

# **Judge takes pity on dad who stole food from Tesco to feed his family**

Richard Hartley-Parkinson

12 May 2015



*Kerry and Paul Barker took food from Tesco bins because they were so hungry (Picture: SWNS)*

**A father accused of stealing out-of-date food from Tesco has had his case thrown out.**

A judge asked prosecutors 'how are they expected to live?' when Paul and Kerry Barker were brought before the courts.

They had been caught on camera looking through bins for food for their family. They told police who arrested them they were hungry and charged with theft.

District Judge Roger Esley said the food was worth nothing and gave the father an absolute judgement. Mrs Barker is yet to enter a plea but is expected to face no action.

He said: 'How are they expected to live? It seems to me the appropriate punishment for taking food which is of no value is an absolute discharge.

'I clearly can't make any financial order.'

Prosecutor Jeanette Smith said the food was being thrown out, but it was against Tesco policy to give away discarded food.

*They were caught on CCTV at the back of Tesco Express in Hetton, Sunderland (Picture: SWNS)*

The couple had no money because Mrs Barker's benefits had not been paid because she missed an appointment and she had no way to fund her food.

Their lawyer said: 'They were told they would not get any benefits for a year from December. He is having to duck and dive to feed himself.

'Without a crystal ball I can see that this will continue to happen. He is trying to survive however he can.'





*They have been separated from their children who are living at their grandparents' house so they can eat properly (Picture: SWNS)*

Speaking at home after the case, Mr Barker said: 'I do it because I need food. I'm not nicking for profit like most.

'You have to be careful with fish, but most out-of-date food you can eat, but things like bread might be slightly harder.

'They should give it to people who need it. But they don't care, its just money making. It's wrong, it's horrible, its like not really living at all. It's like being in jail.'

A spokesman for Tesco said: 'It is not safe to take food from bins and that is why we work with charities to redistribute surplus food that is safe to eat to people who need it.'



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