

Layers of defence

How layered security deters retail crime before an offender ever reaches your shop floor

Deter it. Delay it. Detect it.



This general guide does not replace a site-specific risk assessment. Always verify any measures against your fire risk assessment, insurer requirements, and data protection/surveillance laws before installation. We acknowledge that operating models and site circumstances vary across different stores, so measures should be applied flexibly based on local feasibility.

INTRODUCTION

Why layers of defence matter

No single security measure prevents retail crime. Shutters get cut, alarms get ignored, cameras get avoided, and a lone deterrent is quickly learned and worked around. A layered approach in any circumstance places obstacle after obstacle between the offender and your stock, so the effort rises, the reward falls, and the risk of being identified increases.

01 **Risk is reduced, not moved**
When one layer fails the others remain, so failure is partial rather than total.

02 **Staff safety comes first**
The best outcome is an offender who decides not to enter, not a colleague who has to intervene.

03 **Stock loss falls**
Goods that are harder to take, conceal and sell on are far less attractive to steal.

04 **Evidence improves**
Overlapping layers produce the identification, imagery and overall links that support court outcomes.

05 **Confidence grows**
Visible, coordinated security reassures your team, your customers and neighbouring businesses.

06 **Cost falls with it**
Deterrence is cheaper than recovery: less lost stock, less staff time, fewer claims, less harm.



THE CONCEPT

Think of your security as an onion

Your store is the core. Your stock, your takings and, most importantly, your people sit at the centre. Around that core sits layer after layer of protective skin, and an offender who wants to reach the core has to cut through every one of them. Peel one layer away and the next is still there. No layer has to be perfect or identical in every circumstance, because no layer is working alone.



1. **The wider area.** Cameras, patrols, partnership intelligence and alerts across the town centre or retail park.
2. **The street and shopfront.** Signage, lighting and clear sightlines that show the store is watched and well run.
3. **The physical shell.** Doors, glazing, shutters, alarms, CCTV, barriers and secure display.
4. **Electronic Article Surveillance (EAS) and item-level tagging:** Hard tags, spider wraps, bottle collars, ink tags, and soft stickers attached directly to high-risk stock.
5. **Your people, at the core.** Trained, engaged colleagues, a considered shop layout and reporting relevant incidents and intelligence

Figure 1: The layers of defence. Every layer an offender crosses adds effort, time and exposure, and none of them stands alone.

