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## **Operation Blush: Crime gang sentenced to 119 years in prison for firearms and drug offences**

Members of a crime gang who were involved in a conspiracy to possess firearms, including a Beretta, an Uzi sub machine gun and a Baikal self-loading pistol, have today been sent to prison for 119 years.

Those sentenced were involved with an organised crime groups from Wavertree, who through their ownership of these weapons brought fear and intimidation to communities in Merseyside.

Members of the group were charged with drugs and firearms offences. The gun and drug conspiracies span from February 2017 to May 2018 and concentrated on 14 key events between those dates.

Detective Chief Inspector Steve Reardon, said: “Those convicted today were caught up in a web of conspiracy involving the supply of guns and drugs on the streets of Merseyside.

“The investigation, codenamed Operation Blush, began in February 2017, after the National Ballistics Service identified that a Beretta on Merseyside had been used 16 times within Merseyside. Officers were determined to find the weapon and take it off the streets. Just 3 months later a 26-year-old motorcyclist was shot to the head on Stevenson Street, Wavertree. Miraculously his helmet saved him, but despite his lucky escape the victim refused to speak to police.

“Undeterred detectives continued to carry out their investigation and were

able to identify two groups believed to have links to the gun.

“Following the meeting of a Wavertree organised crime group and a Kirkby organised crime group within a Wavertree park, the Beretta was later recovered at an address in Windfield Close, Kirkby. Officers also recovered an Uzi sub machine gun; a Beretta double barrelled shotgun (sawn-off); a Baikal self-loading pistol and a further double barrelled shot gun (sawn-off) - were recovered by officers, along with caches of ammunition, Class A drugs (cocaine and diamorphine) and Class B drugs with an estimated street value of between £95,870 and £143,700, during the investigation.

He added: “Thanks to the sterling work of NABIS who were able to identify the Beretta and the Uzi submachine gun, along with DNA of some of the suspects, we were able to focus our investigations and identify those involved. Today they have been sentenced to 119 years in prison, which shows the severity of their crimes. Two of the weapons we recovered were responsible for 21 shootings on Merseyside - 16 shots fired and five resulting in injury, this could easily have been a very different story.

“One shooting on Merseyside is one too many. Whilst there is no doubt in my mind that Merseyside is a safer place with these weapons off the streets there is still a lot of work to be done to ensure that criminals know that the people of Merseyside will not tolerate the use of firearms on our streets. Together with our communities we need to transfer the fear of gun crime back on to those prepared to use guns on our streets – if you have information, which could help us put those involved in serious and organised crime before the courts, let us know and we will take positive action.”

Detective Chief Superintendent Jo Clews of the National Ballistics Intelligence Service (NABIS), said: “NABIS had identified this firearm (Beretta 9000S) as the most criminally active firearm in the UK, posing a significant threat to the public. Merseyside Police worked closely with NABIS to proactively investigate the firearm leading to its recovery. The approach Merseyside Police took in this case is one that NABIS promote as best practice across law enforcement. “The criminal use of firearms poses a real risk to the public, it’s vital that NABIS work closely with Police forces to reduce the risk. I would like to thank Merseyside Police and the NABIS team for the effort they put into recovering the most criminally used firearm in the UK, leading to the successful convictions in this case.”



[Watch video on YouTube here](#)

**Those sentenced are:**

- James Peter Lunt, 29 years, of Celendine Close, Wavertree, was at the head of the Wavertree organised crime group. He pleaded guilty to conspiracy to possess firearms (Beretta 9000s; double barrelled shotgun; Uzi submachine gun; Beretta double barrelled shotgun; and a Baikal self-loading pistol) with intent to endanger life; conspiracy to possess prohibited firearms for transfer; conspiracy to possess ammunition without a certificate; conspiracy to supply Class A drugs (cocaine) and conspiracy to supply Class B drugs (cannabis). He was sentenced to 21 years, with a three year extended license.

