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## O2 Stores Lock Doors to Combat Rise in Armed Raids by Gangs

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Several O2 mobile phone shops across the U.K. have adopted strict security measures, including locking their doors during trading hours, after a series of violent robberies carried out by organised criminal gangs.

Customers in locations deemed at high risk, such as Richmond in south-west London, The Strand in central London, and St Albans in Hertfordshire, are now required to knock and wait for a security guard to let them in. This move comes in response to recent incidents involving masked intruders suspected of carrying weapons, targeting high-value mobile devices, and threatening shop workers.

At the O2 store in St Albans, staff confirmed they are now operating a one-in, one-out system. Only a few members of the public are allowed inside at any given time. This follows two alarming incidents in recent months, which have left employees shaken and anxious about their safety.

Speaking to *The Sun*, a staff member at the St Albans branch detailed a terrifying attempted robbery that took place in February. “Three men came in with their faces covered and tried to get into the back storeroom. I saw them out of the corner of my eye and honestly thought that was it,” the staff member said. While police responded quickly and nothing was stolen that time, the trauma remains.

An earlier robbery in October was more successful for the perpetrators. Phones worth thousands of pounds were taken, and threats made during the incident left a lasting impact on staff morale. As a result, the decision was made to lock the doors and bring in security guards as a preventive measure.

## Security Measures

“No one should come into work fearing they might be stabbed over a mobile phone,” the same worker added. “Yes, it’s affected footfall slightly, but everyone coming in now is clearly there to make a purchase. And more importantly, we feel safer.”

The Richmond branch has also suffered back-to-back attacks. In February, thieves armed with weapons forced staff into a secure area before making off with stock. A further incident occurred in May, though one of the suspects was quickly arrested thanks to a swift police response.

Telefónica UK, which operates under the O2 brand, confirmed that the ‘locked door’ policy is now active at a “small number” of its high street locations. A company spokesperson said the step was necessary to ensure the safety of staff and customers alike.

“In response to a growing number of thefts in some areas, we have introduced a locked door policy at a small proportion of our stores, including St Albans,” the spokesperson said.

“These branches are still fully open for business, but customers will be greeted by a security guard who will open the door for them. This is about prioritising safety and protecting stock.”

The company also confirmed it is cooperating with local police forces and other mobile retailers facing similar threats.

While the security measures are not without drawbacks, reduced footfall, and added operational challenges, staff broadly agreed that the extra precautions are necessary. The rise in violent and well-organised thefts has forced high street businesses to rethink how they operate to shield workers and preserve public confidence.

O2 says it remains committed to serving customers despite the challenges, and urges anyone with information on the recent robberies to come forward to assist police investigations.