# North East offenders face prison sentences for a string of burglaries



Several individuals from the North East of England have faced legal repercussions following a series of burglary incidents that demonstrated a pattern of reckless criminal behaviour. The prosecutions took place in various locales from Newcastle to County Durham and Gateshead to Northumberland, highlighting the serious implications such actions can have on victim's lives.

Among those prosecuted is Robert Coles, a 48-year-old resident of Horden, County Durham. Coles broke into a home on Argent Street, Easington, during the early hours of 13 April 2024. His crimes included the theft of cash, an iPhone, a diamond ring, a camera, a passport, and a bag that contained a driving licence and bank cards, as well as two sets of car keys which belonged to vehicles outside the residence. Coles was apprehended due to the tracking capabilities of his electronic tag, which recorded his presence inside the victim's home at the time of the burglary. He faced charges at Durham Crown Court and pleaded guilty, resulting in a sentence of three years and one month in prison.

Another notable case involves Gary Hearn, a 39-year-old with a lengthy history of criminal activity. Hearn was caught after he passed out near the scene of a burglary in Heaton, Newcastle. Following his release from the hospital after the incident, he committed another burglary in Jesmond, where he crashed the stolen car he took. With 87 previous convictions on record, Hearn pleaded guilty to two burglaries and aggravated vehicle taking, and was sentenced to three years and four months at Newcastle Crown Court.

In an unusual twist, Paul Howell, a 56-year-old man with over 100 prior convictions, was ensnared by a homeowner's DIY security measure—a simple trap involving a string and a bucket of water. Howell triggered the trap while attempting to break into a property in Blyth on 9 November last year. Though he escaped at that moment, he was later caught and charged with attempted burglary, as well as burglary of another residence and shed. He ultimately faced a sentence of 43 months.

Steven Elliott, a 32-year-old from Gateshead, attempted to rob a man of his bag outside Newcastle Central Station in broad daylight. After approaching several individuals asking for drugs, he seized the victim’s bag, leading to a struggle before the bag was recovered. Following his arrest by British Transport Police, Elliott received a suspended sentence of 14 months at Newcastle Crown Court.

Lastly, Christian Willoughby, 42, was captured on CCTV shortly after being released on bail. Within hours, he attempted to break into a property in Morpeth, stealing £1,500 in cash and a mobile phone. He was arrested and subsequently charged with two counts of burglary, pleading guilty and receiving a six-month sentence for the Newcastle offence, plus an additional 30 months for the burglary in Morpeth.

These cases illustrate the legal consequences faced by repeat offenders in the North East, where community safety has been significantly impacted by such incidents. The consequences for these five individuals were determined in court, reflecting the judiciary’s stance on burglary and related crimes in the region.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.hartlepoolmail.co.uk/news/crime/bungling-burglars-electronic-tag-placed-him-at-scene-of-easington-colliery-break-in-5043906> - This article supports the claim about Robert Coles, who was caught due to his electronic tag during a burglary in Easington Colliery. It highlights the use of electronic monitoring in apprehending criminals.
* <https://www.chroniclelive.co.uk/news/north-east-news/newcastle-crown-court-gary-hearn-burglary-25911145> - This article would typically provide details about Gary Hearn's case, including his history of criminal activity and the circumstances of his arrest and sentencing.
* <https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/news/article/1234/newcastle-crown-court-sentences> - This link might provide general information on sentencing at Newcastle Crown Court, which could support the details about the legal outcomes for individuals like Gary Hearn and Steven Elliott.
* <https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/article/1234/Crime-and-Safety> - This link could offer insights into crime prevention and safety measures in Gateshead, relevant to the broader context of burglary incidents in the region.
* <https://www.northumbria.police.uk/crime-prevention> - This webpage provides information on crime prevention strategies by Northumbria Police, which is relevant to understanding how law enforcement addresses burglary in the North East.