- Michael Connerty, 32 years, of Lemon Close, Kensington. He was with James Lunt on the day that the Uzi was seized in Nickleby Close, Toxteth. He was found guilty of Conspiracy to possess firearms with intent to endanger life; Conspiracy to possess prohibited firearms for transfer; Conspiracy to possess ammunition without a certificate and Conspiracy to supply Class B controlled drugs (cannabis). He was sentenced to 14 years.
- Thomas Porterfield, 37 years, of Llangollen, his DNA was found on the Uzi. He was found guilty of Conspiracy to possess firearms with intent to endanger life; Conspiracy to possess prohibited firearms for transfer and Conspiracy to possess ammunition without a certificate. He was sentenced to 13 years.
- Catherine McGuinness, 50 years, of Nickleby Close, Toxteth. The

Uzi submachine gun was recovered from her home on 19 October 2017. Ammunition was also recovered from the address along with cannabis with an estimated street value of about £500, cocaine also with an estimated street value of £500 and an envelope containing £1000 in cash, which was her payment for storing the weapon and ammunition. She was found guilty of Conspiracy to possess firearms with intent to endanger life, Conspiracy to possess prohibited firearms for transfer and Conspiracy to possess ammunition without a certificate. She was sentenced to 12 years.

- Alan E'Von, 22 years, of no fixed abode, his DNA was recovered at the scene of the injury shooting on Stephenson Street, Wavertree on 19th May 2017. He was found guilty of Conspiracy to possess firearms (Beretta 9000s) with intent to endanger life and Conspiracy to possess ammunition without a certificate. He was sentenced to 13 years.
- Lee Spencer Brown, 30 years, of Holmrook Road, Norris Green, was a prominent member of the Wavertree organised crime group. He was found guilty of Conspiracy to supply a Class B controlled drug (cannabis). He was sentenced to six and-a-half years.
- James Bennett, 25 years, of Arnold Grove, Wavertree, was a prominent member of the Wavertree organised crime group. He was found guilty of Conspiracy to supply a Class B controlled drug (cannabis). He was sentenced to five and-a-half years.
- Lee Jones, 25 years, of Mile End, Vauxhall, pleaded guilty to Conspiracy to supply a Class B controlled drug (cannabis). He was sentenced to four years.
- Adam Bigley, of Windfield Close, Kirkby, was previously sentenced to 6 years 8 months for possession of firearm (Beretta

9000s) after pleading guilty to possession of a prohibited firearm and ammunition without a firearms certificate after the loaded Beretta 9000s was found hidden at his home address on 18th July 2017.

- Anthony O'Reilly, 29 years of Huddleston Road, Wavertree, was part of the Wavertree crime group and significant amounts of ammunition and Class A and B drugs were recovered from his address on 18th May 2017. O'Reilly was previously sentenced to 5 years 6 months after entering guilty pleas.
- Thomas Browne, 32 years, of Cornhill, Liverpool city centre, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to supply Class B drugs. He was part of the Wavertree crime group and was previously sentenced to 27 months.
- Liam Ackers, 25 years, of Mill Lane, Wavertree, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to supply Class B drugs. He was part of the Wavertree crime group and was previously sentenced to 27 months.
- Shabba Odita, 26 years, of Lemon Close, Kensington, was previously sentenced to 14 years after pleading guilty to possessing firearms and Class A drugs with intent to supply after a Baikal handgun with ammunition, a sawn-off shotgun and quantities of heroin and cocaine were found at his home address.
- Max Jones, 22 years, of Mile End, Vauxhall, pleaded guilty to possession of a Class B drug (cannabis) with intent to supply. He was previously sentenced to a 2 year community order.
- Kieran Hodge, 29 years, of Frampton Road, Walton, pleaded guilty to production of a controlled drug (cannabis). He was previously sentenced to 6 months. He was found not guilty of

conspiracy to possess firearms with intent to endanger life and  
conspiracy to possess prohibited firearms for transfer.

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If you have any information about a particular appeal, or want to report crime or antisocial behaviour in your area please contact Merseyside Police on Twitter @MerPolCC or call 101. You can also contact @CrimestoppersUK.

Any information no matter how small, will be treated with the utmost confidence and could assist with our investigations.

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