# University student receives suspended sentence for drug supply



A 23-year-old university student from Gloucestershire, Samuel Watling, has received a suspended prison sentence after admitting to his role in the supply of cocaine and nitrous oxide. The case unfolded in Swansea, where Watling was caught following an interception by Border Force officers of international shipments of cannabis intended for his residence.

On 13 February 2023, customs officials intercepted two parcels that contained a total of 700g of cannabis, which were dispatched to Watling's student housing on St Helen's Avenue. Following this discovery, the police were alerted and a month later, in March, they conducted a visit to Watling's property. Upon arrival, they questioned him about any additional substances in the house, to which he replied that he had "a little bit of weed" and some nitrous oxide acquired from a legitimate UK distributor.

During the search of his residence, officers uncovered weighing scales, multiple canisters of nitrous oxide, a large container of the gas, £840 in cash, a "tick book", a safe, and a small quantity of cannabis. Watling's mobile phone was also confiscated; however, he refused to disclose the pin number, resulting in only a partial download of its contents that police were able to access. Throughout police interviews, Watling opted to answer "no comment" to all inquiries.

Watling, who previously lived on The Street in Shipton Moyne, Gloucestershire, had pleaded guilty to the charges of being concerned in the supply of cocaine from December 2021 to December 2022, possession of nitrous oxide with intent to supply, and possession of cocaine at the time of his sentencing appearance. The court learned he had been supplying these drugs primarily to friends and acquaintances, while also using them personally. He also acknowledged having a significant cannabis habit but did not have any prior convictions.

During the sentencing at Swansea Crown Court, his barrister, Robin Rouch, elaborated on Watling's personal transformation, noting that he had drastically changed from the naïve individual who initially engaged in drug distribution. Rouch highlighted that as a consequence of this conviction, Watling had to terminate his economics studies in Swansea, but had taken productive steps in the intervening period by securing work in the hospitality industry and ceasing his drug use.

Judge Geraint Walters noted the concerning prevalence of drug involvement among students in Swansea and remarked that Watling had effectively operated "a small business among equally misplaced young men who think it is cool to do this kind of thing". Despite recognising the severity of Watling's actions, the judge acknowledged that delays in the legal proceedings were "unexplained" and "inordinate", cautioning that such delays could allow individuals who might otherwise face imprisonment to avoid immediate custody.

In light of Watling's guilty pleas and the circumstances surrounding the case, the judge imposed a sentence of 18 months in prison, suspended for 18 months, along with a £750 contribution towards prosecution costs. The cash seized at Watling's house was ordered to be forfeited to South Wales Police. The court further indicated that the Crown had opted not to pursue importation charges for the cannabis due to a lack of realistic prospects for conviction. Judge Walters concluded his comments by expressing his continued capacity for surprise, even after years of legal experience.

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

## References

* <https://www.theyworkforyou.com/debates/?id=2023-09-12c.847.0> - This URL supports the discussion around nitrous oxide regulation and its misuse, highlighting its impact on antisocial behavior and the legal measures being taken to control it.
* <https://www.theyworkforyou.com/debates/?id=2023-09-12c.847.0> - It further explains the legal framework under which nitrous oxide is regulated, including its classification under the Misuse of Drugs Act.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/border-force> - This URL provides information about Border Force, which is relevant to the interception of international shipments of cannabis mentioned in the article.
* <https://www.cps.gov.uk/publication/controlled-drug-offences> - This URL offers guidance on controlled drug offenses, which is pertinent to Watling's charges related to cocaine and nitrous oxide.
* <https://www.gov.uk/court-and-tribunal-finder> - This URL helps locate courts like Swansea Crown Court, where Watling's sentencing took place, providing context for legal proceedings.
* <https://www.police.uk/pu/about-forces/south-wales-police/> - This URL provides information about South Wales Police, which was involved in the case and received forfeited cash from Watling's house.