



JUDICIARY OF
ENGLAND AND WALES

Sentencing remarks of Mr Justice Kerr

The Queen

v

Shaye Groves

Winchester Crown Court

22 February 2023

1. Ms Groves, please remain seated for the moment. The jury has convicted you of murdering Frankie Fitzgerald by stabbing him to death in the early hours of 17 July last year. They rejected your defences of self-defence, loss of self-control and diminished responsibility. I am now required to pass the sentence of the court for that murder.
2. You have robbed Frankie's family and loved ones of their son and brother; and his two young children of their father. You ended his life while he was still in his mid-twenties. You have not only taken his life, you have blighted those of his mother, father, siblings and children, for decades to come. Until last week you showed little concern for their suffering, present and future. Your interest was in yourself, not others. The suffering of Frankie's family has been described in statements read to the court this morning.
3. They come from his father Barry Fitzgerald, his mother Roseanne Fitzgerald; from his sister, Karla Smith and from Charlene Scutt, the mother of his two children. No one with any compassion could but be deeply moved by them. The pain, grief and anger you have caused is enduring and unending. His loved ones and children must live with the knowledge that their Frankie has been cruelly taken from them in the prime of his young life, in a futile, unnecessary, self-regarding and shameful attack.
4. How did this happen? The findings I am coming to are ones of which I am sure and which respect the jury's verdict. If I am not sure of something, I will say so. Although important parts of your account at trial were untruthful, not all of it was. You were 26 when you murdered Frankie and are now 27.

5. You had a difficult time as a child. I accept that you were beaten as a young child. To what extent is not clear. You are partially deaf and have worn hearing aids in both ears since the age of 11. At school, you showed violent tendencies both towards yourself and others. You self-harmed as a teenager by cutting your legs. You also threatened others with a scalpel on one occasion and at times carried a knife during your teenage years.
6. Aged 13 or 14, you were referred for a mental health assessment and diagnosed, probably wrongly, with bipolar affective disorder. You started using alcohol and drugs, intermittently. You left home early, in your mid-teens, and started a relationship in which there was some abuse; to what extent is not clear. As a teenager you increasingly went off the rails, resorting to alcohol, drugs and self-harm.
7. For a time things went better when you met Ashley Wingham, the father of your daughter born in April 2017 when you were 21. He was not violent. You were assessed just before the birth and diagnosed, rightly or wrongly, with complex post-traumatic stress disorder. The detailed findings of the psychiatrist who made that diagnosis are not available. You then fell out with your child's father and went to live in a women's refuge.
8. At some point, you started identifying yourself as a "goth", cultivating a dark and ghoulish humour, a preoccupation with crime, killing and killers and a strong interest in lethal weapons, rape pornography and rough sex with some consensual violence such as spanking. You acquired the habit of carrying a flick-knife in the heel of your boot when you went out of doors and kept a Celtic dagger, a ball bearing gun and two axes in your bedroom.
9. I reject your suggestion that the dagger was intended for use in pagan religious rites. I have seen no evidence apart from your own account that you have ever taken part in any such activities. The weapons were, as you have admitted, intended to be used if you decided you needed to use them. They were or became part of your bedroom furniture when about three years ago you moved into the property where the murder later took place.
10. Your friend Lauren White lived there with you and played a role rather like a domestic servant whom you would instruct to do things for you, including getting out your clothes, rolling your cigarettes, making you cups of tea and putting on your socks. You clearly exercised significant emotional control over her and on two occasions were violent towards her.
11. You met Frankie in early February last year on a night out with others. I accept that the two of you fell in love. You began a relationship that was nothing if not passionate. You filmed much of the sex using the CCTV camera installed in your bedroom. You

also had cameras filming daily life in the living room and kitchen.

