



JUDICIARY OF
ENGLAND AND WALES

The Queen

-v-

Leo Pickford

Ronnie Bevan

Archie Pestridge

Sentencing Remarks of Mr Justice Spencer

Stafford Crown Court

Friday 15th July 2022

NOTE: Reporting restrictions under s.45 Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999 were in force in relation to all three defendants until disposal of appeals against conviction by Bevan and Pestridge. Leave to appeal was refused by the Single Judge and there was no renewal to the Full Court. Accordingly reporting restrictions were lifted on 5th January 2023.

1. Leo Pickford, Ronnie Bevan and Archie Pestridge: you may remain seated for the time being.
2. I have to sentence all three of you for the offence of murder. You, Leo Pickford, pleaded guilty well before the trial. You, Ronnie Bevan, and you, Archie Pestridge, were convicted unanimously by the jury after a trial lasting several weeks.
3. The young man you murdered was Peter Cairns, aged 26. He had done nothing to harm or threaten you. He simply had the misfortune to be the victim of your random violence on a

summer's evening, Friday 11th June 2021, when he and his friend Kaine Bushell, aged 21, were enjoying some recreation outdoors near their home in Telford trying out a moped on a leafy public thoroughfare, the Silkin Way. The three of you were all armed with weapons, making your way to another area of Telford in the hope and expectation of a violent confrontation with a rival gang.

4. When you came across these two innocent young men, tinkering with their moped, you attacked them. You did so on the slenderest of pretexts that you did not like the tone of voice in which one of them encouraged you to walk on past them. Although you are the youngest, Ronnie Bevan, it was you who instigated the violence. You pulled out a heavy steel wheel brace which you were concealing as a weapon and you struck Kaine Bushell with it. He put his arm up to protect his face so the blow landed on his elbow, causing heavy bruising.
5. You shouted to Archie Pestridge to "show him the thing", the thing being a samurai sword which you, Archie Pestridge, were concealing in your clothing. In fact it was a purely ornamental sword, without a sharpened blade, but your victim wasn't to know that. It looked like a fearsome weapon. You struck Kaine Bushell across the back with that sword hard enough to leave pronounced tramline bruising. You, Leo Pickford, were encouraging this violence. All three of you are also to be sentenced for this initial assault on Kaine Bushell.
6. You all then turned your attention to Peter Cairns, who had done and said nothing. He had not even had the opportunity to intervene to protect his friend. You, Leo Pickford, were carrying a large kitchen knife. With it you stabbed Peter Cairns repeatedly to the body in what must have been a frenzied attack, and with sufficient force to break the knife, separating the blade from the handle. The fatal wound penetrated the heart, resulting in catastrophic blood loss. You, Ronnie Bevan and Archie Pestridge, encouraged Leo Pickford in that attack, intending that Peter Cairns should be caused really serious injury. It was, in reality, a continuation of the violence you had already jointly meted out to Kaine Bushell.
7. Despite his injuries, Peter Cairns managed to run away from you some considerable distance along the track before eventually collapsing. He was found there by a member of the public a few minutes later. The emergency services were called and were soon in attendance. Everything that could be done to save him was done, but to no avail. He died that evening.
8. Meanwhile the three of you had fled the scene, abandoning in the undergrowth nearby the weapons you had been carrying. None of you did anything to alert the emergency services that a man had been stabbed and was seriously injured, although you must have known that was the case.

9. In those few minutes on that summer's evening the three of you took the life of an innocent young man. At the age of only 26 he had his whole life before him. He was a much loved son, brother and uncle. In moving personal statements read to the court from his parents, his mother describes the devastating impact of his loss not only on her but on all the family. She relied on her son totally. He was her "safety blanket". She has become a virtual recluse and has lost all confidence. Her mental and physical health have suffered badly. She describes him as the glue which held the family together. His father describes the family as "frozen in time" at 11th June last year and unable to move on. He describes the terrible impact on his own physical and mental health. His son's death has left a chasm that can never be filled. No sentence I pass can reflect the depth of the grief suffered by Peter Cairns' family. For them, his loss is in a very real sense a life sentence.
10. All three of you are still very young. That is one of the most disturbing features of this tragic case. You Leo Pickford were just 15 when you committed this murder. You Ronnie Bevan, were only 14. You Archie Petridge were nearly 15 ½. By your senseless violence that night you have also ruined your own lives and caused untold anguish to your own families.
11. For murder there is only one sentence, life imprisonment. Because you were under 18 years of age when you committed this murder your life sentences have to be expressed as detention during Her Majesty's pleasure. But make no mistake, the effect is exactly the same. Each of you will remain in custody for many years to come until you have served the minimum term which I am obliged by law to determine and fix in the case of each of you. After you have served that minimum term you will remain in custody until such time as the Parole Board considers it safe to release you. You will then remain on licence for the rest of your life, liable to be recalled to prison if you commit any further offence or breach the conditions of your licence.
12. In your case, Ronnie Bevan, I have to sentence you not only for this murder but also for a serious offence of s.18 wounding with intent, committed only 11 weeks earlier, and an offence of possessing an offensive weapon. It follows that at the time of the murder you were, in effect, on bail for that earlier matter whilst the police completed their investigation.
13. Those earlier offence were committed on 27th of March 2021. The victim was a 14-year-old boy. You were still only 13 years old at the time, two weeks short of your 14th birthday. The victim lived near you and you knew him. You had some issue with him. You had fallen out with him a month before. You told the author of the pre-sentence report that you took the knife with you that day in case you met up with him. He was out with friends near the river in the

