

***We have been made aware of this incident which happened on the 29<sup>th</sup> January at the Sainsbury store in Newcastle to the mother of one of our colleagues. I have circulated this to our staff to pass on to their friends and family.***

My mum on Saturday did the food shop in the new Sainsbury's, went outside to put the food in the car, opened her bag to get her car keys out, and was then stopped by a foreign bloke to help him as he was lost and wanted my mum to show him on a map directions.

She is too trusting, and of course did this, but then so would I, I wouldn't think anything different.

He moved my mum to a different angle, putting the map down on the bonnet of a car, at which point, a second person came up behind her and stole her purse. She didn't realise straight away until she had got into town and wanted to draw money out.

The police have said it's getting common, gangs are working together. My mum was basically singled out in the store as she did her shop, a woman then went to the same till as her, watched her as she put her PIN in. She then signalled to this bloke outside who she had seen, he positioned himself as my mum went to her car. A third person, another woman, then came up behind her and took the purse. They are getting it on CCTV today to try and find out who they are.

So with the PIN, they immediately drew out money at Sainsbury's, and used it in stores in town. They have taken over £500!! Needless to say, my mum was very upset that she had been stupid as she put it to help him out, but then scared that she had been followed and targeted.

If you could pass this round to mums, mates etc, the police have said it is the older generation they are targeting as they are more willing to stop and help, and also less likely to fight back if they are caught. They are professional, if anyone asks you for help or seems to have come out of nowhere in the car park, just say you are too busy and make sure your bag is done up properly.

There is the issue of how do you prevent such events. I would suggest that a check of the following website will give much good advice on a range of issues. Certainly keeping your bag closed is relevant or perhaps putting the bag in the car and locking it will reduce the opportunity that such people wish to exploit.

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/CrimeJusticeAndTheLaw/CrimePrevention/index.htm>