

Operation Reynard (taken from Lancashire Police Facebook)

Members of a Vietnamese gang which made hundreds of thousands of pounds in a sophisticated cannabis farm operation operating across the North West have been jailed for over 35 years.

The gang used false identities and fraudulent documents to rent dozens of properties before turning them into cannabis farms. 'Gardeners' would then be employed to visit the houses and tend the crops.

The enterprise was overseen by Jack Nguyen and Trang Nguyen assisted by Hoai Nguyen and Thanh Thi Nguyen, Jack's girlfriend. They rented the properties and made themselves attractive to potential landlords by posing as a couple with a baby on the way or with a new born child. They tried to avoid leaving a trail of evidence by using false names and false documentation and always paid deposits in cash.

21 properties were rented across the region, including in Liverpool, Preston, Blackpool, Burscough and Oswaldtwistle, and used as cannabis farms or rented with a view to that use.

When Lancashire Constabulary executed warrants in March 2018 as part of their investigation – codenamed Operation Renard - they recovered cannabis valued at just under a million pounds and a quarter of a million pounds in cash.

A total of sixteen members of the gang were jailed at Preston Crown Court, you can find out the individual sentences on our website: <http://socsi.in/BsrBN>

DS Stu Peall, from the East Exploitation Team, said: "I welcome these sentences which reflect the serious nature of the offending. This was a sophisticated organised criminal group making huge amounts of money from their operation which stretched across the North West of England.

"Many defendants claimed to be trafficked and some claiming to be children, all of these defences were proved to be lies and simply just a tactic used to avoid detection.

"I would like to thank the jury for their careful consideration of this case, and the Crown Prosecution Service, in particular Nicky Moore, Karen Brooks and barrister Jeremy Grout Smith.

"Lancashire Constabulary will continue to proactively target the production of cannabis which can have lasting physical and mental health effects on users as well as having a negative effect on our communities and fuelling other crime and we are determined to tackle that.

"We need the public to continue to work with us to help us tackle drug crime by informing us of any suspicious activity."