

The boy of TEN caught by police with a machine gun under his bed

By JAYA NARAIN

Last updated at 08:29 05 March 2008



Gang related: Older criminals have been known to give firearms to young siblings

The rise of violent crime was highlighted yesterday when it was revealed that children as young as eight have been caught with guns.

The searches by police officers in Greater Manchester, which has been plagued by gang shootings, even discovered a machine gun hidden under the bed of a ten-year-old boy.

It is believed that some of the children had been asked to look after handguns for gang members because they are too young to be charged.

Others claimed the weapons belonged to their mother or father or other close relatives.

According to a senior police source, the ten-year-old kept the sub-machine gun in the bedroom of his house in South Manchester. It was not loaded.

The source said: "It was absolutely astonishing. Apparently he was minding the gun for his brother who was in jail for firearms offences."

Figures obtained under the Freedom of Information Act revealed that two children aged eight and three aged nine were stopped on suspicion of breaking the Firearms Act.

The statistics will further blight the reputation of Manchester.

Only last month a gifted sportsman, Halton McCollin, 20, was shot dead in a Chinese takeaway in a case of mistaken identity.

None of the children under ten was arrested or charged, as they are below the age of criminal responsibility, but campaigners have called for their parents to be prosecuted.

Lucy Cope, from Mothers Against Guns, said: "The consequences of an inquisitive eight-year-old getting their hands on a gun do not bear thinking about."

Professor Peter Squires of the Gun Control Network, which campaigns for tighter controls on guns of all kinds, said: "In the more troubling cases serious offenders will have given young children guns to carry because they are off the surveillance radar."

Three children caught with guns were aged 11 while a further 12 were 12 years old, 16 were aged 13, 27 were 14 years old, and 50 were aged 15.

Some of the weapons were realistic replicas but others were genuine.

Of those children, 51 faced charges or were summoned to court and a further 46 were given warnings.

Greater Manchester Police has carried out dozens of raids in recent weeks as part of a concerted effort to rid the streets of guns.

A scheme has also been set up in the city to target youngsters at risk of falling into gun crime, such as the younger brothers of known gang members.

Detective Superintendent Steve Heywood said: "The police, the council and probation service can only do so much. The problem often starts at home.

"If walking around with a gun at home is acceptable it makes it harder for us to deal with gun crime culture outside the home.

"There is some evidence that gang members use girlfriends, mothers and even children to conceal guns.

"Those who are getting involved in gangs are getting younger."

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Just goes to show that banning guns hasn't worked. Criminals will always find a way to get guns. The only thing that banning them does is prevent innocent bystanders from defending themselves. Absurd!

- Lucy, London, UK, 04/3/2008 19:49

Click to rate Rating 3

The fact they are children is beside the point, they should be prosecuted!

I would also throw the book at the parents who should receive an mandatory lengthy custodial sentence.

- Stephen Holmes, Withington Manchester, 04/3/2008 19:41

Click to rate Rating 1

I thought Great Britain was a gun-free, crime free Utopian society. What happened to your gun control schemes?

- Carl L., USA, 04/3/2008 19:37

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Gordon you must be so proud of the country you and your shower of vacant brained policy makers have created for us. People who don't have the privilege, like yourself, of an armed guard, are afraid to walk the streets, people are having their lives constantly disrupted and their property damaged, those who do try to protect their property and their families are either killed for standing up for themselves or prosecuted by the system meant to protect them. Yes a wonderful legacy, may you and your profiteering, self serving government rot in hell, and I hope that for your sake it is not as bad as the hell you have created in Britain for the rest of us. You will be remembered Gordon but only as the most despised (unelected) PM in recorded history.

- Michael Shaw, Languidic France, 04/3/2008 19:13

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What could be this "reasonable excuse" to carry a gun around?

- A.P., Helsinki, Finland, 04/3/2008 19:11

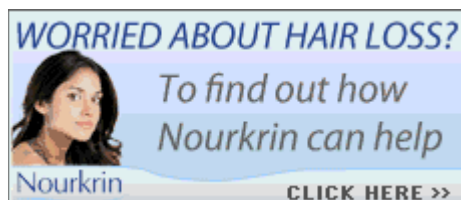
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