Ironbridge area of Telford. He was with friends. As he walked back to the riverside after visiting a shop to buy a snack, you spotted him and pursued him. You put up the hood of your jacket and you were wearing a face covering. What happened next was captured on CCTV and is beyond dispute. As you ran after him you produced a large kitchen knife which you had been concealing in your tracksuit trousers. You ran after him brandishing the knife. You slashed at him, at that stage merely cutting the fabric of his puffa coat.

14. You chased him again. He stopped running and turned to face you. You carried on towards him, holding the knife. He turned and ran back towards his friends but he tripped and stumbled almost to the ground. You caught up with him, ran at him and lunged at him with the knife, stabbing him three times causing wounds to his arm and the back of his shoulder. It ended with him lying on his back on the floor, at which point you stopped the attack. He was able to get up and walk away. Fortunately the wounds were not serious, but that was only by good fortune. By your plea of guilty you admitted that you intended to cause him really serious injury. He was treated for two superficial cuts to the back of the left shoulder, 1 cm and 2 cms in length, and another superficial 2 cm cut just above the left elbow.
15. You ran away from the scene, concealing the knife again in your trousers. You were arrested later the same day. The knife was never found. When you were interviewed that day you made no comment. You were released under investigation. You were interviewed again a few weeks later on 15th May and again made no comment. You were released again under investigation. That was only 22 days before the murder.
16. The boy you stabbed was of mixed race. It is apparent from the account he gave the police in a video recorded interview that you were shouting racial insults at him in the lead up to the stabbing, and suggesting that he should go back to where he came from. That is an aggravating feature of the attack. I will not repeat the words you said, which were read out in court and can be found at the bottom of page 2 of the ABE transcript.
17. Before I turn to deal with each of you individually and consider what minimum term each of you should serve, I need to say a little more about the circumstances of the murder and my factual findings.
18. All three of you were members of or associated with a gang in the Woodside area of Telford where you lived, known by its postcode as the TF7s. There had been issues and confrontations with a rival gang in Brookside, another area of Telford, known as the TF3s. The jury saw photographs of each of you on various occasions posing as gang members, hooded and masked, making hand gestures of the figure 7. In one of the photographs you, Archie Petridge, were

standing in front of the “Welcome to Brookside” road sign with an older gang member, making a similar gesture. You admitted in your evidence to the jury that the intention was to post this photograph on social media to annoy and provoke the rival gang. That photograph was taken only a matter of days before the murder.

19. Messages on your phone, Ronnie Bevan, indicated that there had recently been a confrontation between your gang and the other gang, with discussions about numbers who had been present and a suggestion that your gang and theirs should “have it out”. In your police interview you confirmed that a day or so before the murder you and others had been over to Brookside looking for the rival gang without finding them. In your evidence to the jury, Archie Pestridge, you said that this was not the sort of gang rivalry you get in London or Birmingham, it was more “a children’s thing”. You may have been aping big-city gangs, but as a direct consequence of your intended gang violence that evening an innocent man lost his life. That was not a children’s thing.
20. It is also clear on the evidence that weapons were kept and stored in a shed in Woodside, which was used as a meeting place. One of the weapons was the samurai sword which you, Ronnie Bevan, told the police you had previously owned but had sold on the Internet for £50. It had found its way back into the gang’s joint possession. You, Archie Pestridge, told the jury you had handled the sword previously. You, Leo Pickford, accept that you would commonly carry a knife. Ronnie Bevan told the police he had seen you out and about with a knife or knives on previous occasions.
21. On the afternoon of the murder, you had all gathered together in one of your meeting places in Woodside. Archie Pestridge had bought or at least paid for a bottle of vodka. He at least had been drinking vodka, and smoking cannabis. Leo Pickford was a regular cannabis smoker and had been smoking that day. So had Ronnie Bevan. Your activities in the hours leading up to the murder were captured to an extent on CCTV. There can be no doubt that the decision was made that you should all walk over to Brookside that evening to confront the rival gang. You may well have been encouraged to do so by an older gang member who did not go with you himself, but you all chose to go.
22. Shortly before 6 pm that Friday evening, you Ronnie Bevan can be seen on CCTV walking towards the camera and limping slightly. That was because you had a wheel brace concealed down your trousers and under your coat. A minute later you Archie Pestridge can be seen walking towards the camera, also limping. That was because you had the samurai sword partly down your trouser leg and partly concealed under clothing you were wearing or carrying.