12. Your relationship with Frankie was marked by rough sex, use of cocaine and alcohol, filming yourselves doing sexual acts and watching the film afterwards and role play involving humiliating language such as being called his “dirty little whore”, a title you said you were happy to accept. I accept that Frankie had a history of inflicting domestic violence on his previous partner and mother of his two children, for which he had been convicted. He admitted to you that he could be violent.
13. About a month into the relationship, it was becoming clear that it was not going smoothly and making the two of you happy together. On the contrary, there was a destructive argument as early as March 2022, when he took cocaine one evening. He encouraged you to resume and increase your drug taking which you had ceased at the time your daughter was born.
14. That evening on 12 March, you self-harmed again, cutting your legs as you had done previously. Frankie was frustrated and annoyed to find that your mutual passion, despite its force, was not leading to happiness. He became angry and jealous over a text message from one of your former boyfriends. For a time, he refused to let you leave and he kicked out at your belongings in your bedroom.
15. You told him you had cancer, which was untrue. You also told others including Ms White the same thing, using it to exert influence, inspiring pity, cooperation and sometimes gifts of money. You attended medical appointments and underwent tests but the evidence of your former GP shows that you never had any cancerous condition.
16. Later in March, your bedroom camera was filming you and Frankie having sex. It is clear that he penetrated you anally. You did not stop him, saying afterwards it was not the most romantic act but proof of your love for him. I accept, however, that it was a brutal and not fully consensual act, that it caused you pain of which you complained at the time and that you wanted him to stop but he did not.
17. Later, you used the self-contradictory expression “consensual rape” in conversation with Frankie. Testing the boundaries of acceptable sexual activity became part of the increasingly dangerous dynamic of the relationship. On 22 March, you signed what was called a “sex contract” with Frankie, witnessed by your friend Vicky Baitup, in which you purported to consent to him waking you through sexual intercourse.
18. There was another side to the relationship. It was not all brutal and animal. You wrote a moving letter of love to Frankie in about April 2022, at around the time you wrote to your father telling

him that you intended to commit suicide. It was not the first time you had entertained suicidal thoughts, but you did not carry out the plan. You later explained to psychiatrists that Frankie was wonderful to you when he was not in drink or on drugs.

19. From around April, he showed increasingly dangerous signs of jealousy. I accept that he was threatening towards you and to some extent controlling, though you are not a person who is easily controlled. He also felt inadequate and was angry at himself for being unable to make the relationship work and lead to mutual happiness.
20. He blamed your former boyfriends generally and one of them, Declan Payne, in particular. Frankie became dangerously jealous of Mr Payne who had previously lived with you and with whom you were still in close contact. From April onwards, you had frequent rows and breakups, though you continued to have sex, often filmed, at the times when you were said to be “not together”.
21. In early May 2022, the messages ranged from expressions of love to more menacing messages of derision from Frankie, who called you a “fucking slut” and suggested your answer to another message should be “yes daddy”, to which you responded with dark banter: “I’m sorry daddy of course I’ll do as I’m told and listen to everything daddy says”. He responded that you are “such a good little whore” to which your answer was “only for you”.
22. On 12 May, one of his messages threatened to “snap you ... in half” if you should sleep with someone else; he would also stamp on your other lover, he assured you, adding that “cancer will be the least of your worries”. You passed this message on to your close friend, Ms Baitup, calling it “a threat and a half”. On 17 May, she warned that she was concerned for your safety.
23. The same day you had sex on camera with Frankie after which he complained, as the video shows, that you kept a dagger under your pillow even while the two of you were having sex; and asked you whether you intended to stab him in the throat with it. Your response was that you did not but that the dagger was there to be easily accessible for protection.
24. On 17 May the camera again filmed the two of you. He wanted anal sex and tried to do it but you prevailed on him not to and had consensual vaginal sex instead, assuring him that he had not raped you. I cannot be sure you were referring back to 12 March when, you said in evidence, he anally raped you. On this occasion in May, you commented laughingly that it had been “as close to non-rape rape as I can get to” but if you thought he had raped you “then you wouldn’t be in my house, I have a kid to protect.”
25. In the next bout of sexual activity on camera, you and Frankie agreed on 30 May that you would undergo “punishment” at his

hands. You asked what would be your punishment and whether it would make you cry. Frankie spanked your bottom more than 100 times, the first 54 in six minutes. You were required to respond to each slap: “sorry daddy” or “I’ll be a good girl for you daddy”. Later, he ordered you to count the slaps. You counted at least 36 slaps before stopping and complaining that it hurt, saying “please, no more, no more.”

