

Cheshire Neighbourhood Watch Association

Week ending 23 February 2025

Cheshire News & Appeals



Latest Cheshire News

Ellesmere Port man jailed for harassing his ex-partner

A man has been jailed for over five and a half years for harassing his ex-partner and threatening to set her home on fire.

Gary Edwards was jailed for five and a half years. Gary Edwards, of Hyde Close, Great Sutton, appeared at Chester Crown Court on 1 August 2024, where he was jailed for five and a half years after pleading guilty to threats to damage property and harassment. The 30-year-old also pleaded guilty to supplying a psychoactive substance.



During his court hearing, it was heard that in October 2022 Cheshire Police officers attended the home of a 32-year-old woman in Ellesmere Port to speak to her regarding a threat she and her partner, a 34-year-old man, had received earlier that day. Officers discovered that Edwards had approached the couple and hurled a torrent of verbal abuse at them, goading the victim's partner to try and hit him. He further threatened that he was going to blow the house up.

Edwards was then arrested at his home in relation to this incident, with officers also finding a substantial amount of drug paraphernalia, such as cash, scales and zip lock bags, within the address. He would later be bailed with several conditions. Officers then spoke to the victim, who detailed both historical domestic abuse, including threats of violence, alongside Edwards' continued efforts to trace the address she lived in with her children. She went on to say that Edwards' abuse began very early on into their relationship. This abuse included regular assaults that involved grabbing her by the throat, punching and kicking her and destroying her possessions such as her clothing and her damaging her car. It was also heard that she was, on several occasions, locked out of her own home by Edwards. She would tell officers of one incident that involved her being shut in her garage for nearly two hours by Edwards whilst she was heavily pregnant.

Officers were then provided with threads of abusive messages sent by Edwards to the victim, dating between 2017 and 2021 that included demeaning remarks, telling her what she cannot do or tell people, direct threats of assault, demanding money from her and that she answers his phone calls. The victim also kept a diary containing key dates of abuse in 2020 and 2021 that was crucial in the investigation into Edwards' harassment. Edwards also tried to find out the victim's home address and made threats to burn the house down.

He was subsequently rearrested and charged and set to go to trial in July of 2024, but at the last minute he pleaded guilty to threats to damage or destroy property, harassment and the supplying of a psychoactive substance. Following his sentencing in August 2024, Edwards was also handed an indefinite restraining order.

The lead investigating officer from the Constabulary's Western CID team said: *"To be subjected to a prolonged campaign of torment and abuse such as the victim in this case did is truly abhorrent, and I welcome the sentence handed to Edwards who is now facing the consequences of his actions. Thanks to the courage and bravery of the victim in coming forward to police, Edwards will now be spending the foreseeable future behind bars and will remain the subject of a restraining order indefinitely, bringing his abuse to a conclusion."*

Badger cull costs 2024

Police costs incurred for the badger cull in Cheshire Constabulary during 2024 amounted to ££45,663. These costs are covered in full by Defra (the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs).

CCTV images released following reports of shoplifting in Macclesfield

Officers investigating reports of shoplifting in the Macclesfield area have released CCTV images of three people they are looking to speak to.

The first CCTV image also follows reports of shoplifting at Aldi on Queen Victoria Street, this time on Friday 7 February. Anyone who recognises the woman in the CCTV images is asked to contact 101 or visit www.cheshire.police.uk/tell-us, quoting occurrence number 25000117640.



The final image relates to an incident at the East Cheshire Hospice Store on Chestergate in Macclesfield which occurred on Tuesday 28 January. Anyone who recognises the man in the CCTV images is asked to contact 101 or visit www.cheshire.police.uk/tell-us, quoting occurrence number 25000074868.



