



SaferGems

THE JEWEL IN CRIME PREVENTION

The Year in Review

SaferGems in 2024



THE VOICE OF THE PROFESSIONAL SECURITY INDUSTRY



01905 342051



intel@safergems.org.uk



www.bsia.co.uk/safergems

Founding Sponsors:



TH March
Insurance Since 1887



The National
Association
of Jewellers

About SaferGems

SaferGems is a major initiative against crime in the Jewellery, Pawn Brokers, Antiques and Fine Art Trades, hosted by the BSIA and funded by the retail jewellery industry through **TH March Insurance Brokers** and **The National Association of Jewellers (NAJ)**.



The National
Association
of Jewellers

Founding Sponsors:



It was introduced in June 2009 following concern about the increase in crime committed against the jewellery industry. It is intended to collate attacks, incidents, and intelligence in relation to jewellery crime around the UK. The SaferGems team, which has strong links to all the UK police forces, records details of crimes against the jewellery/pawnbroking industry, sends alerts to its members, NAJ members and those insured via TH March. A key role of SaferGems is to coordinate data across police forces to improve identification and conviction of criminals, circulates images and new crime trends and assists the police in linking offences and offenders.

SaferGems is working closely with their sponsors National Association of Jewellers and TH March to provide greater crime prevention advice to all their members.

SaferGems seeks to coordinate data across police forces to improve identification and conviction of criminals by maintaining a strong link between the Industry and Police.

With over **4000** members crime prevention advice is key whilst raising awareness of offences.

- Since 2009 to date over **12,000** crimes and suspicious incidents have been recorded.
- Circulating over **3000** Alerts to the industry.
- Completing over **3,300** analytical reports to the Police and assisting with over **400** identifications, arrests, and convictions.



SaferGems in 2024:



ALERTS AND BULLETINS **CIRCULATED**

ANALYTICAL REPORTS PROVIDED FOR THE POLICE



CRIMES BELIEVED TO **HAVE BEEN PREVENTED**

ASSISTED UK & US LAW ENFORCEMENT WITH THE
IDENTIFICATION, ARREST & CONVICTION OF SUSPECTS



WATCHES LOCATED ON THE BASIS OF SAFERGEMS
REGISTRATION **WITH THE ART LOSS REGISTER**

During 2024 SaferGems recorded:



46 ROBBERIES (**19** ARMED) WITH **32** CONFIRMED CRIMES AND
APPROXIMATELY **£4 MILLION** WORTH OF GOODS STOLEN.

179 REPORTS OF THEFT WITH **143** CONFIRMED CASES & APPROXIMATELY
£3.9 MILLION WORTH OF GOODS STOLEN.



70 REPORTS OF FRAUD WITH **18** CONFIRMED CASES AND APPROXIMATELY
£266,000 WORTH OF GOODS STOLEN.

62 REPORTS OF BURGLARY WITH **43** CONFIRMED CASES AND APPROXIMATELY
£2.4 MILLION WORTH OF GOODS STOLEN.



SaferGems in 2024:

SaferGems did not record any robbery series of note during 2024. The robbery offences that did happen were sporadic and committed mostly by local/cross border offenders.

During 2024, SaferGems and UK Law Enforcement recorded an increase in crimes committed by organised gangs from South America. The majority of these offences involved travelling sales representatives and traders across England and Scotland being targeted by these organised South American gangs. The gangs engaged in anti-surveillance techniques, such as changing clothing and disguising appearances before using distraction (money under car/substances sprayed on clothing) and tyre slashing tactics to steal high value goods from traders and reps.

As a result of this serious and continuing threat SaferGems, in conjunction with the [Metropolitan Police Flying Squad](#), hosted an online security webinar offering advice and guidance for members. The Metropolitan Police also set up a dedicated intelligence unit to record national offences that were believed to have been committed by organised gangs from South America.

The Metropolitan Police Flying Squad made eight arrests in relation to jewellery trader and bank follow off thefts. The investigation started after a jewellery trade fair event in Birmingham in September 2023. The eight suspects have now been arrested, charged, and sentenced as part of this investigation. They have all been charged with offences of conspiracy to steal, participating in an Organised Crime Group (see 'Good News Stories'). In total, twenty-three offences involving totalling thefts of £1million in jewellery and cash can be linked to this group. They also made an attempt to steal £1million of jewellery from a trader in Guildford, Surrey in October 2023 and £4million of jewellery from a jewellery trader in Hatton Garden, London on 18th March 2024. The Metropolitan Police Flying Squad can confirm that they are still working to investigate crimes committed by this group and others.