26. Your evidence at the trial was that this activity was consensual only up to the point when you stopped counting. Having viewed the grim video footage, I cannot be sure that account is to be rejected. What is clear is that the next day you photographed your red and raw buttocks and engaged in creating edited clips of that episode and the previous episode of 12 March when Frankie succeeded in having anal sex with you.
27. I accept the submission of the crown that you deliberately selected the parts of that sexual activity which portrayed Frankie inflicting or appearing to inflict non-consensual sexual violence on you, to convey the false impression that his actions were abusive of you to a far greater extent than they actually were; though that is not to say that I find you consented to all the activity depicted in your edited versions of it. Parts of the activity were not consensual.
28. As the weeks passed in June and July, you fanned the flames of Frankie’s jealousy and he of yours, in a destructive cycle. Each of you was keen to see the images and messages on the other’s mobile phone. You started to become convinced that he did not love you. Your own passionate, almost obsessive jealousy started to blossom. You became convinced that he preferred his former partner, the mother of his two children, to you; and that he had stayed overnight at her flat and slept with her.
29. In early June, you went on a night out clubbing with Ms White and Ms Baitup, but Frankie thought you had been with your former boyfriend Mr Payne, became angry and blocked you on his phone. You became convinced that you had contracted thrush from Frankie who in turn must have received the infection sexually from his other woman. You became concerned that he had laid a digital trap for you on snapchat, with a “friend request” from a fictitious person you thought he was impersonating.
30. From that time on, there is increasing evidence of you considering a plan to cause serious harm to Frankie, though not clearly intended to lead to his death. You discussed with Ms Baitup ways of hurting him. The latter did not take these conversations seriously; she did not believe you were serious about arranging for him to be hurt physically; her concern was, rather, that the violence might go the other way, remarking that you were “only a little skinny thing, easily broken”. As she had consistently done, she urged you to leave Frankie, saying she detested him.

31. I have to assess how serious your professed intention to harm Frankie was at that time. The crown say it is evidence of premeditation. The defence say it was, adopting Ms Baitup's phrase, all "hot air". I think the truth is somewhere in between. On the one hand, the better part of you did not want Frankie hurt; you loved him and just wanted him to love you back. On the other hand, you were resentful, possessive and jealous and wanted to punish him for preferring his ex-girlfriend and forsaking you.
32. To that there must be added the point that at the time, you were manipulating visual evidence of your sexual relations in a manner intended to discredit him and make you look much more the victim than you were. Furthermore, you are quick to violence, tend to keep a knife close at hand, and would not shrink from using it if the conflict were to come to a head.
33. Your jealousy of Frankie's former girlfriend continued to intensify. You checked her on Facebook, contacted her in some way and on the night of 11 June made a plan to visit her home and catch Frankie there. You did not quite carry out that plan, but you did visit her property, drunk and in the company of Mr Wingham, and dumped some of Frankie's clothing on her doorstep.
34. By the middle of June, just over a month before the killing, your relationship with Frankie was going from bad to worse. You slept with your former boyfriend, an activity that was filmed as usual. You had sex with Frankie later the same day, accusing him afterwards of having no love for you, just using you for convenient sex and saying he had "obliterated" you and put a "knife in my back". You still loved him with a destructive passion, saying you wished it was easy to get over him.
35. From then on, Mr Payne occasionally visited your house, as your father did. Both would certainly be hostile to Frankie. You and your friends strove to keep the visitors in ignorance of each other's visits. Frankie had to be kept apart from them in the bedroom upstairs and spirited in and out of the building when necessary to avoid a meeting between him and your father or Mr Payne.
36. You were, as Ms Baitup put it, "juggling" Mr Payne and Frankie, trying to ensure they did not meet but allowing both to be in your house at or near the same times. Three such scenes took place in the first half of July, each with a group chat running commentary passing between you, Ms Baitup and Ms White, in which the latter anxiously described the three of you as "dead girls walking" if Mr Payne and Frankie should meet.
37. Frankie was becoming increasingly bleak, depressed and threatening, sending you messages rejecting you and despairing of women generally. He continued to be inflamed with jealousy of your ex-partner, Mr Payne. At the start of July, you took down the camera in your bedroom. I accept that this may have been at

Frankie's request. I do not find that it was because you were planning to kill him, as the crown suggested. You were, though, at the time threatening him that you would post on social media explicit sex videos of you and him engaging in sexual acts and that you would "ruin his life".

