# Greggs trials counter service to tackle rising anti-social behaviour in select stores



The recent decision by Greggs, the beloved bakery chain, to trial the removal of certain self-serve items in select locations has sparked a wave of concern among customers. The move, influenced by increasing incidents of anti-social behaviour, means popular choices like sandwiches and bottled drinks will now be available only from behind the counter at specific sites, including Whitechapel in East London. This trial reflects a broader trend within retail, as businesses grapple with rising levels of theft and safety issues that have come to define customer experiences in urban settings.

Customers have expressed their dismay on social media, highlighting a collective nostalgia for a time when shopping was not clouded by the threat of crime. Comments on forums reveal a shared frustration over the necessity of such measures, with one user lamenting, “It was nice to have grown up in a high trust society. I feel sad my kids won’t experience it.” Another remarked that this regression resembles the service norms of earlier decades, asserting, “We’re going to end up back at counter service like corner shops had in the 1940s.” This sentiment underscores a palpable sense of loss regarding community trust and safety.

Greggs, acknowledging the challenges faced by its staff and customers alike, stated that the initiative is one of several being tested across various locations exposed to heightened anti-social behaviour. A spokesperson for the company explained, “Customers can expect to see our full range of great value and tasty Greggs favourites available from behind the counter. The safety of our colleagues and customers remains our number one priority.” While some customers welcome the added security as necessary, viewing it as a rational response to the theft epidemic, others remain sceptical, voicing concerns over the implications for customer experience.

This move follows a series of escalating measures taken by the chain in response to rising crime rates. Reports indicate that Greggs staff in certain locations have been equipped with body cameras to deter thefts, particularly in high-traffic areas such as London Bridge station. Here, a clear notice informs patrons that audio and video may be recorded to enhance safety. Additionally, specific branches have resorted to more drastic security implementations; one in Southwark, for example, has installed D-locks on its drinks fridge to combat a surge in shoplifting incidents, a step indicative of just how pervasive these issues have become.

In a broader context, more than 90,000 shoplifting incidents were recorded in London alone in 2024, marking a troubling increase from the previous year. This spike in crime has left countless businesses fearful for their safety and viability, culminating in actions like Greggs’ decision to retract an application for a 24-hour operating licence in Canterbury, where residents feared the potential for anti-social behaviour in the area.

The growing trend of anti-social behaviour has escalated to the point where even express concerns about mundane operations, like the opening hours of a bakery, reflect deep-seated anxieties about community safety. Following a well-publicised series of disturbances, another Greggs outlet in Newark Market Place encountered trouble when a group of young individuals brazenly stole items in broad daylight, raising alarms about the effects of persistent petty crime on local businesses.

As the nation navigates these challenges, Greggs' actions highlight a precarious balancing act between ensuring customer convenience and upholding safety in an increasingly volatile retail landscape. The bakery's trials of counter service reflect not just an operational shift, but a commentary on the evolving relationship between businesses and their patrons amidst growing fears over crime and disorder. Ultimately, the consequences of such measures may shape retail experiences for generations to come, redefining how we interact with local establishments.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4
2. Paragraphs 4, 5
3. Paragraphs 6, 7
4. Paragraphs 1, 3
5. Paragraph 6
6. Paragraph 6
7. Paragraph 7

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25177836.greggs-new-self-serve-changes-slammed-customers/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.lbc.co.uk/news/surging-sausage-roll-thefts-force-greggs-staff-wearing-body-cameras/> - Greggs has equipped its staff with body cameras following a surge in sausage roll thefts and attacks on workers. The initiative aims to deter thieves and enhance safety, with some of the UK's busiest Greggs locations, including London Bridge station, implementing the measure. A sign in 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.'
3. <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 installed D-locks on its drinks fridge to combat rising shoplifting incidents. A video shows staff securing the drinks cabinet with a D-lock after allowing a customer to choose a drink. This measure comes amid a significant increase in shoplifting offences in London, with nearly 90,000 recorded in 2024, a rise of approximately 58,000 compared to 2023.
4. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-kent-68068731> - Greggs withdrew its application for a 24-hour licence at its Canterbury city centre branch after concerns about potential anti-social behaviour. The bakery chain had sought to operate around the clock, but local residents and councillors expressed fears that the area could become intimidating at night. The nearby McDonald's, already open 24 hours, was also cited as a concern.
5. <https://www.newarkadvertiser.co.uk/news/deplorable-young-hooligans-sadly-prove-there-is-such-thing-9318398/> - A Greggs store in Newark Market Place faced a theft incident where three young individuals stole sandwiches and a soft drink in broad daylight. The theft occurred in front of CCTV cameras, and staff reported regular problems with the same group causing disturbances in the area. The incident has raised concerns about anti-social behaviour affecting local businesses.
6. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cdrjn2d4zpro.amp> - A Greggs drive-thru in Bradford experienced 11 break-ins over a six-month period, leading to the installation of security shutters. The repeated incidents caused significant damage, resulting in boarded-up doors and windows. Greggs applied to Bradford Council for permission to install security blinds, acting on the advice of police and its in-house security team to deter opportunistic thieves.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2023/apr/18/greggs-appeals-against-ban-on-all-night-outlet-in-central-london> - Greggs appealed against a ban preventing its Leicester Square outlet from selling hot food through the night after police claimed it could lead to a spike in crime and disorder. The company was refused an overnight licence to operate between 11pm and 5am amid concerns that the store could become a hotspot for late-night disturbances and anti-social behaviour.