



IN THE CROWN COURT AT LINCOLN

**THE QUEEN V. DANIEL BOULTON
2 FEBRUARY 2022**

SENTENCING REMARKS OF THE HON. MR JUSTICE PEPPERALL

1. Daniel Boulton, you are now 30 and have been convicted by this jury of the murders of your former girlfriend, Bethany Vincent, and her 9-year-old son, Darren Henson. You have also pleaded guilty to assaulting a police officer with intent to resist arrest and an offence of burglary.
2. At 8.11pm on 31 May 2021, young Darren, or DJ as he was known by his family, was going to sleep at his home in Louth. DJ had returned that afternoon from seeing his father, Kieran Henson. The boy and his young mother, Bethany, had just spoken by FaceTime to his grandmother, Caroline Vincent. He was a happy little boy surrounded by love, who was excited to be wearing his new Chelsea shirt and who was laughing as he smothered his little brother with kisses and his love.
3. A mere 12 minutes later both Bethany and DJ were bleeding to death.
4. Your journey to commit these terrible murders started just before midnight the night before when you left Skegness. You walked some 28 miles from Skegness up the coast to Mablethorpe before walking west to Louth. A matter that I have had to consider with some care is your motive in undertaking that walk and then in loitering all afternoon in Louth after first seeing Bethany Vincent at lunchtime and before committing these murders that evening. Having done so, I am satisfied so that I am sure about four key matters. First, I am sure that you forced your way into Bethany Vincent's house that evening with the intention of killing her and DJ. Secondly, I am sure that you decided to commit these offences before Ms Vincent and her young family could move beyond your reach into safe accommodation. Thirdly, I am sure that you targeted DJ because of a hatred motivated by his autism and your irrational fear that such condition would somehow affect your own son. Fourthly, I am sure that you are a violent and very dangerous man and that you pose an ongoing high risk of further violence and possibly even homicide.
5. Such findings are, in my judgment, supported by the following matters:
 - (a) You have previous convictions for assaulting five different police officers, for robbery and for five further offences of violence. Of those offences, three were offences of assaulting women with whom you were in a relationship. The first was committed against a previous girlfriend while the offences in November and December 2020 were committed against Bethany Vincent.

- (b) There is ample evidence that you are manipulative and controlling. Your violence to Bethany Vincent was, I am satisfied, borne out of a desire to control her life and her thinking, and a deep sense of frustration when you did not get your own way. Your abuse ran far deeper than the cuts and bruises that you inflicted in the earlier offences against her, but included vile psychological abuse. You patronised her, you put her down, you made her feel small, you criticised every aspect of her life, you expected her to forsake her family, you insisted that she give up her own son, and you even uttered the most horrific threats about wanting DJ dead in her presence. Your abuse of her caused her to become depressed and to seek medical treatment.
- (c) You had a deep hatred of DJ. You called him a retard and a little bastard. Despite your obvious intelligence and own family experience of autism, you saw the little boy as a threat to your relationship with Ms Vincent and to the upbringing of your own son. You repeatedly claimed that he was not really autistic but simply a naughty child who needed discipline. You said that you feared that his autism would in some way affect your son. You said many times to a number of different people that you wanted him dead and out of the way.
- (d) You repeatedly breached the restraining orders made by the court in order to protect Bethany and her young family. By late May 2021, you had learnt that Bethany was to move to new secret accommodation in an attempt to get away from you. Once she had moved, she would have been beyond your control and you risked, because of your own conduct, having no further contact with your own son. If you were to kill, it had to be then.
- (e) Over the period from 25 May until these murders, you bombarded Ms Vincent with a litany of self-indulgent messages. You professed your undoubted love for your own son and your anger at not being able to see him. You variously hinted at your possible suicide and at the possibility of some violence towards Ms Vincent. There is no evidence that you were in fact suicidal or that you made any attempt on your life. In my judgment, those messages and your actions in turning up at her house with a rope amounted to further psychological abuse as you sought to manipulate Ms Vincent by threatening suicide and blame her should your son grow up without his father.
- (f) When you arrived at Bethany Vincent's house in the early afternoon, she denied you entry or access to your son. You did not, however, strike then. Rather, you bided your time loitering around Louth until Bethany had picked DJ up from his father.
- (g) Whatever your precise intention when you started your hike to Louth and when you first arrived at Ms Vincent's home, I am entirely satisfied that, having been denied entry at lunchtime, you deliberately loitered in Louth for some hours calmly awaiting her return with DJ in order that you could kill them both.