38. On 4 July, a filmed conversation took place in your kitchen. You still had cameras in the kitchen and living room. In a half serious conversation, you suggested that you would arrange for various male friends to beat up Frankie in an alleyway and cause him serious damage if not worse. The supposed plan involved quite a lot of detail; you would be made to look the victim by receiving a staged cut. As discussed, it had the flavour of a bad crime novel plot or movie script. The police later investigated the matter as a possible conspiracy to harm Frankie, but brought no charges.
39. At around the same time, when having otherwise consensual sex with Frankie, but not on camera, he "fisted" and "sunflowered" you, causing you discomfort, pain and injury. I accept that this was not consensual and that it was a serious sexual assault on you. At about the same time, you became aware that your five year old daughter may have been abused by Ms Baitup's seven year old son. You both hoped the contact was innocent but Ms Baitup telephoned the local social services to report the matter on 8 July.
40. On 14 July, three days before you killed Frankie, you and he had what you described in your account the next day as a "big argument". The two of you were drinking. Your account to Ms White and Ms Baitup was filmed in your kitchen the next morning. Frankie had gained access to your phone, gone through its contents and told you he would end up hurting you physically. You talked to him about the comparative size of your various partners' penises, saying Mr Payne's was second only to Frankie's.
41. He became enraged and violent, you explained to your friends the next day, punching the wall and the bookcase and, as you put it, behaving like a "jealous petulant child". The same evening, while you were performing oral sex on him, he had uttered the first name of his former girlfriend, which sounds a bit like your first name; and had spoken amorously of an ex called "Vicky", clearly not Ms Baitup. You were enraged that his former partner was engaging his attention and may have become a serious rival.
42. The next day, 15 July, Frankie had missed his work as a plumber. In the filmed kitchen conversation that morning, you explained the events of the previous evening, causing Ms Baitup real alarm for your safety. She commented, accurately, that your life was a complete mess. You reassured her that you had your weapons to protect yourself and could use them on Frankie; you would warn Frankie: "I'd fucking put that knife in you and I know that I would". You referred to doing a "long stretch" in prison.

43. On the Saturday, 16 July, Frankie came again in the evening. You and he were both trying to inspect each other's phones that evening. Your daughter was not with you; he was at his father's for the weekend. Ms White was with you and Frankie. You and he drank beer and took cocaine. He took more than you but neither of you was so far gone as to be incapacitated.
44. Frankie was gambling online and trying to borrow money from friends; you lent him money that evening. You were exchanging affectionate messages with Mr Payne. Frankie sent a message direct to Mr Payne, whom he had never met, suggesting he should cease his attentions to you. At 1.20am the next morning, he discovered Mr Payne's presence among your snapchat companions. Ms White was worried enough to send a message to Ms Baitup warning of a likely dangerous confrontation.
45. A quarrel ensued, mostly in the bedroom which was now off camera. You asked Frankie, who was downstairs, if he was coming up to the bedroom. You were looking through his phone, which was unguarded by him. You found an image of a conversation in which a person appearing to be a 13 year old girl was exchanging Facebook messages with Frankie. You did not notice that Frankie had blocked her as soon as she said she was 13. (In fact, she was 17.) You took a still photograph of the conversation on Frankie's phone. I accept that you took this photograph at 3.12am¹, before and not after you stabbed Frankie; and I am sure that you were enraged by finding the exchange.
46. Frankie came upstairs to the bedroom and was asleep when you then stabbed him fatally to the neck, using the Celtic dagger. The blow required moderate force, as the pathologist found. The first wound inflicted was inevitably and swiftly fatal. The back of his throat was opened internally. The left internal jugular vein was completely severed and the left common carotid artery partially severed, causing torrential bleeding and rapid loss of consciousness and death. There were no defensive injuries. You stabbed him in the heart and chest area a further 19 times. Those wounds would have been fatal but when they were inflicted Frankie was already dead or dying.
47. I am sure your account given to Ms Baitup and Ms White a few hours later was true and that your subsequent account of having been attacked by Frankie and sought to defend yourself is a fabrication. You claimed that you wanted to protect Frankie's reputation. That is implausible. You had never scrupled to attack it previously. You had no reason to lie to Ms Baitup. If he had attacked you, you would have told her so. Not until after 7 October (when you were assessed by the defence psychiatrist) did you come up with your story about trying to defend yourself with a money box that turned out to be the dagger and then wanting to

¹ Not 2.31am as I mistakenly said in court. The error is not material to the sequence of events.

stop the bubbling in and noise from his neck.

