# Greggs trials behind-counter service in response to record shoplifting surge



In response to a dramatic surge in shoplifting, Greggs, the popular bakery chain, has announced a trial initiative aimed at enhancing security in select stores. The move, which sees sandwiches and beverages shifted from self-serve fridges to behind the counter, is currently being tested in five locations, notably including a store in Whitechapel, east London. This decision comes against the backdrop of alarming crime statistics revealing a historical high of over half a million recorded shoplifting offences in England and Wales, with a staggering 20 per cent increase from the previous year.

The initiative, while focused on addressing specific locations that experience greater levels of anti-social behaviour, signifies a broader strategy among retailers to combat rising theft. A 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 shift to counter-based service is expected to heighten customer safety while ensuring staff are less vulnerable to theft-related incidents.

Greggs’ experience reflects a troubling trend within the UK retail sector, where businesses are increasingly concerned about losing inventory to theft rather than the aftereffects of the cost of living crisis. According to the latest figures from the Office for National Statistics, a record 516,971 shoplifting offences were recorded in 2024, marking a sharp rise that many attribute to the aftermath of the pandemic. Retailers, struggling to balance security measures with customer experience, are implementing various tactics ranging from security cameras to modified store layouts.

Highlighting the urgency of the situation, one Greggs branch in Bradford underwent drastic measures after enduring 11 break-ins in just six months. Security shutters were installed following police recommendations to prevent further damage. Similarly, another location in West Norwood, London, resorted to using bike locks to secure a drinks fridge after frequent theft incidents, with staff manually assisting paying customers. These creative approaches reveal the extent to which retailers are adapting in a shifting landscape marked by significant economic challenges.

Beyond Greggs, supermarket giants are also reevaluating their self-checkout systems, with some, like Sainsbury's, incorporating advanced surveillance technology to monitor customer behaviour more effectively. Meanwhile, a Brisbane supermarket has opted to close its self-serve checkouts entirely due to rising theft.

As inflation pressures continue to shape consumer behaviour, incidents at Greggs have increased significantly, particularly in areas where accessible exit points make theft easier. In places like Deptford, staff reported daily incidences, reflecting the compounding stresses of high living costs.

In light of these challenges, Greggs recently initiated the use of body cameras for staff, particularly in high-traffic areas, as a measure to safeguard employees during confrontational situations. This decision underscores the necessity for enhanced security protocols amid a navigating climate of rising theft and customer demand for convenience.

As Greggs and other retailers adapt their operations to thwart theft, the implications for customer service and staff safety are increasingly intertwined. This balancing act highlights the evolving landscape of retail in the UK as businesses strive to safeguard their assets and employees while continuing to serve their communities amidst challenging economic times.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1: 1, 2
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4. Paragraph 4: 4, 5
5. Paragraph 5: 6
6. Paragraph 6: 1, 7

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 London has installed D-locks on its drinks fridge to prevent shoplifting incidents. A video shows staff securing the fridge after allowing a customer to choose a drink. This measure comes amid rising shoplifting rates in London, with nearly 90,000 offences recorded in 2024, a significant increase from the previous year. Retailers, including Greggs, are implementing various strategies to combat theft, such as using security devices and adjusting store layouts. The effectiveness of these measures remains to be seen as shoplifting continues to rise.
3. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cdrjn2d4zpro> - A Greggs bakery in Bradford experienced 11 break-ins over six months, leading to the installation of security shutters. The Rooley Lane branch was targeted multiple times between March and August 2024, with two break-ins occurring on the same day on two occasions. The company applied to Bradford Council for permission to install security blinds, acting on the advice of West Yorkshire Police and its in-house security team. The repeated incidents caused damage to the store, resulting in boarded-up doors and windows.
4. <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 bike lock to secure the drinks fridge. The staff member stood by the door to open it for paying customers only. This innovative approach was praised by customers, with one commenting, "Damn right for Greggs. People take the mick and help themselves. Well done." The move highlights the challenges retailers face in combating theft and the creative solutions being implemented.
5. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-04-25/supermarket-closes-its-self-serve-checkouts/103762096> - A Brisbane IGA supermarket closed its self-serve checkouts due to a significant rise in shoplifting. The decision reflects a broader trend where retailers are reevaluating self-checkout systems in response to increased theft. Other retailers, including Dollar General and Target, have also adjusted their self-checkout policies, with some removing or restricting these systems to combat shoplifting. The effectiveness of these measures in reducing theft remains a topic of discussion among industry experts and consumers.
6. <https://www.selondoner.co.uk/news/01112023-deptford-greggs-thefts-skyrockets-in-recent-months-say-staff> - Staff at a Greggs branch in Deptford, London, reported a significant increase in thefts, with a minimum of two incidents per day involving items like sandwiches, crisps, and drinks. The rise in shoplifting is attributed to the cost of living crisis, making food more accessible to thieves. The store's proximity to open exit doors has made it more vulnerable to theft. Staff have removed drinks from the front and stored them in the back fridges, requiring customers to ask for them, but this has been inconvenient for both staff and customers.
7. <https://www.lbc.co.uk/news/surging-sausage-roll-thefts-force-greggs-staff-wearing-body-cameras/> - Greggs has equipped staff with body cameras following a surge in sausage roll thefts and attacks on workers. The wearable cameras, capable of recording up to 90 minutes, are activated by staff during confrontations or thefts. The trial is being conducted in some of the UK's busiest Greggs stores, including those at London Bridge station. A sign outside the shop reads, "To ensure the safety of our customers and colleagues, we're trialling body-worn cameras in this shop. Audio and video will be recorded."