- (h) You forced your way into Ms Vincent's home shortly after DJ said goodnight to his grandmother. Bethany Vincent was still alive at 8.19pm when two brave young girls sought to assist her. I accept your own account to the doctors that you killed Ms Vincent first before climbing the stairs and killing DJ. Yet, you were filmed walking away from the house just four minutes after the girls saw Ms Vincent alive at the window. Upon that timeline, I am entirely satisfied that you killed with ruthless efficiency very quickly after breaking into the house. There was no time for you to lose control. You acted, in my judgment, calmly, callously and efficiently as you removed your own son from the front room, assaulted and stabbed both of your victims.
- (i) Further, you were not content simply with killing, but you used significant blunt force whether with your fists or another object to break Ms Vincent's nose and young DJ's teeth before stabbing each of them to death. You stabbed Ms Vincent nine times and young DJ no fewer than twelve times. It is, in my judgment, no coincidence that the deepest stab wounds to your victims was in each case through the costal cartilage of the third rib, through the pericardium and right through the heart. You intended to kill and knew precisely what you were doing.
- (j) The assault on DJ was particularly ferocious with stab wounds to his skull, face, neck, chest, back and legs.
6. You then went on the run. You broke into a bungalow that night and stole food, drink and replacement clothing. On the following day, you were recognised by Police Constable Stephen Denniss, an off-duty police officer who bravely sought to arrest you. You resisted arrest both by fighting him and then by stabbing him in the thigh. Although you sought to escape, curiously you left a note at the bungalow admitting full responsibility for your actions of the previous evening. While you initially denied all of the charges on this indictment, just after the prosecution's opening at the start of your trial, you admitted manslaughter but continued to contest the charges of murder. At the same time, you pleaded guilty to the offences of assault with intent to resist arrest and burglary.
7. Bethany Vincent, DJ Henson and Police Constable Denniss were the direct victims of your offending. Your actions have, however, had the most profound effect on many lives. Your own son will grow up without the love of either parent. His father will be in prison, while he will one day learn that his loving mother and half-brother were cruelly murdered at your hands.
8. In their moving tributes, Caroline, Darren and Chloe Vincent described the enormous hole left in their lives by these murders. They described Bethany as a beautiful and caring young woman and DJ as a very special boy. It is clear that they were both loved very much. They and Chloe's own young son have variously

suffered anxiety and panic attacks. Further, Mrs Vincent has had to give up work to care for Bethany's surviving child while Mr Vincent has had to take on extra work.

9. In his own tribute to his son, Kieran Henson spoke movingly of his utter devastation at the violent death of his little boy. It is clear that Mr Henson sees no joy or purpose in life. He has given up work and suffers both anxiety and panic attacks.
10. Before passing sentence, I wish publicly to commend three people for their astonishing bravery in this case. The two young girls who sought to come to Ms Vincent's assistance were aged just 9 and 12. While adults passed on by, these two young girls heeded Bethany's cries for help, went over to the window and sought to assist her. Such was the ferocity and speed of these murders that summoning the police proved futile, but I commend each of the girls for their bravery, their presence of mind, their public-spirited nature, the remarkable quality and reliability of their evidence, and their good sense in running away when they perceived that there was a risk that you might give chase. Given their ages, I have of course made an order pursuant to s.45 of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999 to protect their identities. Nevertheless, I pay public tribute to them for their actions and direct pursuant to s.28 of the Criminal Law Act 1826 that the High Sheriff should pay each of them a reward of £500. Further, I commend PC Stephen Denniss for his bravery in seeking to arrest you while off duty and without any back-up or regard for his own safety in order to protect members of the public.
11. For the offences of murder, I am required by law to pass sentences of life imprisonment and to fix the minimum term, being the period that you must serve in custody before you can apply to the Parole Board to be considered for release.
12. I shall pass concurrent sentences on counts 1 and 2 that encompass the totality of your offending on this indictment. In doing so, I have regard to schedule 21 of the Sentencing Act 2020. Further, I have regard to the guidelines issued by the Sentencing Council in respect of offences of assault with intent to resist arrest, burglary, offences involving domestic abuse, totality, sentencing offenders suffering from mental health conditions and guilty pleas.
13. Paragraph 2 of schedule 21 provides that the appropriate starting point is a whole-life order in cases where the seriousness of the offending is exceptionally high. Parliament has provided that cases involving the murder of two or more persons where each murder involves a substantial degree of premeditation or planning would normally fall within this paragraph.
14. Paragraph 3 of the schedule provides that where the case does not fall within paragraph 2 but the court considers that the seriousness of the offending is particularly high, the court should adopt a starting point of 30 years. Parliament has provided that the 30-year starting point would normally be appropriate for cases, if not falling within paragraph 2, involving the murder of two or more

persons. Such starting point is also normally appropriate for a single murder that is aggravated by hostility to the victim's disability.