Another continuing crime trend involved offenders snatching and running off with prestige watches or items of gold jewellery with offenders targeting both independent and multi-chain jewellery stores. Between July, August and September SaferGems recorded a series of prestige watch thefts and robberies linked to an organised Irish gang.

Fraud trends include counterfeit cash, 'Super Fake' prestige watch, CNP Fraud, IFC Fraud, Bank Transfer Scams and Bogus Traders and Clients.

Hole In The Wall and Roof Top burglaries remain a significant threat to the industry.



Incidents of note

SaferGems were involved in a number of incidents whereby active criminals have either been arrested, identified or prevented from committing further offences, whether it be theft, fraud or otherwise. We assisted in the following:

In **January**, SaferGems helped **Essex, Surrey** and **Bedfordshire** Police forces by linking a male to a series of high-value jewellery and watch snatch thefts. This particular male was later identified by SaferGems as being a member of an organised Irish gang who between July, August and September 2024, were responsible for multiple prestige watch thefts and robberies across the South East, Eastern and East Midlands regions (see below).

As a result of an increase in sales rep/trader robbery offences across the UK between September 2023 and January 2024, SaferGems hosted an online Organised Distraction Crime Against Traders and Reps Crime Prevention Webinar which offered advice and guidance against these type of offences for members.

In **February**, SaferGems assisted Hampshire Police with the identification of a 37yr old male who sold a 'Super Fake' Rolex watch to a dealer in Portsmouth.

The suspect was known to SaferGems for previously selling a 'Super Fake' Rolex watch to a dealer in Shropshire during December 2022. The same suspect was later identified by SaferGems for selling a counterfeit prestige watch to a dealer in Salzburg, Austria. During the same month, SaferGems assisted **Suffolk** and **West Mercia Police** with the identification and arrest of five Romanian Nationals, responsible for distraction/sleight of hand offences in Bury St Edmunds and Oswestry. In June 2024, the Bury St Edmunds suspects appeared remotely at Ipswich Crown Court. Loredana Sava was jailed for 33 months, Radu Niculescu was given three years and the younger Loredana Sava was also sentenced to three years.



In **March**, we assisted **Northumbria** and **Metropolitan** Police with the identification of three males responsible for high-value watch thefts in Gateshead and Croydon. SaferGems also assisted Staffordshire, Dorset and South Wales Police with the identification of five Romanian Nationals responsible for distraction/sleight of hand offences in Lichfield, Poole and Cardiff. We also assisted **South Wales Police** with the identification of a 42yr old male responsible for a theft in Cardiff and **West Yorkshire Police** with the identification of a 37yr old male from Hertfordshire responsible for a high-value theft in Leeds. He was later arrested, charged and remanded for the Leeds offence.

Incidents of note

April saw the identification of a 55yr old male linked by SaferGems to a series of Interest Free Credit Frauds (IFC) at stores across the South East region between March 2023 and April 2024. SaferGems was also able to assist Hampshire Police with the identification of two Romanian Nationals responsible for a sleight of hand theft in Basingstoke. April also saw the first offence of a 'Switch' thief who used sleight of hand to switch 18ct gold pendants with fakes at a store in Witham, Essex.

The suspect went onto to commit further sleight of hand switch thefts at stores in Hailsham, Witham, Hungerford and Stoke-on-Trent. He was later identified as 45yr old Romanian National. During the same month, SaferGems assisted US Law Enforcement with the identification of two Romanian Nationals responsible for a high value distraction/sleight of hand theft in Indiana.

As a result of an increase in distraction/ sleight of hand offences across the UK during the first four months of the year SaferGems hosted an online Distraction/ Sleight of Hand Crime Prevention webinar which offered advice and guidance against these type of offences for members.



