

**R v PRIDE –  
SENTENCING REMARKS**

1. Alfie Pride, please remain seated for now.
2. At about 6.30pm on 7 November 2020 Lewis Wenman was sitting with two friends, passing time, sitting on a wall in a residential area of Milton Keynes. Minutes later he lay dying, a short distance away, having been stabbed by you at least three times. The largest stab wound was to his chest, penetrating his heart, and was the cause of his death.
3. The jury by their verdict have concluded that in killing Lewis Wenman you did not act in lawful self defence. They have found you guilty of his murder. You were 16 years and 10 months old at the time; and are now 18 years old.
4. Lewis was 17 years old when he died. He was a much loved member of his family, and was also helping his girlfriend raise her young child. He was an apprentice and was working towards becoming a tiler. I have read and listened to the statement of Lewis's mother, on behalf of herself and Lewis's father, his sister Lauren, and his aunts, uncles and grandfather. It explains in moving terms the gap which Lewis's death has left in all of their lives, and the trauma they have experienced not only on his death but also in having to relive much of those dreadful experiences during the trial.
5. I am required to sentence you on the basis of those facts of which I am sure.
6. When you encountered Lewis and his friends on the evening of 7 November 2020, there had according to some of the evidence heard at trial been

disagreements between you and him, including an angry telephone conversation a few days previously. However, there is no reason to believe you faced any kind of threat, when you happened to encounter Lewis on 7 November 2020, that could possibly have justified your taking out a knife and stabbing him. Despite a very extensive search, the police never found any trace of any weapon near the scene other than the folding lock knife that you yourself had been carrying and used to kill Lewis. Nor indeed would there have been time for any other weapons to be disposed of before the emergency services arrived. You yourself were barely harmed during the incident. The jury's verdict shows that they were sure that you faced no threat that could have justified what you did.

7. The evidence shows that you stabbed Lewis at least three times. The first wound, to his chest, penetrated about 8cm, to his heart, and was fatal. The evidence indicates that you inflicted at least one further wound after Lewis was on the ground.
8. After the attack, you picked up Lewis's phone, and your knife (which you had dropped after one of Lewis's friends intervened to try to defend him), and you ran away. The evidence from friends you then encountered indicates that your initial reaction seemed to be one of elation, apparently changing only much later in the evening after news reached you that Lewis had died.
9. The jury's verdict means they were sure that you at least intended to cause Lewis grievous bodily harm, if not to kill him. You knew from your own experiences the harm that knives can do, and the fact that you stabbed Lewis at least three times may well indicate that you intended actually to kill him. Some of your remarks afterwards may also indicate that. That is, for example certainly one

way of understanding the text you sent about having ‘got your man’ and ‘left him for dead’. I accept that the things you said afterwards were not completely consistent, because you also told a friend that evening that you lost control because you were scared. I do not feel able to say for sure exactly what was in your mind at the moment you stabbed Lewis. However, I am sure both that you intended to cause him really serious harm, and at the very least that you did not care whether your attack on him was fatal or not.

10. I have considerable doubts about whether you have felt any remorse for Lewis’s death. You expressed remorse when interviewed by the police after the offence, and the Youth Offending Team managers who have written a pre-sentence report assess that you are genuinely remorseful. On the other hand, your actions and demeanour immediately after the offence seem to suggest that you felt pleased with what you had done; and I can understand, based on how you appeared during your trial, why Lewis’s family feel you showed anything but remorse. I do bear in mind that, as § 1.15 of the Overarching Principles of Sentencing Children and Young People reminds us, a child or young person may on some occasions conduct themselves inappropriately in court by reason of factors such as nervousness or lack of maturity.
11. I have to take all these, and other, considerations into account when sentencing you for murder, and for the two other offences of which you have been convicted.
12. The sentence for murder has been set by Parliament. The law requires me to sentence you to detention at Her Majesty’s pleasure. That is, in fact, a life sentence for someone like you who was under 18 at the time of the offence.