15. In my judgment, there are an extraordinary number of serious aggravating features in this case:
- (a) First, it is a case involving two murders. That of itself would justify a starting point of 30 years.
 - (b) Secondly, I am satisfied so that I am sure that the murder of DJ was aggravated by your hostility to DJ's disability. That of itself, and without consideration of the murder of his mother or the other aggravating features of this case, would justify a starting point for the murder of DJ of 30 years. That said, I do not accept the submission by the prosecution that DJ suffered psychological damage from his knowledge of your hatred. There is no clear evidence on the issue and I infer that while DJ no doubt realised that you did not like him, his loving parents and grandparents would have shielded DJ from the full horror of your previous threats upon his life.
 - (c) Thirdly, count 2 involved the murder of a vulnerable 9-year-old boy in his own bedroom where he should have been safe.
 - (d) Fourthly, this offending was the culmination of your abhorrent physical and psychological abuse of your former partner. It was committed in her own home where she too should have been safe. Further, it was committed against the background of your previous convictions in respect of assaults upon her and the imposition of restraining orders.
 - (e) Fifthly, each murder was brutal and involved significant blunt force trauma before you struck the fatal blows with your knife. I am satisfied upon the evidence of your account to Dr Vandabeele that smashing Ms Vincent's nose and DJ's teeth before killing your victims was explicable by the pleasure that you took in violence. Furthermore, such non-fatal violence added to the suffering and horror of these brutal murders.
 - (f) Sixthly, I find that you are a very dangerous man. I accept Dr Vandabeele's evidence at trial that you continue to pose an ongoing high risk of further violence and possibly even homicide.
 - (g) Seventhly, upon my findings of fact, this was a case involving premeditation at least over the hours between the lunchtime visit and this offending.
 - (h) Eighthly, your offending was further aggravated by your other previous convictions for violence.
 - (i) Ninthly, despite your professed love for your baby son, you calmly walked away from the scene leaving him crawling around near his mother's corpse.

16. Against these matters, there is little to say in mitigation. I accept the agreed psychiatric evidence that you suffer from a dissocial personality disorder and that such disorder meant that you have a low threshold for aggression. I do not, however, accept that you in fact lost control at the time of these offences. Indeed, I am sure upon the evidence that this was calm, controlled, deliberate and purposeful violence. Accordingly, your undoubted personality disorder provides no real mitigation upon the facts of this case. You have shown no remorse for your offending but I accept that is not a further aggravating feature but rather the absence of a factor that can in some cases provide mitigation. Further, I acknowledge that your lack of insight into the harm caused by your offending and your lack of remorse are themselves manifestations of your personality disorder. I take into account the fact that you pleaded guilty to manslaughter after the prosecution's opening. That said, there was overwhelming evidence that you had unlawfully killed Bethany Vincent and DJ and your late guilty pleas to manslaughter failed properly to reflect your true criminality.
17. I have given anxious consideration to whether this is one of those exceptionally rare cases in which the court should impose a whole-life order. Had I been sure that you had intended to commit these murders throughout your 28-mile hike to Louth, I should have had no hesitation in finding that this case fell within paragraph 2 of schedule 21. The picture emerging from your messages to Ms Vincent is, however, confusing. The focus of your messages was upon your claimed love for your son, your fear of losing him, your warped perception that you were the victim and your threats of suicide. Since whole-life orders must be reserved for the most exceptional cases where the judge is in no doubt about the suitability of such punishment, I have concluded that this is a case where I should set a minimum term. I take the starting point of 30 years but move significantly upwards in view of the many aggravating features. In my judgment, the appropriate minimum term after considering all of the aggravating and mitigating features of your case is 40 years.
18. The sentences for the offences of assault of the officer with intent to resist arrest and for burglary are academic in the circumstances of this case. The assault offence was somewhat undercharged given that PC Denniss was stabbed in the leg. In my judgment, the use of a knife to stab the officer and your appalling record of previous offences of violence merits a sentence outwith the guidelines. The sentence after trial would be 2 years' imprisonment and, after credit for your late guilty plea, the proper sentence is 21 months' imprisonment. The burglary was your third conviction for a domestic burglary since turning 18. By section 314 of the Sentencing Act 2020, I am therefore required to pass a minimum sentence of three years' imprisonment unless there are particular circumstances relating to any of the offences or to the offender which would make it unjust to do so in all the circumstances. There are no such circumstances. After credit for your late guilty plea, the proper sentence for the offence of burglary is therefore 32 months' imprisonment.

19. Daniel Boulton, I therefore sentence you to concurrent sentences of life imprisonment on counts 1 and 2. Further, I direct that you will serve a minimum term of 40 years before you are eligible to apply to the Parole Board to be considered for release. Even after serving the minimum term, you will only be released from prison when the Parole Board decides that further imprisonment is no longer necessary for public protection. Upon your eventual release, you will remain under supervision on licence for the rest of your life, and you may be recalled to prison at any time. In view of the exceptionally serious nature of your offending and the risk that you pose at liberty, it may well be that you are never released from custody. I direct that, in the calculation of the minimum term, you should have full credit for the time that you have been remanded in custody, which according to the information before me is 243 days. Further, I sentence you to concurrent sentences of 21 months' imprisonment on count 3 and 32 months' imprisonment on count 4, and I order that you should pay the appropriate victim surcharge.
20. Finally, I impose a restraining order pursuant to s.360 of the Sentencing Act 2020 prohibiting you until further order from contacting Caroline Vincent, Darren Vincent and Kieran Henson either directly or indirectly by any means including by letter, phone, text or social media.
21. You may go down.