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Parrot's Unexpected Role Helps Police Dismantle Drug Network in Blackpool

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A trained parrot played a surprising role in helping police uncover a major drug trafficking ring operating from inside prison walls and across Blackpool, England. The discovery led to the arrest and conviction of multiple individuals, including the gang's imprisoned ringleader, in a case now being highlighted as a significant success for local law enforcement.

Lancashire Constabulary announced that 15 individuals were charged in connection with a criminal organisation that distributed heroin, crack cocaine, ketamine and cannabis throughout the Blackpool area between February 2023 and July 2024. The group was led by 35-year-old Adam Garnett, who was already serving a 15-year sentence when authorities discovered his continued involvement in illicit activities from behind bars.

The investigation began when prison officers searched Garnett's cell and found several prohibited mobile phones and wireless internet routers. These devices became the basis for a broader inquiry that identified multiple associates working on the outside, including Dalbir Sandhu, Shannon Hilton and Jason Gerrand. During searches at their properties, police recovered illegal substances, cash and communication devices allegedly used in drug transactions.

A particularly unusual piece of evidence came from footage found on Hilton's phone. In one video, her parrot, named Mango, was seen repeating the phrase "two for 25," believed to be slang linked to drug deals. Another clip showed the bird playing with bundles of cash, further connecting the home environment to illicit activity. The Lancashire Police made note of this in a public statement, referring to the parrot's mimicry as both unusual and telling of the environment in which it was kept.

Authorities also reviewed recorded video calls between Hilton and Garnett, which appeared to show large blocks of what was suspected to be cocaine, often accompanied by music containing lyrics glorifying drug use. Despite being incarcerated, Garnett was found to be orchestrating drug movements, maintaining regular contact with nearly all members of the gang, and attempting to direct efforts to cover their tracks.

Detective Sergeant Anthony Alves of Lancashire Police's West Targeted Crime Team described the case as a complex and coordinated investigation that reached far beyond prison walls. He credited the outcome to close collaboration between law enforcement and the Crown Prosecution Service and emphasised the ongoing efforts to capture two remaining suspects, Chloe Stott and Ryan Black, who remain at large.

The courts handed out significant sentences. Garnett received an additional 19 years and six months, to run consecutively with his existing term. Hilton, aged 29, was sentenced to 12 years, while Sandhu, aged 41, received 10 years.

The investigation formed part of Operation Warrior, a broader initiative led by Lancashire Police aimed at disrupting organised crime, reducing drug harm, and preventing exploitation and violence within the community. Police and Crime Commissioner Clive Grunshaw commended the officers involved, reaffirming support for continuing efforts to keep communities safe and crime-free.

This case highlights the evolving methods used by criminal networks, along with the creative and, at times, unexpected ways in which law enforcement can piece together evidence.