23. Rather than walk along roads where there were CCTV cameras or where you might attract the attention of any passing police officer, you chose instead to walk along the Silkin Way to the Brookside underpass, where you anticipated members of the rival gang might be waiting. In order to understand the evidence properly, the jury visited the scene. For people living locally the Silkin Way is, or should be, a pleasant country walk along a wooded pathway for a mile or so. There are no CCTV cameras. As you walked along that pathway, and before you reached the scene of the fatal attack, you encountered another member of the public who was riding an electric scooter. He had to give you a wide berth because you made it quite clear by your body language that you were not going to give way. He felt quite threatened.
24. A little further along your route, Peter Cairns and Kaine Bushell had been trying out a moped they had recently acquired. As Kaine Bushell put it they were simply out for “an hour of fun” on a Friday evening. Instead they found themselves confronted by your threatening group. I am quite sure on the evidence that the most Kaine Bushell did or said was to encourage you all to walk on quietly rather than cause some sort of incident. Whatever he said it was quite innocuous and did not deserve the foul mouthed threatening response which you, Archie Pestridge, admit you gave him immediately before the weapons were produced. It immediately flared up into unprovoked serious violence with weapons, as I have already described.
25. By their verdicts the jury roundly rejected any suggestion that you, Ronnie Bevan, and you, Archie Pestridge, were in any way acting in self-defence. I am quite sure on all the evidence that neither of you genuinely believed you were under any threat from Kaine Bushell. It was unprovoked violence on your part. You were looking for an excuse to start trouble and use violence.
26. It was unclear on the evidence whether the attack on Peter Cairns which soon followed took place close by, or whether he was chased some distance before he was attacked. Kaine Bushell had by then run off and did not see it. Only the three of you know what really happened. You, Leo Pickford, undoubtedly bear the greatest responsibility, because it was you who stabbed Peter Cairns repeatedly with the knife you were carrying. You, Archie Pestridge, admitted in your evidence to the jury that you had seen that knife as you were walking along the Silkin Way, but claimed there had been no discussion about the weapons you were each carrying or about the purpose of your journey. I am quite sure on all the evidence that each of you knew perfectly well what weapons you all had, and what the purpose of the journey was.
27. The prosecution case was that you, Archie Pestridge, must have joined in the attack on Peter Cairns which Leo Pickford was leading, and that this was why Peter Cairns’ blood was found on the samurai sword that you were still holding. It was not suggested that you had cut him

with the sword, not least because the cutting edge was blunt and there was no matching injury to Peter Cairns. However, I am quite sure on all the evidence that you were close to Peter Cairns when the stabbing was taking place, encouraging and intending to encourage by your presence, the attack on Peter Cairns, and intending that he should be caused really serious injury. In answering the questions posed for the jury in the steps to verdict as part of the directions of law, by convicting you of murder the jury must have been sure of all those things and must also have been sure that your participation in the attack began before the fatal injury was inflicted.