THE CONCEPT

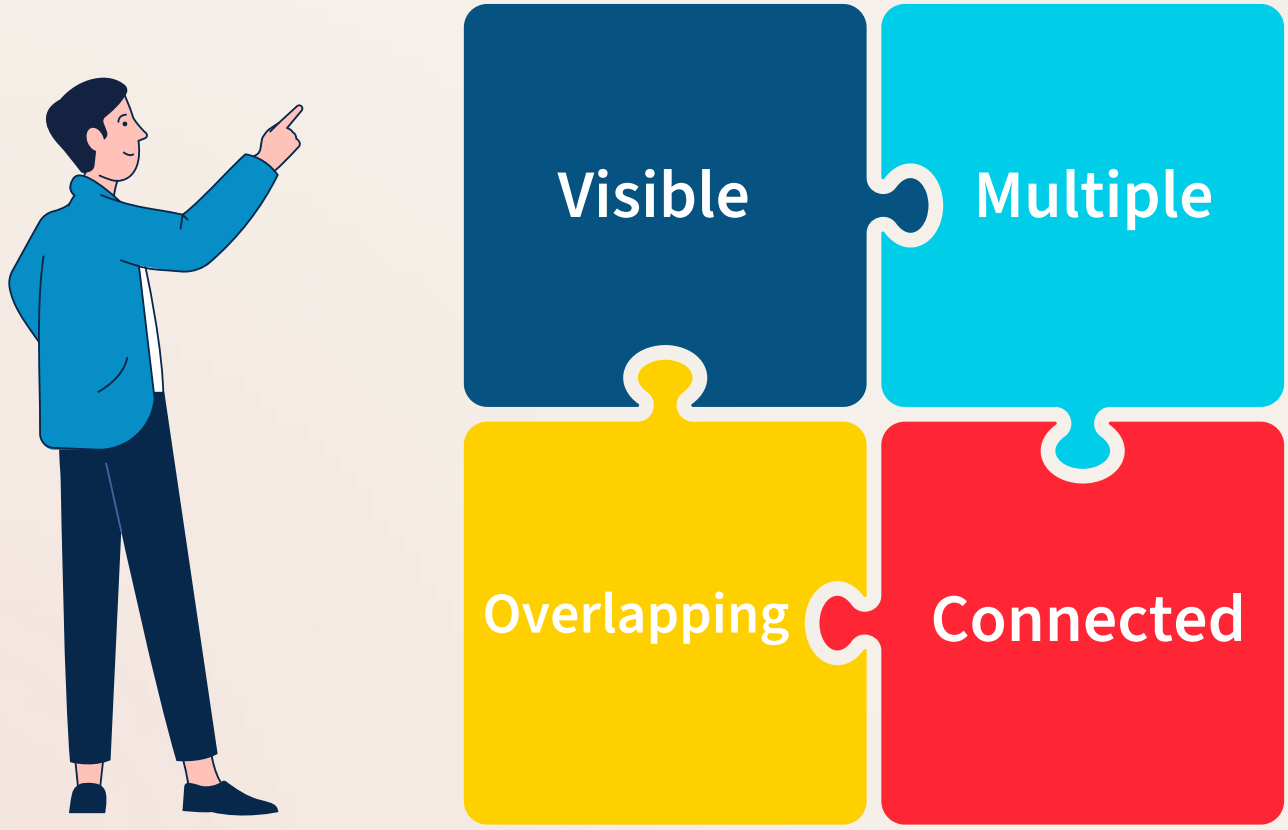
How Layered Security Works

For layered security to work, individual measures cannot sit in isolation. When deployed effectively, each layer reinforces the next - increasing the effort, time, and risk required to target your business while creating multiple opportunities for detection.

Four principles of an effective layered strategy

- **Visible**
  A deterrent the offender cannot see does not deter. Signage, lighting, marked stock and staff presence must be obvious.
- **Overlapping**
  Each layer covers a gap. Physical perimeters secure the building, CCTV provides visual coverage, item tagging protects stock, and vigilant staff cover blind spots.
- **Multiple**
  Single measures fail. Relying on a single control creates a clear vulnerability. Combining physical, technological, and operational measures removes easy targets.
- **Connected**
  Intelligence creates scale. A threat identified at one boundary should inform the rest. Sharing alerts across your local BCRP network protects your store and the wider retail community.

Figure 2: Deterrents work when they are seen, when there are many of them, and when they are wired together.



LAYER 01 · EXTERNAL DETERRENTS

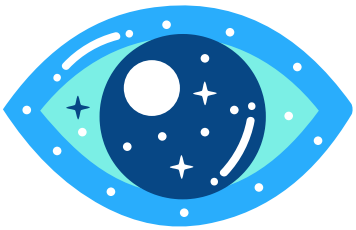
The wider area

The outermost layer sits well beyond your door. Many prolific offenders may already be known locally or travel between areas, so long before they reach your entrance, they pass through a network of eyes and systems that can identify them and warn you. This layer belongs to your town centre, your BID and your partnership, and it costs you nothing to install. You only benefit from it if you are connected to it.

01 Eyes across the area

Systems and people that spot offenders before they arrive.

- **ANPR and transport hubs.** Camera networks on approach roads, car parks and station entrances flag vehicles of interest as they arrive.
- **Public space CCTV.** Control rooms identify or locate individuals of interest and can track and record movement between premises.
- **Police patrols.** Officers can engage known offenders early, and a conversation on the street often ends the day's offending before it starts.
- **Rangers, wardens and street teams.** Uniformed presence with radio access provides the same early engagement and reassurance.
- **Parking officers and public space workers.** Cleansing crews, enforcement and transport staff are extra eyes when they are briefed and radio linked.



02 Alerts that reach your store

The link that turns someone else's sighting into your warning.