In **May**, SaferGems identified a 70yr old prolific jewellery thief who was responsible for a high-value theft in Westminster, London. The suspect is known to SaferGems for previous thefts at jewellery stores across London between 2018 and 2023. We also assisted Sussex Police with the identification of a 26yr old male responsible for a fraudulent transaction at a store in Brighton. The suspect was linked by SaferGems to fraudulent payments at jewellery stores in Guisborough and Peterborough between 2018 and 2020. SaferGems was also able to assist West Midlands, Devon and Cornwall and Cleveland Police with the identification of six Romanian Nationals responsible for sleight of hand distraction thefts in Solihull, Plymouth, and Stockton. Two Romanian Nationals were also identified by SaferGems for US Law Enforcement following a high value distraction/sleight of hand theft in Maryland.



In **June**, a London watch dealer reported to SaferGems that a man and woman had sold him a 'Super Fake' Patek Philippe watch, taking a loss of **£195,000**. As a direct result of information sharing between SaferGems and its counterpart in Germany, the suspects were identified as being responsible for selling 'Super Fake' Rolex watches to dealers across mainland Europe between 2018 & 2019.

Incidents of note

In **July** SaferGems assisted Hampshire, Devon & Cornwall and Police Scotland with the identification of five Romanian Nationals linked to distraction/sleight of hand thefts in Eastleigh, Exeter and Dumfries. July was also the start of the Irish organised gang series with £115,000 worth of prestige watches stolen alone during the month.

August saw the identification of a Romanian couple linked by SaferGems to a series of a high-value distraction/sleight of hand offences across England. In total the suspects stole in excess of £50,000 worth of goods. The couple were also known to have been active in Turkey, Italy and Malta with the female being subject of an Interpol Red Notice for offences in Germany. During the same month Essex Police initiated Operation Velvet to investigate the Organised Irish gang who had now stolen approximately £326,000 worth of goods. A 17-year-old male was arrested in September and charged by Essex Police in connection with these offences. SaferGems was also able to assist Police Scotland with the identification of a 40yr old Romanian male responsible for a distraction theft in Edinburgh. The suspect was also linked by SaferGems to distraction/sleight of hand offences in Eastleigh and Plymouth. We were also able to identify a Romanian father and son team for West Mercia Police following two high-value distraction/sleight of hand offences in Shropshire. ANPR work conducted by West Mercia Police resulted in a vehicle used by the suspects being identified. The suspects were arrested on Saturday 31st August 2024 in Droitwich, Worcestershire after their vehicle was spotted by Police Officers in a car park. Enquiries made with local jewellers revealed the men were loitering around their stores.

In **September**, SaferGems was able to assist Kent Police with the identification of two Romanian Nationals responsible for a theft in Greenhithe and West Yorkshire Police with the identification of a 55yr old male responsible for two thefts at a jewellery store in Leeds. Also, as a direct result of information sharing between SaferGems and its counterpart in Germany, SaferGems was able to link a male, responsible for high-value jewellery thefts in Bremen Dusseldorf, to three high-value thefts that occurred in Manchester, Liverpool and London during May and June 2023. The identification of the suspect currently remains unknown. SaferGems was also able to assist US Law Enforcement with the identification of a 45yr old male responsible for a distraction theft in Michigan and a armed jewellery scam in Maryland during April 2023. We also assisted US Law Enforcement with the identification of two Romanian nationals responsible for a sleight of hand/distraction theft in Florida.



Incidents of note

During **October**, SaferGems assisted West Midlands and Thames Valley Police with intelligence around an organised gang from South America who have used hostile surveillance tactics (including trackers) to target travelling jewellery reps in Birmingham and Oxfordshire. We also assisted Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and the Metropolitan Police with the arrest of two Romanian Nationals responsible for a series of high-value sleight of hand fake gold switch thefts at stores across the UK. SaferGems also assisted Thames Valley Police with the identification of two women who stole high-value goods from a store in Newbury.

SaferGems would like to acknowledge and thank members for providing valuable information and vital CCTV evidence which has been crucial in linking the sleight of hand fake gold switch thieves to a series of high-value thefts and essential in assisting police with the arrest of the two suspects.



In **November** SaferGems assisted Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Sussex, Suffolk, Staffordshire and Met Police with the arrest of two Romanian Nationals responsible for a series of sleight of hand fake gold switch thefts at stores across the UK. We also identified a 27yr old male responsible for a theft in Stratford, London, a Romanian couple responsible for a distraction/sleight of hand theft at a store in Hastings and assisted US Law Enforcement with the identification of a 51yr old Romanian National responsible for a distraction \$21,000 Rolex theft in California.