28. The prosecution case was that you, Ronnie Bevan, took part physically in the attack on Peter Cairns by striking him with the wheel brace. There was forensic evidence which supported this suggestion, although it was the subject of considerable challenge which I need not go into. Alternatively, the prosecution case was that by your presence and conduct at the scene, including the joint attack on Kaine Bushell, you encouraged and intended to encourage Leo Pickford in the attack on Peter Cairns, intending that he should be caused really serious injury. In your case too, in answering the questions posed for the jury in the steps to verdict as part of the directions of law, by convicting you of murder the jury must have been sure of all those things and must also have been sure that your participation began before the fatal injury was inflicted.
29. Having fled the scene and discarded the weapons, you all returned eventually to Woodside by a circuitous route. You split into two groups, some of which activity was captured on CCTV. You, Leo Pickford, discarded the bloodstained jacket you had been wearing. You, Ronnie Bevan, discarded a garment you had been wearing, although there is no evidence that it was bloodstained.
30. Another disturbing feature of the case is that later that evening, within an hour or two of the murder, you Leo Pickford and you Archie Petridge, were boasting of what you had done. You both went to the home of a girl you knew, whose garden shed was a regular meeting place for the group of friends you all belonged to. In that shed, in the girl's presence and in the presence of her mother, you both described in graphic terms what you have just done. In your case Archie Petridge there was plainly gross exaggeration in your description of what you had done to each of the two victims. Suffice it to say, however, that the account you gave and the way in which you gave it provided powerful confirmation that you had been a willing and enthusiastic participant in both attacks.
31. In your case, Leo Pickford, the girl and her mother both noted that your demeanour was much more restrained and reflective, holding your head in your hands for much of the time. But you too described in graphic terms how you had stabbed him, and had done so for no reason you

could explain. You attempted to leave the Telford area that night intending to head for Liverpool, but you were arrested by the police when you were found hiding in a vehicle they stopped. When you were interviewed by the police you elected to make no comment throughout all the interviews, although that should not be held against you in view of your mental health issues.

32. You Ronnie Bevan and you Archie Pestridge were arrested that night. You were both interviewed by the police at considerable length over several days. Your video recorded interviews were played to the jury. You, Ronnie Bevan, gave a generally frank account of much of what had occurred, although you minimised your own role in the two attacks, claiming that you had struck Kaine Bushell only in self-defence, and that you had played no part at all in any joint attack on Peter Cairns. You Archie Pestridge gave an account which was riddled with lies, as you readily admitted to the jury, denying involvement in either of the attacks.
33. Against this background I turn to consider the statutory provisions which govern the approach I must take to setting the minimum term which each of you must serve. Parliament has laid down in Schedule 21 to the Sentencing Act 2020 that for an offender under the age of 18 at the time of the murder, the starting point is 12 years' custody. That is equivalent to a determinate sentence of 24 years custody, from which an offender of your age would be released on licence after serving half. I emphasise that this is the minimum term you will have to serve. It does not follow by any means that you will be released at that point. In setting the minimum term I am concerned not with risk but only with punishment. Risk is a matter for the Parole Board.
34. From the starting point of 12 years, I have to consider what aggravating and mitigating factors exist which should cause me to depart from that starting point.
35. For each of you the minimum term must also reflect the additional criminality of the associated offence of assault on Kaine Bushell, causing actual bodily harm. Under the relevant Sentencing Council guideline I assess it to be a category 2B offence, with a starting point for an adult of 9 months custody and a range up to 18 months. A substantial appropriate reduction would have to be made for your youth, in accordance with the guideline on sentencing children and young people.
36. In your case, Ronnie Bevan, the minimum term must also reflect the additional criminality of the serious offence of s.18 wounding with intent which you committed some weeks before the murder, and possession of the knife you were carrying and used. It is common ground that under the relevant Sentencing Council guideline the wounding is a category 3A offence, with a starting point for an adult of 5 years custody, and a range of 4 to 7 years. In my judgment the

aggravating features place it at the very top of the range, and into the range above. Again, a substantial appropriate reduction would have to be made for your youth, in accordance with the guideline on sentencing children and young people, and for other mitigating factors.

37. Next it is convenient to identify in respect of the murder the aggravating factors which are common to all three of you.
38. First and foremost, the use of a knife is a serious aggravating factor. In the case of Leo Pickford, who used the knife and brought it to the scene, it is particularly serious. Had you been over 18 and therefore an adult, the starting point for your minimum term would have been 25 years, rather than the usual starting point of 15 years for an adult. That is a reflection of how seriously the carrying and use of a knife to commit murder has to be regarded. It is nevertheless still a serious aggravating factor for Ronnie Bevan and Archie Pestridge as well, because each of you knew that Leo Pickford was carrying a knife and was likely to use it.
39. Second, the three of you were acting as a group, and this was gang violence. That makes it more serious than an individual offender who commits such an offence alone.
40. Third, this murder took place in public and in broad daylight. As chance would have it, no-one else was around at that precise time to see it. But there were plenty of people out and about on the Silkin Way that evening, including children. Some of them came across the aftermath and saw Peter Cairns being attended to at the side of the path. Several members of the public made witness statements as to what they had seen of your group before and after the fatal incident.
41. Fourth, you all disposed of the weapons you had with you. In due course they were recovered, thanks largely to the co-operation of Ronnie Bevan in pointing out to the police where they had been thrown away.
42. I turn now to consider the cases of each of you in turn.

