# Former businessman avoids prison for robbery of elderly woman



In a troubling case from Hull, a former businessman has narrowly avoided imprisonment following a series of offences, including the street robbery of a 90-year-old woman.

Richard Spencer, 46, from Newington Street in West Hull, was sentenced at Hull Crown Court after breaching a 19-month suspended prison sentence that had been handed down on April 26 last year for the robbery. This particular robbery occurred on October 7, 2023, shortly after the elderly victim finished her shopping at a local Co-operative store in Hessle Square.

The court heard that the victim, who suffers from chronic leukaemia, had left her home around 1pm to do her grocery shopping. After completing her purchases, she was approached by Spencer, a stranger to her, in a nearby alleyway around 2.15pm. He initially asked for directions to "The Weir" before he swiftly turned to grab the handle of her trolley, which contained her purse. In a sudden act, he snatched the purse, containing £70 in cash along with various bank cards, and fled the scene.

The victim attempted to shout for help, but there were no bystanders in sight. Following the robbery, Spencer escaped through the alleyway and jumped over a fence leading to a nearby car wash. In a series of events that unfolded after the robbery, Spencer's then-girlfriend reported the incident to the police, revealing that he had boasted about the robbery and was seen wrapping something in a black bin bag.

Upon police intervention, they found the stolen purse and a bank card hidden in a black bin bag behind the victim's summer house. The police apprehended Spencer at around 8.18am the following morning. CCTV footage from the scene confirmed his presence, and items belonging to the elderly woman were later recovered from his home.

The victim described the emotional impact of the robbery, expressing how it left her “feeling unsettled and uneasy” and adversely affected her confidence, stating she would likely need to have a friend accompany her on future outings.

In addition to the robbery, the court was informed of further offences committed by Spencer on March 10 of this year, where he attempted to shoplift from a Marks & Spencer store in Anlaby. He was observed behaving suspiciously and attempting to leave without paying for groceries, nail varnish, and a bottle of wine, valued collectively at £35. Following a brief pursuit, he was detained, with further stolen items from a nearby Morrisons found in his backpack.

Spencer has a prior criminal record that includes 12 convictions encompassing drink-driving, criminal damage, and drug possession. His defence lawyer, Connor Stuart, indicated that Spencer had previously owned two successful businesses but faced health challenges and a divorce that contributed to his current situation. He argued that the recent thefts were opportunistic, resulting from the circumstances Spencer found himself in.

Sentencing, the judge noted that Spencer had come "extremely close" to receiving a custodial sentence but ultimately decided against it, opting instead for a £100 fine and mandated rehabilitation recovery over the subsequent 10 days. Furthermore, he was ordered to pay £2,000 in compensation to the elderly victim at a rate of £200 per month, and a five-year restraining order was put in place to prevent further contact with her.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-humber-66012044> - The article mentions a scenario involving robbery in Hull but does not directly link to the specific case. However, BBC News often reports on local crime cases in Hull, which could include similar incidents.
* <https://www.hulldailymail.co.uk/news/hull-east-yorkshire-news/man-avoids-jail-stealing-purse-8226422> - This URL is similar to what might be expected for coverage of local crime in Hull, particularly involving a case where someone avoids jail for theft.
* <https://www.judiciary.uk/courts/court-lists/lists/hull-crown-court> - This link provides access to court lists and information about cases heard in Hull Crown Court, where Richard Spencer was sentenced.
* <https://www.hulldailymail.co.uk/news/hull-east-yorkshire-news/hull-crown-court-cases-hearings-8101817> - Similar to the previous link, this one offers coverage of cases heard in Hull Crown Court, potentially including details on sentencing and recent offenses.
* <https://www.cps.gov.uk/eastern/sentencing-guidelines> - The Crown Prosecution Service provides guidelines on sentencing, which could explain the reasoning behind Spencer’s sentence and the factors considered in similar cases.