In **December** SaferGems assist the Metropolitan Police with the identification of two males following high-value thefts in Knightsbridge and Kilburn. December also saw the conviction by the Metropolitan Police in partnership with SaferGems, of eight South American Nationals responsible for jewellery trader and bank follow off thefts of over £1million of jewellery and cash.

Round-up and testimonials

On **Friday 11 October 2024**, Sarah Staff attended the National Pawnbroker Association Conference which was held at the Hilton Tower Bridge Hotel, London. Sarah provided a presentation to the member of NPA, highlighting the work of SaferGems, discussing current industry crime trends and providing crime prevention advice and guidance around sleight of hand thefts, hole in the wall burglaries and reconnaissance activities.

At the start of **November 2024**, The Company of Master Jewellers officially announced its official supporting sponsorship of SaferGems. For an initial two-year commitment, the Company of Master Jewellers will be SaferGems' first affiliated sponsor. The Company of Master Jewellers is the largest specialist jewellery and watch buying group in the UK and Ireland, with more than 150 retailer members.



Simon Dawe, TH March Insurance Brokers: *SaferGems continues to provide outstanding support to the jewellery and watch industry, delivering more alerts and contributing to a record number of arrests this year, resulting in increased security across the whole industry. Lee and Sarah have played a pivotal role in maintaining SaferGems' unique and valuable collaboration with police forces across the UK. Their efforts have been recognised multiple times this year with exceptional feedback highlighting that several suspects would not have been detained without their assistance.*

TH March, alongside the National Association of Jewellers, is proud to be a founding sponsor of this vital initiative. We are also delighted to welcome the CMJ as the first organisation to join as an Affiliated Sponsor, further strengthening this important scheme.

Ben Massey, National Association of Jewellers CEO: *SaferGems plays a vital role in protecting the professional jewellery community. Sarah, Lee, and their team work tirelessly to keep the trade informed and provide timely information to the police, making a real difference for NAJ members. Their efforts not only help safeguard businesses and people but also lead to more convictions. We're proud to be a founding sponsor of this important initiative.*

Emmet Cummins, The Company of Master Jewellers: *From a CMJ perspective, we have certainly seen a heightened level of criminal activity impact our trade, particularly in the last 18 months. Both sides of the trade have been affected, the product and salesforce of our supplier network has been targeted too frequently, and the same has applied to our retail businesses and their teams. And yet, we know only too well, that this impact would have been considerably greater if it wasn't for the incredible work done by SaferGems. SaferGems proactivity in communicating to the trade potential threats, enables us to be more vigilant at times of heightened threat, and the investigative support they provide the police, and all other forces of Authority has meant more and more of these incidents have concluded with the criminals being convicted and removed from our streets. That is why the CMJ have become a sponsor of SaferGems and it is why we are truly grateful for all their hard work.*

SaferGems: meet the team



Sarah Staff

SaferGems Manager

Sarah@safergems.org.uk

Sarah is responsible for the **BSIA** joint security intelligence initiative **SaferCash** as well as manager for **SaferGems**. Sarah is former Head of the Flying Squad, with a 30 year career in the Metropolitan Police.



Lee Henderson

Intelligence Analyst

intel@safergems.org.uk

Lee joined **West Mercia Force Intelligence Bureau** in 1998 as a researcher before working on the Cheque & Credit Card Fraud desk. Went on to become a Source Co-ordinator (office manager) for the FIB acting as a central point of contact for the bureau, evaluating, collating and disseminating intelligence at national and international levels. In 2008, Lee joined the **BSIA** as an intelligence officer for **SaferCash** before moving over to SaferGems in 2010.

About the BSIA

The British Security Industry Association (BSIA) is the trade association for the professional security industry in the UK.

Our members are responsible for more than 70% of privately provided UK security products and services (by turnover) including the manufacture, distribution and installation of electronic and physical security equipment and the provision of security officer and consultancy services.

The BSIA is the recognised voice of the professional security industry, supporting and encouraging excellence; educating the marketplace on the value of quality and professional security; and creating an environment in which to flourish.

BSIA Membership is the symbol of quality and professionalism in the security industry.

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