- **BCRP instant messaging.** A single alert puts a description, image and direction of travel into every member store within seconds.
- **BCRP radio.** Live voice contact between stores, security teams, the CCTV control room and police is the fastest warning you can get.
- **Live facial recognition, where lawfully deployed.** Used under strict legal, data protection and watchlist governance, it identifies prolific offenders at the point of entry.
- **Ensure trained users are on shift.** Alerts only work if somebody is listening, so make sure cover is rostered for every trading hour.



Practical step: ask your local BCRP or BID which of these systems already operate in your area, and make sure at least two colleagues per shift can receive alerts and use the radio confidently.

LAYER 02 · EXTERNAL DETERRENTS

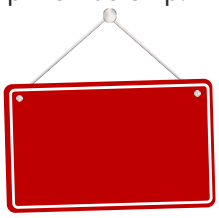
The street and your shopfront

This is the layer where the offender decides whether your store is worth the risk, and that decision is made from the pavement in a few seconds, on appearances alone. Signage, lighting and sightlines are the cheapest and most effective deterrents you own.

01 Signage

A monitored, zero tolerance environment, stated plainly.

- State what is in place: CCTV recording, stock forensically marked, BCRP Partnership where deployed, and radio contact with police and neighbours.
- Make clear that every incident is reported, that you support exclusion schemes, and that you will always seek prosecution.
- Position signs at eye level at every entrance, at high-value fixtures and at the rear or service door.
- Keep wording short, calm and factual, replace faded signs, and display your partnership membership.



02 Lighting

No dark pockets, front or back.

- Light the whole approach evenly: entrance, frontage, alleyway, yard, bin store and staff parking.
- Use dusk to dawn control, and check that planting, signage or deliveries are not casting new shadows.
- Check CCTV is setup optimally; it requires light to produce identification-quality images.
- Replace failed lights within days, not weeks. A dark shop reads as an unattended shop.



03 Clear sightlines

Everyone who could help needs to be able to see in, and your team needs to see out.

- Keep windows clear above roughly one metre so patrols, neighbours and passers-by can see in.
- Lower anything that blocks the view of the till, the entrance and high-value fixtures.
- Never leave ladders, pallets, bins or cages where they can be used to climb or conceal.
- Repair damage and remove graffiti quickly. It tells an offender someone is paying attention.

LAYER 03 · PHYSICAL DEFENCES

The physical shell

If an offender is undeterred by the wider area and by your shopfront, the next layer is the building itself and the equipment inside it. Every element here should be specified properly, maintained, and signed, so that it deters as well as protects.

01 The building

Every way in, front and back.

- **Doors, locks, glazing and shutters.** Certificated locks, protected glazing on vulnerable panes, and shutters where your risk assessment supports them.
- **The back of the building.** Rear doors, delivery bays, cellar hatches and roof access are attacked frequently.
- **Intruder alarms.** Monitored, tested regularly, with a current key holder list and clear external signage.
- **CCTV that produces evidence.** Cover entrances, tills and stockroom doors, check quality at head height, keep time and date correct, and know how to export quickly.



02 Inside the shop

Equipment that slows movement and protects stock.

- **Layout hardware.** Barriers, queue guidance and a considered entry and exit route remove the straight run to the door.
- **Secure display for high-risk lines.** Locked cases, protective wraps, dummy packaging and reduced facings on targeted products.
- **Headsets and radios.** Silent, instant communication lets your team support one another without confrontation.
- **Cash and stock handling.** Frequent till lifts, a locked safe, discreet banking routines, and stockroom access limited to those who need it.



Never compromise on escape. No physical measure may obstruct a fire exit or delay evacuation. Check every change against your fire risk assessment and your insurer's requirements.



LAYER 04 · ELECTRONIC ARTICLE SURVEILLANCE (EAS) AND ITEM-LEVEL TAGGING

Merchandise Protection

If an offender breaches your physical shell, the next layer protects the individual merchandise. Where feasible for your operating hours and circumstances, high-risk items should be fitted with visible, maintained EAS tags and security wraps that act as immediate deterrents and trigger alarms at the exit.

01 Tagging the Stock

Item-level protection on high-risk lines.