Sgt Matt Bassirat, of Macclesfield Local Policing Unit said: *"Shoplifting is a serious offence, and we are committed to using all the powers available to us to help tackle the issue. Enquiries in relation to these three incidents are currently ongoing and as part of our investigation we are keen to speak to the three people in the CCTV images. If you think you know who they are please get in touch quoting the occurrence numbers above. I would also like to appeal directly to the people in the images and ask them to come forward."*

Manchester man jailed for violent New Years attack on former partner

A 63-year-old man from Manchester has been jailed for over two years after pleading guilty to violently assaulting a former partner in a hotel room in the early hours of New Years Day.

Antonio Francitti, of Bowdon, Greater Manchester, appeared at Chester Crown Court on Friday 14 February where he was sentenced to 26 months in prison after previously pleading guilty to two counts of intentional strangulation and assault causing actual bodily harm.



During Francitti's hearing, the court was told he had been in a relationship with the woman between 2021 and 2024, with the victim making several attempts to separate from him in the twelve months prior to his

attack. Francitti was desperate for the victim not to leave him and went to great lengths to manipulate her into staying with him: buying her expensive items, regularly following her and checking in on her location to see who she was with and accessing her mobile phone activity to the extent where the victim resorted to speaking in code when messaging her own family.

Officers then attended the scene to speak to the victim, who disclosed that she felt obliged to join Francitti for several nights in London over the New Years period. Returning to their hotel in the early hours on Wednesday 1 January, Francitti became violent, grabbing her around the neck with considerable force and used his other hand to cover her mouth and nose. This caused a large amount of bruising and swelling to her nose and mouth area and due to the pressure on her neck, she fell unconscious. She also recalled being on the floor of her hotel room at some point during her semi-conscious state and being dragging her backwards face down, causing severe carpet burns and further facial bruising and swelling.

Upon regaining consciousness, the victim immediately wanted to return home, but Francitti refused to let her out of the hotel room, expressing concern that questions may be asked regarding how she sustained her injuries. Eventually returning to Cheshire that day, the victim disclosed to her family the circumstances of what had occurred and officers were subsequently called. The victim was initially hesitant of reporting the incident to police, through fear of repercussion, but she was supported by her family and eventually came round to doing so. The victim showed officers the extent of her injuries, which included two chipped teeth, bruising and swelling to both eyes, forehead and cheeks, and an injury to her left ear where her earring had been pulled out.

Officers subsequently attended the home of Francitti in Bowdon, Manchester, and arrested him. Whilst under caution, Francitti denied the offences put to him during his interview. Despite this, Francitti was charged with two counts intentional strangulation and assault causing actual bodily harm and pleaded guilty to them on his first appearance Warrington Magistrates' Court on Friday 3 January 2025.

Following Francitti's sentencing, Insp Matt Chapman, of the Area Investigations Team, said: *"No one should have to endure the kind of violent behaviour that Francitti subjected his victim to. His violent rage left his victim scared of coming forward and disclosing what he had done to her through fear of repercussion, even as going so far as to create a narrative to cover for his actions. Despite this, thanks to the bravery of the victim and the evidence gathered during our investigation, Francitti will now be held accountable for his actions. The process of coming forward and disclosing to your family and police the abuse you have endured can be incredibly difficult and upsetting. I would extend my thanks and commend her bravery and courage in recounting everything that had occurred over that 48-hour period that helped us secure a conviction against man who made her life a misery for well over a year."*

If you, or someone you know, are a victim of domestic abuse please report it by calling 101 or visiting www.cheshire.police.uk/tell-us. In an emergency always call 999.

One of the UK's most wanted men ordered to pay back over £40k of his ill-gotten gains

The ringleader of a drugs gang who was on the run for two years has been ordered to pay back over £40,000 of his ill-gotten gains.

Dean Garforth, whose last known address was Regency Park, Widnes, used the EncroChat communications network to discuss with other criminals the supply of substantial amounts of Class A and Class B drugs. The 32-year-old's encrypted data was analysed by detectives from the Serious and Organised Crime Unit (SOCU) from March 2020 to July 2020, after it was cracked by international law enforcement.



