

Postie stole parcels to pay £7,000 drug and gambling debts



Lee Flanagan stole parcels while working as a postman

MAN WHO CLAIMED THEFT OF MAIL WAS REGULAR IS SPARED PRISON SENTENCE

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A POSTMAN who stole parcels to fund his cocaine and gambling debts has walked free after claiming stealing was 'commonplace' in the Royal Mail.

Lee Flanagan, 34, took up to eight packages containing clothing and perfume after running up debts of £7,000. He was caught after a concerned member of the public filmed him opening one of the parcels and handed the footage to Royal Mail chiefs.

Police recovered an Apple iPod

Nano from the home Flanagan shares with his parents in Gorton, but he admitted selling the other items worth £518 for £400 on the black market. It emerged he had previous convictions for stealing from his employers.

At Manchester Magistrates' Court Flanagan, who has since lost his job, admitted theft and opening parcels but claimed postal thefts were so regular, discussions were held how to do it during training for the job.

He now works as a delivery driver for parcel delivery firm DPD.

The court heard the thefts occurred over a four-week period in January

when Flanagan was working at the Manchester South East delivery office in Ardwick.

Prosecutor Hayley Bennett said: "Five tracked delivery assignments between January 2 and 23 were confirmed as having been received but, when checked, the GPS of where they were delivered didn't match the GPS of where they were supposed to be.

"The person responsible for the delivery of these parcels was the defendant. The second incident came on January 17, 2019, when the defendant returned a parcel to the depot which was ripped open. He said it had been damaged in transit.

"However, a member of the public then came forward with footage of the defendant opening the parcel and then closing it up when he realised he was being filmed.

"On January 30 a parcel of an iPod Nano failed to deliver. Upon a search of the defendant's house the purple iPod Nano was found in a bedside cabinet. In interview the defendant then admitted more thefts than he was caught for. He said he sold the other items for around £400.

"The defendant told police he had problems with drugs and gambling debts... in the region of £7,000.

"The amount stolen comes to just under £500. Royal Mail have so far paid out £115 in refunds. It's going to cost the Royal Mail over £7,000 in legal costs."

In mitigation, defence lawyer Chris McGrath said: "He is under no illusion as to how serious this offence is and is well aware Royal Mail employees hold a huge amount of trust from the public.

"The catalyst for this was £7,000 pounds worth of gambling and drug debts.

"He accepts this is an extremely serious offence. He has shown a substantial amount of remorse."

A probation officer told the court: "Mr Flanagan says stealing is almost commonplace in the Royal Mail and it is something which is even discussed in training - but he understands the seriousness of it now."

Flanagan was sentenced to nine months in jail, suspended for 18 months and was ordered to complete 180 hours unpaid work. He will also pay £1,295 in costs and surcharges.

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