Leo Pickford

43. I deal first with you, Leo Pickford. You pleaded guilty to this offence of murder as soon as all necessary investigations had been conducted into your psychiatric and psychological background. It was nevertheless a courageous decision, and a clear reflection of your genuine remorse. The maximum credit for plea which is permissible for the minimum term of a life sentence for murder is one-sixth, which is the equivalent mathematically to a reduction of one-third for an ordinary determinate sentence. You will receive maximum credit for your guilty pleas.

44. You have some serious mental health issues, which form an important part of your mitigation. They are set out clearly in a range of psychological and psychiatric reports between January 2021 (prior to these offences) and July 2022. I have permitted you to appear remotely over a video link for this sentencing hearing because of concerns about your mental health and risks arising from those concerns. There is a helpful pre-sentence report dated 7th July 2022 which draws together the threads and provides additional valuable background information. I also have impressive character references from family members and friends which provide additional important insight into your background. All these documents have been collated in a bundle running to 137 pages.
45. In brief summary, you were initially assessed in January 2021 by a consultant clinical psychologist because your mother was concerned about your challenging behaviour. You were then still only 14. There were problems and issues at school and at home. The conclusion of the assessment was that you met the diagnostic criteria for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and also presented with traits of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Various recommendations were made. Your mother says in her letter to the court that the decline in your mental health seemed to arise after the death of your great-grandfather to whom you were particularly close, and the death soon afterwards of your great-grandmother. Prior to that you had been fully engaged at school, particularly with sport, captaining the school rugby team for your age group. Your mother expresses concern that, try as she might, she was unable to obtain the mental health support that you needed, in accordance with the recommendations that had been made.
46. The next psychologist's report is dated 22nd September 2021, after you had committed the murder and had first appeared in court. There was a real doubt as to whether you were fit to plead and stand trial. This led to the trial of all your co-accused having to be postponed as well whilst this issue was investigated further. It was anticipated that there would also be an issue as to whether you might have a partial defence of diminished responsibility.
47. In the end these concerns were addressed in psychiatric reports dated 29th November 2021 and 20th January 2022. The psychiatrist was sceptical as to whether you met the criteria for a diagnosis of ADHD or AHD. Traumatic life events such as the death of your great-grandfather and the separation of your parents had taken their toll, but you were also smoking cannabis. You had been admitted to a specialist unit at a young offender institution, where you were coping well. No transfer to hospital had been called for. There was no defence of diminished responsibility available. You admitted to the psychiatrist that you had been smoking up to 3 grams of cannabis a day, which was "messing with your head", as you put it. You said you

commonly carried a knife for self-protection as there had been incidents of gang-related violence in the area and you had previously been assaulted yourself. You could not remember why you stabbed the victim, but you recalled screaming and being overcome by intense anger. That accords with Ronnie Bevan's description of your behaviour during the stabbing.

48. As the pre-sentence report suggests, it is clear that you were part of a group who aspired to replicate a gang lifestyle and gang behaviour. You had been removed from rugby teams following the decline in your mental health. No doubt gang membership provided an attractive sense of belonging, attachment and identity, but also feelings of power and autonomy. You were under further stress at the time because your girlfriend was pregnant.
49. The pre-sentence report, and the testimonials, show a very different and positive side of your character. You have done well since your time on remand, but serious concerns remain over your mental health and the risk of self-harm. You are regularly reviewed by the consultant psychiatrist at the unit whose latest report is dated 7th July 2022.
50. One of the matters I have to consider is to what extent these undoubted mental health issues impacted on your behaviour on the fatal night, and the extent to which they reduce your culpability. I take into account the Sentencing Council guideline in relation to mentally disordered offenders, as well as the guideline on children and young persons. Whilst there was undoubtedly some reduction in your culpability as a result of these problems, it is also quite apparent that you were acting to a degree under the influence of cannabis, which is an aggravating rather than a mitigating factor. You knew what you were doing. You allowed your anger to dominate your emotions and took it out on your victim.
51. There are, however, other mitigating factors. First, although it was a frenzied attack and you stabbed your victim in the chest, I accept that there was no intention to kill. Second, there was no pre-meditation or pre-planning of this particular attack. It arose on the spur of the moment immediately after Ronnie Bevan and Archie Pestrige had started the violence. That said, you were on your way to a confrontation with a rival gang in which it was anticipated that weapons would be produced to instil fear if not necessarily to be used. Third, you have no previous convictions, cautions or reprimands and had never previously been in trouble with the police. On the contrary, the picture presented in the testimonials is, in happier times, that of a polite, caring and responsible young man. Fourth, I accept that you have demonstrated genuine remorse.
52. Fifth, your young age is in itself a mitigating factor. You were less than two weeks past your 15th birthday at the time of the murder. It must be remembered, of course, that the offender's

