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# Jail for prolific Epsom burglar who preyed on vulnerable women

31 March 2023

Thanks to the determination of Surrey officers, a prolific burglar from Epsom has found himself sentenced to over three years behind bars.

Frank Smith, 27, from Rutland Close was sentenced at Guildford Crown Court on Friday (17 March), after he pleaded guilty to 19 offences over the last year making the lives of many in the borough of Epsom and Ewell a misery.

Victims spoke about being left “traumatised and anxious” after being targeted by Smith, with one saying: “I should feel safe in my home and not have to worry about things like I do, because of him”.

Another victim described how she had been “manipulated” by Smith and said it was “hard to trust people after what he did”.

A woman whose house was burgled by Smith said: “It is very difficult to put across in words how devastating it has been for me, and my family, to suffer such a violation of our home, peace of mind and family life.

“Home should be a safe and comforting place, but since the burglary, both of my children are deeply afraid to be in the house. Our home was utterly ransacked. My children’s belongings were strewn on the floor, my daughter’s toys and horse figures were left broken and they had even broken into her money box.”

In this series of offences, which started in May 2022, Smith pleaded guilty to a burglary at Buildbase in Epsom, where he stole tools totalling £4,400.

That same month he stole a black Peugeot 3008 from outside a takeaway while the owner was inside the restaurant. This was followed by the theft of a VW van from the forecourt of a petrol station while its owner was in the garage paying for fuel. He later burgled the Co-Op store on Chessington Road, Epsom managing to get into the safe in the staff room and taking several hundred pounds.

In June 2022, whilst on bail under investigation for these offences, Smith saw a woman taking out cash from a Sainsbury’s in Epsom. He then followed her outside and back to her car. She described how Smith ran past her and snatched her bag out of her trolly whilst she was unloading shopping into the boot. The cost to the victim was estimated to be around £1,000 as she had to change the locks to her home, order replacement car keys and get a new phone. Her bank cards were then used shortly after to make two purchases totalling just under £60. Smith was caught on CCTV getting lottery scratch cards and making contactless payments, while holding the cash he had taken from her.

Smith then moved on to targeting private homes. After going out for the day, an elderly woman returned home to find a whole drawer missing from her dresser which had contained jewellery including a gold watch, two bracelets and several pairs of earrings with a total value of around £4,000.  Smith was caught on CCTV carrying the drawer with its contents partly visible.

In July 2022, Smith approached an 83-year-old woman as she was being dropped home, telling her that she had a leaking gutter and offering to fix it. The victim described how he initially quoted £15 but after a brief amount of work, claimed he’d had to replace the rubber seals and the cost would now be £135. When the victim’s son later checked the guttering, he found that no work had been done. Smith later returned to the property via a side gate before climbing in her front bedroom window and taking her purse.

In September 2022, Smith knocked on the door of a property in Epsom and told the 90-year-old occupant she had a rat problem in her back garden. The victim went through the house to the garden followed by Smith. Later she checked her handbag and found that her wallet and purse were missing. She later said Smith had been constantly pestering her to do guttering or other jobs around her home. Following this burglary, Smith used the victim’s card on six occasions making contactless payments.

A further nine offences committed by Smith were also taken into consideration, including four burglaries, three thefts of motor vehicles, one offence of fraud by false representation and one theft of a pedal cycle.

Detective Constable Sam Wightman, who led the investigation, said: “Smith is a serial offender and over time, escalated from opportunistic acquisitive crime, to targeted burglaries and fraud – targeting primarily elderly women. He has caused untold distress to his victims leaving them feeling unsafe in their own homes and costing them thousands because of the way he preyed on their vulnerabilities. This case has involved a lot of hard work and tenacity from officers across several units to track down the evidence needed to link these offences to one person and, because of this work, Smith is now where he deserves to be – behind bars.”

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