



# SHOPLIFTING

## No! An Honest Mistake

### Civil recovery companies: Where the real theft lies

Civil recovery companies claim to recover millions of pounds from shoplifters for high street retailers but rogue organisations simply bully those accused into paying unreasonable amounts. The Citizens Advice Bureau does not condone the behaviour of law breakers. However, in some instances, **unreasonable demands** have been placed on those accused of shoplifting or employees accused of theft.

Rogue companies have sent threatening letters demanding large sums of money although in most cases items stolen has been either under £20 or recovered in full by the retailer. Amounts demanded can vary between £85 and thousands of pounds.

*In cases where the goods damaged or stolen amount to nil, threatening letters go directly against the Office of Fair Trading guidelines and can be defined as **deceitful** and **unfair** business practice.*

Intimidating tactics seen in threatening letters include the use legal language as well as suggestions of court action, visiting bailiffs and/or having the accused shoplifters' details placed onto a "National Database of dishonesty".

The practice targets those most vulnerable to threats. Typically those under the age of 25 are likely to be hit the hardest or those working in retail or anyone just simply making an honest mistake. Alison<sup>1</sup>: A 23yr old mother of two whose 2yr old opened a juice box in Boots. Despite paying for the item, Alison received a letter demanding £87.50 to cover staff, administration and security costs. In some cases items have been stolen by teenagers (one as young as 14yrs old) but returned to the retailer without the need for police action.

Exploiting the inexperienced when all costs have been accounted for is extortion. Retail crime is a serious problem and it should not be condoned. However, recovering the costs of such crime cannot be justified by dishonest means.

<sup>1</sup>Names have been changed

## Talk to us in confidence...

**Talk to us**  
If you or someone you know has experienced unreasonable civil recovery methods, please contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau. You could be helping to challenge this unfair practice.

**Hillingdon Citizens Advice**

**UXBRIDGE CAB**

The Collonade, Civic Centre,  
Uxbridge Middlesex UB8 1UW

**HAYES CAB**

One Stop, 49-51 Station Rd, Hayes,  
UB3 4BE

**RUISLIP CAB**

9 Eastcote Road, Ruislip, HA4 8BD