48. In the aftermath, you made a half hearted partial attempt to clean up the scene. I am sure that you discussed the killing on the phone with Mr Wingham and also cleaning up and disposal of the body, despite his untruthful evidence to the contrary. You sent two lying messages to Ms Baitup asserting that Frankie had left the house, alive. However, you later owned up to her that you had killed him while he slept. You engaged in fantasy talk of burying the body in the garden and making the death appear to be suicide. You warned Ms White that she was an “accomplice” who had helped to place bin bags beneath the body.
49. Your confession by video call to Ms Baitup, about four hours after the killing, caused the latter to alert the police by calling 999. You and Ms White were then arrested. You made clear that Ms White had had “no part” in the killing and made no serious attempt to deny that you were the perpetrator. You later told a mental health nurse that you did not deserve a blanket in your cell because you had taken a man’s life; that what you had done was inhuman; and that you would going to jail for a long time.
50. You were interviewed by police under caution in the presence of your solicitor on three occasions over the next few days. You responded “no comment” in the first two interviews. In the third, you hinted at self-defence, asking if you had attacked him in his sleep, why was the bed not covered in blood? In fact, you had wrapped Frankie’s body in the duvet, which was saturated with his blood.
51. I come to the sentence of the court for this murder. I am required by law to sentence you to imprisonment for life. I have to determine the minimum term of imprisonment which you must serve before being eligible to apply to the Parole Board to be considered for release. To do so, I have to consider the seriousness of the offence, to determine the minimum period of time you must serve in prison, before consideration can be given to your release.
52. A minimum term is not the same as an ordinary sentence of imprisonment where a defendant will normally serve only half or two thirds of that sentence before being released on licence. A minimum term is the term that must be served before your case may be referred to the Parole Board for a consideration of your release upon licence. It means the actual length of time that you will spend in prison before that process can take place.
53. Whether or not you will be released after the minimum term has been served will be for the Parole Board to consider at the end of that term. The Parole Board will not decide that you can be released at that stage, unless it is satisfied that you are not a risk to the public, and are ready for release into society. If you are

released at that time, or any later time, you will be released on licence with specific conditions attached, and may be recalled to continue serving your life sentence if you breach any licence conditions that are imposed upon you.

54. Where a knife is taken to the scene with intent to have it available to use as a weapon and the perpetrator uses it on the victim, the court's starting point is 25 years. The starting point is normally only 15 years if the weapon is not taken to the scene, but the court must avoid artificially large differences in outcome between cases where a weapon is taken to the scene and cases of equal or near equal gravity where the weapon is not taken to the scene.
55. Here, the knife was not taken to the scene, your bedroom, because it was already at the scene, where you normally kept it together with other knives, axes and a pellet gun. You had made clear to your friends that you were prepared to use those weapons. The nominal starting point is 15 years but the actual minimum term will necessarily be a good deal higher. Its length should not be much lower where the victim is brought to the weapon, rather than the other way round.
56. Having chosen the starting point, I am required next to take into account any aggravating or mitigating factors, to the extent that I have not allowed for them in the choice of starting point. I begin with some general observations about your offence.
57. This was a crime of passion. You loved the man you killed and killed the man you loved. You are, as the crown submitted, manipulative, jealous and possessive. A crime of passion is not committed in cold blood. You realised your relationship with Frankie was ending. You were losing your influence over him. You sensed that he was going to leave you for a less toxic girlfriend. You were planning for that already, considering resuming your relationship with Mr Payne.
58. But then you became furious on finding the messages between Frankie and the supposed 13 year old girl. I accept that you believed he was in contact with a girl of 13 and did not realise that he had blocked her on finding out her supposed age. You lost your temper and acted upon your impulse. If you could not have Frankie, no one could. No other woman would have him if you could not. You saw to that.
59. The first and obvious aggravating feature is the use of a knife. This was not a kitchen knife normally used for innocent purposes and taken up in the heat of the moment. This was a dagger intended beforehand for possible use as a weapon, forming part of a collection of such weapons in your bedroom. You kept it close to you, under your pillow or in a drawer.
60. Next, you did not merely use the knife to kill Frankie. You must

have known that he was already fatally wounded when you stabbed him a further 19 times, gratuitously disfiguring his young body in a frenzy of violence. That is a serious aggravating factor which must lead to a substantial upwards adjustment from the 15 year starting point.