Following a detailed investigation, the team conducted a warrant at Garforth's home address before discovering that he had fled the country to Spain and was actively evading arrest. Over the next two years, officers spent hundreds of hours searching for Garforth, working closely with their law enforcement colleagues in Spain. A public appeal to trace Garforth was issued in January 2022, when the NCA and Crimestoppers launched a new Most Wanted campaign featuring 12 fugitives who were believed to be hiding in Spain.

On Monday 24 October 2022, Garforth was riding an e-bike on a street in Nueva Andalucia, Marbella, when he was arrested in a pre-planned operation. When he realised plain-clothed officers were closing in, Garforth, who was wearing sports clothes, sunglasses, and a cap, rode the bike into an officer and resisted arrest. He was located and arrested after an operation by the National Crime Agency, Spanish National Police, and Cheshire Police. Garforth was subsequently extradited from Spain to the UK on Tuesday 14 March 2023. On his return, he was charged with conspiracy to supply cocaine, conspiracy to supply cannabis, and conspiracy to supply weapons and ammunition. He appeared at Chester Crown Court on Thursday 25 January 2024, where he was sentenced to 19 years and six months imprisonment.

Following his sentencing, Financial Investigators at Cheshire Police embarked on an extensive confiscation investigation into the lifestyle of Garforth. Through this thorough and extensive investigation police were able to show that Garforth had benefitted by around £1,530,000 from his criminal lifestyle. Of the money gained officers were able to prove that he was still in possession of £40,331.00 worth of assets. These included 50 per cent of the equity in his home and the value of his KTM off road motorcycle. Following the investigation, Garforth was called back to Chester Crown Court on Tuesday 11 February where he was ordered to pay this sum back.

DCI Nick Henderson, of the Serious and Organised Crime Unit said: *"The Confiscation Order in this case sends a strong message that Cheshire Constabulary takes the recovery of the Proceeds of Crime seriously. It highlights the importance of asset recovery considerations, running throughout an investigation to maximise the opportunities to recover significant sums, derived from criminality. The Financial Investigator in this case worked tirelessly to accomplish this result through a tenacious and diligent approach to the investigation, leaving no stone unturned in pursuit of asset recovery."*

Appeal for information following serious collision in Warrington.

Officers are appealing for witnesses and video footage following a serious collision in Warrington.

Shortly before 7.15am on Wednesday 19 February police were called to a collision near to the junction of Southworth Lane and Delph Lane in Croft. Officers attended and found there had been a collision between a silver Peugeot 2008 and a blue Ford Fiesta. The driver of the Peugeot, an 86-year-old local man, suffered serious injuries as a result of the collision. He was taken to the Royal Salford Hospital where he remains at this time. The driver of the Fiesta, a 60-year-old man from Widnes, was also injured during the incident, he was taken to Warrington District General Hospital. His injuries are not believed to be life changing.

Enquiries in relation to the collision are ongoing and officers are keen to hear from anyone who witnessed the incident, or anyone with any dashcam footage which may aid the investigation. Anyone with any information is asked to contact Cheshire police on 101, or at www.cheshire.police.uk/tell-us, quoting IML 2030531.

Man arrested and drugs seized following Northwich stop check

Officers from Northwich have arrested a man and seized a large quantity of class B drugs following a vehicle stop check in the town.

At around 10.40am on Tuesday 18 February officers from Northwich Local Policing Unit stopped a car on Green Lane, Wincham. The driver of the car, a 37-year-old local man, was subsequently arrested after failing a drug test and during a search of the car officers recovered two mobile phones, cannabis and a quantity of cash.

A section 18 search was subsequently conducted at an address in Wincham where officers recovered a large amount of cannabis and cannabis resin form, along with cannabis gummies and cannabis vapes. Officers also seized other drugs paraphernalia, including scales, snap bags, and further cash. The man was subsequently arrested on suspicion of drug driving, possession with intent to supply class B drugs, possession of class A and B drugs and money laundering. He has since been released under investigation pending further enquiries.

