

Lewes couple who befriended and robbed disabled man in his own home jailed for longer

A couple who robbed a disabled man in his own home, after one of them befriended him, have had their sentences increased following intervention by the Solicitor General, Rt Hon Michael Ellis QC MP.

Kirsty Norris, 31, met the victim, 57, eighteen months before the planned attack. The victim believed that Norris was his friend, and showed her kindness by providing her with food and company.

The victim is a vulnerable person, who is disabled and suffers from serious medical conditions. The authorities had moved him to a new address after he became the target of attacks in his original home town.

On the morning of 16 October 2018, the victim saw Norris and invited her to his flat for a meal. Inside the victim's home, Norris phoned her boyfriend, signalling the pre-planned attack.

Her boyfriend, David Mercer, 25, then came to the victim's door, claiming to be from the council. When the victim refused to let him in, Mercer punched him multiple times in the face and neck. The offender then stole his Christmas savings and bank card before fleeing.

Throughout the attack, Norris feigned surprise and pretended to help the victim but he soon realised that he had been betrayed. Norris then left the victim's flat to find her boyfriend.

Once reunited, the offenders immediately made several purchases which were captured on CCTV footage.

The offenders were arrested at their home on Thursday 25th October.

Norris and Mercer originally appeared at Lewes Crown Court in October 2019 and were sentenced for robbery and five counts of fraud. They were both sentenced to 2 years' imprisonment, suspended for 2 years, with a rehabilitation activity requirement for a maximum of 35 days.

Today, following the Solicitor General's intervention, the Court of Appeal has increased their sentences to 3 years' immediate imprisonment.

Commenting on the increase, the Solicitor General said:

"This was a brutal, targeted attack against a vulnerable individual, who had already suffered abuse for his disabilities. The victim was betrayed and attacked and suffers psychological trauma as a result. It is only right that the Court of Appeal has agreed to increase the sentences to reflect this long-lasting harm."