youth is built into the starting point of 12 years itself, particularly when you would have been liable to a starting point of 25 years had you been three years older and over 18. Nevertheless, you were and are still very young, only a little over 16 now. The guideline for sentencing of children emphasises that children and young people are likely to be susceptible to peer pressure and other external influences; changes taking place during adolescence can lead to experimentation, resulting in criminal behaviour. The emotional and developmental age of a young offender is of at least equal importance to their chronological age, if not of great importance.

53. The aggravating factors I have identified would have justified a significant increase from the starting point of 12 years, but the mitigating factors I have identified would have justified a significant but lesser decrease. Weighing and balancing all the factors, I have reached the conclusion that, before credit for your guilty pleas, the appropriate minimum term in your case, taking into account the very modest separate sentence appropriate for the other assault, is **13 ½ years**. With credit for plea of one-sixth, I round that down to **11 years**.
54. **Leo Pickford**, stand up, please. For the offence of murder I sentence you to be detained at Her Majesty's pleasure for a minimum term of **11 years, less 395 days** already served on remand. I impose no separate penalty on count 2 for the offence of assault occasioning actual bodily harm. You may go down.

Archie Pestridge

55. I deal with you next, Archie Pestridge. You are slightly older than Leo Pickford. You were four months past your 15th birthday at the time of the murder. You are now 16 ½ years old. You have no previous convictions, but you have two youth cautions for assault on police officers who were called to an incident at your home in May 2019 when you were only 13 years old.
56. I have already identified the aggravating factors in your case. You did not take a knife to the scene, but you took a samurai sword and used it as a weapon. You were aware that Leo Pickford had a knife, and as I have already explained, I cannot believe and do not accept that there was no discussion between the three of you about the weapons you were carrying and the purpose of the journey. Whilst your responsibility for the use of the knife in the stabbing is not as high as Leo Pickford's, in the end it makes little difference because this was a joint enterprise in which all three of you were armed with weapons, even if you did not actually use the sword on Peter Cairns. By the jury's verdict you participated in the fatal attack by encouraging and intending to encourage the attack, intending that he should be caused really serious injury.

57. You used the samurai sword in the initial attack on Kaine Bushell. It was a frightening joint attack in which he was assaulted by two of you at the same time, with weapons, immediately before your attention turned to Peter Cairns. There is no doubt that Kaine Bushell was severely affected psychologically by the incident overall, but particularly by the experience of holding his dying friend whilst the ambulance was on its way. The samurai sword had no sharp cutting edge, but you struck him a full-blooded blow to the back which left bruising. In its context overall it was a serious offence, albeit in category B2. For an adult the sentence would have been 12 months after trial, and for you as a 15-year-old somewhere around half that, applying the guideline for sentencing children and young persons. If you were being sentenced for that offence alone you would serve half that period in custody, 3 months. It is therefore appropriate to take that into account in deciding upon your total minimum term.
58. I had the opportunity of observing you closely for several days during the course of your evidence to the jury. You accepted that you had not told the truth in your police interviews. The jury rejected your account in relation to the two offences of which you were convicted. For the reasons I have already explained, I am quite sure that you never believed you were under threat from Kaine Bushell, and that you resorted to gratuitous unprovoked violence. I am also quite sure on all the evidence that although you caused no injury yourself to Peter Cairns, you were in the thick of the joint attack, lending support to Leo Pickford, and you were positively bragging about your participation later that evening.
59. I have the benefit of a pre-sentence report in your case dated 7th July 2022. It helpfully provides a great deal of background, and in particular throws light on the problems you were having to cope with at home over several years. I have also read and taken fully into account the impressive testimonials from members of your family and from staff at the young offender institution where you have been detained on remand for many months, including a letter from the prison chaplain.
60. It is plain that as a young child you suffered several very harmful experiences, including witnessing domestic abuse. You became a vulnerable child and outside the home over time you began to keep bad company, learning to misuse drugs, especially cannabis. Very prominent in your traumatic childhood experiences was the loss of your father who died tragically in a car accident when you were at the particularly impressionable age of only 7 years. You appear to have received no bereavement counselling, which may have contributed to your trying later to find a sense of belonging by involving yourself with older males who exploited you. Your education suffered. You were consistently excluded from school. More recently within the

space of two years you suffered further bereavements with the deaths of your great-grandmother, your grandfather and your aunt.

