half-term school break. The owner remarked: "The police knew one particular kid who was at the front of the video. Apparently, he threatened someone with a plastic knife a little while ago. It is a trigger for me because today it's a plastic knife, but tomorrow it could be a real one."

Despite reporting every incident to the police, the newsagents’ owners say officers seldom respond promptly, apparently due to challenges in securing prosecutions. The owner expressed frustration: "Even though it has a massive impact on our lives and businesses, there are no repercussions for these children." They also mentioned the police advising that youths from social housing could face eviction as a deterrent, but added this does not apply to all offenders.

Kent Police confirmed they have received reports concerning anti-social behaviour at the shop and stated that investigations are ongoing. Following the latest incident on 12 April, officers attended and conducted enquiries including reviewing CCTV footage of children allegedly throwing liquid from a bottle within the store. A spokesperson said: "Officers are liaising with the owner of the premises and work is ongoing, including with schools, to help identify those responsible so that they and their families can be spoken to and a proportionate resolution reached."

Anti-social behaviour of this nature is not isolated to Medway. Nearby Sittingbourne has implemented dispersal orders in response to disorder and threatening behaviour towards shop staff and the public along its high street. Similarly, in Ashford, a local business owner and war veteran has spoken out about how such behaviour and theft are severely affecting his livelihood.

The Kent Police Medway Community Safety Unit’s Inspector Paul Diddams acknowledged the significant impact on local businesses and residents. He assured that "officers will always pursue the most robust options available to them, including prosecution where appropriate." Inspector Diddams encouraged those experiencing similar issues to report them promptly to facilitate effective police action.

The shop owners summarised the challenges facing their business and community: "It is traumatic. I think the only course of action really is to give retailers more power to be able to physically hold these children and push them out." They emphasised their desire to work and serve the community without incident, saying, "All we want to do is come to work, do our job and go home – we don't want anything else."

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