13. I have to decide the minimum term: and I stress the word minimum. The end of the minimum term is not the point in time at which you will necessarily be released. It only fixes the point when you will be entitled to apply for parole. It will then be for the Parole Board to decide whether you can be released on licence, and that will depend on the risk which at that time they assess you pose to others. If the Parole Board do decide to release you at that or some later stage, you will then be on licence for the rest of your life. That will mean that if you offend again or do not follow your licence conditions, then you are likely to be returned to prison.
14. Parliament has also fixed the starting point for the minimum term when a person is convicted of murder. For a person who is under 18 when the crime is committed, the starting point is set at 12 years. I see no reason to take a different starting point in this case. But I have to decide whether, in all the circumstances, the minimum term should be 12 years, or longer or shorter than that, bearing in mind aggravating and mitigating factors. In this case I have concluded that it should be longer, as I shall explain.
15. In deciding the minimum term I have to take into account all the relevant circumstances. I also must have regard to the relevant general considerations in the Overarching Guideline on Sentencing Children and Young People, because you were under 18 on the date when you were convicted. Paragraph 1.2 of that guideline says that while the seriousness of the offence will be the starting point, the approach to sentencing should be individualistic and focused on the child or young person, as opposed to offence focused, and should focus on rehabilitation where possible. The court should also consider the effect the sentence is likely

to have on the child or young person (both positive and negative) as well as any underlying factors contributing to the offending behaviour. Paragraph 4.10 indicates that developmental and emotional age are as at least as important as chronological age, and the court should consider the extent to which the child or young person has been acting on an impulsive basis and whether their conduct has been affected by inexperience, emotional volatility or negative influences.

16. An important aggravating factor here is that you were carrying a knife at the time of the attack, and you used it when you killed Lewis Wenman. I accept that you were not positively out looking for Lewis; and when you took the knife out with you, you may have seen it as a means of self defence. However, as your guilty plea to the offence of possession of the knife shows, you had no lawful reason to be carrying a knife. Also, you said at one point during the trial that you had the knife with you in case the threats which you claimed Lewis had made were not empty ones: so you had in mind the possibility of using the knife against him. As I have already said, you knew from experience the harm that knives can do, and in your hands the knife became a lethal weapon. This is a significant factor which makes the offence all the more serious.
17. Also, you stabbed Lewis at least three times, including when he was already on the ground. Even if you did not positively intend to kill him, I am sure that you did not care whether he lived or died.
18. Your carrying of the knife and your attack on Lewis are also aggravated to some extent by your other convictions and cautions for offences involving varying degrees of violence. There are several of these and I have to take them into

account. They include a conviction for possession of an offensive weapon in public in April 2019, when you were 15, to which you pleaded guilty. After the offences we are concerned with today, you pleaded guilty and were sentenced for having inflicted grievous bodily harm on a fellow pupil at school in June 2020. That was the incident shown on CCTV during the present trial, in which you made a sudden and fierce attack on a fellow pupil, including trying to kick out at him after he was on the ground.

19. There are some further aggravating factors. The fact that after stabbing Lewis you took his phone, hid it and asked friends to smash it suggest an element of vindictiveness about your attack on him. In addition, you stabbed Lewis in a public residential street, and in front of two of his friends.
20. I have already referred to things you said, and how you appeared, in the aftermath of the attack, at least some of which appear to show a lack of remorse, though I accept that your mood changed that evening and in the ensuing days, and I have to take account of the assessment which I mentioned in the pre-sentence report.
21. You made some effort after the attack to conceal your knife, and later to flee; and you disposed of the clothes you had worn during the attack. However, the evidence here does not all point in one direction, since also we know that the day after the offence you called the police and handed yourself in.
22. I accept that this was a chance encounter rather than a premeditated attack. It was also not in my view a murder committed for gain. There is no reason to believe your taking of Lewis's phone was the reason for the attack, as opposed to a very unpleasant afterthought.

23. I have to take account as mitigating factors of your mental difficulties and the life experiences you had had. It is not unusual for children who commit murder to come from troubled backgrounds or to have mental health problems. However, the evidence heard at trial indicates that your life experiences had been unusually bad even by those standards, and could fairly be described as disastrous. This evidence included the three experts' reports on psychiatry and psychology, which I have considered again when deciding upon sentence.
24. You witnessed and experienced domestic violence committed by your father from when you were aged about 3. Your mother was addicted to heroin, and your father also abused drugs. Your father was in and out of prison, before passing away last year while you were awaiting trial. An interim care order was made when you were 13. The grandparents with whom you lived for a while had alcohol problems. Thereafter you were placed in care in different locations around the country, including some where you became involved with and subject to attack by gangs. When you were 13, your best friend was stabbed after you momentarily left him in a street, and you saw the graphic injuries he had suffered. At the age of 14 you were attacked by a gang and shot with metal pellets. Another friend of yours was stabbed in March 2019; and in April 2019 you were stabbed in the arm and the leg by your own best friend over a trivial matter. The areas of Milton Keynes where you found yourself from mid 2019 onwards were gang-ridden, and there is some reason to believe there was a gang context to the incident at school in June 2020. It was noticeable that no relative attended your trial.