61. Happily you have responded well to your period in custody so far, engaging fully with the opportunities for education and development, and achieving a good rapport with staff. It is an encouraging picture. I accept that you have expressed and feel genuine remorse, now that the enormity of your crime has really hit you, following the jury's verdict. There is force in your counsel's submission that this dramatic change in your educational achievement, away from bad influences in the company you were previously keeping, tends to highlight your prior immaturity.
62. I have taken into account the psychiatric report, dated 13 August 2021, prepared well in advance of your trial. That report highlights the significant impact of your father's death on your self-confidence and self-esteem in your formative years. You became angry and rebellious. This led to a low threshold of anger. You began to use cannabis. The psychiatrist did not consider that you were suffering from any symptoms of mental illness at the time of the murder, but you may have been vulnerable and easily led by older boys. That coincides with your mother's view.
63. In your case too I have full regard to the principles emphasised in the guideline on sentencing children and young people. I have already referred to some of the relevant principles, and they are all helpfully highlighted in your counsel's written submissions on sentence. In my judgement they afford some degree of general mitigation, although I do not accept that they had a particular impact on your culpability. You knew perfectly well what you were doing and were happy to go along with it.
64. There are other mitigating factors. First, there was no intention to kill. Second, there was no premeditation or pre-planning of this particular attack. It arose on the spur of the moment. Third, despite your early police cautions you are otherwise of good character. Fourth, you have expressed genuine remorse
65. Fifth, your young age is in itself a mitigating factor. You were only 15 years old at the time. I have already referred to the way in which the guideline suggests the court should approach the relevance of an offender's young age in terms of susceptibility to peer pressure and other external influences.
66. The aggravating factors I have identified would have justified a significant increase from the starting point of 12 years but the mitigating factors I have identified would have justified a significant but lesser decrease. Weighing and balancing all the factors, I have reached the

conclusion that the appropriate minimum term in your case, taking into account the very modest separate sentence appropriate for the other assault, is **13 years**.

67. **Archie Pestrige**, stand up please. For the offence of murder I sentence you to be detained at Her Majesty's pleasure for a minimum term of **13 years, less 395 days** already served on remand. I impose no separate penalty on count 2 for the offence of assault occasioning actual bodily harm. You may go down.

Ronnie Bevan

68. I deal finally with you, Ronnie Bevan. You are the youngest of the defendants, but you were the instigator of the violence and you had previously committed another very serious offence only a few weeks earlier. Punishment for that offence will be reflected in the length of your minimum term for the murder, because it is an associated offence for the purposes of s.400 of the Sentencing Act 2020.

69. I have already indicated that your earlier section 18 wounding would be a category 3A offence under the relevant Sentencing Council guideline, with a starting point for an adult of 5 years and a range of 4 -7 years. However, there were three separate high culpability factors: first, a significant degree of planning or premeditation in that you went out armed in case you came across him; second, you used a highly dangerous weapon, a large kitchen knife; third, it was a prolonged and persistent assault, in that you chased him and carried on chasing him after the first use of the knife. That combination of high culpability factors would have merited a significant increase from the starting point, even before considering other aggravating factors. The offence was committed in broad daylight in public when there were people around. It was also an aggravating factor that the attack was accompanied (if not motivated) by audible hostility based on race. For an adult, the sentence on these facts would have been 9 years after trial, 6 years after full credit for an early guilty plea. Applying a reduction of around one-half to reflect your extreme youth at the time of the offence (13 years 11 months) in accordance with the guideline on sentencing children and young persons, and other mitigating factors, your sentence for this offence had it stood alone would have been in the range of 2 to 3 years custody, of which you would serve half, that is 12 to 18 months. You committed the murder whilst effectively on bail for this offence, so allowing for totality it is appropriate to add 12 months to the minimum term for this associated offence.

70. When you committed the murder you were only two months past your 14th birthday. You instigated the violence, striking the first blow against Kaine Bushell with the wheel brace, and you encouraged Archie Pestrige to produce and use the samurai sword. It was serious

gratuitous violence for which there was no conceivable excuse. I have no doubt that your violence acted as a direct encouragement to Leo Pickford. I need not decide whether you struck Peter Cairns with the wheel brace. The jury were sure that in one way or another you encouraged and intended to encourage Leo Pickford in the attack, intending that Peter Cairns should be caused really serious injury.

