# Former prison governor jailed for nine years over illicit ties to drug gang leader



A recent case involving Kerri Pegg, a former prison governor, has brought to light serious concerns regarding misconduct within the UK's prison system. Pegg, 42, was sentenced to nine years in prison after being convicted of two counts of misconduct in public office and one count of handling criminal property. Her conviction arose from her controversial relationship with Anthony Saunderson, a notorious drug gang leader known by the alias "Jesse Pinkman," named after the character from the acclaimed television series *Breaking Bad*.

The highly publicised trial revealed that Pegg exchanged her modest Honda Jazz for a luxurious £12,000 Mercedes Benz, allegedly funded by 34 kilos of amphetamines supplied by Saunderson. This car, along with incriminating evidence—including a toothbrush containing his DNA—was discovered during a raid on her home. Such findings raised serious questions about the integrity of her position. Pegg had served as a "rising star" in the Prison Service, advancing swiftly through the ranks from a graduate entrant to a governor at HMP Kirkham in just six years. However, her rapid ascent was dramatically underscored by the fall from grace brought on by her inappropriate relationship with an inmate.

During the trial, it was revealed that Pegg approved Saunderson’s release on temporary licence, a privilege he misused shortly after his liberation to continue participating in criminal activities. Prosecutors presented evidence that not only demonstrated the romantic nature of their relationship but also indicated that Pegg had failed to disclose significant personal debts to her superiors. This breach of trust was considered a gross misconduct, severely undermining public confidence in the prison system.

The prosecution painted a picture of Pegg as a dedicated official whose commitment turned into dangerous entanglements with the criminal underworld. Despite her denials, claiming her relationship with Saunderson stemmed from a professional connection through the BADD programme aimed at supporting prisoners, the evidence suggested otherwise. Members of Saunderson's gang reportedly noted his excessive time spent with Pegg, suggesting that their relationship began well before his release.

After a three-week trial, the jury deliberated for nearly three hours before returning a guilty verdict. Tarryn McCaffrey from the Crown Prosecution Service expressed that Pegg’s actions were not only deeply disappointing but also posed a significant risk to the integrity of the Prison Service. "Kerri Pegg’s conduct fell far short of what might be expected from any professional within the Prison Service, let alone one of such a senior grade," she stated.

Following the guilty verdict, Pegg was left without visible reaction, marking a stark contrast to her previous reputation within the service. At the time of her arrest, Saunderson was already serving a 35-year sentence for masterminding a large-scale drug distribution operation using the Encrochat encrypted phone network—a tool heavily relied upon by organised crime.

This case highlights an imperative need for systemic reforms within the UK prison system to prevent such breaches of trust and to restore public confidence. As the fallout continues, it prompts a thorough examination of how relationships between staff and inmates are managed and monitored, to ensure that the integrity of the prison system is upheld in the future.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
2. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4
3. Paragraphs 2, 3, 5
4. Paragraphs 1, 6
5. Paragraphs 1, 2, 4, 5
6. Paragraph 1