- **Hard tags and spider wraps**. Use robust hard tags for apparel and adjustable spider wraps for boxed electronics or high-value stock to deter on-floor tampering.
- **Specialist protection.** Fit bottle collars onto spirits and ink-filled tags or lanyard tethers to targeted, high-theft merchandise.
- **Concealed soft stickers.** Apply active EAS labels internally or discreetly on vulnerable packaging to catch concealed theft at the point of exit.
- **Consistent tag placement.** Standardise tagging locations across product categories so staff can quickly audit stock and check for missing tags.



02 Detection and response

Hardware and routines that make tagging effective.

- **Pedestals and exit gates.** Maintain, test, and keep exit pedestals clear of clutter so alarms trigger reliably the moment an active tag passes through.
- **Deactivation at the till.** Ensure till-point detachers and deactivators are secure, operational, and used consistently by trained colleagues.
- **Tag maintenance and storage.** Keep spare tags and detaching equipment locked away to prevent unauthorised access or theft of security tools.
- **Clear alarm protocols.** Train staff on calm, non-confrontational responses when an EAS gate triggers, prioritising customer experience and colleague safety.

Dynamic risk coverage. Tagging can shift offender focus to unprotected lines. Monitor loss data regularly to identify new 'hot items' and adjust tag allocation quickly.



LAYER 05 · HUMAN AND OPERATIONAL DEFENCES

Your people and the shop floor

Technology narrows the options; people close them down. A confident, attentive team is the layer offenders find hardest to plan around, because it is the one that reacts. It is also the layer most easily neglected, and the one that needs your protection in return.

01 The power of hello

Service that doubles as deterrence.

- Greet every person who enters, within seconds. It tells an offender they have been seen and remembered.
- Offering a basket provides a legitimate way to carry goods and can reduce opportunities for concealment.
- Keep colleagues visible and moving, particularly around high-risk fixtures. Presence, not pursuit.
- Agree the routine in advance: acknowledge, offer help, alert a colleague, record a description, report. Never confront and never follow.
- Support your team after an incident. A recorded, followed up response is part of the defence.



02 Layout and CCTV awareness

Design the floor so your team can see and act.

- Position the till so colleagues can see the entrance, and keep high-value lines within staffed sightlines.
- Design out blind aisles, dead ends and hidden corners, and keep displays low enough to see over.
- Make surveillance visible. A public monitor at the entrance is one of the most cost-effective deterrents available.
- Make sure colleagues know what the cameras cover, and how to preserve footage before it is overwritten.
- Review incident footage in team briefings to build recognition of repeat offenders.



THE OUTER SKIN · HUMAN AND OPERATIONAL DEFENCES

Partnership holds the layers together

An onion with no outer skin dries out. Partnership is what connects your layers to everyone else's. It turns your single sighting into a town-wide alert, and other people's intelligence into your early warning.

01 What your BCRP gives you

Tools no single store can build alone.

- Shared intelligence and images across member stores.
- Radio and instant messaging that reach the whole area in seconds.
- Exclusion and banning schemes, warning letters and support for civil orders.
- Analyst support, evidence packs for police and courts, and training for your team.
- A collective voice with your police force and local authority, supporting civil banning, ancillary orders, and Integrated Offender Management (IOM).

02 Reporting powers every layer

Live, real-time reporting is what makes the rest work.

- Report every incident, regardless of how minor or how familiar the offender is.
- Report to police and to your BCRP. Partnership data drives patrols, exclusions and prosecutions.
- Make reporting quick: one named process a colleague can complete in minutes.
- Share what worked. A description, an image or a method protects the whole street.

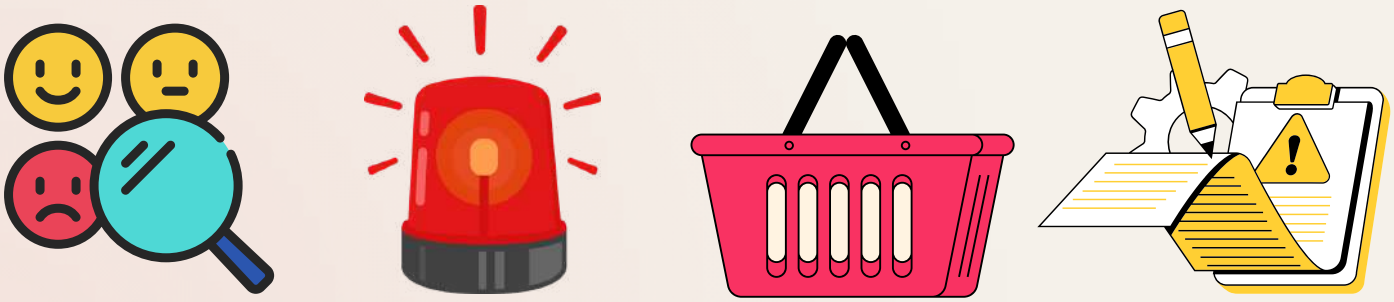
The chain of deterrence in practice

Offender identified in the wider area → Alert sent by radio and instant message →