Following the arrest, Insp Paul Heatley, of Northwich Local Policing Unit, said: *"This is another fantastic result which has led to the removal of a large quantity of illegal drugs from the streets of Cheshire. While this investigation is in the early stages, I hope that this arrest provide reassurance for residents in the area and the wider community. I want to reassure the public we are doing all we can to crackdown on those who bring misery to our communities, helping to ensure Cheshire remains a hostile environment for those intent on committing crime. If you have any concerns about drugs activity in your community, don't hesitate to get in touch with us via 101 or online at www.cheshire.police.uk/tell-us."*

Man jailed for more than eight years for aggravated burglary

A man who wielded a machete as he forced his way into an address in Egerton, near Malpas, and made off with cash and jewellery has been jailed.

Gavin Hope, of The Glebelands, High Ercall, Telford, appeared at Chester Crown Court on Thursday 6 February where he was sentenced to eight years and four months. The 52-year-old had previously pleaded guilty to aggravated burglary.



On 15 July 2024 the occupants of an address in Bickerton Road, Egerton, were woken at 2.10am by a loud bang and the house alarm sounding. Hope was holding a large knife after gaining entry into the property and forced one of the occupants inside the address to open a safe before leaving the scene. A total of £17,000 in cash was stolen and a jewellery box containing sentimental items. The victims later discovered that entry had been made to the living room using a plant pot to smash the rear patio doors.

An officer who was responding to the victims' call to police spotted an object in the road near to the address. This was a discarded item of clothing which was seized and sent for forensic examination. This then came back with a DNA match to Hope. Following enquiries, Hope was arrested and subsequently charged with the offence.

DC Ian Halliwell said: *"Everyone deserves to feel safe in their own home. To find an armed stranger inside your property forcing you to hand over money and sentimental items is truly terrifying. Hope showed no regard for the occupants of the property and the impact this would have upon them, his*

only goal was financial gain, no matter the consequences. But thanks to the hard work of our officers, including our forensics team, Hope was linked to the incident and is now behind bars for a considerable amount of time."

£10k worth of counterfeit cash found during raid at Warrington cannabis farm

Warrington officers joined colleagues from the Northern Problem Solving Team and found a considerable amount of cannabis, plants and counterfeit cash during a warrant at an address in Bewsey and Whitecross.

On Tuesday 18 February Warrington Beat officers supported the Northern Problem Solving team to execute a raid at an address on Bewsey and Whitecross following reports of drug usage linked to the property. Conducting the warrant at an address on Leicester Street, officers entered the property and found an 18-year-old man and woman alongside a 30-year-old man inside. Further searches inside the address also resulted in officers uncovering around 20 cannabis plants and a large quantity of cannabis in bags. As well as this counterfeit notes, believed to be around £10k, were also seized. The trio, all of whom are from Warrington, were arrested for cultivation of cannabis, possession with intent to supply cannabis and the possession of counterfeit cash. They have all since been released under investigation.

PC Murphy, who led the warrant at the address, said: *"We will always act on the concerns of local residents and this is a shining example of the work that can be done to further protect your local communities from drug dealing and the associated crime that comes with it. Our intervention here also means that we have prevented a sizeable amount of counterfeit cash from entering circulation. No matter the amount, distributing and creating fake bank notes is illegal and, oftentimes, it directly funds more serious and organised crime. The supply and use of illegal drugs has an incredibly negative impact on the community, and our fight against this type of behaviour is never over. We will continue to do all we can to put a stop to this kind of activity."*

Police are advising car owners to be vigilant following thefts

Police are advising residents to be vigilant following recent thefts of Nissan Navara vehicles.

Since January there have been five reports of thefts of these vehicles, including one in Cheshire. Due to the emerging pattern, police in Cheshire are warning Navara owners to be vigilant and report suspicious activity to police.

DI Chris Morris said: *"It's worth reviewing your security and making sure your car is locked and secure. If you see anything that seems suspicious, please report it. We want to make Cheshire a no go area for thieves, and by working together and reviewing security we can make the county difficult for thieves to operate."*

- It's important that you make sure you always lock your vehicle, even if you are just stepping away from it momentarily. Vehicle crime is more than often committed when the vehicle is left insecure.
- Fuelling up or popping back into your house to get something are perfect examples of how easy it is to turn your back for a moment and forget your vehicle is unsecured.