61. What was the extent of any planning and premeditation? You maintained the presence of the weapons in your bedroom, to be used in case of need. That involved planning, but not planning for the purpose of committing the specific crime actually committed. It was planning to enable a crime such as this one to be committed and with a willingness to commit it, should the occasion arise.
62. I do not find that the actual crime committed, that is the killing of Frankie that night, was planned in advance. I am far from sure that it was, though the crown suggested it was. The semi-serious plan to harm him discussed some two weeks earlier, was a quite different plan which I do not think was clearly intended to be carried out and, indeed, was not carried out.
63. The victim was particularly vulnerable in this case, not because of his age or any disability, but simply because he was asleep and defenceless. He might have been able to defend himself if he had been awake. His trust was abused in that he had questioned why you needed a dagger under your pillow while he was with you in bed and asked whether you intended to stab him in the throat. You had told him you did not, while aware that you might, knowing that he may be in danger from you.
64. There are other serious aggravating features: the manipulation of evidence by editing the sex video clips; the issuing of threats to make the videos public by posting them on social media and thereby to ruin Frankie's life; the consumption of alcohol and cocaine on the night; implicating Ms White, over whom you had strong influence, as your "accomplice", having attacked Frankie knowing she was present in the house; the partial cleanup of the scene; and lying to Ms Baitup in the two false text messages indicating that Frankie was still alive.
65. All those aggravating features, cumulatively, require in my judgment, a substantial upward adjustment from the statutory starting point of 15 years to a period of 26 years. That is then subject to a further adjustment downwards to take account of any mitigating features, which I consider next.
66. There are some mitigating features in this case. I am unable to accept as a mitigating factor that you intended only serious bodily harm to Frankie, rather than to kill him. The wounds you inflicted are inconsistent with that suggestion. You did not stab him in the leg or arm but in the neck and then the heart and surrounding chest area. But I do accept that the intention to kill him was formed only moments before the killing. I do not think you spent

that evening waiting to bring about his death.

67. I accept that you had a difficult childhood in which you were yourself a victim of violence and that you had mental health problems from an early age and continuing up to the present. You suffer from emotionally unstable personality disorder, as the psychiatrist Dr Cumming found. You have a tendency to act on impulse and an inability to consider in advance the consequences of doing so. Your emotionally unstable personality disorder diminishes the level of your culpability to a small extent.
68. I accept that your passion for Frankie was deep and genuine, which made it all the more destructive. I accept that he was far from blameless. He was a violent man who threatened you and sexually assaulted you. You were in some fear of him and he was a danger to you, as you were to him.
69. I also accept that the attack was not premeditated, in the sense that I have described above. You did not plan to kill Frankie come what may. You were prepared to do so if the need should arise. You feared violence from him as well as offering a threat of violence against him. That is limited mitigation because of the countervailing aggravating factor I have already referred to: your stash of weapons and professed willingness to use them.
70. You made a slight and implausible attempt to escape justice by cleaning up and making a wild and unrealistic suggestion that you would bury the body in the garden and pass the incident off as a suicide. But you made no serious attempt to evade responsibility once the police arrived, with the body upstairs in the bedroom. You made clear to the police that Ms White had no part in the killing, which mitigates your culpability for implicating her.
71. You did deny responsibility by your plea of not guilty. That is not an aggravating factor, nor a mitigating one. You showed remorse in your conversation with the mental health nurse in the afternoon of 17 July, but it does not seem to have lasted long. Until the jury went out, you showed little insight into your crime and the effect of it on the victim's family and loved ones.
72. I received yesterday the letter you have written in prison, dated last Tuesday, 14 February, which was while the jury were out. It strikes a different tone from when you gave evidence. It contains an apology to Frankie's family and children and expresses remorse that appears to be genuine. But it comes very late, right at the end of the trial when a verdict was imminent and you did not know what the verdict would be.
73. You have no previous convictions, though you have admitted to consumption of illegal Class A drugs and carrying a knife in a public place, which is illegal. You are the mother and were the main carer of your daughter. You will now be largely separated

from your daughter, who is also a victim of your crime. I am told that you have completed some courses in prison and started doing some teaching of others there who have learning difficulties.

74. I have to balance the aggravating and mitigating features against each other. The former far outweigh the latter, in particular the use of the dagger, its prior presence in your bedroom and the frenzied gratuitous attack after the victim was already lost. The aggravating features impel me, as I have said, to elevate the 15 year starting point substantially to a period of 26 years. I will then make a downward reduction of 3 years to take account of the mitigating features, limited as they are.
75. I conclude that the minimum term for this murder should be one of 23 years. That punishment is little consolation to set against the suffering Frankie's family will have to endure during and beyond the years you will spend in prison. You may eventually be released, but their son and brother will not return. The father will not return to his two children. The damage you have done cannot be undone.
76. Stand up please, Ms Groves. The sentence of the court for the murder of Frankie Fitzgerald is life imprisonment, with a minimum term to be served of 23 years, less 217 days spent on remand in custody awaiting trial. That will be some atonement for the senseless murder of this troubled young man.
77. Any statutory charges that apply will be dealt with administratively. That is the sentence of the court. I would like to conclude by extending my profound thanks to the police officers who carried out the investigation, the prosecution and defence lawyers who conducted the case so professionally; and, not least, the jury which had to watch distressing but unavoidable evidence. You may go with the officer.