71. You did not take a knife to the scene, so your responsibility for its use is not as great as that of Leo Pickford. However, you took another weapon to the scene and used it and I am quite sure that you were well aware that Leo Pickford had a knife and might use it. Whether or not you actually struck Peter Cairns with the wheel brace makes little difference in the end, because this was a joint enterprise in which all three of you were armed with weapons.
72. I have the benefit of a pre-sentence report in your case dated 7th July 2022 which helpfully provides a great deal of background information about your upbringing and home life. I have a letter from your mother. I also have psychiatric reports dated 14th October and 24th November 2021 from Dr Louise Holly, instructed on behalf of the defence, and from Dr Iankov dated 21 January 2022 instructed on behalf of the prosecution. One of the purposes of those reports was to ascertain whether a defence of diminished responsibility might be available. It was not. However, the doctors were agreed on a diagnosis of ADHD which was of long-standing, and also a diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) arising partly from an incident when you were 10 years old and witnessed a serious assault on your father. You have also been classified as vulnerable in that the National Referral Mechanism has found there were reasonable grounds to conclude that you were a victim of modern slavery, in relation to exploitation by older gang members.
73. The doctors were agreed on a diagnosis of mixed disorder of conduct and emotions, characterised by a combination of persistently aggressive, social or defiant behaviour. Dr Iankov identified this combination of mental disorders, against a background of a deprived upbringing, lack of parental guidance and missed education, as leading you to the path of criminality. Being part of a gang gave you a sense of belonging and excitement. However, these disorders provided you with no defence of diminished responsibility. You told the doctor that you decided, together with your friends, to go out and look for trouble that evening.
74. There was also a psychological report, dated 17th November 2021, principally to establish whether you required the assistance of an intermediary during the trial. The report concluded that you do not have a learning disability but that an intermediary was required, and accordingly, on the direction of the court, you had the assistance of an intermediary throughout the trial.

75. Despite your young age, you had acquired several convictions and youth cautions: for possessing cannabis, for assault occasioning actual bodily harm on two occasions, for burglary and for racially aggravated harassment. You were made the subject of a referral order receiving supervision by the youth justice service. Despite all that you went on to commit very serious offences. The reality, as demonstrated by the present offences of murder and wounding with intent, is that you were completely out of control.
76. For the last 13 months you have been detained on remand at a secure training centre, the only one of its kind in England. After a challenging start, you have recently shown signs of improvement and a willingness to engage with the help that is being offered, including educational opportunities. This is encouraging but there is still a very great deal of work to be done with you. During the trial itself, which lasted many weeks, you had to be conveyed every day from the south of England to Stafford and back. I was impressed at the way you co-operated with these demanding arrangements. I have read the letter which you have written to me in your own hand with considerable assistance from your mentor. I accept that you are now genuinely remorseful for the devastation you have caused by your offending.
77. This troubled background, and your mental health problems, provide you with significant mitigation, although they do not begin to excuse or even explain fully your very serious offending. I take into account all the submissions made by your counsel, and the principles emphasised in the guideline on sentencing children and young offenders which she has identified in her written sentencing submissions.
78. There are other mitigating factors. First, there was no intention to kill. Second there was no premeditation or planning of this fatal attack. You came upon your victims by chance. Third, you have expressed genuine remorse. Fourth, you assisted the police by showing them where the weapons had been thrown away, leading to their recovery. Fifth, your very young age is in itself a mitigating factor. You were only just 14 years old when you committed the murder. You are still only just 15.
79. The aggravating factors I have identified would have justified a significant increase from the starting point of 12 years, but the mitigating factors would have justified a significant but lesser decrease. Weighing and balancing all the factors, I have reached the conclusion that the appropriate minimum term in your case, taking into account an increase for the associated offences of assault occasioning actual bodily harm, wounding with intent, and possessing an offensive weapon, is **13 years**.

80. **Ronnie Bevan**, stand up please. For the offence of murder I sentence you to be detained at Her Majesty's pleasure for a minimum term of **13 years, less 395** days already served on remand. I impose no separate penalty on count 2 for the assault occasioning actual bodily harm. For the offence of wounding with intent on the other indictment, there will be a concurrent determinate sentence of 2 ½ years detention, under s. 250 of the Sentencing Act 2020. On count 2, possessing an offensive weapon, there will be no separate penalty.
81. In the case of each of the defendants there will be a victim surcharge order in the appropriate sum.