- If you have a garage, use it to keep your vehicle safe from thieves. If you are parked on the drive or roadside, think about how you could improve lighting, or consider doorbell cameras or CCTV.
- If your car has keyless entry, make sure your key, and spare, are stored well away from the car. If you can, use a faraday bag. You can also turn off wireless signals on your fob if it isn't being used.

Considering these options will make life difficult for thieves.

Anyone who sees suspicious activity should report it to police on 101 or via the [website](#), if you see a crime in action dial 999.

Latest Cheshire Appeals

Appeal for information following an attempted robbery in Widnes

Detectives are appealing for witnesses and video footage following an attempted robbery in Widnes.

At around 3.30pm on Thursday 20 February, a 50-year-old man was cycling along Routledge Road when he was approached by two unknown men from behind who attempted to steal his eBike. One of the men hit the victim on the head with a weapon, before the pair fled the scene empty handed, travelling in the direction of Greenway Road, towards Halton View. The victim sustained a minor injury to his head as a result of the incident and he was taken to Whiston Hospital as a precautionary measure.

Both suspects were described as being in their late teen/early twenties with scouse accents. The pair, who were both riding together on a black eBike, were wearing puffer jackets, balaclavas, and hoodies. One of the men was also wearing a blue Nike cap.

Enquiries in relation to the incident are ongoing and officers are keen to hear from any witnesses or anyone with any video footage which may aid the investigation.

DC Annie Bromilow, of Widnes CID said: *"This was a horrific incident on an innocent member of the public, the victim has been seriously assaulted whilst these offenders have tried to take his electric bike. I understand the concern this is likely to cause, and I would like to reassure residents that we are doing all we can to find the people responsible for this incident. We are confident that someone out there knows who did this, and we would like to ask the public to please get in touch with any information they might have."*

Anyone with any information is asked to contact Cheshire police on 101, or at www.cheshire.police.uk/tell-us, quoting IML2031557. Information can also be reported anonymously via Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 or at <http://www.crimestoppers-uk.org/>.

Appeal for information following collision in Styal

Police are appealing for witnesses and video footage following a serious collision on the A555 in Styal.

Shortly after 9pm on Wednesday 19 February a grey Ford Kuga involved in a collision with a red VW Polo at the junction of the A555 and Styal Road. The occupants of the Polo, a man and a woman, both aged 19, sustained serious injuries as a result of the collision and were both taken to hospital where they remain at this time. The three occupants of the Ford then fled the area on foot.

A 19-year-old man from Wythenshawe was later arrested nearby on suspicion of dangerous driving, driving while disqualified, going equipped to steal, failing to stop for officers and failing to provide a specimen. He has since been released on bail and enquiries to identify the two other occupants are ongoing.

Enquiries in relation to the collision are ongoing and officers are keen to hear from anyone with any information which may aid their investigation.

DS Andrew Dennison of the Serious Collision Investigation Unit said: *"This was a serious collision which has left two people with potentially life changing injuries, and we are committed to doing all we can to establish exactly what took place. As part of our investigation we're keen to hear from anyone who witnessed the incident or anyone with any dashcam footage. We're also keen to hear from anyone with any information in relation to the identity of the occupants of the VW Polo who fled the scene following the collision."*

Anyone with any information in relation to the collision is asked to contact Cheshire Police on 101 or at www.cheshire.police.uk/tell-us, quoting IML 2031057.

Appeal to locate missing teenager from Warrington

Cheshire Police is appealing for information from the public to help find a 15-year-old girl who is missing from Warrington.

Sophie Wooder was reported missing from an address in Latchford at around 10.40pm on Tuesday 18 February. Officers have carried out extensive enquiries since she was last seen but so far to no avail.

Sophie is described as white, of slim build, 5ft 5in tall, with long brown hair. She is known to frequent the Runcorn and Frodsham areas.