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/tv/news/kerri-pegg-sentence-jesse-pinkman-b2752807.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.the-independent.com/news/uk/crime/jesse-pinkman-prison-service-liverpool-preston-crown-court-tony-soprano-b2729544.html> - A prison governor, Kerri Pegg, was convicted of misconduct in a public office after forming a relationship with Anthony Saunderson, a Liverpool drug gang boss known as 'Jesse Pinkman'. Pegg, 42, exchanged her Honda Jazz for a £12,000 Mercedes C class car, paid for by 34 kilos of amphetamines from Saunderson, who is now serving 35 years in prison. Pegg approved Saunderson's temporary release while serving as a governor at HMP Kirkham. The court heard that Pegg was a 'rising star' in the Prison Service, quickly climbing the career ladder from graduate entrant to prison governor in six years. Saunderson was known to criminal associates as 'Jesse Pinkman', the drug dealer in Breaking Bad, or 'James Gandolfini', the actor who played Tony Soprano in the mafia TV series. Pegg was described in court as 'petite, blonde and bubbly'.
3. <https://www.lbc.co.uk/crime/prison-governor-jesse-pinkman-breaking-bad-hmp-kirkham/> - Prison governor Kerri Pegg, 42, denied engaging in a relationship with drug boss inmate Anthony Saunderson, known as 'Jesse Pinkman', after Hugo Boss flip-flops and a toothbrush carrying his DNA were found in her flat. Pegg also denied accepting a £12,000 Mercedes from Saunderson. The court heard that Pegg was seen as a 'rising star' in the Prison Service, granting Saunderson a temporary early release from HMP Kirkham, where she was a governor. Saunderson, known in the criminal underworld as 'Jesse Pinkman', the meth-dealing character from TV’s Breaking Bad, was involved in secret communications with other criminals. Pegg denied any wrongdoing, stating she was a 'hands-on' person but did not think she was doing anything wrong.
4. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/mercedes-wigan-prison-service-liverpool-preston-crown-court-b1221375.html> - Prison governor Kerri Pegg, 42, faces an 'inevitable' prison sentence after being convicted of misconduct in a public office for forming a relationship with Liverpool drug gang boss Anthony Saunderson, known as 'Jesse Pinkman'. Pegg exchanged her Honda Jazz for a £12,000 Mercedes C class car, paid for by 34 kilos of amphetamines from Saunderson, who is now serving 35 years in prison. Pegg approved Saunderson's temporary release while serving as a governor at HMP Kirkham. The court heard that Pegg was a 'rising star' in the Prison Service, quickly climbing the career ladder from graduate entrant to prison governor in six years. Saunderson was known to criminal associates as 'Jesse Pinkman', the drug dealer in Breaking Bad, or 'James Gandolfini', the actor who played Tony Soprano in the mafia TV series. Pegg was described in court as 'petite, blonde and bubbly'.
5. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/kirkham-prison-governor-kerri-pegg-drug-dealer-prisoner-b2722434.html> - Prison governor Kerri Pegg, 42, began a relationship with inmate Anthony Saunderson, a drug dealer who gave her a £12,000 Mercedes after she released him from jail. Pegg is charged with two counts of misconduct in a public office, one by having a relationship with Saunderson and the second by failing to disclose county court judgments about her debts. She is also charged with one count of possessing criminal property, the Mercedes, from Saunderson. Pegg denies all the charges. The court heard that Pegg was seen as a 'rising star' in the Prison Service, climbing the ladder from graduate entrant to prison governor in just six years. Pegg became 'emotionally and personally involved' with Saunderson, a serving prisoner, and accepted a Mercedes C class car from him, the court heard. When Pegg’s home was raided, a toothbrush was found with Saunderson’s DNA on it, the court heard. Pegg claimed her contact with Saunderson was due to his involvement in the BADD programme. But even members of his gang grumbled that their boss was spending too much time with her and away from his wife and 'work'. Pegg was convicted of two counts of misconduct in a public office and one count of possession of criminal property. The jury was out for two hours and 43 minutes after a three-week trial. Pegg gave no reaction as the guilty verdicts were delivered. She told jurors there were 'cultural issues' at the jail and clashed with bosses over her 'progressive' and 'hands-on' open-door policy with prisoners. In October 2018, Saunderson put in a release on temporary licence (ROTL) request which Pegg signed off, though she did not have the authority to do so. Saunderson was released from Kirkham in May 2019 and within two months, while still on licence, was involved in another massive drug conspiracy. Pegg’s trial heard he continued contact with prisons in the BADD programme and was also still close to Pegg, who was at the time the regional official coordinating drug strategy in six prisons in the North West. The Prison Service has been contacted for comment. Saunderson and his gang were producing and supplying drugs on an industrial scale from a lab at a premises on the England/Wales border and a storage unit in Aintree, Merseyside. He was jailed for 35 years at Liverpool Crown Court in August 2022 after law enforcement agencies cracked the Encrochat system, the phone network used by serious organised criminals. Barbara-Louise Webster, prosecuting, said Pegg had a promising future, but added: 'Anthony Saunderson was her downfall.' Outside court, Tarryn McCaffrey, from the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), said: 'Kerri Pegg’s conduct fell far short of what might be expected from any professional within the Prison Service, let alone one of such a senior grade as prison governor. She was clearly involved in an inappropriate relationship with Saunderson after he was released and the evidence points to this going back further, to a time when he was in jail. This relationship, and the fact that Pegg failed to disclose her debts to her employers, amount to a gross breach of trust and are therefore extremely damaging to public confidence.'
6. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/jesse-pinkman-north-wales-police-preston-crown-court-prison-service-dna-b2722779.html> - Prison governor Kerri Pegg was in a relationship with the boss of a drug-dealing gang who went by the name of a character from hit US crime drama Breaking Bad, a court has heard. Pegg, 42, described in court as 'petite, blonde and bubbly', was gifted a £12,000 Mercedes car by Anthony Saunderson, who used the name Jesse Pinkman, a meth dealer in the TV show, during secret communications with other criminals. Pegg had been a 'rising star' in the Prison Service, climbing the career ladder from graduate entrant to prison governor in six years, Preston Crown Court was told. But while a governor at HMP Kirkham she allegedly became too close to Saunderson, signing off his temporary release without proper authority, it is alleged.