

## News

# Cannabis factory mum spared prison for sake of her kids

By CAMERON SINCLAIR

A MOTHER-OF-TWO who allowed her family home to be used as a cannabis factory has been spared jail because prison would be 'detrimental' to her children.

Trainee dental nurse Claire Witherford, 36, was arrested after police raided her rental property and found 15 marijuana plants worth up to £5,000 growing in her loft.

During the swoop in Middleton,

officers also seized various drug paraphernalia, including a set of scales, and discovered an illicit electric supply had been set up which bypassed the electricity meter.

At the time Witherford, a former make-up artist, was living at the house with her daughter, then aged eight - and was thought to have been pregnant with her second child.

She initially gave no comment to police but later claimed she had been 'manipulated' by others into letting

them set up the cannabis farm, and said she had no involvement in it.

She has since given birth to her child.

At Minshull Street Crown Court, Manchester, Witherford, now of Heywood, admitted production of cannabis and was sentenced to a 12-month community order during which she will have to abide by a 9pm-6am curfew.

Sentencing, Judge Mark Savill told her: "You are of previously impeccable character. You are in a stable relationship, with a daughter, now aged ten, and a young baby.

"It is to some extent a complete mystery to me why you were foolish enough to involve yourself in this. I have regard to your lesser role, although while it was in one light a lesser role, in another it was more serious as it was you that provided the premises.

"However this seems to be an isolated incident. You have lived a relatively stable, hitherto blameless existence but you have involved yourself in illegal drugs.

"You have two young children and one day you may have to explain yourself to them. Put them first in your mind and never involve yourself in this sort of thing again. Do you understand? You are being given a chance here.

"I very much don't wish to see you again and I'm sure that is mutual. If you breach this order I can resentence you. But hopefully in a short space of time this will be behind you. Consider yourself lucky."

The raid happened on December 16, 2017, after it is believed officers acted on a tip-off.

Witherford was a tenant of the property at the time

In mitigation, David Bentley said: "She is deeply ashamed of her actions. It was a stupid and foolish decision to allow her premises to be used in this way. She has lost her impeccable character. She is now a mother to a 16-month old baby. This focus has realigned her life to live a law-abiding one."



Claire Witherford

Manchester Evening News

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## Beware loophole attackers, police warn

POLICE in Salford have issued an urgent warning to children and parents after a spate of violent robberies in and around the Roe Green loophole through Worsley Woods in Monton.

Police said teenage boys and a man have been targeted for their bikes, cash and mobile phones by a gang of three young robbers.

In one case a 24-year-old man was slashed with a hunting knife

and suffered facial injuries.

A youngster was punched in the face in another attack.

Police patrols have been stepped up around the popular loophole and the Bridgewater Canal, close to Monton's border with Winton in Salford.

Six incidents are being investigated by detectives, the M.E.N. can reveal.

As a result, police have now

urged children cycling and walking in the area and along the loophole to stay in groups with their friends.

Worsley Woods Parkrun is held there every Saturday and the area is popular with walkers, joggers, cyclists and dog walkers.

People can call police on 0161 856 5401 or 101 with any information, or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.