Staff and security recognise them on arrival → Early, safe engagement: hello, a basket, presence

→ **Deterred** → Community notified, intelligence updated

Figure 3: Each handover in the chain is a layer. Break the chain at any point and the offender reaches the core.



PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Making it work in your business

The layers are the same whatever your size, but the way you deliver them differs, and measures should always be tailored to what is feasible for your operating hours and circumstances. Independent retailers gain most from partnership and from low-cost, visible measures. Multi-site retailers gain most from consistency, data and formal standards across the estate.

Layer	Independent shop	Multi-site retailer
01 Wider area	Join the BCRP, and make sure the radio or app is on and monitored during every trading hour.	Enrol every store in its local partnership and route alerts through your control room as well as the shop.
02 Street and shopfront	Refresh signage, fix the lighting, clear the window. A weekend's work with immediate effect.	Set an estate-wide signage and lighting standard, and audit it at store visits.
03 Physical shell	Prioritise the rear access, the till line and the most targeted fixtures.	Specify hardware and CCTV to a common standard, and use loss data to target secure display by store.
04 Merchandise Protection	Focus tags, wraps, and collars on your top target lines, ensuring deactivators work at the till and staff react consistently to every exit alarm.	Standardise tagging policy by category, track shrinkage data to dynamically reallocate tags to new target items, and audit EAS compliance across all sites.
05 People	Agree the greeting, the basket offer and the reporting routine at your next team briefing.	Make it induction content, refresh it annually, and report incident volumes as a board-level measure.

Whatever your size, start with the layer that is missing rather than the layer that is easiest. One new layer beats a second lock on a door that already has one.

THE PAYOFF

Sixteen factors to confirm with your team

Work through this list at your next team meeting. Anything you cannot confirm is an opportunity for the offender to exploit.

01 We are members of our local BCRP and receive alerts.

02 Radio or messaging is monitored during all trading hours.

03 Signage is current, factual and at every entrance.

04 External lighting works and covers the rear and yard.

05 Windows and aisles give clear sightlines in and out.

06 Rear doors, hatches and roof access are secured.

07 The alarm is monitored, tested, and key holders are current.

08 CCTV covers the entrance, till and high-value fixtures.

09 Someone on every shift can export footage correctly.

10 High-value stock is on secure display or reduced facings.

11 Methods of crime prevention are checked to be fully operational at the beginning of every shift.

12 Staff are aware of any prolific offenders and know the key target zones and items of the store.

13 Every colleague greets customers and offers a basket (where possible).

14 Colleagues know never to pursue, and what to do instead.

15 Every incident is reported to police and to the BCRP.

16 Security is reviewed at least twice a year with the team.



NEXT STEP

Join your local BCRP. No store should be a single layer.

While not every layer or measure will be feasible in every circumstance - depending on your store's operating hours, size, or local setup - adapting these principles to fit your environment is key. Partnership is what makes the layers overlap, and Business Crime Reduction Partnerships are stronger for every business that joins.

01

Find your nearest partnership through the National Association of Business Crime Partnerships.

02

Ask what alerts, radio, marking schemes and training are available to members in your area.

03

If there is no partnership near you, ask the NABCP and the NBCC how to start one. See our companion guide, *Setting up a BCRP*.



Safer high streets, together.

For more information, please contact the NABCP.

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This guide is general advice and does not replace a site-specific risk assessment. Check any measure against your fire risk assessment, your insurer's requirements, and the relevant data protection and surveillance camera obligations before installing it. We acknowledge that operating models and site circumstances vary across different stores, so measures should be applied flexibly based on local feasibility.

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