Anyone who has seen Sophie or knows of her whereabouts is asked to contact Cheshire police on 101 quoting IML 2030423 or [visit the website](#).



Chester residents warned to remain vigilant following burglaries

Officers are warning residents in Chester to remain vigilant and ensure their homes are secure following recent burglaries in the area.

Over the past few days, officers from Chester Proactive Team have received multiple reports of burglaries and theft of motor vehicles and are asking residents to make sure their properties are sufficiently secured. The reports suggest that offenders are targeting insecure addresses and stealing keys to vehicles, before driving the vehicles overnight and then abandoning them.

DS Roy Wellings said: "Firstly, I would like to reassure residents that we are doing all we can to apprehend those responsible and there are a number of enquiries underway. While we continue with our investigation, I would urge residents to ensure that they review security measures and ensure that their properties are properly secured in order to make it even more difficult for any offenders to strike. If anyone has spotted anything suspicious, please contact us via our website or 101, quoting 25000147260."

Key advice being issued to homeowners:

- Make sure that all windows are closed and locked, even when you are at home or in the garden.
- Use the security measures on modern windows, which allow them to let some air in but still be locked.
- All external doors should always be secured, even when you are at home.
- Keep all valuables and car keys out of sight and ensure that large amounts of cash are never kept in the home.
- Where feasible install CCTV.
- It's also a good idea to keep an eye on your neighbourhood and report any suspicious activity to police.
- Lighting is a good deterrent and is recommended at doors and on garages.
- Consider an accredited burglar alarm system with audible alarm boxes mounted high at the front and rear of your home.

Appeal for witnesses following fatal collision near Crewe

Police are appealing for witnesses and video footage following a fatal collision on the A500 near Crewe.

At 6.30pm on Saturday 15 February, police were called to reports of a serious collision on the A500 near Crewe. Officers attended and found the collision involved a white Ford Kuga and a HGV. The driver of the Ford, a 76-year-old man, and a passenger in the vehicle, a 63-year-old woman, both of the Stoke-On-Trent area, were sadly pronounced dead at the scene. Their next of kin have been informed and are being supported by specialist officers.

Enquiries are ongoing and officers are keen to hear from anyone who witnessed the collision or anyone who believes they have any dashcam footage of the incident.

Sgt Russel Sime, of the Serious Collision Investigation Unit, said: *"The A500 is a busy road and as part of our investigation, we are appealing for anyone who witnessed this collision to get in touch. The same goes for anyone who has any dashcam or CCTV footage that may help us determine how this incident occurred. If you have any information, no matter how small, please call us on 101, or via the website, quoting IML 2028192."*

Anyone with any information in relation to the collision is asked to call Cheshire Police on 101, quoting IML 2028192, or give the details [via the website](#). Information can also be reported to Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

Appeal for information following serious collision near Northwich

Police are appealing for witnesses and video footage following a serious collision near Northwich.

At 9.26am on Friday 14 February, police were called to reports of a collision on Whitegate Lane, near to the slip road onto the A556 westbound. Officers attended the scene and found the collision involved a silver Hyundai Tucson and a motorcycle. The rider of the motorcycle, a 48-year-old man from the Weaverham area, sustained potentially life-threatening injuries and is currently being treated in hospital. Enquiries in relation to the collision are ongoing and officers are keen to hear from anyone with information which may aid their investigation.

PC Iain Condliffe said: *"This was a serious collision which has man with potentially life-threatening injuries, and we're committed to doing all we can to establish what took place. As part of our investigation, we are keen to hear from anyone who may have witnessed the collision or who may have dashcam footage of it. We are particularly interested in speaking to the drivers of a blue Peugeot 2008 and a white Jaguar F Pace, both of which were in the area in the moments prior to the collision and may be able to assist our investigation. We're also keen to hear from anyone who thinks they may have any dashcam footage of the vehicles involved in the minutes prior to the collision."*

Anyone with information is urged to contact Cheshire Police on 101 quoting IML 2027066 or [visit the website](#).

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