

## Store Detective

Store detectives prevent and detect theft in retail stores and maintain a safe and secure environment for customers and staff. They may be called retail loss prevention officers or retail security officer.

### The Work

You could be:

- patrolling a store during opening hours, to watch for shoplifters
- using equipment such as closed circuit television (CCTV) to observe the store, two-way radio to contact colleagues, loop alarms, mirrors and electronic security tags on goods
- watching customers who are acting suspiciously, or are recognised as a previous offender, and keeping notes of what you see
- working undercover as a customer to watch and follow potential shoplifters
- detaining suspected shoplifters, taking them to the manager's office and possibly searching their clothes and possessions
- helping other staff deal with customers suspected of credit card theft or fraud
- calling the police, reporting what you have seen and being present when the police question a suspect
- talking to witnesses to collect evidence and writing up reports for both the police and the retailer
- occasionally giving evidence in court.

### Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Actual pay rates may vary depending on:

- where you work
- the size of the company or organisation you work for
- the demand for the job.

Pay rates for store detectives vary but are often based around the National Minimum Wage. Starting pay is often based on the National Minimum Wage (NMW) or the National Living Wage (NLW).

As of 1 April 2026 the National Minimum Wage is £10.85 an hour for workers aged 18 to 20. The National Living Wage for those aged 21 and over is £12.71 an hour. This may rise to around £14.50 an hour with experience.

### Conditions

- You would work indoors.
- Some store detectives are employed directly by the retailer, others are employed by security companies.
- You usually work a 40-hour week, on shifts which may cover seven days and include late evenings.
- You may cover a number of stores, especially if you are working under cover, so would need to travel between them.

### Getting In

- You do not need formal entry requirements but a good general education is useful.
- You must be able to speak and write clearly and accurately.
- If you work for a private security company who charges a fee for providing security guards to retail companies, you require a licence from the Security Industry Authority (SIA). See SIA website for details.
- You must be at least 18 to comply with SIA regulations.
- You might get in through a Modern Apprenticeship in Providing Security Officer Services.
- This can be a second career and entrants sometimes have previous experience of work in the police, prison service or other security work.
- A full clean driving licence and access to your own vehicle may be required for some jobs.
- You may need a first aid certificate.
- You will require a satisfactory criminal record check from Disclosure Scotland to show that you are suitable for this type of course. Contact [Disclosure Scotland](#) for details on the type you would need.

There are jobs with retail chains and with agencies. Jobs are usually advertised in Jobcentre Plus offices, on the [Find a Job](#) website and other recruitment websites. Prospects are good in most areas and particularly good in cities with major retail shopping centres.

## What Does It Take

You need to have:

- a good memory for faces and details
- good observation skills
- honesty
- a sense of responsibility
- good written and spoken communication skills, to write reports, deal with offenders and give evidence in court.

You need to be able to:

- make decisions, think and react quickly
- deal with people in a polite and tactful, but firm and assertive manner
- remain calm when speaking to people who may be aggressive or upset
- work alone and face possible threats.

## Training

- If you do a Modern Apprenticeship, you'll complete the SVQ Providing Security Officer Services at SCQF Level 5.
- If you require an SIA licence, you would complete an approved course through a training provider.
- Courses for the SIA Security Guard Licence take 5 days and for the SIA Door Supervisor Licence it's 6 days.
- You may also need the SIA CCTV Licence.
- Licences usually need to be renewed every 3 years.
- Other training may be on the job, working with experienced staff.
- You may do short courses such as those approved by the Security Industry Authority (SIA) and run by a

variety of organisations.

## Getting On

- You might work for a retail chain, or for a security firm or agency contracted to retail stores.
- With experience, and perhaps further training, you may be promoted to supervisor.
- You may progress to become a manager or trainer.
- Skills for Security runs short courses in training and assessment.
- For managers, the Security Institute offers a Certificate, a Diploma and an Advanced Diploma in Security Management which you can take by distance learning.

## Contacts

### Security Industry Authority (SIA)

Website: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/security-industry-authority](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/security-industry-authority)

X: @SIAuk

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/thesiauk](http://www.facebook.com/thesiauk)

### Security Institute

Tel: 02476 346 464

Email: [info@security-institute.org](mailto:info@security-institute.org)

Website: [www.security-institute.org](http://www.security-institute.org)

X: @SyInstitute

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/syinstitute](http://www.facebook.com/syinstitute)

### Skills for Security

Tel: 01905 744000

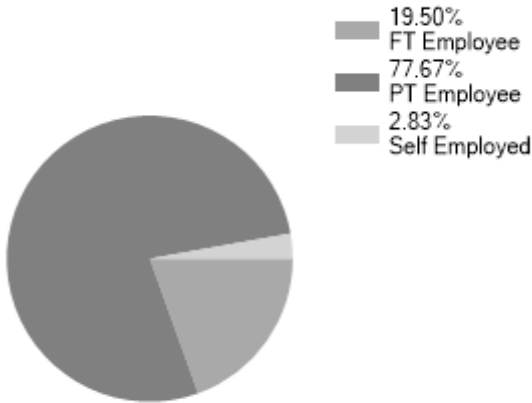
Email: [info@skillsforsecurity.org.uk](mailto:info@skillsforsecurity.org.uk)

Website: [www.skills4security.com](http://www.skills4security.com)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/skillsforsec](http://www.facebook.com/skillsforsec)

Statistics

Employment Status UK %

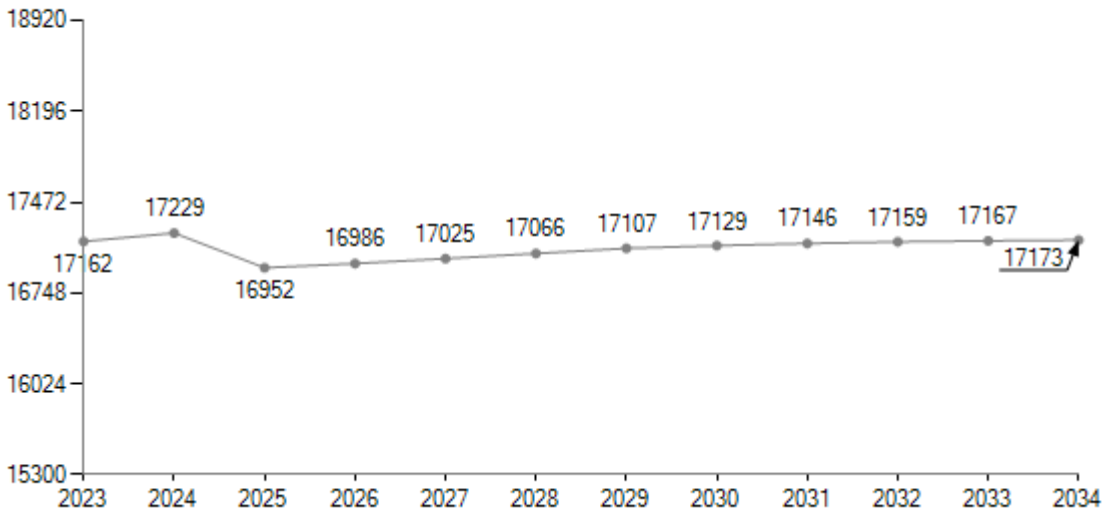


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

LMI data powered by [LMI for All](#)

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [Lightcast](#)