25. You suffer from some communication difficulties. The experts at trial differed about whether, as result of your traumatic experiences, you suffered from PTSD. It was not suggested by any of the experts that any condition you have reduced your culpability for the murder of Lewis Wenman in the sense of diminishing your legal responsibility for it. It was suggested that your previous experiences had made you hypervigilant, and that that might have given you an increased perception of threat. But you walked through the Springfield area on the evening of the attack knowing that you could possibly encounter Lewis there, and of course the jury did not accept that any hypervigilance on your part meant you were acting in self defence.
26. At the same time, however, the pre-sentence report draws a link between your offending behaviour and your adverse childhood experiences. It refers to reasons to believe you were at times exploited by gangs, felt pressure to comply with local gangs, and had difficulty in being able to remove yourself from that lifestyle. The report also notes that in June 2020 you worked with a Thames Valley police problem-solving team for 5 months, including wearing a voluntary GPS tracker, trying to disengage from gang associates. I do not regard any of this as reducing your direct culpability for the murder of Lewis Wenman, but it amounts to significant personal mitigation which I must take into account in sentencing.
27. Having carefully considered all of these matters, as well as the lesser offences of theft and possession of an offensive weapon to which I shall come shortly, I have come to the conclusion that the minimum term should be 16 years, less the time spent on remand in custody that you would not have spent in custody



anyway as a result of the sentences passed on you in August 2021. I understand that the period to be deducted is 279 days, but if that is incorrect then it can be corrected administratively or under the slip rule.

28. The jury also convicted you for the theft of Lewis Wenman's mobile phone. Applying the sentencing guideline for theft, the offence involved high culpability because of the force used and the targeting of a victim whom you had just stabbed. Given the likely value of the phone and the loss of photos and other material of personal value, it should in my judgment be treated as category 3 harm offence. For an adult offender, the starting point would be 1 year's custody, with a category range of 6 months to 2 years. Even leaving aside the fact that it was you who had attacked Lewis, stealing a phone from a person who had just been fatally stabbed would merit a sentence at the top end of the category range. As you were aged 16 at the time of the offence, an appropriate discount should be made. The Overarching Guideline on Sentencing Children and Young people indicates in § 6.46 that when considering the relevant adult guideline, the court may feel it appropriate to apply a sentence broadly within the region of half to two thirds of the adult sentence for those aged 15 – 17. After applying such a discount, the appropriate sentence here is 16 months, to be served concurrently with, meaning at the same time as, the sentence for murder.
29. You pleaded guilty, while you were still 16, to possessing an article with a blade or point, in other words the unlawful possession of the knife in a public place. I have to apply the sentencing guideline for possession of bladed articles and offensive weapons, and have regard also to the specific guidelines for the

possession of such items by children and young people, and the overarching guidelines I have already mentioned. Because you had already a conviction for possessing an offensive weapon in a public place, the minimum sentence by law would be a 4 month detention and training order for a child, or six months' imprisonment for an adult, unless there were particular circumstances making that unjust. In any event, the appropriate sentence here would be higher than that. Under the adult guideline, this would be a culpability A offence, because the weapon was a knife. It involved harm category 1, because even setting aside the fact that you went on to use the weapon against Lewis, your producing and brandishing the knife when you did is bound to have caused alarm and distress for those present and a risk of public disorder. So the starting point for an adult would have been 18 months' custody, with a category range from 1 year to 2 years 6 months. The attempt to dispose of the knife afterwards was an aggravating factor, as was your previous conviction. The appropriate sentence after trial for an adult would have been 2 years' custody. I reduce that by a third in light of your age, and by a further quarter because you pleaded guilty at the PTPH, the plea and trial preparation hearing. The appropriate sentence in my judgment is one year's custody, to be served concurrently with the two sentences I have already explained.

30. Alfie Pride, please stand up. I sentence you for the murder of Lewis Wenman to detention at Her Majesty's pleasure, with a minimum term of 16 years, less 279 days spent in custody on remand.
31. For theft of the mobile phone, the sentence is 16 months' custody, to be served concurrently with the sentence for murder. For possession of a weapon in a

public place, the sentence is one year's custody, to be served concurrently with the sentences I have just imposed.

32. It would not be appropriate to impose the victim surcharge in this case. There will be forfeiture and destruction of the knife. You may go down.
33. Finally, I pay tribute again to Lewis's family for their dignity and strength during the trial and today's hearing. I also pay tribute to the police for their careful and thorough investigation and preparation of this case. And I thank counsel and Lewis's family for making the journey to Coventry today.

**Mr Justice Henshaw**

**31 January 2022**