

Man jailed for stealing £78k worth of goods across the UK

A MAN involved in a nationwide shoplifting spree including from a store in Southend has been sentenced to a further 12 months in prison.

Andrei-Theodor Cretu, 27, of Bramston Road, London, was caught trying to steal more than £78,000 worth of items from shops across the country.

He was arrested for thefts in Southend and Beverley after further crimes came to light during questioning when he was stopped by police in August, 2023. The stolen items from these incidents were valued at more than £2,600.

Cretu was previously charged for 15 counts of attempted shop theft, resulting in a 16-month prison sentence in January.

While in prison, further investigations revealed he was part of a larger organised crime group operating nationwide.

He was identified on CCTV repeatedly targeting the same franchise over a 16-month period, stealing items including beauty and shaving products, toothbrushes, nappies, razor blades, and HP printer ink.

He was arrested in prison on suspicion of 17 counts of shop theft in October last year.

He was sentenced at Hull Crown Court on Tuesday to a further year in prison.

Car rental services return to city's airport

CAR rental services have returned to Southend Airport as part of a new partnership.

The airport has announced a new partnership with Green Motion, marking the return of on-site car rental services.

The new on-site rental hub is now open, allowing passengers and residents to collect and return their vehicles just minutes from the terminal.

Caroline Fitzgerald, commercial director at Southend Airport, said: "We're delighted to drive this partnership forward with Green Motion – literally. This new addition gives passengers even more flexibility when planning their trip to the UK and also offers our local community a much-needed, greener car rental option without the hassle of travelling further afield."

The Green Motion location at London Southend Airport is operated by franchise owners Matt Jones and Sean Lahiffe, who also run the successful franchise at Stansted Airport.

Matt Jones said: "We're thrilled to expand into Southend Airport and bring our trusted service to passengers and customers across Essex, while becoming a valued part of the community."

Green Motion offers a wide range of vehicle choices, which can be reserved directly through the Green Motion website or Southend Airport website.

● NHS Trust looking for more savings after axing 450 positions last year

'No warning of plan to cut 750 jobs' say staff

STAFF working for south Essex's hospital trust claim they were not notified of plans to cut more than 700 roles prior to the news breaking this week.

Following the axing of 450 positions last year, the Mid and South Essex NHS Trust is now looking to cut a further 743 before next March in an effort to maximise value for money – sparking criticism from unions and campaign groups.

Now, staff have raised fresh concerns around the cuts and claimed, unlike with previous rounds, they were given no prior warning of

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the trust's plans. The trust insists these cuts are part of work to slash its budget which bosses have "discussed with staff regularly".

"I am so concerned about the intended job cuts," said one nurse working for the trust who asked not to be named.

"Unlike last year when we were advised via email of the trust's intention to cut staff via retirement and or some voluntary redundancy, the *Echo* report is the first I have

seen.

"I expect this round of cuts will be done in the same way, but that will result in an unsafe staff-to-patient ratio."

The Mid and South Essex NHS Trust, which runs Southend and Basildon hospitals as well as Chelmsford's Broomfield, has said the plans are part of a process of maximising value for money and allocating resources where they are most needed.

The plans have faced backlash from Unison as well as Save Southend NHS, a campaign group founded to protect patient services in the city.

"The ground staff are cogs in the wheel and even if it's admin staff, this will ultimately affect patient service delivery in an NHS facing ever rising demands," said a Save Southend NHS spokesperson.

Of the cuts, trust CEO Matthew Hopkins said: "This is a continuation of the work we started last year to right size our organisation. We have discussed this with our staff regularly and they understand that we need to have the right people in the right places to deliver the best care to ensure we are spending taxpayers' money responsibly."



■ Brave – Yasmin Daodu, a student at Chase High School, with her award

Teen praised for speaking out on colour

A TEENAGER'S speech on colourism has won her third place in a regional competition.

Yasmin Daodu, a Year 10 student at Chase High School in Westcliff, earned the award at the Jack Petchey Speak Out Competition finals.

The competition is aimed at helping young people improve their public speaking skills.

Yasmin's speech on colourism, a form of discrimination based on skin tone, was chosen to represent her school at the regional finals.

She was one of 60 students from her school who took part in the competition.

Maria Howard, head of English at Chase High School, said: "Yasmin's presentation on colourism was both powerful and thought-provoking, allowing her to explore the complexities and societal implications surrounding this important issue."

Headteacher Matt Suttwood added: "Yasmin's speech was inspirational; her passion and determination for change were unparalleled. I am so proud of her for tackling what some may consider a sensitive topic."

M25 crash causes heavy morning traffic on A127

A CRASH on the M25 caused heavy traffic affecting south Essex commuters travelling towards London during yesterday morning's rush hour.

Two lanes were blocked after a crash on the anti-clockwise M25 at around 8.30am, near Brentwood.

As a result, traffic was queueing along the A127 with congestion at

its heaviest at junction 29 leaving Basildon.

Severe delays of up to half an hour were reported even after the lanes were quickly re-opened, shortly before 9.30am.

Traffic stretched to junction 30 until around 11am, when all traffic cleared across the major roads in south Essex.

Lengthy traffic delays on A13 after morning crash

DRIVERS faced long delays on the A13 yesterday morning following a crash.

One lane was blocked due to the crash, which took place just before the A132 at Pitsea at around 11am.

Average speeds of around 10 mph were reported at the height of the incident, with traffic queueing back past the A176 at Five

Bells.

The AA traffic planner also showed disruption and delays to journeys along the A13 up until 1pm.

The severity of the crash is unclear. Emergency services were contacted for comment, but did not respond before the *Echo* went to print yesterday evening.